

City of Sarcoxie Action Plans 2014-2016

Approved by the Sarcoxie City Council on 9/16/2014

Introduction

The city's first comprehensive plan was approved in 2007/2008 after several public hearings with the input of several interested citizens and organizations. The plan identified two goals:

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

To achieve these goals, a number of areas for focus were also identified:

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

Since the goals and focus items were big in scope and far reaching, the creators of the plan decided the best course was to set smaller steps in shorter time frames. To that end, elected officials have made a practice of reviewing the plan every two years and use these reviews as a basis for improvement efforts.

2014 marks the fourth 2-year cycle of seeking public input and establishing action plans. Once approved by the city council these plans help ensure that everyone is on the same page and the intent of the 2008 comprehensive plan continues to be pursued.

Elected officials are primarily responsible and committed to pursuing the goals of the comprehensive plan. Most goals of the plan are directly in line with good governing and promote the city in a positive light.

In addition to elected officials and paid staff involvement, enough cannot be said about the importance and potential of individual volunteers and non-government organizations to improving our community. Motivated volunteers have ready access to a broad variety of organizations that can shape the future of Sarcoxie and make it a better place to live and do business. Many civic organizations in the city have organizational goals that parallel many of the goals and intentions of the comprehensive plan. Successful organizations enhance quality of life and available services for our community.

Detailed below are proposed action plans and a reiteration of policies based on approved actions of the current cycle.

Growing the Tax Base

“Growing the tax base” is a broad effort that provides several benefits to our community:

- More resources for our school district and local government to improve public services.
- Improved availability of commercial and retail services
- More local jobs.

In early 2014, the council formally approved the creation of the SEED Board (Sarcoxie Economic & Entrepreneurial Development). The primary responsibility of the board is to drive economic development. The SEED Board works with elected officials to:

- Market our city and region to the world
- Promote and be a resource for existing local businesses
- Encourage and support local entrepreneurs
- Help local residents be more employable in outlying areas.

Initial activities of the SEED Board have included:

- Consulting successful developers to identify our strengths and weaknesses.
- Getting “boots on the ground” to identify the needs and priorities of local businesses.
- Overseeing work force development activities.
- Promoting pro-business activities.
- Coordinating development at the 3 main gateways to our city
- Developing content for the “Doing Business in Sarcoxie” portion of the website.
- Overseeing real estate listings in “Location 1”.
- Preliminary work for housing developments in Sarcoxie.
- Liaison with relevant regional and state organizations.
- Pursuing a business incubator.
- Engaging the school district and area youth to be part of the team.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR 2014/2016

1. The primary focus for growing the tax base is to support the SEED Board. It is comprised of motivated individuals united under a common goal with clearly defined objectives.
2. Pursue planning grants for W&S expansion to anchor points south and west of the city. Having these studies in hand will be very beneficial if such expansion is warranted by development opportunities.
3. Codify the appointed position of Economic Development Director (EDD).

Growing the Population

“Growing the population” includes attracting prospective residents to live here by making the city more appealing and increasing housing opportunities.

Reaching a population of 3,000 dramatically improves economic opportunities by increasing the customer base for current small businesses and creating an appealing market for outside businesses to locate here.

By interviewing local businesses, the SEED Board identified quality housing as a major concern. Based on this strong sentiment, the board has sought out successful developers for their advice on variables that help and hurt new housing development in Sarcoxie.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR 2014/2016

1. Create a Housing Board to take the lead on increasing the population and housing inventory as well as assisting with improving the overall quality of the housing inventory in Sarcoxie. This board would work to maximize our strengths, reduce our weaknesses and market Sarcoxie to future residents.
2. In addition to empowering the new Housing Board, the City will also:
 - a. Refocus on hiring a competent building inspector.
 - b. Focus on dangerous vacant buildings - the weakest of our housing inventory.
 - c. Pursue constructive ownership change of existing empty lots.
 - d. Continue emphasis on city clean up (railroad tracks, Swifty, street gutters, etc.)
 - e. Continue police department’s elevated nuisance enforcement activities
3. Continue growth through voluntary annexation. The next major phases are:
 - a. Phase 3 Annexation: Autumn Acres Mobile Home Park
 - b. Phase 4 Annexation: Apple Rd to CR 60 and CR 60 to Business Loop 44
 - c. Other annexation opportunities as requested by property owners.
4. Continue a policy of annexation versus “out of town” fees for new water service outside city limits. New services to sign an agreement to annex in to the city if and when the city limits contact the property as consideration for receiving such city services.

Downtown Revitalization

At the time of this writing, the State of Missouri just approved the City's historic district application for much of the city square. Although the application is still pending federal approval, the city owes a big debt of gratitude to Michelle Gautz for over two years research and documentation. Katrina Keyes also provided a great deal of research and assistance.

