

VISION 2047:

Comprehensive Plan for Monticello, Arkansas

.

Approved by Monticello City Council, December 15, 2022

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ONE. INTRODUCTION

What is this Comprehensive Plan?

According to the *Arkansas Code Annotated* (A.C.A.), a city plan “shall be prepared in order to promote, in accordance with present and future needs, the safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare of the citizens (§14-56-403)

This plan will serve as an official policy statement of the City of Monticello for directing growth and development within its city limits and planning area, as

well as articulating strategies to address Monticello's current and future challenges.

The plan will help guide the decisions of both the Planning Commission and City Council during the next quarter-century. It is additionally intended to outline strategies and actions for key private entities. The Comprehensive Plan serves all residents and property owners within the planning area as well as others having a stake in the future of the city.

The Comprehensive Plan provides a broad guideline for growth and development. It is not meant to direct land use arrangement precisely, nor is it a zoning ordinance. It serves as an instrument intended to blend public and private interests in a manner that will best suit the entire community.

The Plan will remain flexible, allowing for necessary modifications of land uses, since it is addressed to long-term community needs. Planning should be based on sound development principles, and this Plan addresses pertinent community issues as a whole rather than treating isolated problems as they may arise.

Authority:

In all of its work, the Planning Commission serves in an advisory role to the City Council which alone has the authority to approve the Commission's recommendations.

The duties of a city planning commission are detailed in the A.C.A., §14-56-4. This section requires that plans of a municipality should aim "for the coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the municipality and its environs" (402). The Code further states that plans may provide for, among other things, the following:

- Efficiency and economy in the process of development
- The appropriate and best use of land
- Convenience of traffic and circulation of people and goods
- Healthful and convenient distribution of population
- Good civic design and arrangement
- Adequate public utilities and facilities
- Wise and efficient expenditure of funds.

The Planning Process

Planning is a process that involves many steps and a great deal of input. This plan is the result of several years of a thoughtful process, slowed down by a pandemic, but carried through by residents and officials.

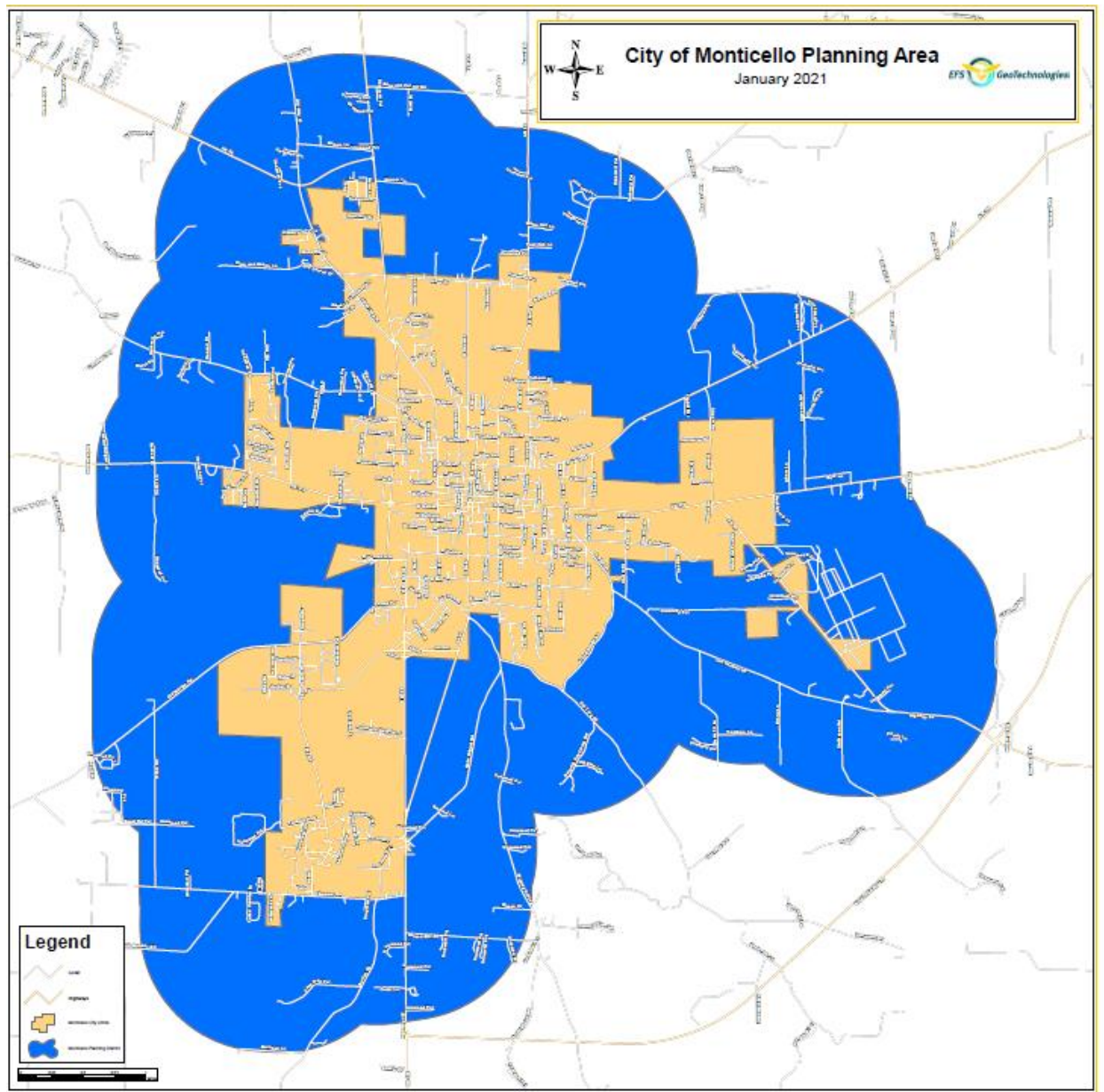
The Monticello Planning Commission, which had been created in 1959 but was dormant for almost six decades, was reinvigorated by Mayor Paige Chase in April of 2019. After getting organized and updating some long-neglected building ordinances, the Commission began its work of writing a City Plan, taking the following steps:

1. A map of the Planning Zone was drawn up by Eagle Forestry Service.
2. The Commission gathered data on the history, current population, and trends of Monticello and Drew County, using historical census data and the numbers from the 2020 Census. Much of this information composes the first chapter of this plan.
3. The Center for Community & Economic Development (CCED) at the University of Central Arkansas, thanks to the sponsorship of the Monticello Economic Development Commission, led a series of four significant events that all resulted in reports with useful data, and in a few cases in some projects to enhance the city:
 - a. January 2021: A community public survey, conducted using paper and online ballots, with the results shared with the community.
 - b. June 2021: A Downtown Walk Audit, led by Doug Roberts of Crafton Tull.
 - c. August 2021: A First Impressions visit by the Advanced Year Class of the CCED, similarly followed by an open forum to share the thoughts and advice of the group.
 - d. March 2022: A Strategic Doing Workshop, which resulted in three projects of immediate use for the community.
4. Also in March of 2022, the Planning Commission hosted two Public Forums to elicit the concerns and dreams of the community. Lively discussions resulted in prioritized lists of concerns. These concerns, as well as ideas raised in the public survey, and other public comments, all inform this plan. It represents fifteen months of input from residents, as well as observations, advice, and ideas from professionals who helped with the CCED events.

The papers and recommendations produced by these four projects are appended to this plan. Particular recommendations are scattered throughout the Plan itself.

Planning Area:

The Monticello Planning Area boundary appears in graphic form on the following map, and other maps used with this document. The Planning Area Map was prepared in accordance with statutes found in the A.C.A, which state that for a city the size of Monticello, "the jurisdictional area will be one (1) mile beyond the corporate limits." (§14-56-413 a.2.A). Copies of the map are on file with the City Clerk and the Dew County Recorder. The Planning Area Boundary depicted on the Comprehensive Plan Map includes those lands within the territorial jurisdiction of Monticello for which it may prepare plans, ordinances, and regulations.



Land Use Regulations

The Code goes on to say that "the land use plan is plainly not a zoning ordinance. It is merely a broad declaration of policy, specifying in a general way the uses to which the land in and near the city is now being put and to which it may be put in the future." (§14-56-403 and notes) As noted above, VISION 2050 is not an ordinance. It lays out recommendations for the ongoing development of Monticello. The Arkansas planning statutes, in A.C.A. §14-56-416 (a)(1) provide:

Following adoption and filing of the land use plan, the commission may prepare for submission to the legislative body a recommended zoning ordinance for the entire area of the municipality.

The Statutes further provide in A.C.A. §14-56-417 (a)(1):

Following adoption and filing of a master street plan, the Planning Commission may prepare and shall administer, after approval of the legislative body, regulations controlling the development of land.

These provisions signify a strong relationship between the plan and its supporting regulations. In simple terms, a municipality first plans and then regulates. As stated in §14-56-412 (e):

In order to promote, regulate, and control development and to protect the various elements of the plans, the commission, after adoption of appropriate plans as provided, may prepare and transmit to the legislative body such ordinances and regulation as are deemed necessary to carry out the intent of the plans, or of parts thereof.

Planners take these provisions literally and encourage municipalities to base decisions in land use and development upon adopted plans to the greatest extent possible. At the same time, it has been noted in court decisions in Arkansas that plans are not legal documents but rather broad statements of municipal policy. The legal force arises from the adopted regulations developed to support the plan. All of which is to say that after the Plan is adopted, the Commission can begin developing – for City Council consideration – ordinances to help fulfill the goals of the Plan.

TWO. CONTEXT AND TRENDS

2.A SETTING, HISTORY, & CHALLENGES

The Community

In 2022, Monticello is the commercial and cultural center of Southeastern Arkansas, with a population of around 10,000. The seat of Drew County and the home of the University of Arkansas at Monticello, the city is also home to two school systems, a growing medical presence, and a number of industries.

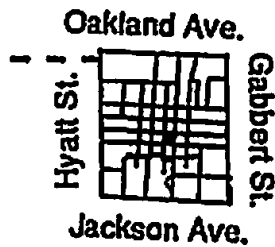
Regional Setting:

Over the past fifty or sixty years, Monticello has gradually become the hub of the Southeast Arkansas region. Partly this is owing to the declining population of neighboring counties and cities, including McGehee and Crossett. Partly, this is owing to more positive features, including the growth of the hospital and neighboring medical offices. A larger factor is the presence of UAM, which provides steady employment as well as educational and cultural opportunities otherwise unavailable in the immediate area. Both intersecting state highways, 425 and 278, provide motor access to Monticello, although a lack of improved infrastructure, including natural gas and water, is limiting industrial expansion.

Abundant water, woods, and nearby Delta rice fields combine to make the region popular for hunting and fishing. Lake Monticello was a powerful attractor for water sports, but was closed for repairs to the lakebed and the dam. These repairs were completed in 2021, and a system of trails is being planned by a group of interested citizens and will eventually wind around the Lake.

Community Roots

Monticello was founded in 1849 as the seat of the newly formed Drew County, with the city's original boundaries comprising Hyatt, Oakland,



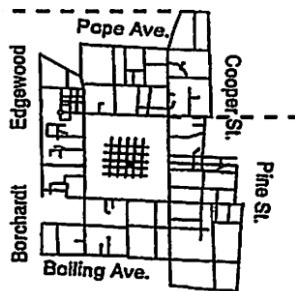
Gabbert, and Jackson Streets.

1850 City Limits

Economically, Antebellum Southeast Arkansas, dominated by cotton growers, was perhaps the wealthiest section of the state, and Monticello's per capita wealth was highest among all Arkansas cities. But the area's fortunes were crushed by the Civil War and the resulting devastation to homes and farms. Only slowly did the region begin to recover and at a pace behind the rest of the state. Socially, the changes wrought by Reconstruction were largely rolled back in the 1870s, although the state government allowed the county to police itself with white sheriffs while

Blacks served as elected officials. Eventually, however, state-enforced Jim Crow legislation and lynchings began to describe a grim world for African American citizens.

Arrival of a railroad in 1880 provided an important connection to the wider world. Monticello Bank, the town's first, opened in 1887, at the same time that the foundations of the Arkansas Baptist Home for Children were laid. The downtown, anchored by the McCloy & Trotter Mercantile & Grocery, prospered. By 1900, the city's population had grown to nearly 1,600, and its physical presence had expanded to Pope Street in the north and Bolling in the south, with Edgewood on the West and Pine and Cooper the boundaries on the east.



1900 City Limits

With the coming of the twentieth century, a number of cotton and stave mills opened in Monticello which, along with canning plants and other businesses, attracted many new residents, nearly doubling the city's population by 1930. Economic growth and resulting in-migration continued, even as the rest of the nation endured the Great Depression. By the middle of the century, Monticello's population had tripled to 4,500 and city boundaries had almost reached their current limits. The Fourth District State Agricultural School, established in 1910, had grown with fits and starts into Arkansas A&M in 1925. The Vera Lloyd Presbyterian Home opened in 1924. The new 1932 county court house and the 1934 municipal building signaled growing vitality and regional significance for the city.

