

INFLUENCES and EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Bentonville's recent rate of growth and expanded role as an international destination can be seen in the evolution of its community facilities and services. The following influences will continue to shape facilities and services in the future, and provide context for recommendations included throughout this chapter.

Projected growth and redevelopment.

The projected increase in population of 31,000 people by 2035 will create demand for new community facilities and infrastructure. Chapter 4: Land Use and Strategic Growth of this Community Plan describes how redevelopment, infill, and new growth can be used to accommodate such growth. Community facilities and infrastructure will need to be proactively planned, improved, and activated in parallel with growth and development.

Existing facility standards.

Several service providers provide services according to standards that have a direct impact on local land use and character. For example, the State of Arkansas requires new elementary schools to acquire land based on maximum enrollment. Each facility must be a minimum of 10 acres, plus include one additional acre for each 100 projected students. Due to land costs in Bentonville, this has resulted in investment on the fringe of the community, which in turn drives residential development outward. It also results in school properties that are difficult to access by walking or bicycling.

Recent investment in arts, culture, and identity.

The Walton Family Foundation has spearheaded several projects that have heightened Bentonville's role in arts and culture. Crystal Bridges is a world-renown art museum and architectural specimen, and the on-going investment along 8th Street will support the community's long-term goals of becoming a destination for food, arts, and education. Others, including the City of Bentonville, have invested in streetscaping and other projects to enhance the character and identity of the community. These efforts lay the foundation for future investment that should aim to strengthen the community's local quality of life and regional, national, and international image.

The need for stakeholder collaboration.

The City of Bentonville is responsible for infrastructure, public safety, and other basic government services. However, many of the services that define Bentonville's long-term potential are provided by others. The following list summarizes many of the major stakeholders and the services they provide in Bentonville.

CITY OF BENTONVILLE

- Electrical Utility Department
- Wastewater Utilities Department
- Water Utilities Department
- Streets Department
- Fire Department
- Police Department
- Planning Department
- Bentonville Public Library

EDUCATION

- Bentonville Public Schools
- Charter and Private Schools
- Northwest Arkansas Community College

HEALTHCARE

- Northwest Medical Center
- Mercy Clinic

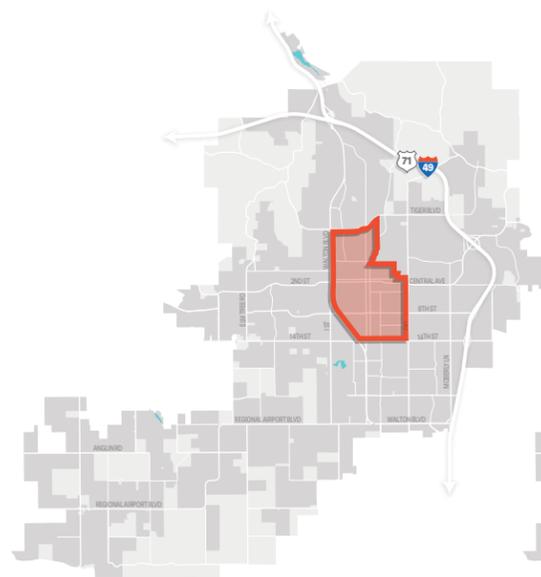
ARTS & CULTURE

- Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art
- Scott Family Amazeum
- Walmart Museum
- Bentonville Film Festival
- Walton Family Foundation
- 21c Museum Hotel
- Compton Gardens and Conference Center
- Peel Mansion & Gardens
- Museum of Native American History

