



## VISION 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**History:** The community's long-range planning process has been known as "Vision" since it was first conducted in 1989 (Vision 2000). The Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce has consistently spearheaded this process and has collaborated with citizens and community leaders to update the long-range plan frequently since 1989 (Vision 2010, 2015, 2020). The community participated in the most recent process April to November 2008 to create Vision 2025.

The Vision process is specific to Rogers and Lowell, but the outcome matters to anyone who lives, works, plays, shops or does business in Rogers, Lowell and the region. The most common factor in other successful, thriving communities throughout the U.S. is a planning process which engages citizens and leaders in identifying and proposing solutions to advance their community. The Vision plan is referenced frequently by leadership and planning bodies such as city administration, city council, planning commission and public school and higher education institution boards as they make critical advancement and planning decisions and serves as a springboard to launch us into new projects, infrastructure and facilities.

**Process:** Community surveys were conducted in March and April 2008, with more than 500 individuals submitting opinions and feedback. Survey results were compiled and used to identify and prioritize 39 sectors representing the key issues identified by each community. More than 200 individuals participated in committee meetings throughout July, August and September 2008. A compilation of sector reports was presented to the community in November 2008.

**Vision 2025:** A number of clear themes emerged throughout the Vision 2025 process at the local and regional level:

In Lowell, continued efforts to advance the community through consistent planning and leadership will be essential. Infrastructure improvements, land use planning, consistent long-term leadership and planning, growing city services, facilities and amenities, adequate funding through a growing tax base and aggressive marketing and identity branding were key priorities identified.

Most importantly for Rogers will be support from community leaders and citizens for an anticipated late 2010/early 2011 bond issue to extend the current one cent sales tax for significant projects related to streets and parks. Street improvements, community appearance and beautification, advancement of downtown Rogers, parks, facilities and green space, trails, bike trails and community connectivity, a community gathering place, engagement of emerging leadership, workforce recruitment and retention and public school district promotion were key.

Many issues were combined and addressed at the regional level. In addition to regional transportation and infrastructure funding and advocacy, additional priorities included childcare and after-school care as well as newcomer communication.

A complete sector list along with sector reports and the Vision 2025 executive summary and report in its entirety are all available at [www.RogersLowell.com](http://www.RogersLowell.com)



## Northwest Arkansas At-A-Glance

### 1. Dynamic Growth

Northwest Arkansas is consistently ranked one of the fastest-growing metro areas in the nation – the only Midwestern city to demonstrate such growth. Overall regional growth since 2000 more than 25%; 17<sup>th</sup> fastest-growing metro area in U.S. and 110<sup>th</sup> largest MSA of 363 in U.S. Since 1990, region has doubled in population, today more than 2.4 million people live within a 100 mile radius (NWA Regional Planning Commission).

### 2. National Acclaim

Repeated top 20 accolades from the Milken Institute (top 10 best performing cities nationally three times since 2002; #6 in 5-year wage and salary growth; #10 in 5-year job growth), *Forbes* Magazine (#8 best place for business/careers 2007), Kiplinger's (#7 of 2008 best cities), *Inc.* Magazine (#13 best overall places in nation; #4 of best medium-sized cities 2007), *Money* Magazine (100 best places to live 2006).

### 3. Quality of Life

Sperling's Best Places ranked the area as the 11th least stressful place to live, 11th most secure area in the U.S. (and one of the safest in Arkansas) and 21st best place to relocate a family in 2006. \$300 million in recent healthcare facility expansions in Northwest Arkansas and University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Center for Children opened 2007.

### 4. Education

School districts consistently ranked finest in state (Rogers High School one of *Newsweek* top 100 schools in U.S.; Kirksey Middle School one of 86 "Diamond Schools to Watch" nationwide in 2007. University of Arkansas (18,000+ students, recent \$1 billion Campaign for 21<sup>st</sup> Century) ranked in top tier of America's Best Colleges in 2008 (*U.S. News & World Report*). Dozens of local and national learning institutions including NorthWest Arkansas Community College (8,000+ students) and John Brown University (2,000+).

### 5. Natural Beauty

30,000 sparkling blue acres on Beaver Lake, nearby Buffalo National River and enviable state parks – some of the finest examples of the Natural State. *Outdoor Life* Magazine ranked Rogers #20 of Top 200 Towns for Outdoorsmen 2008, *Boating Life* Magazine calls Beaver Lake one of the 10 best places to live and boat. Ample canoeing, fishing, hiking, biking and boating and fall foliage rivaling New England.

### 6. Amenities

The Arkansas World Trade Center (Rogers), Walton Arts Center (Fayetteville), Pinnacle Hills Promenade shopping center (Rogers), Northwest Arkansas Naturals AA Baseball (Springdale), Botanical Garden of the Ozarks (Fayetteville) and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, scheduled to open in 2010 (Bentonville) along with dozens of local gems such as the Rogers Little Theater and North Arkansas Symphony fill the niche for arts, theater, shopping and attractions.

### 7. Accessibility

Direct flights to 15 national hubs from NWA Regional Airport, less than ten hours drive time to many major U.S. cities, strong interstate and railroad networks.

### 8. Affordability

Cost of living consistently 10% below national average, *BusinessWeek* recently called Rogers one of the top 25 best affordable suburbs in the South (2007).

### 9. Thriving Business Climate

World headquarters of Wal-Mart (Fortune #1), J.B. Hunt Transportation and Tyson Foods; local offices for hundreds of Fortune 500 consumer product companies and service industries; excellent business climate; bustling corporate travel market. Personal income in Northwest Arkansas ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in the U.S. from 2003 to 2004, and the region creates more than 50% of annual jobs in Arkansas. Benton County experienced 41.6% job growth since 2000 (*Money* Magazine).

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