Socially, the 1920s saw a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan nationally with Arkansas as a center of activity. In Monticello, the local chapter of the Klan was led by the white city leaders, including clergy, politicians, sheriffs, and county judges. Although this iteration of the Klan was focused on

temperance, its very presence evinced the ongoing and pervasive influence of Jim Crow.

After World War II, economic growth continued, especially after 1960 with new factories and mills, including the Burlington mills, the J.P. Price Lumber Company, Akin Industries, a Coca Cola bottling plant, the Drew Cotton Seed Oil Mill (later Drew Foam), and two boat manufacturers. A&M College joined the University of Arkansas System in 1971, giving it much needed financial stability. The years 1960 to 1980 saw the city's population nearly double to 8,300.

In the 1990s, the commercial center of the city shifted abruptly to the west when the new Walmart Supercenter was built and the North Park Village Shopping Center drew business away from the downtown and the Gaines/McCloy/Highway 278 corridor and over to the northwest 425 corridor. New neighborhoods, miles from downtown, grew up in the northern and northwestern sections of the city.

From the Past into the Future: Trends and Challenges

The twenty-first century has seen a mixture of growth in some areas and stagnation in others, with plenty of challenges for the city. UAM's enrollment that briefly surged to almost 3,000 has been subsiding. Downtown businesses have struggled, most unsuccessfully, as the town's business center had by 2000 clearly moved to the 425 corridor. Especially devastating was the closing of the Burlington Mills, throwing hundreds of Monticello residents out of work, and turning a large part of the city into empty factories. Likewise, the closing of the bottling plant and other mills hit the city hard.

To replace some of these large employers, the Monticello Economic Development Commission has worked diligently, recruiting a variety of large and small industries. Some of Burlington's facilities have been used by War Eagle Boats and Hood Packaging. A number of companies now participate in the region's lumber industry: just to the south of the city, the Price Company and Interfor operate significant plants. Farther south, Maxwell Flooring, helps process raw materials.

Monticello for decades was a center for boat-making, and while this industry has become smaller, existing plants like War Eagle continue to provide a market for smaller businesses, such as Fastenal and Drew Foam, and supports suppliers such as Barton's and Baker's.

Finally, while downtown storefronts in many towns are boarded up, Monticello's downtown remains vibrant. Union and Commercial Banks anchor two of the four sides of the square, but a restaurant and other shops attract consumers. The importance of the presence of the Ridgeway can hardly be overstated: a \$5.2 million renovation project now provides apartments for seniors.

Moving into the second quarter of the new century, Monticello faces several challenges:

Infrastructure: The city's century-old water and sewer system is in desperate need of replacing. Neighborhoods too frequently experience lack of water because of broken water mains, and a storm in the winter of 2021 led to ruptured pipes and a lengthy boil order for much of the city. Leaks happen weekly and sometimes daily. Complaints from residents about water with questionable color or taste are heard by not only neighbors but by potential future residents. As one participant put it in a Public Forum, "Unless we get this infrastructure fixed, nothing else will matter!" Updates and enhancements to infrastructure, including water, natural gas, electricity, and wireless, will be very important in the ongoing competition for businesses.

A secondary challenge is that connecting city utilities and services to building projects outside the city limits has severely strained capacity, and a renewed push to encourage development within city limits will require some imagination and investment.

Finally, and also seriously, comprehensive and reliable wireless communication, including telephone service, has been a significant challenge, and Southeast Arkansas has lagged behind most of the rest of Arkansas. Recent statewide efforts using Covid Relief funds may improve things.

Population: The 2020 Federal Census has dealt heavy blows to cities and counties across Southern Arkansas. Monticello had stood out in Southern and Eastern Arkansas because its numbers had been climbing steadily or holding steady. But the 2020 official population count – and however flawed it may have been, it is still official – was almost eleven percent lower than the 2010 number. Drew County, despite homes built around the outskirts of the city, is also losing population, with non-Monticello population having decreased by seven percent since 2000.

An aging population, without new sources of natural or migration growth, challenges the school systems' enrollment and local businesses. Filling vacated slots in businesses becomes challenging owing to a lack of qualified labor.

Education: Having UAM placed near the city provides an inestimable benefit for Monticello residents, both in terms of providing the opportunity for a college education as well as employment for hundreds of people. While Monticello residents are proud of their two public school systems, the fact remains that maintaining two complete systems, located barely a mile apart, results in a significant duplication of effort and, probably, unnecessary spending of tax dollars. There has been talk of merging the systems for decades, but in all likelihood nothing short of a recognized crisis will actually prompt action.

Employment: Regionally, health care and social services has become the largest employment sector, with manufacturing dropping to second. Agriculture/forestry, transportation, and warehousing are also significant, but employment in those sectors has been slowly decreasing. UAM's recent initiatives in expanding its Forestry outreach may help reverse that trend. Attracting new businesses was the top concern listed by respondents to the January 2021 community survey.

For some decades, UAM has been the largest employer in the Monticello area, but Walmart and the Drew Memorial Health System have become major employers, also. The companies with the most employees in Monticello are:

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| UAM: | 392 |
| Drew Memorial Hospital: | 365 |
| Monticello School District: | 325 |
| Maxwell Hardwood: | 172 |
| Hood Packaging: | 153 |
| Advantages of SE Arkansas: | 150 |
| Drew Central: | 142 |
| SeaArk Boats: | 140 |
| Walmart: | 127 |
| Interfor: | 120 |
| Foam Holdings: | 117 |

| | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| War Eagle Boats: | 86 |
| City of Monticello: | 85 |
| Union Bank: | 46 |
| Commercial Bank: | 40 |
| Centers for Youth & Families: | 40 |
| enviraPAC: | 30 |

Income

Regionally, median household income is \$42,285, significantly lower than national averages. The area's poverty rate of 21.2% is 50% above the nation as a whole, and our disability rate is almost double the national rate. On a positive note, the area's cost of living is only 83% that of the U.S.

Housing

A lack of available housing in general has become a growing concern over the past several years and is now a nationwide crisis. Affordable housing for new buyers or renters looking to buy has become all but nonexistent. This challenge ranked high in the 2021 Community Survey and in the 2022 open forums. The participants in the UCA Center for Community & Economic Development (CCED) Advanced Year Report pointed out a number of times the lack of rental housing and the need for smaller houses, especially for young families.

Sprawl

New houses have been springing up in developments in the county, often a few miles outside of the city limits. Meanwhile, empty lots remain around the Downtown.

Transportation

Busy Highway 278, bisecting the downtown, challenges the walkability of the area. The June 2021 Downtown Walk Audit noted that the downtown square is very auto-centric: the shape of the Square itself is rounded off to allow cars to make faster turns, and crosswalks into the square are dangerous for several reasons. Opportunities and safety for cyclists and pedestrians ranked high in both the Community Survey and in the Open Forums, and the June 2021 Walk Audit Report listed a number of actionable ideas for safety in the Downtown. The CCED Advanced Year Report talked about both pedestrian

safety and developing a “complete streets” system of sidewalks and connectivity.

2.2 STUDIES AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

As it initiated the planning process, the Planning Commission was able to use a variety of strategies to elicit input from residents of Monticello and Drew County, as noted above. From the CCED surveys, the public forums, and the other sources of input, several key themes emerged:

Infrastructure: The problems of the city’s almost decrepit water and wastewater systems are painfully obvious, and resolving them is a primary theme that resounded time and again in the CCED studies and the public forums

Downtown Development: Monticello residents recognize the special value of the downtown, and especially the square. Enhancing this area for small businesses, tourism, and community events was often mentioned in forums, and was one of the top concerns in the Community Survey. Likewise, the CCED Final Year report emphasized the potential value of enhancing the appearance of businesses with facades, murals, and streetscaping.

Bicycle Paths and Trails: Providing a safe way for residents, and especially children, to get around the city was a frequent request. Linking up to the planned trail system around Lake Monticello would provide benefits in terms of healthy activity as well as connecting the Lake to city greenways and neighborhoods. Eventual linkage of Monticello’s trail system with the trails of other towns and the Delta Heritage Trail will strengthen regional tourism as well as boost the city’s economy, as such linkages have proven in Northwest Arkansas and the Little Rock area.

2.3 FORM-BASED CODE: A City Plan Without Zoning?

Monticello may be the only large city in Arkansas without a formal zoning code, and yet the city looks like most other cities. This suggests, as many communities nationwide are now realizing, that zoning may not work

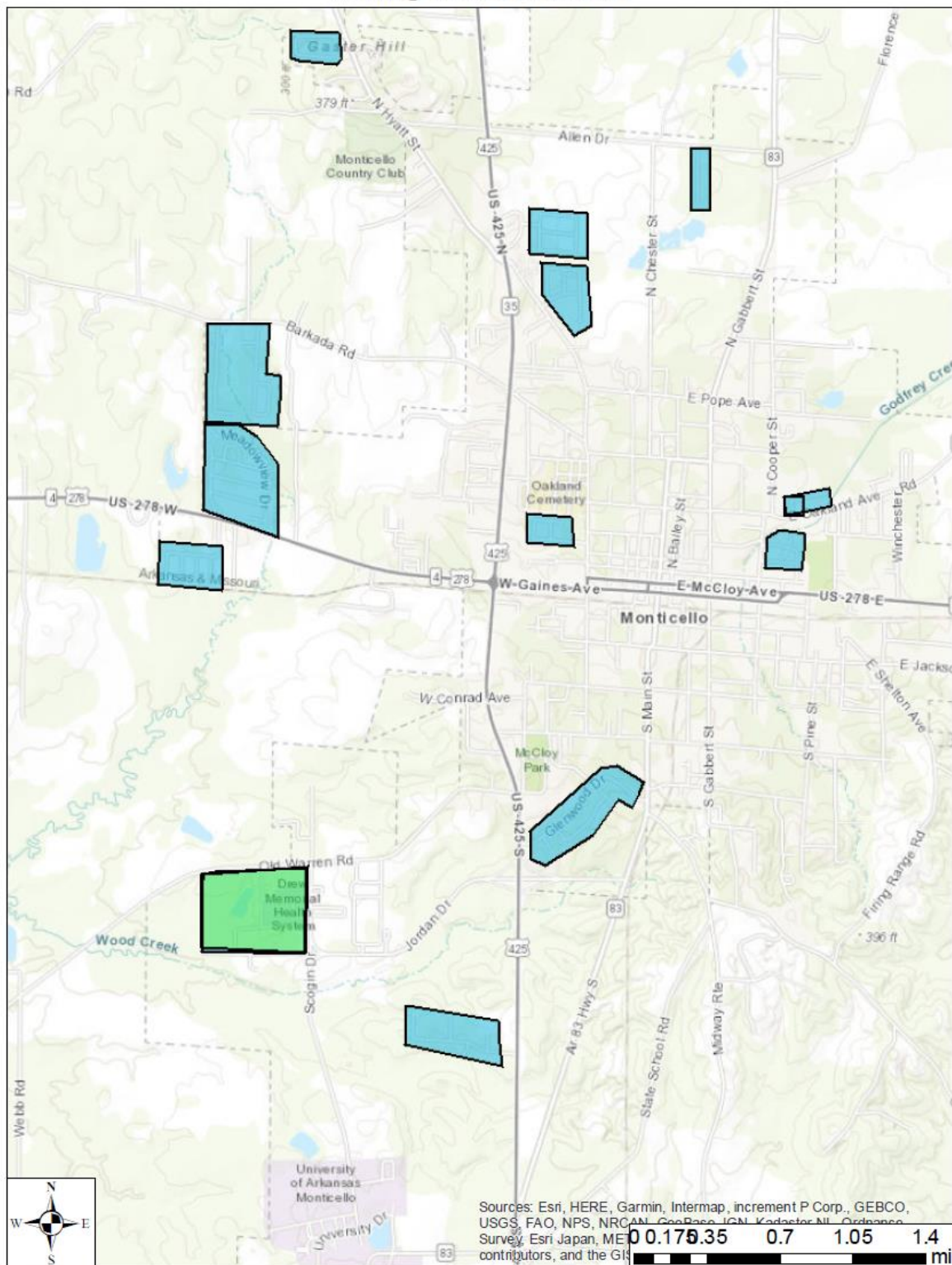
especially well for cities in general, and that Monticello can envision a future without introducing additional zoning.

Why not zoning?

Conventional zoning arose in the twentieth century as a way to protect property values by separating the ways that land was used. Housing (usually single-family housing) was separated from commercial areas which were separated from industrial areas. Across the nation, this resulted in low-density development, sometimes called sprawl. Besides consuming a great deal of land, this resulted in an explosion of residential areas in which it was no longer possible to walk to a shop for a gallon of milk or to the library for a book. And this in turn led to dependence on the automobile, which created busier roads which were no longer safe for pedestrians or bicyclists.

Even without formal zoning, similar effects in Monticello are seen in neighborhoods such as Vivian Manor, Northgate, and Western Pines. The city has established one zone that encompasses the medical and educational areas in the city's southwestern quadrant. Existing covenants and the zone are shown on the following map.

Zoning and Covenants



But Monticello is more fortunate than many cities in still having an active downtown square and older neighborhoods with sidewalks and even grocery stores.

