

# City of Sarcoxie Action Plans 2016-2017

Approved by the Sarcoxie City Council on November 22, 2016

In 2007 and 2008, the chamber of commerce, city government, school district representatives and representatives of other organizations worked together to prepare the Sarcoxie's first comprehensive plan. This plan identified two central 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 of focus were identified:

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

Since the goals and focus areas are both big and long term, the plan creators decided to help stay on track and pursue these goals by setting short term action plans every two years. 2016 marks the fifth biennial action plans created.

Detailed in the following pages are action plans proposed for 2016 & 2017. They are categorized by the areas of focus shown above even though most proposed actions impact several other areas. Some actions are just too potentially impactful to be noted in a single category. For these actions, we've added a category labeled "Too Big to Label".

### **Too Big to Label**

There are several proposed actions which are either too general or effect too many categories to be labeled as a specific area of focus. Successes in these areas help us move closer to achieving the goals laid out in our original comprehensive plan.

**Growth in the Rural Ozarks (GRO) Program:** In 2016, the city was awarded a grant for economic development assistance from the Community Foundation of the Ozarks. This grant provides professional assistance in economic development for three years. This has the potential to help us make significant strides in growing the economy and improving quality of life. It involves collaboration between the city, school district, chamber of commerce, SEED Board, and local churches. The GRO program promises to have a broad impact on Sarcoxie.

1. The City will fully support and participate in the GRO program to secure the maximum benefit from it. The City will also look for lessons learned that can be implemented in other departments and committees to help them be more successful.

**Website ([www.sarcoxiemo.com](http://www.sarcoxiemo.com)):** The goal of the website is two-fold: To be the premier source of local information for our community and to be a window into our community for the rest of the world to see. While lots of progress has been made, there is still much to do to get it up to a level our citizens deserve.

1. The City is pursuing interns through the high school to assist with developing the website as well as other marketing activities.

**Sarcoxie Text Service:** The City started offering a free text service in 2015. This is a tool designed to quickly get important messages out to the community.

1. The City is actively working to sign up residents for this service at City Hall and during community events.

**Geographical Information System (GIS) Mapping:** GIS mapping is a significant improvement over traditional mapping systems for such systems as water and sewer systems. It is very portable, easy to use, and readily integrates with other systems. GIS mapping will offer benefits to several city departments as well as ensure data is more readily protected.

1. The city will begin a transition to GIS mapping with its water and fire hydrant system and then expand to the sewer system.

**SEED Board:** The SEED Board (Sarcoxie Economic & Entrepreneurial Development) is the City's primary organization responsible for promoting economic development. It includes representatives of the city, chamber, Sarcoxie foundation, and school district. Although the SEED Board has latitude to pursue anything impacting economic conditions in Sarcoxie, the board's primary goals are to:

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

## **Annexation**

Since the creation of the Plan, the city has relied on voluntary annexation to extend the city's size. MODOT has allowed highway rights of way annexation to exits 26 and 29 on I-44 as well as along Hwy 37 south to the Newton / Jasper County lines. In addition, several businesses have annexed in to the city which has helped preserve and enhance sales and property tax revenues.

In mid-2016, the City successfully completed the annexation of high rights of way from County Road 60 and Blackberry north to the Center Creek Bridge on 37 Highway. The City is also finalizing the annexation of the property formerly known as Ozark Souvenirs. The planned action is to pursue commercial development and eliminate blight at one of the city's primary gateways. Proposed actions through 2017:

1. Continue a policy of annexation versus out of town fees for new requests for utility extensions outside of city limits.
2. Pursue mandatory annexation of Autumn Acres trailer park and all properties located between 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> streets and High Street and Bridgeview. This would require a majority vote of both the residents of the City and the registered voters located in this geographic area.

## **Revitalize the square and restore the downtown / pursue historic preservation**

The city square is the cultural heart of our City. This federally recognized historic district may never again be the economic center of Sarcoxie, but that does not make it less important to us.

As a matter of 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.

With this spending mindset, the city will continue to promote steady gains in the downtown area.

