



2024

Vision 100 Update

RogersLowell**Chamber**

Serving Business & Community Together



The center of world-class business, welcoming communities, and opportunities for all.

Leaders Conference Report

June 27, 2024

Vision 100 Update

The 2024 Leaders Conference was held at the Embassy Suites, on June 27th and was utilized to bring together business and community leaders to provide an update on Vision 100 as well as discuss the future of our community. The group heard from leaders from around the region such as Robert Burns with the Walton Family Foundation, Dr. Jeff Perry with Rogers Public Schools, City Officials from both Rogers and Lowell, and Nelson Peacock with the NWA Council. Each presentation built upon one another culminating in a time of collaboration for those in attendance to discuss the future of our community as it relates to Vision 100. Raymond Burns, CEO of the Rogers Lowell Chamber, posed a few questions towards the beginning of the conversation to set the stage for our focus groups later in the day. The focus groups were Infrastructure, Public Safety, Parks, Public Education, Planning & Zoning, Arts & Entertainment, Workforce, and Regional Cooperation.

Our VISION for Rogers Lowell is a vibrant, diverse, and cohesive community in the heart of Northwest Arkansas, with a willing spirit, a healthy focus and a progressive attitude, possessing the core values of faith, family, community, education, and economic prosperity. The Rogers Lowell Chamber has utilized our visioning to develop programs, philosophy and strategy geared towards how we approach growth, building, and bonds for our area.

Rogers and Lowell currently have a combined population of nearly 87,832 people with the population increasing to 101,000 by 2030. Northwest Arkansas is scheduled to reach one million residents by 2050. It is our intention to advance community values by preserving and recognizing our heritage, taking action in the present, and pursuing a dynamic future as we continue to add to our population. Some of the most important Quality of Life issues we foresee are safety, transportation, entertainment, shopping, and services. We must continue to invest in Public Safety and have smarter and imaginative Planning and Zoning while recognizing the capacity of our city boundaries. As we continue to build up our community, we must also recognize the need to maintain this growth through both roads and continued beautification. Clear, concise, and consistent visioning is needed as we look to the future of Rogers and Lowell.

Robert Burns, Home Region Program Director for the Walton Family Foundation, laid the groundwork for the day's conversation by discussing the region's growth with insights into quality of life and workforce development. Though we have many bright spots, big concerns surround transportation, affordable housing, infrastructure, and

early childhood education/education in general. Many topics that have been brought to the WFF's attention are not necessarily new to our Vision 100 strategy, but the conversations have shifted.

Conclusions

As we move forward, the regional paradigm must play a more prominent role. The stage is set for dramatic growth, and there is little we can do to change that. The real challenge will be maintaining a quality of life aligned with the small-town hometown feel that everyone desires, as we develop into a larger metropolitan area.

Taking the statement that **“world class companies need world class people to satisfy workforce needs”** brings us to world class people want world class communities. The implications of not looking at all the major areas or quality of life could be disastrous as a worst-case scenario and could ultimately cause people to leave Northwest Arkansas as quickly as they are coming here.

So, let’s spell it out. It’s about the workforce. That’s a driving factor that touches and gives cause to our most challenging areas of concern. It’s a marketing challenge, a regional cooperation challenge, and a math challenge. Here’s a list of some of the major factors that need immediate attention to address workforce recruitment challenges:

1. Affordable Housing
2. Child Care / Early Childhood Education
3. Infrastructure
 - a. Streets, Roads, & Highways
 - b. Public Transportation
 - c. Water Quality
 - d. Waste Water Treatment
 - e. Trails & Sidewalks
 - f. Drainage
4. Local / Regional Planning & Zoning
5. Solid Waste & Recycling
6. Public Safety, Court Facilities, & Jails
7. Faith, Inclusiveness & Belonging
8. Healthcare
9. Public & Private Education / Workforce Training
10. Next Gen Leadership Development
11. Political Unity, at least locally, but at all levels preferably
12. Recreation, Parks, Arts & Entertainment
13. Beautification
14. Expanded Retail & Service Choices

It can be argued that all of these are top priorities, and that the math, or dollars to do these things will be best served by communities working together internally but also working together with each other. We have a say, an opportunity, an obligation to develop and support leadership that will look beyond self interest and make our home, Northwest Arkansas, an even better place to live, work, and play.