How can we preserve those neighborhoods, increase economic vitality for the city, and create a healthier place to live? In this plan, we will advocate for another kind of planning, called a Form-Based Code. A form-based code focuses on how development relates to the context of the surrounding community, including the relationships between buildings and streets, pedestrians and vehicles, and public and private spaces. A form-based code can also:

- Encourage a mix of housing types.
- Promote a mix of land uses, helping to reduce the need to travel extensively for daily activities.
- Focus on what the community wants, not what it dislikes.
- Encourage “infill,” increasing densities and enhancing walkable neighborhoods.
- Emphasize site design and building form.
- Help nurture the character of Monticello, helping strengthen our sense of place.
- Provide information that is easier to use than most zoning codes, with pictures preferred over texts, and which can speed up the design and approval process.

While maintaining existing covenants and the educational-medical zone, the rest of the city can develop in a more holistic and organic way using Form-Based code.

The following plan will be designed to maintain and strengthen the best aspects of Monticello as we move toward 2050.

THREE: GOALS AND POLICIES

The following goals and policies help direct action within the plan. These goals aid with the actualization of the vision and provide a framework for decision-making by the Planning Commission and City Council.

3.1: Infrastructure:

A widely and deeply felt need to update Monticello's infrastructure became clear in public meetings. Reliable and safe infrastructure, including water, electricity, and internet is essential for Monticello's very existence. Potential businesses and residents will not consider locating in a city unless these are available in sufficient quantity and quality. All other community improvements build upon the availability of basic services.

Similarly, problems with drainage have been obvious for many years, and these were raised in the public forums for a number of neighborhoods. The Downtown Walk Audit recommended a drainage study for the downtown. Piecemeal attempts to correct the problem have been of minimal use, and City Council in the Spring of 2022 approved moving ahead with a systematic approach to improving citywide drainage.

Goal 1.A: Update, replacing as necessary, the city's Water and Wastewater System.

Policy 1.A.1 Follow – with modifications as needed – the fifteen-year plan by McClelland Consulting Engineers for the improvement of the city's water treatment, storage, and distribution.

Policy 1.A.2 Follow – with modifications as needed – the McClelland plan for improvement of the city's wastewater collection, treatment, and pumping facilities.

Goal 1.B: Adequately address issues of drainage and flood hazards.

Policy 1.B.1 Having adopted, continue to use as a guide the fifteen-year plan by McClelland for ameliorating the city's drainage problems.

Policy 1.B.2 Ensure that future developments adequately address drainage to ensure new drainage problems are not created.

Policy 1.B.3 Promote the use of green infrastructure as a way to work with the environment to prevent localized flooding risks and drainage problems.

Policy 1.B.4 Provide regulations that ensure drainage issues caused by development are properly mitigated.

3.2: Quality of Life / Recreation

Quality of life and recreational amenities for a city are important for community health in the 21st century. Today, people are moving to the place

they want to live and then looking for a job. Some of the top recommendations of the CCED Survey included "Youth and Family Activities," "Bike and Walking Trails," and a "Community Center." To remain competitive in retaining our talented youth and in attracting growth, it is essential that Monticello provide competitive quality-of-life amenities for its residents.

Goal 2.A: Implement a green network for the City of Monticello.

Monticello already has a good park system. We can connect all parks, schools, and large commercial areas through bike and pedestrian infrastructure to improve accessibility of amenities. A connected network of green spaces, including parks, tree-lined streets, undeveloped road corridors, and hillsides should be protected and developed for recreation and as an alternative pedestrian network.

Policy 2.A.1 Develop a pedestrian and bicycle trail network throughout the city, connecting city sectors. Linking the Downtown to the developing trail network at Lake Monticello, to the Sports Complex, and to the public schools and UAM will be key for both recreation and health. The value of properties along these trails will, as they have in other cities, surge.

Policy 2.A.2 Promote conservation development with residential clustering and use of conservation easements.

Goal 2.B Continue to develop plans, support, and funding for a Community Center.

Goal 2.C Encourage community institutions to provide festivals and programming that enhances quality of life.

Policy 2.C.1 Pursue partnerships with community institutions to provide cultural programming that can have a city-wide benefit.

Policy 2.C.2 Support City recreation programs in addition to community recreation programs.

Goal 2.D Implement watershed protection measures and best management practices for riparian corridors

Goal 2.E Implement recommendations from Downtown Walk Audit

Policy 2.E.1 Conduct a Streetscape Analysis and Enhancement in order to improve and coordinate pedestrian movement, appropriate street furnishings, and other amenities to enhance the atmosphere of the square and for local businesses.

Policy 2.E.2 Analyze accessibility in compliance with ADA standards, to improve sidewalks and handicap parking. This can be done in coordination with improvements to grading and drainage.

Policy 2.E.3. Consider and install as appropriate curb extensions and other traffic furniture to reduce traffic speed and enhance safety downtown.

3.3: Transportation

Transportation was identified in both public sessions and CCED sessions as a serious concern. Automobile traffic patterns need to be restructured for safety, while safe routes for pedestrians and bicycles need to be designed. Connectivity to parks, sports facilities, and Lake Monticello are essential.

Goal 3.A. Enhance transportation networks' connectivity between all city sectors.

Neighborhoods and city sections should connect with adjacent development to avoid the "cul-de-sacing" of the city. Higher connectivity facilitates greater pedestrian activity and improves general efficiency in the transportation network. Connectivity of the Downtown to UAM was noted as a recommendation in the Walk Audit.

Goal 3.B Focus transportation infrastructure investments on corridors that will relieve traffic and improve connectivity.

Policy 3.B.1. New developments must provide for the interconnection of existing and proposed streets to permit the orderly expansion of the city's transportation system.

Policy 3.B.2. New developments adjacent to or encompassing existing streets shall be responsible for construction of half-street improvements to those streets. Those improvements will be consistent with the functional classification reflected in this plan, the city's construction standards, and all other applicable standards.

Policy 3.B.3 Where new developments are adjacent to or

encompass arterial streets controlled by the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ArDOT), half-street improvements shall meet the functional classification shown on the Master Street Plan or as determined by agreement between the developer, the ArDOT, and the city.

Policy 3.B.4 Strip commercial developments are discouraged and may be subject to access limitations. The city encourages commercial developments to provide their own internal streets and drives for direct access to individual parcels.

Policy 3.B.5 Disallow limited access in new residential and commercial development. Planned developments should include multiple points of access on all sides. The downtown grid is a good example of a sector with maximum connectivity and choice in travel mode and direction.

Policy 3.B.6 Avoid channeling local traffic trips to arterial roads, which creates congestion.

GOAL 3.C: Provide a transportation system that is equitable and benefits all residents.

Policy 3.C.1 The city will develop a bike and pedestrian transportation system that will consider the mobility and safety needs of a variety of users including children, seniors, active adults, and the physically challenged.

Policy 3.C.2 Bike and pedestrian facilities will be constructed as part of all new development and transportation facilities according to the provisions of this plan.

Policy 3.C.3 Bike users and pedestrians will be given consideration in the planning and design of all transportation facilities within the Planning Area.

Policy 3.C.4 The city will carefully monitor mobility and access options for citizens with disabilities when reviewing development proposals.

Policy 3.C.5 Utilize context-sensitive roadway design approaches to ensure roadways are appropriate for the function of the supporting land use.

Policy 3.C.6 Streets should be planned or improved with multiple levels of transit service including sidewalks, bicycle paths, parking, street

trees, and stormwater facilities. Streets should be memorable and safe public spaces.

Policy 3.C.7 Ensure future street improvements adequately provide for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers by including sidewalks and trails where appropriate.

GOAL 3.D: Utilize access management to preserve the function of existing and future corridors.

Policy 3.D.1 Access-management principles shall be incorporated into the city's land-use regulations.

Policy 3.D.2 Access points for individual properties fronting collector, minor arterial, and major arterial streets shall be kept to a minimum to facilitate traffic movement, reduce crashes and fatalities, and to increase market area for local businesses. Keeping access points to a minimum may be achieved through driveway consolidation, joint-access agreements, or specific corridor access management plans.

Policy 3.D.3 City staff and the Planning Commission shall include considerations of access management in the review of all development plans or requests.

GOAL 3.E: Conduct Main Street Corridor Plan

Policy 3.E.1 As Highway 83 is turned over to the City, analyze Main Street as the primary linkage between downtown and UAM.

Policy 3.E.2 Include a Downtown Master Plan as part of the city's Street Plan, to consider the efficient and safe movement of through traffic on Highway 278.

3.4: Affordable Housing

As is happening nationwide, ready access to affordable housing is disappearing. Young people will not stay in Monticello if they cannot find a place to live, and no one will move here if they cannot afford a residence. This was noted in the CCED Advanced Year Report as a primary roadblock for families looking to settle in Monticello. Infill and policies to encourage new housing will be critical.

Goal 4.A Facilitate a Mix of Housing Opportunities in all sectors of Monticello:

The city should encourage a mix of residential unit and lot sizes to accommodate various income groups in all neighborhoods. Housing mix increases developer profit from efficient land use and enhances neighborhood diversity. This increases neighborhood choice for all income groups and helps maintain an affordable housing market.

Goal 4.B Encourage Housing Infill within the City

Policy 4.B.1 Provide incentives to developers for infill redevelopment. Make land in and around the downtown readily available for redevelopment, thus reducing the developers' cost to implement infill development.

Policy 4.B.2 Create a non-profit affordable housing development corporation to leverage state and federal funds for infill development.

Policy 4.B.3 Enhance interconnectivity between existing neighborhoods supportive of pedestrians as part of the mobility mix. Traffic planning should be secondary to neighborhood-based planning.

3.5: Community Identity and Image

5.A. Implement neighborhood plans with a mix of land uses.

Good neighborhoods are the backbone of Monticello. We should commit to enriching our neighborhoods through a combination of public and private investments.

Policy 5.A.1 Incentivize development of downtown amenities including safety, convenient shopping, and a mix of land uses.

Policy 5.A.2 Develop commercial land uses in tandem with residential and employment-based land uses.

Policy 5.A.3 Avoid clustering affordable housing in one location, always seeking a mix of land uses, including civic spaces such as parks.

5.B Continue to develop the Downtown as a major resource

In all public forums and community surveys, the value of the Downtown Square was prominent as a much-loved source of pride for

the community. The June 2021 Downtown Walk Audit acknowledged its “charm and character,” and offered many very specific recommendations to strengthen the area.

Policy 5.B.1 Develop a plan for rejuvenating the downtown using the Walk Audit recommendations. These include:

- a Main Street Corridor Plan
- a downtown drainage study
- streetscape planning
- a better system of pedestrian crossing
- improved sidewalks

3.6: Growth Management and Fiscal Health

Goal 6.A Adopt infill and compact redevelopment in all sectors of Monticello.

The city should commit to no further expansion of city service boundaries. We should encourage infill and compact development, allowing us to utilize already existing infrastructure while creating richer neighborhoods.

Policy 6.A.1 Redevelop single-use commercial and big-box retail sectors as mixed-use neighborhoods with housing, recreational, and civic land uses.

Policy 6.A.2 Develop neighborhoods at the edge of existing schools.

Policy 6.A.3 Encourage a variety of housing options in the Downtown area, especially market-rate housing, through infill development.

Policy 6.A.4 Encourage development in areas already served by city services, where service provision is most cost-effective.

Policy 6.A.5 Encourage development that is compatible with the natural and built environment of the surrounding area.

Policy 6.A.6 Encourage development that creates long-term community value and adapts well for future re-use.

Policy 6.A.7 Promote development that builds the city’s tax base and generates enough tax revenue to pay for the life-cycle costs of its supporting infrastructure.

Policy 6.A.8 Promote mixed-use development that combines commercial, residential, and office functions in the same building.

Policy 6.A.9 Promote compatible infill development within existing neighborhoods.

Policy 6.A.10 Encourage new neighborhoods that are planned to

combine a variety of design elements, uses, densities, housing options, and amenities.

Policy 6.A.11 Establish standards for high-quality design of multi-family housing.

Goal 6.B: Coordinate growth and utilities in the most efficient and effective manner.

It will be vital to control the extension or provision of utilities in order to carry out the provisions of this plan.

Policy 6.B.1 Ensure that no approved development will result in a reduction in the adopted level of service for public infrastructure.

Policy 6.B.2 Ensure new developments locate where they can be accommodated by existing public infrastructure.

Policy 6.B.3 Require all developments within the Planning Area Boundary to be served by central water and wastewater services, when technically feasible.

Policy 6.B.4 Require all developments to install public utilities and agree to annexation as a condition of tying onto city utilities.

Policy 6.B.5 Encourage development to occur where it can be supported by the transportation and utility infrastructure.

Policy 6.B.6 Prioritize the maintenance of existing utility and transportation infrastructure over the expansion of new facilities.

Policy 6.B.7 Promote development patterns, such as mixed-use development, that yield higher tax revenue per acre.

Policy 6.B.8 Ensure local tax policies provide adequate revenue to meet the city's ongoing liabilities.

Goal 6.C: Adopt, maintain, and use Monticello 2050 as the city's comprehensive plan.

Policy 6.C.1 The Planning Commission will conduct annual reviews of its comprehensive plan and land-use regulations to ensure they remain applicable and up-to-date.