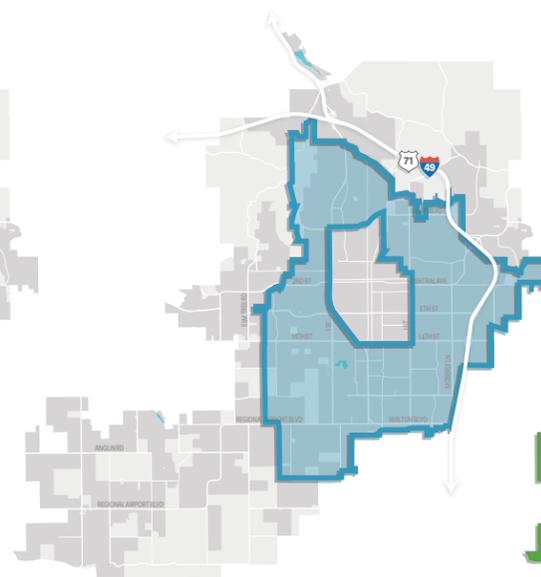
ACCOMMODATING FUTURE GROWTH

Chapter 4: Land Use and Strategic Growth of this Community Plan identifies a three-pronged approach to managing future growth; 1) city-center intensification, 2) urban infill, and 3) edge growth. Through this approach, the community should be able to accommodate a population beyond the projected 31,000 new residents expected by 2035. Using this framework as context, this section presents recommendations regarding the provision of infrastructure and services in the changing Bentonville landscape.

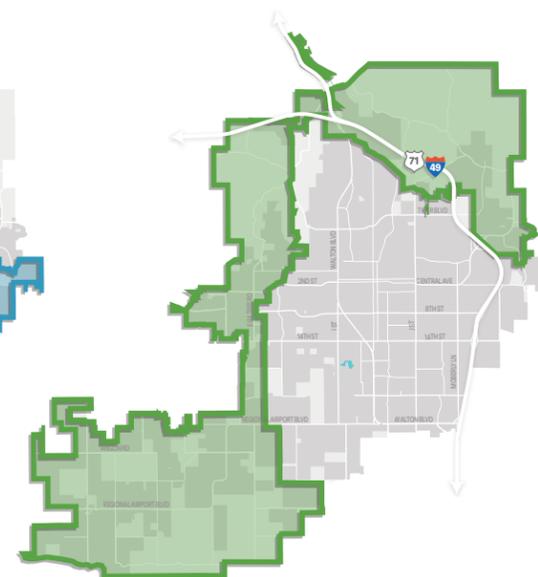
Growth Priority 1
Central City Intensification



Growth Priority 2
Urban Infill



Growth Priority 3
Edge Growth



AREAS OF CITY-CENTER INTENSIFICATION

Modernize infrastructure to a more urban model.

Many areas slated for redevelopment and intensification have rural infrastructure systems, such as open ditch stormwater conveyance. The City should upgrade these systems to increase capacity and better serve the anticipated future population. Upgrades could include the installation of curb and gutter drainage, new and higher capacity telecommunications lines, and sustainable infrastructure practices.

Assess the need for capital investment in new fire trucks to serve a more urban environment.

Some areas of intensification may include higher densities, taller structures and narrow roads or alleys. However, existing fire trucks may not be able to adequately serve this development model. An assessment of existing trucks should be done to determine if new trucks would be needed to serve a more urban neighborhood model.

Assess the need for upgrades to water, waste water, electricity, and other utilities.

The redevelopment and intensification of existing development will increase the demand on local systems. For example, the recently adopted Downtown Neighborhood zoning allows for more intensive residential development in the center of the City. As a result, the City is assessing existing systems to ensure they can meet the demand of a greater population. Where necessary, upgrades in capacity should be made as redevelopment is proposed.

Monitor potential influxes in school enrollment against the capacity of existing schools.

Areas identified for intensification are within the boundaries of existing schools. As intensification occurs, school enrollment may increase. The City should work with Bentonville Public Schools to assess potential enrollment increases and plan for the expansion of existing capacity where necessary with the intent of allowing residents to attend a school close to their neighborhood.





AREAS OF URBAN INFILL

Plan infrastructure capacity for anticipated build-out population.

The Future Land Use Plan establishes general parameters for population densities in urban infill areas. These parameters should be refined as needed and used as a basis for assessing the capacity of current infrastructure systems based on the anticipated built-out demand. Where necessary, upgrades should be made prior to infill development occurring.

Require logical connections to existing roadway, trail, and sidewalk systems.

Urban infill areas should be seamlessly woven into the established development pattern. New collector streets should be linked to one another, and sidewalks and bike trails should provide continuous multi-modal mobility between neighborhoods.