SLIDO Poll Results – 2024:

The Rogers Lowell Chamber prides itself on asking the tough questions to form a discussion about the hard issues that are facing our community. One of our methods in engagement is through utilizing surveys throughout our networks to gauge priorities. Below you will see a comparison between the 2024 Leaders Conference Attendees and the 2019 Community Survey responses.

2024 – Leaders Conference Response – Top 5 Issues:

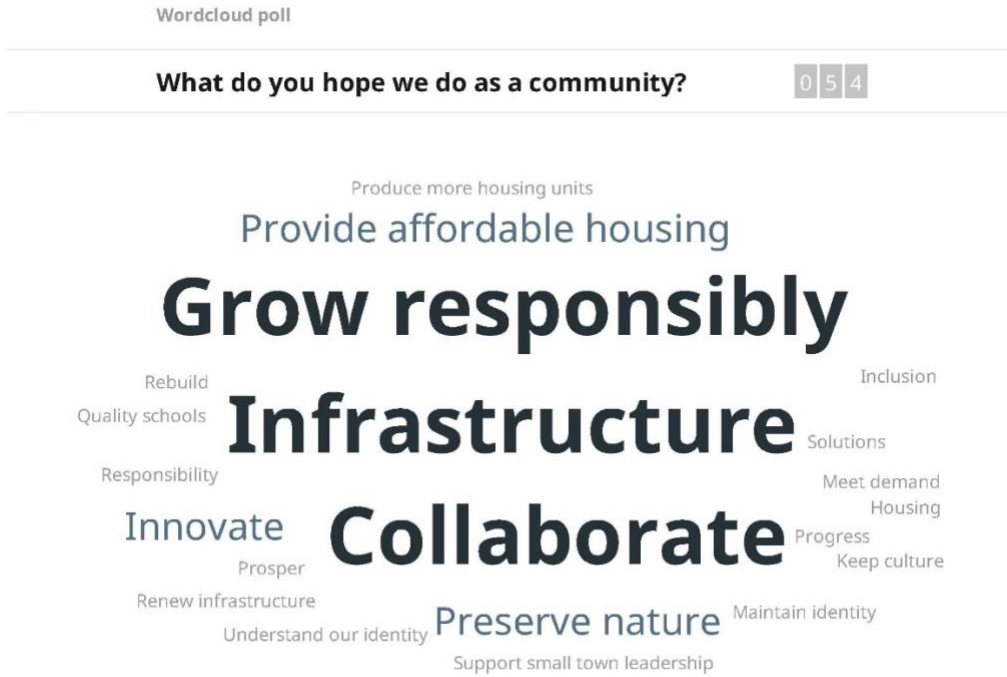


2019 – Community Response – Top 5 Issues:



Difference: We have also seen some relatively big shifts from 2019 to 2024 in regard to what keeps people up at night relating to our community. In 2019, the big issues were workforce, education, communication, and diversity but in 2024 that has shifted to affordability, housing, finances and inflation.

2024 Leaders Conference Response – Hope we do as a community?



2019 Community Response – Hope we do as a community?



Difference: From 2019 to 2024 we had some similarities in our responses for what we hope not to do as a community. In 2019, there was a focus on missing legacy opportunities, failing to think regionally and ignoring increasing population, to following self-serving agendas. In 2024, the big concern was that we lose our identity as NWA, we grow irresponsibly, or we become complacent.