Policy 6.C.2 The city's land-use regulations will be consistent with and designed to carry out the provisions of the comprehensive plan.

Policy 6.C.3 Development proposals will be evaluated in terms of their compatibility with the comprehensive plan.

Policy 6.C.4 All amendments to the city's land-use regulations must conform to the comprehensive plan.

Goal 6.D: Enhance the city's land-use regulations and development review process.

Policy 6.D.1 Provide and carry out land-use and building regulations that protect the health, safety, welfare, and aesthetics of the community.

Policy 6.D.2 Promote the use of land-use tools that allow flexibility in site design and layout for innovative developments.

Policy 6.D.3 Support policies that allow the construction of a variety of housing types and price ranges to meet the needs of residents of all ages and incomes.

Policy 6.D.4 Provide timely and efficient review of development proposals.

Policy 6.D.5 Provide fair, consistent, and transparent review and evaluation of all development proposals.

Policy 6.D.6 Ensure that development review is conducted in ways that evaluate external impacts of development upon adjacent properties.

Policy 6.D.7 Ensure that the Planning Commission is representative of the entire community.

Goal 6.E Enforce City Codes

Policy 6.E.1 Use city resources to enforce the city's regulations.

Policy 6.E.2 Focus code enforcement efforts on neighborhoods where blighting influences could serve to destabilize property values.

Policy 6.E.3 Use a collaborative approach with property owners in addressing code enforcement violations by helping property owners in need identify resources to assist them.

Policy 6.E.4 Use the provisions of Arkansas law such as the "City Cleanup Tools" Act and other laws to address nuisances and unsightly, unsafe, and unsanitary conditions on private property.

Monticello Community Survey Results

Monticello Community Catalyst



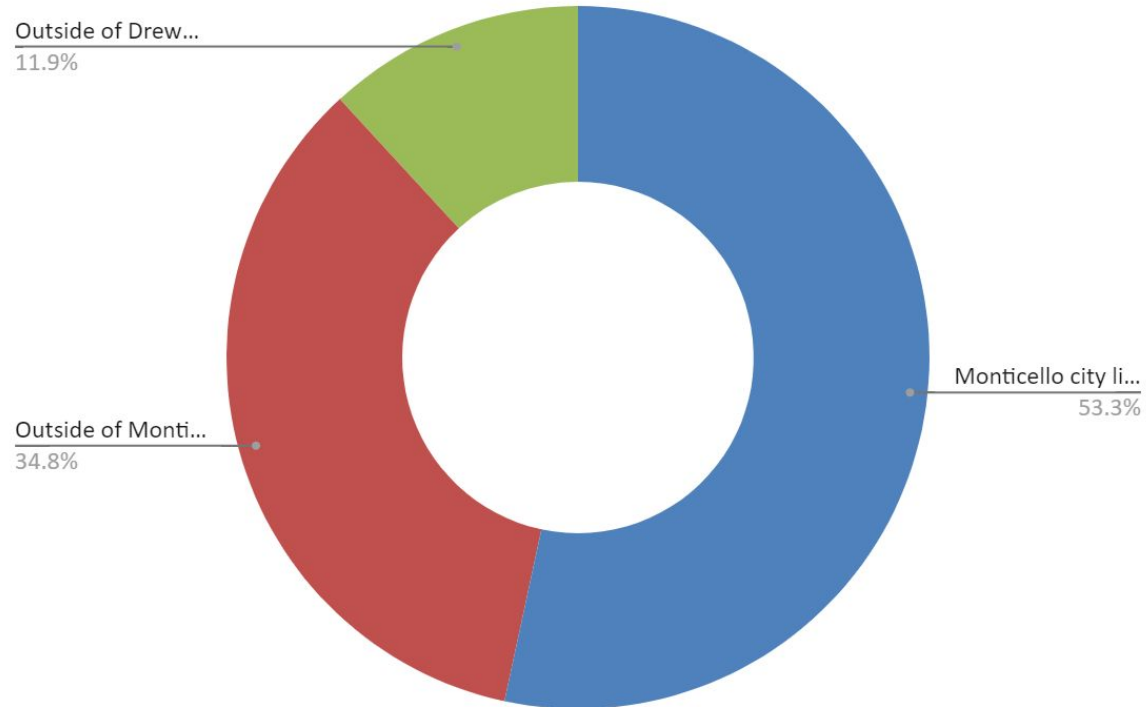
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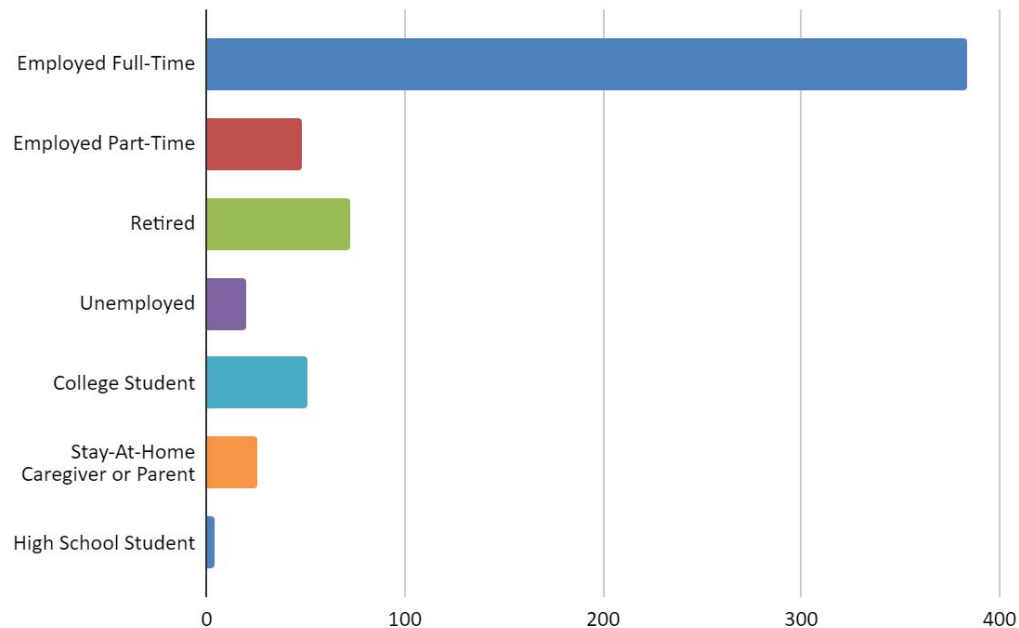
Monticello Community Survey Overview

- Survey window: January 4 to January 22, 2021
- **525 citizen responses**
- Survey received a diverse representation of ages, employment/student status, employment industry, and residential status that represent the larger Monticello community