Prioritize new infrastructure development in areas easily linked to existing systems.

The extension of infrastructure into new areas is typically expensive and seldom provides positive return on investment for the City. The City should prioritize the approval of developments in areas that are easily linked to existing systems in order to maximize the efficiency of the overall system and return on existing and new infrastructure.

Establish thresholds for the development of new public safety facilities.

New residents and business will result in greater resource demands, more police calls and new fire services. The location of new development could also inhibit efficient response time during emergencies. The Police and Fire Departments should establish thresholds for population growth that warrant new investment in facilities, staff, and fleets in order to sustain a high level of service to all parts of the community.

AREAS OF EDGE GROWTH

Identify opportunities to expand long-term infrastructure capacity.

It may be several years before the long-term population projections are attained, but planning for the capacity to serve those residents and businesses should begin in the short-term. The City should assess the capacity of existing water supplies, water treatment facilities, waste water treatment facilities, and other elements to determine if they can accommodate long-term population growth. If they are found to be lacking long-term capacity, appropriate resources or properties should be identified to fill the gap as growth occurs.

Limit the expansion of infrastructure to areas easily connected to existing systems.

The Land Use and Strategic Growth chapter of this Community Plan identifies areas within ¼-mile of existing water, waste water, and sewer lines. Areas beyond this ¼-mile buffer should not be approved for development until the adjacent buffer area is developed and logical local infrastructure connections can be made.

Proactively preserve land for critical public services.

The Land Use and Strategic Growth chapter provides guidance on the location and density of future residential development. The City of Bentonville and Bentonville Public Schools should proactively acquire necessary property in these areas to accommodate future needs related to education and public safety services. Facilities could then be developed as population thresholds are met.

Support Bentonville Public Schools in advocating for variances from state site requirements for new facilities.

The State of Arkansas school siting requirements establish minimum development sites of 10 acres for elementary schools, 20 acres for middle schools, and 40 acres for a K-12 school. Sites of this size are difficult to acquire and assemble in appropriate locations near residential areas due to the rapid development of the region and rising land costs. The City should work with Bentonville Public Schools to advocate for relief from these requirements by demonstrating the local burden the present and the challenges they create in achieving other community objectives.

Integrate sustainable infrastructure practices.

While sustainable infrastructure could be implemented throughout Bentonville, new growth areas pose the greatest opportunity to install modern systems that reduce the demand for traditional conveyance systems. The City should support the installation of green infrastructure that reduces stormwater runoff, enhance water quality, provide local amenities for residents, supports local wildlife, and allows for trails and other complementary networks.

ENHANCING COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Public infrastructure and facilities in Bentonville have a direct impact on local character. On one hand, facilities like the Bentonville Parks and Recreation headquarters integrate attractive building design, landscaping, and signage. On the other hand, the location of utilities and supporting facilities negatively impacts the character of neighborhoods and commercial areas. The City should support the following recommendations in order to enhance the character of the Bentonville community.

Utilize green building and sustainability best practices when developing or improving public buildings.

Over the next two decades, Bentonville's growing population will likely warrant the development or improvement of civic buildings, schools, and public safety facilities. The City should serve as a model for sustainable building and site development by integrating local materials, energy efficient design, local energy production, native landscaping, green infrastructure, and other aspects of design as investment occurs.

Manage the location of utilities and utility corridors.

Currently, utilities are located based on standards that focus on ease of installation and maintenance. However, the result is often utilities placed in residential front yards or in prominent locations along commercial corridors. The City should review and modify its standards to allow for proper maintenance but relocate or bury utilities to minimize the impact on local character. Potential solutions include the integration of alleys or utility easement as subdivision occurs, the vaulting of utility boxes, or investment in machinery that allows for smaller setbacks from buildings.

Incorporate public art into civic buildings.

The City of Bentonville maintains a Public Art Policy that establishes a Public Art Commission and establishes standards for the review, installation, maintenance, and removal of art in public spaces. The City should consider adopting a policy that would require the inclusion of public art to be integrated in facilities generally accessible to the public. This could include requirements that a space be provided to accommodate public art to be provided by private artists, or that a portion of the construction budget for new facilities be set aside to purchase public art.