Proposed actions through 2017:

1. Continue supporting the Park Board, Historic District Committee, Chief Sarcoxie Days Committee, and other organizations working to improve the city square. In addition, the City wholeheartedly supports the reactivation of the Downtown Revitalization Committee or a similar organization whose focus is the downtown / city square area.
2. Pursue policies and rules for parking on the square.
3. Explore the potential of using existing buildings on the square for such purposes as a city museum, business incubator, etc.
4. Continue to push SEMA to complete a detailed flood study of Center Creek ASAP.
5. Leverage the city's recent agreement with the Ozark Regional Land Trust to finish creating a soft park in the cave area.
6. Finish the sidewalks around the square replacement program
7. Install banners on light posts to decorate and direct traffic to the historic district.
8. The Historic District Committee will continue to coordinate with building owners to improve the attractiveness of storefronts, continue collecting historical data and share this information through media, civic events, and public displays.
9. The Library will continue its interior and front façade renovation.
10. Tear down well house #1 to further develop and utilize property on or around the square.

### **Enhance Fire and Police Protection**

Sarcoxie relies on the protection of four separate emergency service entities (police, fire, emergency management and sentinels). Each has different responsibilities but share the same common theme of protecting and serving our community.

**Police Department:** The long term 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 plus an active reserve squad. The city council moved closer to this goal in 2016 by increasing the department from 3 full time to 4 full time officers. Further increases will depend on increasing the tax base. In addition to traditional police roles, the police department is trained and equipped to provide basic medical response and to actively assist with nuisance abatements.

**Fire Department:** The Sarcoxie Fire Department is a volunteer fire department. Prior to 2016, it was a blended department jointly governed by the City and a membership based rural fire association. In early 2016, the two departments separated. This change is good for the city in that other city resources can be brought to bear to assist with services traditionally provided by a fire department. It also clarifies the chain of command and priorities in the event of a disaster occurring in the city.

SFD completed an ISO audit in early 2016. Based on this audit, city's ISO rating improved from a 7 to a 6 which will have a positive impact on property owners insurance in the city as well as improve fire protection.

Proposed actions through 2017:

1. Secure a second front line engine.
2. Improve the City's ISO rating to a 5
3. Respond to 100% of all calls within the city.
4. Pursue reactivation of the health property tax to support fire department operations. This would require popular support through a ballet initiative.

**Emergency Management:** This office is still in its growing phase and has a lot of work ahead of it before standing on its own. Emergency Management replaces the former Civil Defense office and is tasked with coordinating and documenting disaster preparations, response, and recovery. This office helps drive emergency preparedness planning in all city departments and helps increase resource availability before, during and after disasters. Proposed actions through 2017:

1. Codify the position of Emergency Management Director per state law
2. Complete the storm siren addition on the hill giving the city a total of 4 sirens.
3. Complete the emergency management and public outreach portions of the city website.

**Sentinels:** This volunteer organization provides support during public events and actively assists during emergency or disaster events in the city. They are cross trained to assist with emergency operations when disaster strikes. Proposed actions through 2017:

1. Develop additional roles for emergency operations and community service to increase their perceived value to our community and to attract more volunteer participation.
2. Increase public awareness of their organization.

### **Upgrade sewer and water systems**

**Water System:** The city operates two wells and two towers to provide water supply. The city is transitioning from simply maintaining our water system to planning for long term improvements.

Proposed actions through 2017:

1. Pursue 85% accountability of all gallons pumped. Several actions are being taken including installing meters on all unmetered outlets, FD reporting usage, tracking collector adjustments, replacement of obsolete meters with more accurate meters, verifying master meter accuracy at each well and annual leak detection efforts.
2. Continue the annual fire hydrant testing. Use hydrant test data and hydrology mapping to make improvements to the water system to improve flow and redundancy.
3. Continue pursuing the 20 year water plan (2031) that has been adopted by the city council which includes installing a 10 inch loop around the city and upgrading all other distribution lines to 6 inches minimum.

**Sewer:** The City operates a 150,000 GPD 3-cell lagoon system for wastewater treatment. At the same time, the city is under constant pressure to continuously identify and eliminate sources of inflow & infiltration of ground water into the sewer system. Like the water system, the city is transitioning from maintaining to planning for long term improvements. Proposed actions through 2017:

1. Continue inflow & infiltration abatement efforts through smoke testing, replacement and upgrade of the distribution system per DNR guidance.
2. Consider cost effective means of repairing or replacing the city's current clay tile sewer mains.
3. Pursue implementation of DNR's 10 year (2026) order to upgrade the waste treatment system to reduce ammonia discharges.

**Trash Service:** In addition to providing sewer and water services, the city contracts with outside vendors for residential trash service. The city agreed to a five year contract extension in 2014 which brought about the vendor provided trash receptacles. In partnership with the Sarcoxie Girl Scouts and Innovative Industries, a recycling center was brought to Sarcoxie in 2016. The city also transitioned from an annual city wide cleanup program to providing continuous access to a roll off dumpster year round to help improve cleanup efforts in the city. Proposed actions through 2017:

1. Build on the city's recycling program.
2. Continue to provide year round access to dumpsters for large items or cleanup activities.