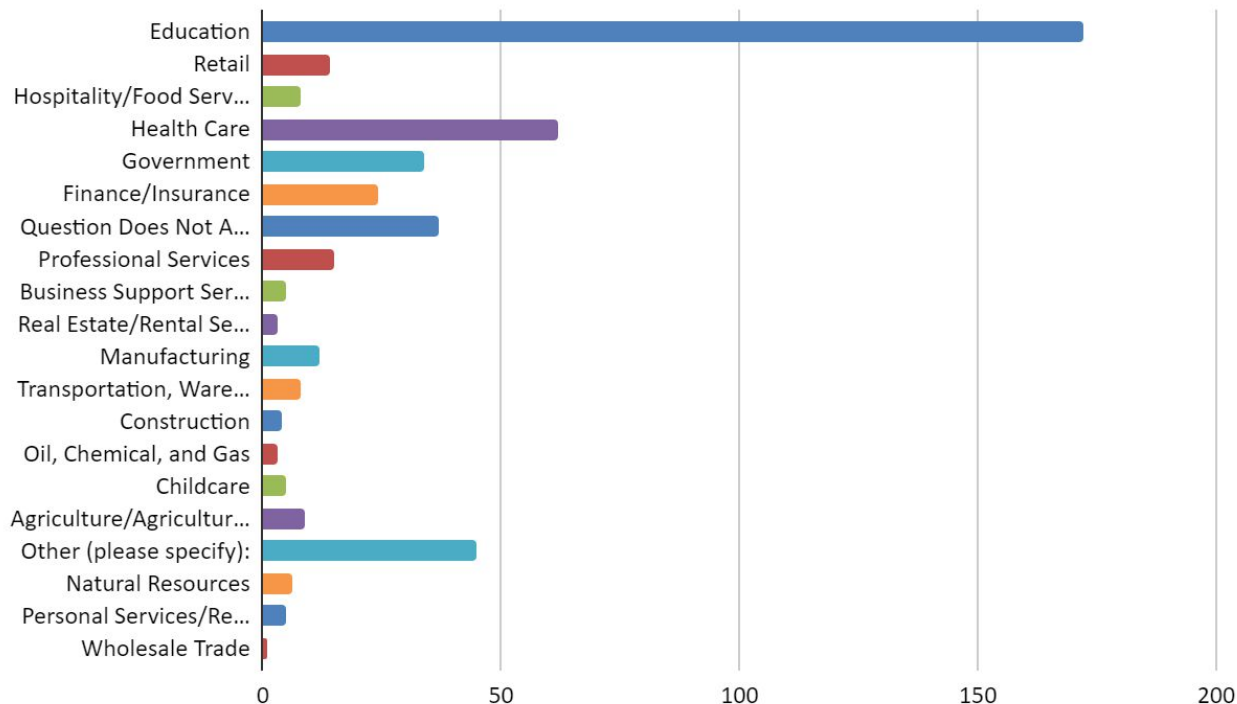
Residence of Respondents



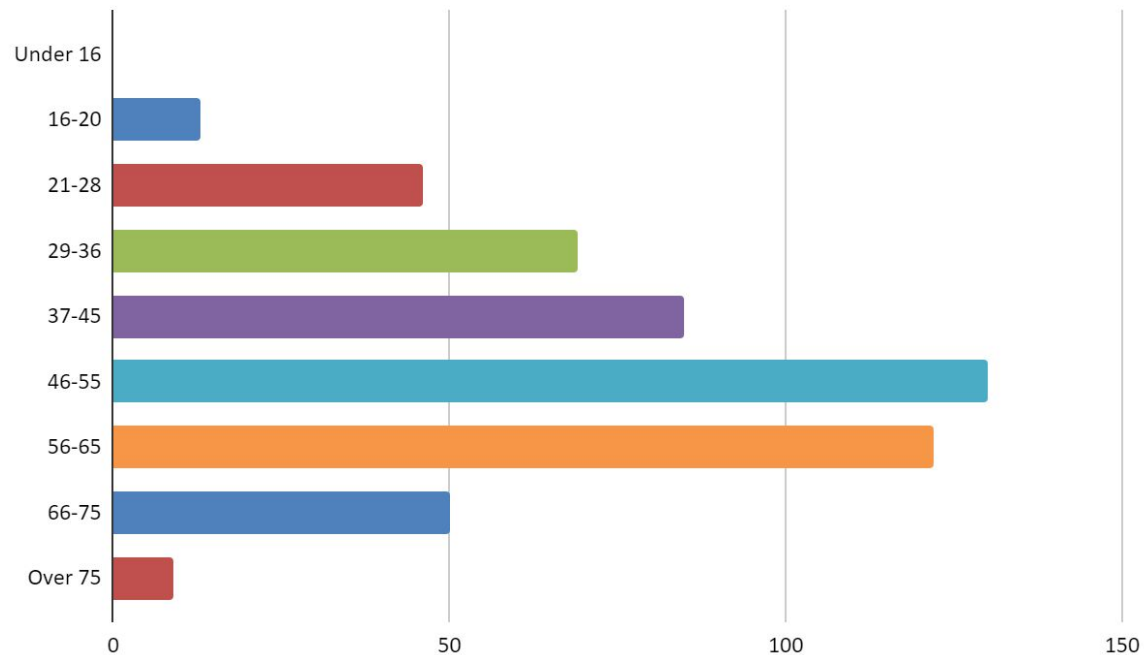
Employment/Student Status



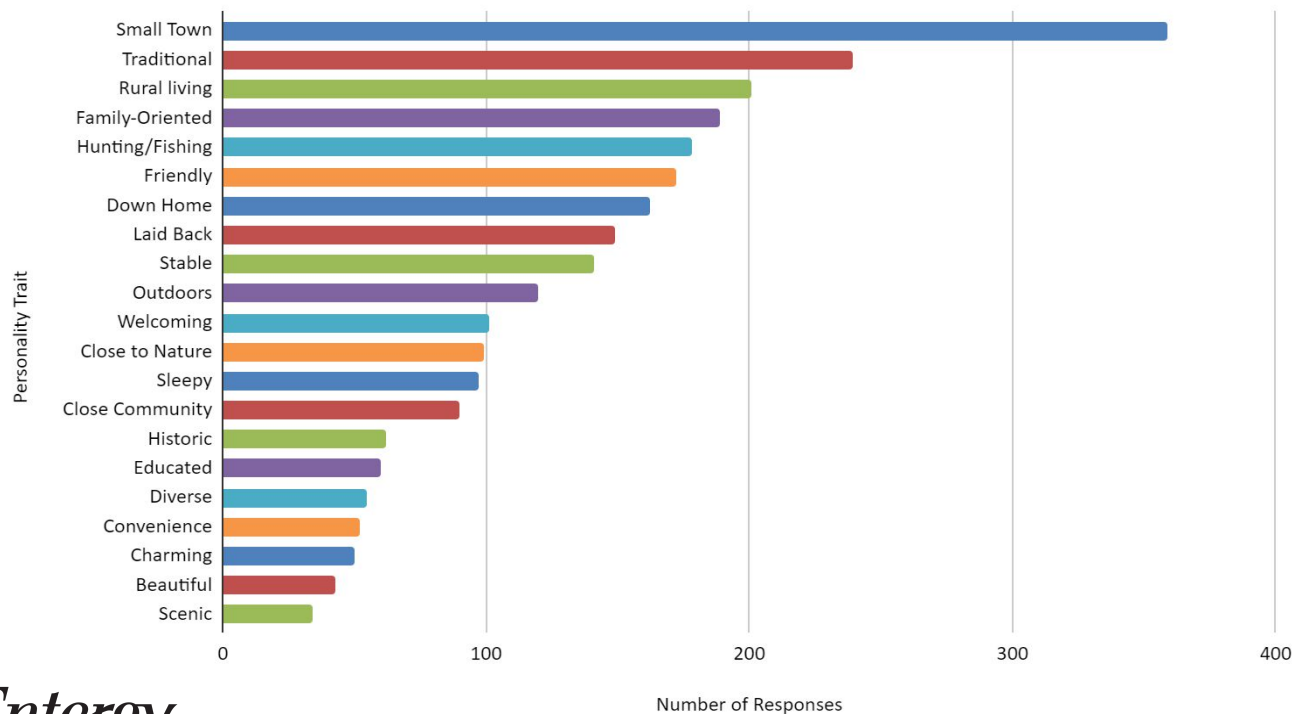
Industry Representation



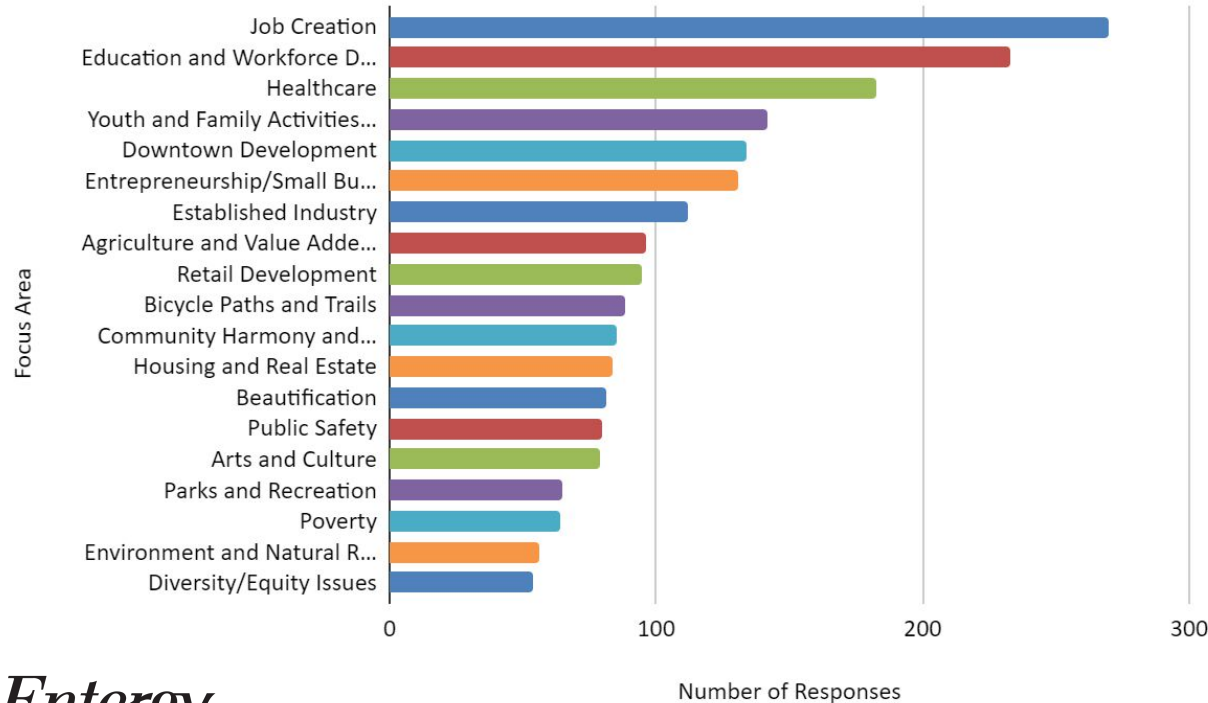
Age Range of Respondents



Community Personality



Focus Areas



Top Projects and Opportunities

1. **Attracting Business and Industry:** Respondents voiced a desire for more industry and retail businesses in hopes of bringing more jobs. Respondents also mentioned a desire for a better variety of restaurants and stronger support of existing small businesses.
2. **Youth and Family Activities:** There was an expressed need for more kid friendly activities including the ideas of an arcade, minigolf, festivals, and a community theater.
3. **Bike and Walking Trails:** Respondents mentioned bike and walking trails to encourage exercising. Trails would also be another activity for children and families to participate in.
4. **Lake Monticello:** Respondents shared the need to restore Lake Monticello. The lake could be a great place for outdoor recreation and contribute to the beautification of the town as well.
5. **Community Center:** Respondents mentioned a need for a community center for community education and recreation. Mentioned potential for an indoor basketball court and pool.

Top Projects and Opportunities Word Cloud

services Small business Work focus schools around activities make local downtown county
maintenance Job creation existing UAM public transportation places love see new larger
healthcare recreation streets repair shopping nice things available build drive
retail stores job opportunities public family Downtown development
people go businesses well opportunities open
industry Zoning city also jobs park Better create
need use community come town entertainment
Monticello support area state Bring arts restaurants
new industries housing living lake attract development hospital
education Fix roads help etc s youth keep Clean children kids walking trails
Lake Monticello see improved events square Recreational Beautification training
options affordable improvements including infrastructure Community Center sidewalks
community events festival Increased

Next Steps

- **Monticello has been chosen as the Community Development Institute (CDI) 2021 Advanced Year community.**
 - CDI graduates will utilize the First Impressions Tour (FIT) assessment tool to provide your community with an unbiased perspective of its strengths and weaknesses during the week of August 2 - 6, 2021
 - More details on how you can be involved in the CDI Advanced Year are coming soon
 - This program is conducted in partnership with Simmons Bank
- **UCA and Crafton Tull will conduct a walk audit in Monticello.**
 - Crafton Tull and UCA will conduct an interactive walk audit with community leaders to develop placemaking concepts and solutions for circulation (vehicular, pedestrian and bike), parking, universal access, low impact development concepts, wayfinding, beautification and community character improvement for a 3 x 3 block area of Monticello
 - A summary report of findings will be shared with the community
- **We plan to utilize a process called Strategic Doing to move the Community Catalyst process forward.**
 - Strategic Doing is an innovative community development tool that focuses on immediate, impactful small wins and goals to create transformation in communities
 - We hope to host a Strategic Doing workshop when we can meet safely in-person

Questions?



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MONTICELLO WALK AUDIT

Held on June 3, 2021

TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM



Provided by University of Central Arkansas
Center for Community & Economic Development



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COMMUNITY
& ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

Prepared by Dave Roberts, Crafton Tull



Crafton Tull

Introduction

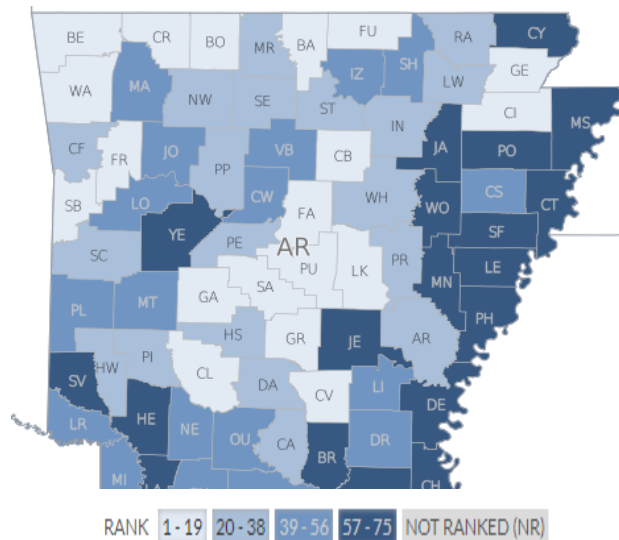
Why do a walk audit?

Also called a walkshop, this site meeting is a review of walking (and biking) conditions along a specific street or area conducted with a diverse group of community members to identify conditions that either support or create barriers in the built environment with regards to livability and safety for the users. The following list are possible outcomes of a walkable and bikeable downtown:

- Community Character
- Economic Development
- Health
- Transportation
- Recreation
- Inclusion

With regard to health, each year the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation ranks counties in the country based on Health Factors and Health Outcomes. The following is information specific to Drew County:

<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/arkansas/2021/rankings/drew/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>



Walk audits are intended to educate and call attention to good design elements and some elements/issues that could use attention. The information in this technical memo will illustrate what was observed and provide possible solutions to the urban design issues that may require improvements.



Definition of Concepts

Active Transportation: Also known as non-motorized transportation, this includes walking, bicycling, skating, wheelchair use, skate boarding, scooters or other small wheel transport. Active modes of transportation offer a combination of recreation, exercise and transportation.



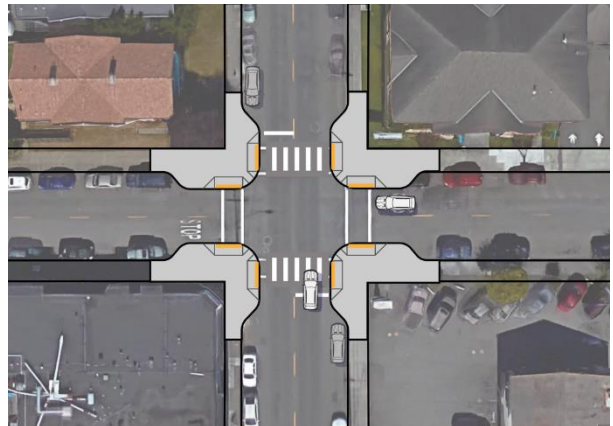
Accessible Route: A continuous unobstructed path connecting all accessible elements and spaces of a building or facility that meets the requirements of ADA (American Disabilities Act).

Arkansas Department of Transportation (ArDOT): The state agency that oversees all transportation planning, expansion and construction of vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian facilities along state roads in Arkansas.

Arterial Road: A major through route; arterials often provide direct service between cities and large towns.

Buffered Bike Lanes: On-road bike lanes that have striping or other physical barriers to separate the vehicular travel lane from the bicycle lane.

Bulb Out: Another term for a curb extension, which is a section of sidewalk at an intersection or midblock crossing that reduces the crossing width for pedestrians and can help reduce traffic speeds.



Corners in light gray depict curb extensions.

Change of Grade: An abrupt difference between the grade (elevation) of two adjacent surfaces.

Complete Streets: Roads that provide dedicated spaces for all modes of transportation. Complete Streets are accessible, have vehicle speeds appropriate for the area, are comfortable for walking and biking and includes sidewalks, street trees and other amenities that make them feel “complete”

Connectivity: Strategic design to link or connect multiple modes of transportation within one multimodal network to ensure access for all. True connectivity includes vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian and transit (bus) in urban areas. US Department of Transportation's link on connectivity: <https://www.transportation.gov/mission/health/promoting-connectivity> .

Crosswalks: A designated location for pedestrians to safely cross across the flow of vehicular traffic. Crosswalks are typically found at intersections (see midblock crossing for the other location) and marked by repeating white lines to visually emphasize the walk zone.



Crosswalk example



Curb cut example

Curb Cut with Ramp: A small ramp built into the curb of a sidewalk to make it easier for people using strollers or wheelchairs to pass from the sidewalk to the crosswalk. ADA requirements mandate the use of truncated domes in a bright yellow strip to alert visually impaired pedestrians of the sidewalk edge.

Livability: In the context of community environments, livability refers to all the factors that add up to a community's quality of life – including the built and natural environments, economic prosperity, social stability and equality, educational opportunity, culture, entertainment and recreation possibilities.

Mid-block Crossing: A street crossing positioned in the middle of a block rather than at an intersection.

Multi-Use Path: A form of infrastructure that supports multiple recreation and transportation opportunities, such as walking, bicycling, inline skating and people in wheelchairs.



Mid-block crossing with a center lane pedestrian refuge

Pedestrian Refuge: A small section of sidewalk or island surrounded by asphalt or other road materials, where pedestrians can stop safely between lanes of traffic when crossing a road. This pause affords them the ability to look at one direction of traffic at a time.

Placemaking: The process of planning and designing public spaces that capitalizes on the uniqueness of a community, location or philosophy of a place. The way people live, work and play can shape the sense of place that may be contribute to a public's perception of the space. More on placemaking may be found at Project for Public Spaces:
<https://www.pps.org/category/placemaking>.