Past action plans have tabled pursuit of organized improvement efforts on the square until flood zone studies and the historic district application could be completed.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR 2014/2016

1. Form a Downtown Revitalization Committee. It is time to commission a board focused on gaining full benefits from the anticipated federal designation as a historic district and promote revitalization efforts to the square and immediate area. Such a board would advise the city council and pursue pending issues such as:
 - a. Serve as the historic district committee.
 - b. Help organizations sponsoring events on the square.
 - c. Assist with planning and revitalization on the square.
 - d. Make recommendations for policies & laws for parking on the square
 - e. Explore the potential of a city history museum.
 - f. Explore creative and non-traditional ways to effect improvements with available local resources.
2. The city will complete several items currently underway:
 - a. Close the Cross St. property sale
 - b. Close on tax sale property behind City Hall
 - c. Close on donated property at SE corner of square.
 - d. Help grow the Christmas on the Square light and music show.
 - e. Continue to push SEMA to complete a detailed study of Center Creek ASAP.
 - f. Complete the 7th St. parking upgrades
 - g. Finish the ramp off Center St. to increase utility of property behind city hall.
 - h. Soft Park in cooperation with the Ozark Regional Land Trust.
 - i. Sidewalk replacement around the square
3. Policy: City government can have a big impact on the life of the square and should take a balanced approach in spending tax dollars in this area of the city. By maintaining and making cost conscious improvements to city owned buildings and property we can help insure the square does not die but steadily rises out of dilapidation. Doing this, without over extending, will insure the square survives and will help create a market for buildings so the City can pursue an off-square government facility.

City Government & Administration

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR 2014/2016

1. The City is working to complete projects from the 2012/2014 period including:
 - a. Written office & accounting procedures.
 - b. Personnel manual for city employees
 - c. Complete the asset inventory to ensure proper insurance coverage. PW and FD are done. Parks, Library and City Hall need to be finished.
 - d. Review work order software to better track work flow and cost centers and as a means to verify critical work is completed.
 - e. Explore supplemental accident insurance – VFIS (800-233-1957) & Nationwide (800-525-8669) for volunteer firemen and police reserves for wage protection in the event of a debilitating workman's comp injury.
 - f. Conversion to city wide digital radio system for emergency services.

Website: The goal of the website is two-fold:

- To be the premier source of information to the community.
- To be a window into our community for the rest of the world to see.

PLANNED ACTIONS FOR 2014/2016

1. Continue committing 5 hours of staff time per week on website development (min).
2. Expand the use of twitter as a real time information resource for the area.

Cemetery: At the Sarcoxie Cemetery Board's request, the city has accepted ownership and operation of the cemetery and finishing the legal requirements to affect the transfer.

PLANNED ACTIONS FOR 2014/2016

Once transfer is complete:

1. Continue current operations with the City providing background assistance as needed.
2. Maintain a Cemetery Advisory Board which will operate as a standalone department.
3. Secure state registration to ensure perpetual protection of the cemetery and its assets.
4. Codify the operation and maintenance of the cemetery.

Library: The public library offers recreational and educational services to the community and has the potential to be a resource to pursue the goals of the plan. The library has council approved policies and procedures and a technology plan.

PLANNED ACTIONS FOR 2014/2016

1. Continue building renovations including reconditioning walls, new office, power room and bathrooms, open entire library from front to back, and recondition the front façade.
2. Continue to develop role as a resource for our community.

Infrastructure

Streets: The city is responsible for maintaining approximately 11 miles of paved streets.

The biggest challenge for this department is a lack of funds for resurfacing of streets. The cost of asphalt has more than tripled in the last several years while street funding has remained fairly static. Street funds also do more than just pave streets. These funds are also used for sidewalks, targeted repairs, inclement weather maintenance and correcting past issues.

PLANNED ACTIONS FOR 2014/2016

1. Pursue new strategy on road maintenance. Economically protecting all city streets will minimize deterioration and allow reserves to make long term repairs.
2. Unspent asphalt funds will be accumulated for future projects.
3. Sidewalks & Curbing on Collector Streets – pursue modest but steady improvements.

Water: The City is currently operating under a 20 year plan (2031) to install a 10 inch loop around the city and upgrade all other distribution lines to a minimum of 6 inches. In addition to working towards this goal, the city is working to:

PLANNED ACTIONS FOR 2014/2016

1. Achieve a minimum of 75% accountability of water pumped. Several actions are being taken including meters to all unmetered outlets, FD reporting estimated usage, tracking adjustments, replacement of obsolete meters with more accurate meters, verifying master meter accuracy at each well and annual leak detection efforts.
2. Document the historic data on the wells (static water level, draw down, and dates)
3. After the 2012 bonds are paid in full, pursuing a new 12th Street water tower to replace the old, under capacity and hazardous tank currently there.