Participate in the Northwest Arkansas Design Excellence Program when designing prominent new civic buildings.

The Walton Family Foundation sponsors the Northwest Arkansas Design Excellence Program, which provides funding to encourage public purpose buildings and spaces to integrate design elements that elevate the experience for residents and visitors. The City should identify priority public buildings and hire design firms as needed to pursue funding through this program.

Screen utility substations.

There are several utility substations that are located within existing neighborhoods or areas planned for future residential growth. Ideally, relocating these substations is preferred, but can be extremely costly. Alternatively, these substations should be heavily screened with dense landscaping that allows for necessary maintenance access.

Relocate non-customer-based public facilities.

The City or other service providers maintain several facilities on prominent corridors or in residential areas. Some, such as City Hall, the Parks and Recreation headquarters, and Community Development building, rely on such visibility to allow easy access by residents and developers. Others that are not customer-intensive, such as fleet maintenance facilities or public works storage, should be relocated away from prominent areas to allow for redevelopment with appropriate uses.

Install attractive gateway features at all prominent entry points into Bentonville.

The City currently installs markers at entry points that identify entry into Bentonville. However, these markers do not convey the prominence of the community and its place in international arts and culture. The City should work with local artists and designers to install prominent gateway elements along major corridors. These elements could represent a variety of styles and provide a more dramatic entry into the community.

SUPPORTING ARTS and CULTURE

Bentonville has a uniquely large amount of arts and cultural amenities for a community its size. On its own, Crystal Bridges is a facility that many major cities around the world could not envision. Add to that the Amazeum, the Culinary Institute, The Plant, the Bentonville Film Festival and several other projects that create a full spectrum of arts and cultural experiences for residents and visitors of all ages and interests. The following actions should be supported by the City in order to sustain the role of arts and culture over the next several decades.

Promote the collaboration with arts and culture agencies and organizations.

While City government will have a limited responsibility in implementing arts and culture initiatives, it is a critical partner in facilitating the actions of others seeking to sustain and grow Bentonville's prominence in these areas. The City should seek creative ways to support art and culture initiatives through its regulatory tools, coordinated capital improvements, marketing, and permit approval procedures.

Support the adaptive reuse of Bentonville's older buildings for uses that support arts and culture.

The on-going reuse of the former Tyson facility and Kraft facility for the Brightwater Center and the Plant illustrate the potential of other obsolete structures to accommodate new uses. The City should support the adaptive reuse of older buildings in order to preserve the City's traditional character while accommodating new amenities that would strengthen local arts and culture.

Review and amend zoning regulations to allow for a more flexible mix of uses.

The City's current zoning ordinance lacks specificity on flexible uses that could support an arts-oriented community, such as live-work spaces, arts production studios, and gallery and display spaces. More specifically, none of these activities are allowed in any residential district. The City should amend its zoning ordinance to include provisions for these types of uses where appropriate through special use standards or through an overlay that would support a creative arts living and working environment.

Continue to support collaborative arts programming and education.

Northwest Arkansas Community College, Bentonville Public Schools, Crystal Bridges, and other partners currently collaborate to provide access to art facilities and education for Bentonville youth and adults. The City should continue to support this effort through shared marketing and forwarding inquiries about these programs to appropriate partners.

Support art internship and apprenticeship opportunities for local students.

Through the development of the Plant, the Walton Family Foundation and Bentonville community are shifting the spotlight from simply finished art to also include the process of creating art. The City should partner with the Foundation and other local partners to align local artists with students interested in learning trades and skills related to the arts.

Continue to support the Bentonville Film Festival (BFF) and the creation of new events.

After two years, the Bentonville Film Festival has proven to be highly successful in terms of both attendance and significance to the film industry. The on-going development of a new theater near Downtown Bentonville will enhance the festival experience. The City should continue to support the BFF and other events through the shared use of public spaces and facilities, marketing and promotions, and permitting.