Sharrows: A “share-the-road” arrow marking, usually paint, placed in the center of the vehicular travel lane to alert motorists and bicyclists alike to the shared use of the lane. A graphic example of a sharrow is shown on the right.

Sidewalks: A paved path along the side of a road meant to accommodate pedestrian movement with moderate changes in grade (height) and is typically separated from the vehicular use by a curb and/or turf strip.

Universal Design: The design of products and environment to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible, regardless of age, sex, race, size or abilities. The term typically refers to barrier-free design for accessibility.



Sharrow example



Observations

Downtown Monticello general notes:

- Buildings are in good condition, possessing charm and character and the potential for further quality of life investment, such as murals.
- Sidewalks and pavement are broken in some places, and other tripping hazards such as drainage grates are in need of repair.
- Clearly visible crosswalks and additional handicap parking spaces are two of the downtown area's greatest needs.

Gaines Street at the Square

- Dilapidated sidewalks create tripping hazards. Weeds are growing in concrete cracks.
- The town Square was clearly designed for vehicle travel (for example the bank has a drive through window accessible from the square). Pedestrians are forced to cross a wide swaths of pavement to get to the square. The Square also has parking adjacent to it and islands that separate and inner slip lane for vehicles.
- Like several downtown spaces in small cities, there is an elevation change between the street and the sidewalk.
- There was no Handicap parking in the square.
- There was no wayfinding (for local college or other cultural stuff like farmer's market)
- Another piece of charm was the flag pole stands on the sidewalk in front of businesses. However, they were empty and not sure if they are routinely used. Some were broken.
- Hanging baskets all around the square were a nice feature.

Gaines and Main

- Highway 83 (Main Street) will be turned over to the City from the DOT
- The Department will make upgrades before giving it to the City. The City was advised to ask for crosswalks and anything else they may need.
- The City would like bikes lanes in other parts of town.
- Highway 83 connects to Highway 425 and eventually reaches the college. The City would like to make this connection with bike lanes. Sharrows are recommended if bike lanes aren't possible.
- There are many blank walls on side streets. Murals are recommended to bring more charm and visual interest.
- Flower pots were also placed around the square on the sidewalks in front of the businesses. Some had flowers and some did not.
- Coordinate with ARDOT for crosswalks where there are none on state highways.
- There is a short line railroad track south of town. Many pedestrians cross it.
- There are no merchant's associations in town. A downtown business association is encouraged.
- There is a midblock crossing between Gaines Street and the square. A pedestrian must stand too far out into the vehicle travel lane to watch and wait to cross.

Gaines and MLK

- Grated drainage in a depression in the pavement can be a tripping hazard or a hazard to someone in a wheeled device.
- Trees would be a good touch in the downtown area. Free trees from the forestry service was recommended.
- Near the curbs there was some sand in this area and water in the previous location indicating that there is water runoff and possibly some drainage issues.

Trotter and Main

- Torn roof awning at the street corner. Code enforcement was recommended. They can be effective with problems more so than the City simply asking for compliance.
- There is a Bed & Breakfast at this location. This could be a tourist draw. There are other large homes in the area. This has the potential to become a B&B District.
- There is a Church on the corner which may require too much parking real estate.
- Crosswalks needed in this area. It was recommended that the City have a crosswalk painting program. Do something fun with them and get some positive PR.
- This area also had utility poles in the sidewalks. It was suggested to ask that poles be relocated when the utility company changes or upgrades the poles.

Church and Trotter

- More dangerous grates, potential trip hazard.
- Sidewalks at this corner have no ramps.

MLK and Church

- Wide swaths of pavement dangerous for pedestrian crossing. For safe crossing peds should cross to the west (Church) then cross the street to the south (MLK).
- Businesses on the west side of the square do not have canopies.
- There is a midblock crossing done very well on this side of the square. It had drainage and grading with tactile surface for ADA safety.

Railroad Ave. from Church St. and Main St.

- The City needs to take advantage of any railroad abandonments despite homeowner's/landowners disapproval.

Recommendations

- ❖ **Streetscape:** Pedestrians benefit from a robust streetscape. The sidewalks in downtown Monticello are wide enough to accommodate pedestrian movement as well as some street furnishings like occasional benches, trash receptacles, bike racks and planters. These amenities provide comfort, visual interest and organization to the public spaces around the retail shops. The City should consider benches and other amenities that match in color and material to create a unified family of street furnishings.



- ❖ **Awnings:** Downtowns can greatly improve their overall image by asking the merchants to consider updating their storefront awnings to match other awnings (both material and colors). This improvement will create uniformity (color, shape and material) in the downtown area, beginning with those in need of repair at Trotter and Main. There are grants available to assist with the cost.

The USDA Rural Facilities Grant may assist with this: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services>.



- ❖ **Accessibility:** Not everyone using the sidewalks and crosswalks are able to walk under their own power. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has requirements that provide minimum standards in public spaces to accommodate all users. Attention should be paid to curb cuts with truncated domes (yellow textured pavers for the visually impaired), crosswalks, handrails where grade changes occur, sidewalk slopes and materials, etc. Likewise, accessible parking on city streets should be indicated by designated parking stalls with stripped off-load areas adjacent to the stall. Currently, there are no handicap parking spaces around the downtown square. Often, infrastructure improvements that address accessibility, may be combined with projects that solve grading and drainage issues. Sidewalks at the corner of Church and Trotter should have curb cuts added and walks with spaulding concrete should be resurfaced.



- ❖ **Sidewalks:** Walks should be well maintained and clear of trip hazards. All grade changes (cracks or uneven walk surfaces) should meet ADA codes for barrier-free access in the downtown built environment. Like many downtowns, Monticello has many areas where there is an abrupt drop between sidewalk and street. This includes stormwater inlets or utility covers that are lower than the surrounding grades.



- ❖ **Crosswalks:** Many of the downtown intersections either don't have crosswalks or the paint on the crosswalks is faded. Some of those roads are city streets but others are the State highways. During the walk audit, via the County Judge, we notified the ARDOT District Engineer a request for new crosswalk markings on State Hwy 278 (Gaines Ave). The city should follow up with ARDOT to find out when those are scheduled to be done. When talking with ARDOT – request that the speed limit in downtown be lowered to 25 mph. The logging trucks and other traffic in town drive too fast for pedestrian crossing safety. The City should also plan to paint new crosswalks on their streets on all downtown intersections using crossbars and side bars.



NACTO Urban Street Design Guide: <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/intersection-design-elements/crosswalks-and-crossings/conventional-crosswalks/>.

- ❖ **Curb Extensions:** All roads coming into the downtown square (McCloy, Church, Gaines and Main) are great candidates for roads that could utilize curb extensions to protect pedestrians crossing at intersections by reducing the amount of road they need to traverse. These 'bulb outs' will also provide protection to the adjacent parked cars as well. Curb extensions help to reduce traffic speeds by creating a visual narrowing that psychologically affects the driver's perception. Especially since the traffic that loops the square "park" does not stop.



- ❖ **Midblock Crossing:** The walk audit revealed that a midblock crossings between Church and Main to the downtown square should be considered, since the vehicular traffic doesn't stop driving around the square. A "Yield to Pedestrians" sign is also strongly recommended. This midblock crossing would then serve to slow traffic and provide safe crossing. There are currently two mid block crossings into the square on the east and west side of the center park.



- ❖ **Connectivity:** With Highway 83 being turned over to the City from ArDOT jurisdiction, there are many opportunities for improvement. With proper planning and collaboration, Main Street/Highway 83 could be the primary linkage between downtown and University of Arkansas at Monticello. At just under three miles, this stretch would be easily navigable on a future side path. Crosswalks at every pedestrian-navigated intersection should be repainted.



- ❖ **Placemaking:** Public art like murals and sculptures not only add interest to blank walls and spaces but act as a draw to pull people out of their cars and into the built environment. This will in turn encourage them to get a closer look and possibly stop at a retail shop or business while investigating. Public art also provides a unique community character that can lead to branding of a downtown (i.e. Fort Smith – The Unexpected program). Incorporating unique urban design elements will help ‘brand’ your



downtown that will help to attract visitors. A strong brand, (like capitalizing on the bed and breakfast opportunities you have on Main just blocks for the square) in connection with a walkable downtown, will support retail efforts of your downtown merchants, especially if they are willing to stay open past 5:00 certain evenings. Public murals are encouraged on the blank walls of side streets, such as at the corner of Main and Gaines.



- ❖ **Wayfinding & Signage:** Wayfinding is a way to direct visitors into downtown to experience the best that Monticello has to offer. When entering Monticello from the perimeters of the town. The wayfinding signage should include works like shopping, lodging and/or dining to entice visitors into downtown.

- ❖ **Beautification:** Strategic placement of trees in a downtown’s streetscape serves to draw the eye to the surrounding buildings and amenities, as well as provide much needed shade. Planting trees and flowers around the downtown square. An initial effort of planting flowers in pots in front of businesses facing the square has been successful and reinforced the need for more greenery in downtown Monticello. Also, consider a tree replacement program to add young trees in the square “park” for a head start on growth prior to the day the older trees die.



- ❖ **Next Steps:** Communities often ask after completion of a walk audit, now what? The answer depends on the city’s leadership and its political will to move forward. Funding can be a challenge but grants are available to assist with certain project types. Communication with the ARDOT District Engineer on state highway improvements is something that should be on-going. The ‘low hanging’ fruit pointed out on the walk can be done immediately (pavement paint and decals), while other steps, like master planning will take more time. The following is a list of plans discussed at the audit that will provide valuable direction for Monticello in the future:

- Main Street Corridor Plan
- Downtown Drainage Study
- Downtown Master Plan with design guidelines
- Entertainment District Overlay
- Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan

Master planning establishes a shared vision along with proposing specific action items for short, mid, and long- term goals. These goals will act as a road map for infrastructure improvements and policy changes that will help transform Monticello into a more walkable and bikeable community.



Thank you to the City of Monticello Leadership for their participation in the walk audit

LINKS

Link to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices

https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/htm/2009/html_index.htm

Contact information of Catherine Barrier at the [Arkansas Historic Preservation Program](#). She is the Certified Local Government Coordinator and has been a great resource for our Historic District Commission in Conway. Her email address is catherine.barrier@arkansas.gov

Link to Conway Downtown Partnership: <https://conwayarkansas.org/pages/downtown-conway/about-downtown-conway/>

Contact information of Catherine Barrier at the [Arkansas Historic Preservation Program](#). She is the Certified Local Government Coordinator and has been a great resource for our Historic District Commission in Conway. Her email address is catherine.barrier@arkansas.gov

Someone also asked if Rural LISC had any resources or funds for downtown improvement. Primarily they are a lending agent (LISC is a non-profit community development financial institution), but they also offer a wide variety of grants and resources to support placemaking, workforce development, diversity/equity, disaster relief/resilience. You can learn more about Rural LISC here: <https://www.lisc.org/rural/>

Justin Burch is my contact at Rural LISC and he is a senior program officer out of Little Rock. He is a great resource and you can reach him at jburch@lisc.org

Pedestrian and Bicycle Funding Opportunities

U.S. Department of Transportation Transit, Highway, and Safety Funds

Updated January 21, 2021

This table indicates potential eligibility for pedestrian and bicycle projects under U.S. Department of Transportation surface transportation funding programs. Additional restrictions may apply. See notes and basic program requirements below, and see program guidance for detailed requirements. Project sponsors should fully integrate nonmotorized accommodation into surface transportation projects. Section 1404 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act modified 23 U.S.C. 109 to require federally-funded projects on the National Highway System to consider access for other modes of transportation, and provides greater design flexibility to do so.