Sewer: The City operates a 150,000 GPD 3-cell lagoon system for wastewater treatment.

The City expects continued DNR pressure to ultimately change from lagoons to a treatment plant. The City's intent is to postpone any such upgrade until at least 2018. Until then the city will improve the distribution system.

PLANNED ACTIONS FOR 2014/2016

1. Top priority: Perform system wide sewer inspections and cleanout
2. Continue Inflow & Infiltration abatement efforts through smoke testing, replacement and upgrade of the distribution system will prevent stormwater from entering the sewer, reduce the workload of the system, prevent releases of sewage and is a DNR requirement. It also indicates successful improvements to the distribution system.

Stormwater: Efficient movement of stormwater is a problem in many parts of the city.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR 2014/2016

1. Map & improve stormwater movement through the city.

Trash Service: In late 2014, city residents will likely see trash volume restrictions as the city begins a new round of trash contract bids.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR 2014/2016

1. Explore and implement reasonable recycling options to assist with volume restrictions.

Public Safety & Emergency Services

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

Fire Department: The Sarcoxie Fire Department is a volunteer department that continues to improve its capabilities and unit cohesion. While major improvements have been made in recent years it still has much to do. It is jointly governed by the city and a membership based Rural Fire District. A competent fire department is vital to the safety of the Sarcoxie area and important for growth and economic development. The City will continue an aggressive leadership role supporting our Fire Department. The department has council approved Standard Operating Guides.

PLANNED ACTIONS FOR 2014/2016

1. ISO Audit by early 2015 to benefit homeowner insurance premiums and provide guidance for future department needs.
2. Taxable Fire District: The City is exploring the pros and cons of being actively involved with the Rural Fire Board in pursuit of a taxable fire district.
3. Codify the authorization for the FD and a contract for service with the rural board.
4. Assist with attracting volunteer firemen – currently one of their biggest challenges.

Police Department: The goal of the city council is to have a competent and competitively paid department that provides 24/7 protection and encourage community involvement and interaction with our citizens. The vision to meet this goal is a department of 5 full time officers and an active reserve squad. The PD has council approved Operating Policies & Procedures.

1. Replace report writing software in 4th qtr 2014 – the goal is to use LEST grant funds.
2. Pursue elimination of 35 mph zone on High St.
3. Support a proposed Sarcoxie Girl Scout address numbering project.

Emergency Management: This office is less than 4 years old but has an important role for our community. EM replaces the former Civil Defense office and is tasked with coordinating and documenting disaster preparations, response, and recovery. A functioning office increases resource availability for disasters as well as cost recovery afterwards.

1. Codify the position of Emergency Management Director per state law
2. Complete the NIMS compliant emergency preparedness plan for the city.
3. Complete federally mandated NIMS training.
4. Complete the storm siren addition on the hill giving the city a total of 4 sirens.
5. Complete the emergency management and public outreach portions of the city website.

Sentinels: This volunteer organization reports to the Police Chief and serves in traffic control and public assistance during community events. They are cross trained to assist with emergency operations when disaster strikes.

1. Assist with attracting volunteers – currently one of their biggest challenges.
2. Develop additional roles for emergency operations.
3. Build emergency medical “blow out” kits.

Parks & Recreation: The Park Advisory Board has been one of the most productive volunteer organizations in our city. In addition to assisting with events in the park and youth baseball/softball, they help oversee a number of physical assets and locations.

The baseball complex was the only priority project in 2012/2014 that made no significant progress. It was stopped by elected officials due to a lack of funds and community support until something changes to make pursuit of this project feasible. In the meantime, the PB needs to get back to pursuing development of assets that are being utilized.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR 2014/2016

1. Stebbins Memorial Park: Top Priority - Issues in early 2014 brought attention to the need for serious improvements that may require substantial funds to correct.
Needs include:
 - a. 3 Pavilions in disrepair (roofs and gables)
 - b. Plan and implement playground equipment safety upgrades.
 - c. Complete the basketball court
 - d. Complete the sand volleyball court
2. The Square. With the planned historic district and revitalization, improvements to this park will compliment community events and economic development:
 - a. Install a watering system on the square.
 - b. Ensure the light poles get painted by Empire Electric.
 - c. Pursue adopt a corner botany projects on the square.
 - d. Fill 8 existing flower beds with shrubbery
 - e. Increase 220V outlets on the square (in partnership with CSD committee)
3. Community Building.
 - a. Experiment with low-cost acoustics improvements
 - b. Update the kitchen cabinetry
4. Pool Complex
 - a. Upgrade the pool house plumbing for hot, cold, and warm water.
 - b. Increase shaded areas
 - c. Re-plaster portions of the volley pool
 - d. Increase seating
5. Youth Baseball / Softball Leagues
 - a. Some capital expenditures will be needed on things such as repair of scoreboards, bleachers and possibly some fencing.