### **Expand the park system and create more recreational opportunities**

**Parks & Recreation:** The Park Advisory Board oversees the city's parks and recreational assets and assists with community events such as "Trunk or Treat" and "Christmas on the Square". In 2015, the Park Board created a Stebbins Park Improvement Plan which involved removing obsolete equipment, renovating existing assets, and adding additional assets to the park. To date they have made substantial improvements to the Stebbins. Proposed actions through 2017:

1. Complete the Stebbins Park Improvement Plan.
2. Install a watering system for the park on the square
3. Address the challenge of shrinking pool attendance and rising costs to find a happy medium.
4. Improve the acoustics in the community building.

### **Upgrade the stormwater system**

Little has been done to the city's stormwater system over the past 20 years. This lack of action has resulted in localized flooding and an extra burden on the sewer system. This problem has to be addressed at the macro level before haphazardly addressing it in individual neighborhoods. A small amount of funds have been reserved in preparation of addressing this issue. Proposed actions through 2017:

1. Work with the City Engineers to commission a stormwater map.
2. Work with engineers, public works, property owners to implement improvements that do more than just push stormwater problems to other neighborhoods.

### **Improve the transportation system**

**Streets:** The city has approximately 11 miles of paved streets. Unfortunately part of the issue with streets is that our practice has been to simply add new asphalt on top of old asphalt. The biggest challenge for the street system is a lack of funds for asphalt replacement. The cost of asphalt has exploded over the past 10 years while funding has remained fairly static. Proposed actions through 2017:

1. The priority of our street plan is to first protect and preserve existing streets then focus reserves on repairing the worst streets in our inventory.

### **Adopt property maintenance and management tools**

Property maintenance and management tools primarily involve "planning and zoning". Although traditionally considered a very unpopular activity, it has more recently gained interest in at least exploring the impact planning and zoning could have on Sarcoxie. Proposed actions through 2017 include:

1. Work with the Missouri Municipal League to explore the state laws on planning and zoning. Share this information with the SEED Board and Chamber of Commerce to determine the feasibility of implementing it.

### **Encourage new residential, retail, and commercial development**

1. Pursue at least 1 housing subdivision
2. Complete the exit 26 improvements
3. Pursue exit 29 improvements

### **Increase tax revenue**

Increasing tax revenue increases available funds for the City and School District to improve services to the residents. It is also a good indicator of economic development, increasing population, and other desirable variables. Success in the other areas of this plan will have a positive impact on this area of focus.

### **Retain and grow 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 2,000 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 conducting surveys and interviews, JumpStart, INC. and the SEED Board separately 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 through 2017:

1. A 2,000 population goal by 2020.
2. The City is receptive to the creation of 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.

### **Neighborhood revitalization**

Neighborhood revitalization involves making improvements to existing neighborhoods in the city. It can be visualized by comparing individual properties within a neighborhood as well as comparing individual neighborhoods to the city in general. Properties or neighborhoods that fall below the norm can be considered distressed. Efforts and resources should be focused first at individual properties then at neighborhoods to bring improvements. Indicators of distress include high turnover of residency, vacant or abandoned properties, and general conditions and upkeep of properties such as yards, nuisances, structure condition, types of activity occurring (i.e. frequent criminal activity, disturbances, dog and animal issues, etc.)

There are two distinct groups of owners or tenants of distressed properties - owners or tenants with a desire to improve properties but lack resources and owners or tenants that lack the desire to maintain properties to a standard consistent with the neighborhood they reside in. It is important to factor in these distinctions when addressing the issues of each group accordingly.

To date, aspects of neighborhood stabilization are frequently talked about but not enough progress has been made. This lack of progress can be traced to lack of a clear direction and limited resources including grant programs, local funds, manpower, and civic group participation. To increase improvements in this area, the city has developed the following understandings, policies and action plans:

1. Pursue GRO Pilot Project impacting neighborhood revitalization.
2. Focus on dangerous vacant buildings - the weakest of our housing inventory.
3. Pursue condemning at least 2 unsafe and abandoned properties in the city.
4. Continue tax sale acquisitions and other alternative measures to make improvements
5. Continue police department’s nuisance enforcement activities.
6. Continue emphasis on city clean up (railroad tracks, Swifty Creek, street curbs, etc.)