| Pedestrian and Bicycle Funding Opportunities: U.S. Department of Transportation Transit, Highway, and Safety Funds | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|------|-----|-----|----------------|------|------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------|--|
| Key: \$ = Funds may be used for this activity (restrictions may apply). ~\$ = Eligible, but not competitive unless part of a larger project. \$* = See program-specific notes for restrictions. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Activity or Project Type | BUILD | INFRA | TIFA | FTA | ATI | CMAQ | HSIP | NHPP | STBG | TA | RTP | SRTS | PLAN | NHTSA 402 | NHTSA 405 | FLTP | |
| Access enhancements to public transportation (includes benches, bus pads) | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | | | \$ | |
| ADA/504 Self Evaluation / Transition Plan | | | | | | | | | \$ | \$ | \$ | | \$ | | | \$ | |
| Bicycle plans | | | | \$ | | | | | \$ | \$ | | \$ | \$ | | | \$ | |
| Bicycle helmets (project or training related) | | | | | | | | | \$ | SSRTS | | \$ | | \$* | | | |
| Bicycle helmets (safety promotion) | | | | | | | | | \$ | SSRTS | | \$ | | | | | |
| Bicycle lanes on road | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | \$ | | | | \$ | |
| Bicycle parking | ~\$ | ~\$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | \$ | |
| Bike racks on transit | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | \$ | \$ | | | | | | \$ | |
| Bicycle repair station (air pump, simple tools) | ~\$ | ~\$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | \$ | \$ | | | | | | \$ | |
| Bicycle share (capital and equipment; not operations) | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | | | \$ | |
| Bicycle storage or service centers (example: at transit hubs) | ~\$ | ~\$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | \$ | \$ | | | | | | \$ | |
| Bridges / overcrossings for pedestrians and/or bicyclists | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$* | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | \$ | |
| Bus shelters and benches | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | | | \$ | |
| Coordinator positions (State or local) | | | | | | \$ 1 per State | | | \$ | SSRTS | | \$ | | | | | |
| Crosswalks (new or retrofit) | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$* | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | \$ | |
| Curb cuts and ramps | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$* | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | \$ | |
| Counting equipment | | | | \$ | \$ | | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$* | | | \$ | |
| Data collection and monitoring for pedestrians and/or bicyclists | | | | \$ | \$ | | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$* | | | \$ | |
| Historic preservation (pedestrian and bicycle and transit facilities) | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | \$ | \$ | | | | | | \$ | |
| Landscaping, streetscaping (pedestrian and/or bicycle route; transit access); related amenities (benches, water fountains); generally as part of a larger project | ~\$ | ~\$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | | | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | | | \$ | |
| Lighting (pedestrian and bicyclist scale associated with pedestrian/bicyclist project) | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | \$ | |
| Maps (for pedestrians and/or bicyclists) | | | | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | \$ | \$ | | \$ | \$* | | | | |
| Paved shoulders for pedestrian and/or bicyclist use | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | | | \$* | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | \$ | | | | \$ | |
| Pedestrian plans | | | | \$ | | | | | \$ | \$ | | \$ | \$ | | | \$ | |
| Recreational trails | ~\$ | ~\$ | ~\$ | | | | | | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | | \$ | |
| Road Diets (pedestrian and bicycle portions) | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | | | | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | | | \$ | |
| Road Safety Assessment for pedestrians and bicyclists | | | | | | | \$ | | \$ | \$ | | | \$ | | | \$ | |
| Safety education and awareness activities and programs to inform pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists on ped/bike safety | | | | | | | | | SSRTS | SSRTS | | \$ | \$* | \$* | \$* | | |
| Safety education positions | | | | | | | | | SSRTS | SSRTS | | \$ | | \$* | | | |

Pedestrian and Bicycle Funding Opportunities: U.S. Department of Transportation Transit, Highway, and Safety Funds

Key: \$ = Funds may be used for this activity (restrictions may apply). ~\$ = Eligible, but not competitive unless part of a larger project. \$* = See program-specific notes for restrictions.

| Activity or Project Type | BUILD | INFRA | TIFIA | FTA | ATI | CMAQ | HSIP | NHPP | STBG | TA | RTP | SRTS | PLAN | NHTSA 402 | NHTSA 405 | FLTP |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Safety enforcement (including police patrols) | | | | | | | | | \$SRTS | \$SRTS | | \$ | | \$* | \$* | |
| Safety program technical assessment (for peds/bicyclists) | | | | | | | | | \$SRTS | \$SRTS | | \$ | \$* | \$ | | |
| Separated bicycle lanes | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | \$ | | | | \$ |
| Shared use paths / transportation trails | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$* | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | \$ |
| Sidewalks (new or retrofit) | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | \$ |
| Signs / signals / signal improvements (including accessible pedestrian signals) | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | \$ | | | | \$ |
| Signed pedestrian or bicycle routes | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | \$ | \$ | \$ | | \$ | | | | \$ |
| Spot improvement programs | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | | | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | \$ |
| Stormwater impacts related to pedestrian and bicycle projects | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | \$ |
| Traffic calming | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | | | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | \$ | | | | \$ |
| Trail bridges | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | | | \$* | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | \$ |
| Trail construction and maintenance equipment | | | | | | | | | \$RTP | \$RTP | \$ | | | | | |
| Trail/highway crossings and intersections | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | | | \$* | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | \$ |
| Trailside and trailhead facilities (includes restrooms and water, but not general park amenities; see program guidance) | ~\$* | ~\$* | ~\$* | | | | | | \$* | \$* | \$* | | | | | \$ |
| Training | | | | | | \$ | \$ | | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$* | \$* | | |
| Training for law enforcement on ped/bicyclist safety laws | | | | | | | | | \$SRTS | \$SRTS | | \$ | | | \$* | |
| Tunnels / undercrossings for pedestrians and/or bicyclists | \$ | ~\$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$* | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | | | | \$ |

Abbreviations

ADA/504: Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 / Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
[BUILD](#): Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development Transportation Discretionary Grants
[INFRA](#): Infrastructure for Rebuilding America Discretionary Grant Program
[TIFIA](#): Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (loans)
[FTA](#): Federal Transit Administration Capital Funds
[ATI](#): Associated Transit Improvement (1% set-aside of FTA)
[CMAQ](#): Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program
[HSIP](#): Highway Safety Improvement Program
[NHPP](#): National Highway Performance Program
[STBG](#): Surface Transportation Block Grant Program

[TA](#): Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (formerly Transportation Alternatives Program)
[RTP](#): Recreational Trails Program
[SRTS](#): Safe Routes to School Program / Activities
[PLAN](#): Statewide Planning and Research (SPR) or Metropolitan Planning funds
[NHTSA 402](#): State and Community Highway Safety Grant Program
[NHTSA 405](#): National Priority Safety Programs (Nonmotorized safety)
[FLTP](#): Federal Lands and Tribal Transportation Programs (Federal Lands Access Program, Federal Lands Transportation Program, Tribal Transportation Program, Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects)

Cross-cutting notes

- FHWA Bicycle and Pedestrian Guidance: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/
- Applicability of 23 U.S.C. 217(i) for Bicycle Projects:** 23 U.S.C. 217(i) requires that bicycle facilities “be principally for transportation, rather than recreation, purposes”. However, sections 133(b)(6) and 133(h) list “recreational trails projects” as eligible activities under STBG. Therefore, the requirement in 23 U.S.C. 217(i) does not apply to recreational trails projects (including for bicycle use) using STBG funds. Section 217(i) continues to apply to bicycle facilities other than trail-related projects, and section 217(i) continues to apply to bicycle facilities using other Federal-aid Highway Program funds (NHPP, HSIP, CMAQ). The transportation requirement under section 217(i) is applicable only to bicycle projects; it does not apply to any other trail use or transportation mode.
- There may be occasional DOT or agency incentive grants for specific research or technical assistance purposes.
- Aspects of DOT initiatives may be eligible as individual projects. Activities above may benefit safe, comfortable, multimodal networks; environmental justice; and equity.

Program-specific notes: Federal-aid funding programs have specific requirements that projects must meet, and eligibility must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

- BUILD: Subject to annual appropriations. See <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants> for details.
- INFRA: See <https://www.transportation.gov/buildamerica/infragrants> for details. Focus on projects that generate national or regional economic, mobility, and safety benefits.
- TIFIA: Program offers assistance only in the form of secured loans, loan guarantees, or standby lines of credit, but can be combined with other grant sources, subject to total Federal assistance limitations.
- FTA/ATI: Project funded with FTA transit funds must provide access to transit. See [Bicycles and Transit](#) and the FTA Final Policy Statement on the [Eligibility of Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements under Federal Transit Law](#).
 - Bicycle infrastructure plans and projects funded with FTA funds must be within a 3-mile radius of a transit stop or station, or if further than 3 miles, must be within the distance that people could be expected to safely and conveniently bike to use the particular stop or station.
 - Pedestrian infrastructure plans and projects funded with FTA funds must be within a ½ mile radius of a transit stop or station, or if further than ½ mile, must be within the distance that people could be expected to safely and conveniently walk to use the particular stop or station.
 - FTA funds cannot be used to purchase bicycles for bike share systems.
 - FTA encourages grantees to use FHWA funds as a primary source for public right-of-way projects.
- CMAQ projects must demonstrate emissions reduction and benefit air quality. See the CMAQ guidance at www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air_quality/cmaq/ for a list of projects that may be eligible for CMAQ funds. Several activities may be eligible for CMAQ funds as part of a bicycle and pedestrian-related project, but not as a highway project. CMAQ funds may be used for shared use paths, but may not be used for trails that are primarily for recreational use.
- HSIP projects must be consistent with a State's [Strategic Highway Safety Plan](#) and (1) correct or improve a hazardous road location or feature, or (2) address a highway safety problem.
- NHPP projects must benefit National Highway System (NHS) corridors.
- STBG and TA Set-Aside: Activities marked "\$SRTS" means eligible only as an SRTS project benefiting schools for kindergarten through 8th grade. Bicycle transportation nonconstruction projects related to safe bicycle use are eligible under STBG, but not under TA (23 U.S.C. 217(a)).
- RTP must benefit recreational trails, but for any recreational trail use. RTP projects are eligible under TA and STBG, but States may require a transportation purpose.
- SRTS: FY 2012 was the last year for SRTS funds, but SRTS funds are available until expended.
 - Planning funds must be used for planning purposes, for example: Maps: System maps and GIS; Safety education and awareness: for transportation safety planning; Safety program technical assessment: for transportation safety planning; Training: bicycle and pedestrian system planning training.
- Federal Lands and Tribal Transportation Programs (FLTTP) projects must provide access to or within Federal or tribal lands:
 - Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP): Open to State and local entities for projects that provide access to or within Federal or tribal lands.
 - Federal Lands Transportation Program: For Federal agencies for projects that provide access within Federal lands.
 - Tribal Transportation Program: available for federally-recognized tribal governments for projects within tribal boundaries and public roads that access tribal lands.
- NHTSA 402 project activity must be included in the State's Highway Safety Plan. Contact the State Highway Safety Office for details: <http://www.ghsa.org/html/about/shsos.html>
- NHTSA 405 funds are subject to State eligibility, application, and award. Project activity must be included in the State's Highway Safety Plan. Contact the State Highway Safety Office for details: <http://www.ghsa.org/html/about/shsos.html>

CDI 2021 ADVANCED YEAR REPORT

WELCOME TO
MONTICELLO



UNIVERSITY OF
CENTRAL
ARKANSAS

CENTER FOR
COMMUNITY
& ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

WHAT IS THE CDI ADVANCED YEAR?

The Community Development Institute Central (CDI), established in 1987 at the University of Central Arkansas, trains community and economic development professionals in Arkansas and the Mid-South. The complete CDI experience is a three-year training program with one week of training per year. Participants are exposed to a comprehensive, applied approach to the field of community and economic development. CDI is coordinated by Director Shelby Fiegel, Assistant Director Dylan Edgell, Project Coordinator Emily Cooper Yates, and Graduate Assistant Greta Hacker.

The CDI Advanced Year is an optional fourth year of training for CDI graduates. The Advanced Year was created to provide a unique opportunity for CDI graduates to apply their knowledge and skills in real-life situations and to kick start a community and economic development process in one community in Arkansas. During the week of CDI, the Advanced Year participants conduct research on the selected community, visit the community for a driving tour, facilitate focus groups, conduct interviews with citizens and community leaders, and host a public presentation on their findings where they identify general strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and priorities for the community moving forward.

Monticello, Arkansas was selected as the CDI 2021 Advanced Year community.

To learn more about CDI, visit uca.edu/cdi.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Monticello is a wonderful community in southeast Arkansas with great assets including its historic downtown square, a respected four-year institution, and a strong sense of community. Participating in the CDI Advanced Year 2021 process shows that leaders in Monticello are looking toward the future and are open to new ideas and opportunities for their community.

Our goal with this report is to share the challenges and opportunities the CDI Advanced Year class identified as well as to provide some recommendations to help imagine the future of Monticello based on our assessment and feedback from community leaders and citizens. The challenges and opportunities identified by community leaders and citizens in Monticello are shared by many other communities in Arkansas.

The CDI 2021 Advanced Year team took a holistic approach in assessing Monticello from an outsider's perspective. Before coming to Monticello, the Advanced Year team was asked to research Monticello online. After discussing this research, the Advanced Year team participated in a driving tour of Monticello. The team then met with community leaders, conducted focus groups with citizens, and implemented an online survey to collect feedback from the community to inform their recommendations. At the end of the week, the team presented their findings to the community during a public presentation, and pulled their insights and future recommendations together in this report.

This is not a comprehensive analysis of Monticello, but it takes a fresh look at the community from several outsiders with community and economic development experience and expertise. These individuals work every day in different aspects of community and economic development and came to Monticello from communities in Arkansas and Mississippi to provide their unique perspectives.

There is a lot to be proud of in Monticello. The recommendations found in this report will build on the great work that the community has already done. We hope this report will serve as a catalyst for future growth and development in Monticello!

KEY PARTNERS

A special thanks to these key partners who made this initiative possible:

- UCA Center for Community and Economic Development
- City of Monticello
- University of Arkansas at Monticello
- Monticello Economic Development Commission
- Lorie Robertson of Chaffee Crossing (CDI Advanced Year Class Director)
- Dana Poindexter of the City of Bryant (CDI Advanced Year Class Director)
- CDI 2021 Advanced Year Team
- Entergy Arkansas
- Community leaders and citizens of Monticello



CDI 2021 ADVANCED YEAR AND ASSIGNMENTS

The CDI 2021 Advanced Year consisted of seven individuals working in a variety of professional roles from communities in Arkansas and Mississippi. The class was led by Lorie Robertson of Chaffee Crossing and Dana Poindexter of the City of Bryant.

Members of the 2021 Advanced Year Team include:



Don Clark
City of Siloam
Springs



Tonya Fletcher
Paris Chamber of
Commerce



Lasha Marshall
Bank OZK



Julie Murray
Van Buren Chamber
of Commerce



Joy Saucier
Mississippi Power



Truett Smith
City of Bryant



Alicia Wilmoth
City of Cabot



Lorie Robertson
Chaffee Crossing



Dana Poindexter
City of Bryant

During the research phase of the CDI 2021 Advanced Year, the class explored the following roles: a prospective college student, a family with young children, a retiree, a tourist, a small business owner, an industrial prospect, and a citizen of Monticello.

ONLINE COMMUNITY RESEARCH

CDI Advanced Year Participants conducted an “online tour” where participants assessed Monticello’s online presence through the lens of different personas. These personas include: a family with young children, tourist, small business owner, citizen of Monticello, prospective college student, retiree, and industrial prospect.

A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis was completed for city and community websites, social media pages, Arkansas Site Select, online real estate databases, and travel websites based on these personas. Below are the strengths and weaknesses found from the online assessment of each persona:

Prospective College Student

Strengths:

- UAM has the only forestry program in the state
- UAM offers fantastic opportunities for music students
- UAM has a number of technical and professional certifications
- Unique mascot (Go Boll Weevils!)

Weaknesses:

- Few rental options found off-campus
- No mention of community recreation opportunities on UAM’s website
- Little information on social groups and places for students to plug-in to the community

Family with Young Children

Strengths:

- Several Pre-K options
- Shorter commutes than in larger metropolitan areas

Weaknesses:

- Middle School, Intermediate School, and High School rated “average” according to GreatSchools
- Elementary School rated “below average” according to GreatSchools
- Public safety rated a “D” from Crime Grade (third-party website; the Monticello Police Department is updating its information stream to correct these statistics)
- Lack of job opportunities in industrial and service industries
- Limited options for shopping
- After-school programs could not be found online

Retiree

Strengths:

- Drew Memorial Hospital
- Monticello Senior Center
- Assisted living options

Weaknesses:

- Attraction and retention of healthcare specialists
- Not much senior-friendly outdoor recreation
- Smaller single-family housing

Tourist

Strengths:

- Quality of life with great parks
- Rich culture and history highlighted by local museums
- Hunting and fishing options nearby
- Country club and golf course
- Good, established local restaurants

Weaknesses:

- City websites were not up to date with community events and resources
- Lodging options rated mid-to-low online
- The Allen House Tours look fun but it seems to be available only in October
- Historical Museum lacked information on hours of operation and events
- Several options for restaurants but not very many are reviewed online
- Limited shopping options
- Found no information online about downtown Monticello

Small Business Owner

Strengths:

- City has a population of 8,500 and a daytime population of 17,800
- Currently 38 restaurants and 6 hotels in Monticello
- Dial Diner Food Delivery
- Monticello AR Talk of the Town Facebook page offers positive reviews of the city
- ExpoloreMonticello.com was a great resource for quality of life

Weaknesses:

- No commercial listings on nationally known commercial sites including: Loopnet, Crexi, and Commerce Exchange
- No retail or commercial buildings listed on the MEDC site; only industrial sites listed
- Chamber of Commerce had a static landing page and no online presence

Industrial Prospect

Strengths:

- Properties listed and community profile available on Arkansas Site Selection website
- Arkansas Midland Railroad
- University of Arkansas at Monticello
- Drew County Memorial Hospital
- Municipal Airport with commercial, freight, and charter capabilities
- Selected twice by Arkansas Business as a City of Distinction for its Quality of Life
- Monticello Economic Development Commission website

Weaknesses:

- Google ranking and SEO optimization for economic development website and Chamber website
- Chamber website is one page and needs to be regularly updated including a listing of industries/ members, calendar of events, member news, and job postings
- Outdated social media posts
- Economic development contact for the City was difficult to find and not readily available online
- Need more housing options and more diverse housing options

Citizen of Monticello

Strengths:

- 4-year university
- Technical certifications offered at university
- Family friendly community
- Adequate healthcare options

Weaknesses:

- City website needs to be updated
- Difficult to find utility information
- Could not find adequate information on housing
- No information on new developments or construction projects



COMMUNITY FEEDBACK AND TRENDS

CDI Advanced Year conducted focus groups, interviews, and an online survey with Monticello citizens to collect feedback and identify key trends in the community. The feedback included the following bright spots, challenges, and opportunities in each of these community and economic development sectors.

Bright Spots

- Variety of educational resources
- Hunting and fishing opportunities nearby
- Positive perception of local schools
- Plenty of childcare options and afterschool programs
- Arkansas Small Business Technology Development Center office at UAM
- Diversity of businesses and industries
- Hospital expansion
- Sports complex
- Received TAP and RTP funding for trails
- Youth sports and Miracle League
- Strong performing arts association in Southeast Arkansas Concert Association
- Monticello is a retail hub
- Market in the Park program
- UAM visual arts programs
- World renowned jazz band
- Beautiful downtown with limited vacancies
- Community has a rich history
- Use and availability of parks
- Community leaders and local business leaders are eager to be involved

Opportunities

- Address infrastructure issues including: sidewalks, streets, utilities, and housing
- Create, retain, and recruit a skilled workforce in Monticello
- Increase engagement between the Chamber of Commerce and local business community
- Cultivate mutually beneficial partnerships among the Chamber, the City, the A&P Commission, and the Monticello Economic Development Commission
- Begin campaign to extend sales tax
- Develop a branding and marketing strategy to tell Monticello's story

Challenges

- Lack of zoning and development codes
- Need for enhanced pedestrian infrastructure including sidewalks, crosswalks, and ADA compliance
- Connections between key community leaders
- Need to be further developed
- Lack of shared vision
- Workforce needs
- Awareness and trust to utilize local services
- Pedestrian friendly improvements
- No large event venue(s) outside of UAM
- Need to tell Monticello's story (branding and marketing needed)
- Business curb appeal
- Wayfinding signage
- Population is stagnant or declining
- Completing Lake Monticello improvements and communicating with public
- Unreliable broadband
- Limited healthy restaurant and grocery food choices
- Support and engagement throughout the community

DRIVING TOUR

The driving tour assessment focuses on the community's physical infrastructure (highways, roads, sidewalks, public utilities, signage and beautification efforts), social infrastructure (schools, healthcare, arts and cultural amenities, parks/recreational amenities and housing) and economic development infrastructure (small businesses, large employers, site and commercial building availability and downtown development). These amenities in the community are rated as very good, average, needs improvement or not available and the CDI Advanced Year team took notes about why each amenity in Monticello was given a particular rating.

Below are the notes from the CDI 2021 Advanced Year driving tour in Monticello:

Physical Infrastructure

- Nice gateways into Monticello!
- Lack of complete streets (walking, biking, and driving), sidewalk improvements, and general pedestrian connectivity
- Great streetscapes in certain areas of downtown; continue building on this
- City was clean from litter
- HWY 278 corridor needs improvement
- Curb cuts needed in commercial areas downtown
- Good transportation infrastructure including access to highways, rail lines, and an airport
- Charming downtown
- Overall an attractive city

Economic Development Infrastructure

- Impressive industrial potential
- Arkansas Midland Railroad access is great for economic development
- Intermodal growth potential
- Active industrial park and diverse existing industry
- Boat manufacturing cluster
- Many signs of new capital investments
- Minimal signage for the downtown businesses
- Workforce Training Center and workforce training schools are great
- University of Monticello (UAM)

- Monticello is an ACT Work Ready community
- Healthy local banking community

Social Infrastructure

- Impressive public library
- Parks and outdoor recreation has a lot of potential
- Market in the Park is great
- Robust church and faith-based community
- Healthcare facilities provide adequate care for area between Drew Memorial Hospital, general practitioners, and local specialists
- Existing greenspaces in the downtown area were nice
- Opportunities for murals and public art on buildings, benches, and public spaces in the downtown area
- Good mix of housing options and neighborhoods
- Monticello school system was impressive; educational options from Pre-K to post-grad
- Great historical assets (museum/courthouse/downtown)

KEEP ON GROWING TODAY

Based on these observations and the findings of this report, there are several short term steps Monticello can pursue to raise quality of life and expand future economic growth. In this section titled “Keep on Growing Today,” the CDI Advanced Year class identified short term steps that can be completed within a year.

1. Start regular inter-organizational meetings with local leaders including the MEDC, the Mayor’s office, the A&P Chair, the Planning Commission, the Chamber, and other community leaders to foster collaboration and communication.
2. Elevate the Chamber of Commerce to serve as a hub and connector for organizations, activities, and businesses in Monticello.
3. Intentionally engage the business community with regular communication and opportunities to be more involved in community and economic development.
4. Regularly communicate the status of improvements on Lake Monticello with the broader community.
5. Plan a ribbon cutting event for the reopening of Lake Monticello.
6. Assess social media presence and create a social media strategy for the City and MEDC pages.
7. Revitalize Explore Monticello website and regularly maintain website with updated links, events, and community meetings.



KEEP ON GROWING TOMORROW

The CDI Advanced Year team also identified several longer term action items that would take more than one year to accomplish but are a part of a long-term vision to raise quality of life and expand future economic growth in this section titled “Keep on Growing Tomorrow.”

1. Utilize existing talent within your community to accomplish community and economic development goals. Intentionally include community leaders and business owners and provide them a seat at the table.
2. Create zoning ordinances to assist with improvements in Monticello’s housing and public infrastructure needs and to protect existing housing and infrastructure.

Tell Monticello’s story by developing a brand and marketing strategy to share the city’s great assets. Suggestions to consider include:

- Focus on your main industries and economic development drivers
 - Focus on business retention
 - Miracle Ball Field sporting complex
 - Hunting and fishing options in the area
 - The University of Arkansas at Monticello and UAM Jazz Band
 - Update city websites regularly and elevate visibility of the Chamber
 - Maintain a regular social media presence
3. Develop programming to provide support for local entrepreneurs.
 4. Utilize Main Street Arkansas resources to continue investing in downtown.
 5. Seek signage grants to improve wayfinding around the city and consider developing a wayfinding signage system.
 6. Seek grants to improve facades downtown.
 7. Work with downtown retailers to improve merchandising, window displays, curb appeal, and signage to encourage foot traffic and sales.
 8. Invest in public art around the city including murals and sculptures.
 9. Develop the Drew County Museum into a regional tourist asset by improving online communications and increased public program offerings.
 10. Develop a skilled trade career path from UAM to existing industry in Monticello.
 11. Continue to capitalize on sports tourism and serve as a regional sports hub.
 12. Consider holding on to the Armory Building and developing this asset into a community center or community space to serve the citizens of Monticello.

LOOKING FORWARD

A special thanks to the following individuals for their leadership, cooperation, and hospitality in welcoming the CDI Advanced Year team to Monticello:

- Mayor Paige Chase, City of Monticello
- Nita McDaniel, Monticello Economic Development Commission
- Chancellor Peggy Doss, University of Arkansas at Monticello
- Dan Boice, University of Arkansas at Monticello
- Jeff Weaver, University of Arkansas at Monticello
- Judge Robert Akin, Drew County

We appreciate the community leaders in Monticello who came out and participated in the focus groups and public presentations. Your participation, positive attitude, and commitment are crucial to the community development process moving forward.

Monticello is a special place with unique assets, opportunities, and a strong sense of community. Monticello has a great foundation on which to build the future. The citizens of Monticello are the most knowledgeable about your community, and they are in the driver's seat moving forward. We hope this report offers some useful observations, recommendations, and quick wins that will be helpful during the journey making Monticello a great place to live, work, and play.





Monticello Planning Commission

Public Forums, March 15 &16, 2022

Issues and Concerns (with vote totals from both sessions)

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Water / Sewer System | 22 |
| Family Activities (Putt-Putt, e.g.): | 16 |
| Sports Tournaments: | 10 |
| Adequate Lodgings | |
| Too many competing leagues | |
| Affordable Housing: | 9 |
| Bike Trails / Pedestrian Friendly: | 7 |
| Retaining our talent: | 7 |
| Coordination of Campus & City: | 6 |
| Community Center: | 4 |
| Medical Infrastructure: | 4 |
| Shortage of plumbers, electricians, | 4 |
| Vacant Buildings: | 4 |
| Infill: | 3 |
| Rental Housing: | 4 |
| Encouraging volunteerism: | 2 |
| Roads: | 2 |
| Career Opportunities: | 2 |
| Drainage: | 2 |
| Street Lighting, | |
| especially along 425 North: | 2 |
| Neighborhoods deteriorating: | 2 |
| Sidewalks: | 2 |
| Housing & Business Infill: | 1 |
| Litter: | 1 |
| Section Eight Housing: | 1 |
| Transit: Shuttles: | 1 |
| Maker Space: | 1 |

Mentioned but without votes:

Emergency Response
Energy Infrastructure
Drew Theatre
Transit: bus station
Litter
Bicyclist safety
Connecting city greenspaces/parks

Transit: Uber
Workforce shortage