2024 Leaders Conference Response – Describe the Rogers – Lowell you hope to see in the future.

Wordcloud poll

List several action words that best describe Rogers – Lowell as you hope to see them in the future,

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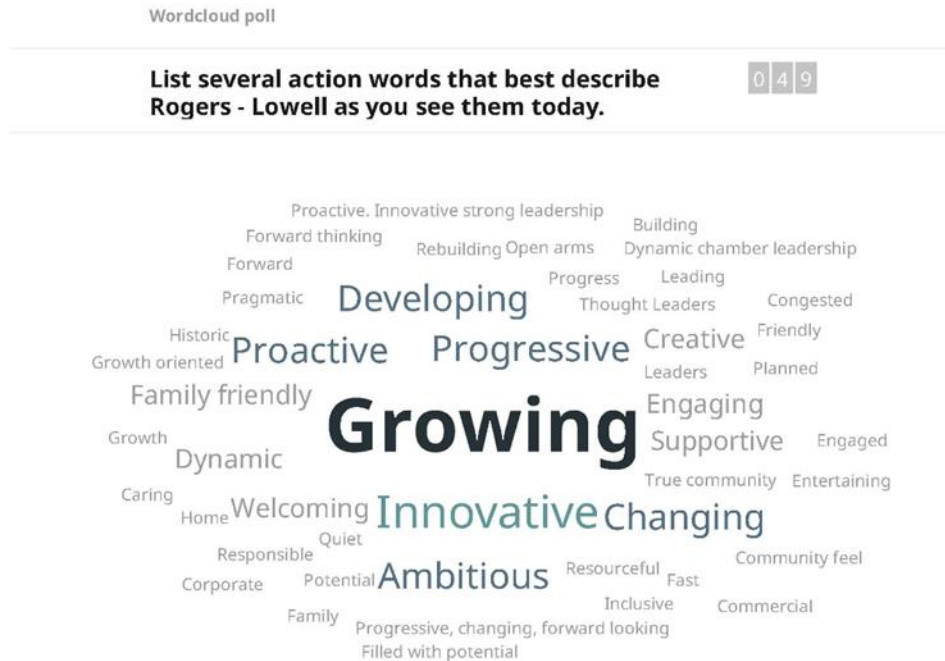


2019 Community Response – Describe the Rogers – Lowell you hope to see in the future.



Difference: We had some unison in what we hope the future of Rogers and Lowell look like from 2019 to 2024 but we also had some variation. In 2019, the main focus was remaining authentic, leading the region, and being more welcoming and diverse. In 2024, the two biggest components were that our community is safe and inclusive while also being walkable.

2024 Leaders Conference Response – Describe Rogers – Lowell as you see them today.



2019 Community Response – Describe Rogers – Lowell as you see them today.



Northwest Arkansas Council about regional issues that are facing our communities, the biggest piece being our growth. After hearing from the various community leaders, we were able to take some time to break into Focus Groups to further dive in on key topics for Rogers and Lowell.

Major Comments from Focus Groups - 2024:

The Focus Groups for the 2024 Leaders Conference were an opportunity for business and community leaders to come together to discuss the vision for growth in our community moving forward. Each of the focus groups coincide with one another to facilitate a better community and outcomes as we continue to grow.

Infrastructure: Infrastructure is a very important piece in the success of our community as it continues to grow. There were quite a few takeaways from the focus group that highlighted areas we should consider investing in.

- Sewage, Water Treatment, and Landfill plan needed to address age, capacity, and general infrastructure.
- Public Transportation/General Transportation:
 - Lack of Availability/ Awareness/ Routes for Public Transit
 - Needs Better Connectivity
 - How are we addressing traffic flow/road needs with 36 people moving here per day.
 - East/ West Connectivity
 - Increased Roundabouts for better traffic flow
 - Interchanges – Exit 83
 - Need more parking.
 - Need safer sidewalks.
- Can more utilities be buried?

Public Safety: Public Safety is a major component for any community to thrive and continue an upward trajectory. A few of the main concerns brought forward by the breakout focus group were:

- Availability of affordable housing for people working in public safety to be able to retain employees.
- Ability to alter training for fire and police with the changing landscape of NWA – They need the ability to train for a denser population with higher story buildings.
- Find ways for the community to help support public safety officials through training and other methods.
- The ability to hire and retain first responders – the pool is small and between salaries and housing affordability it is challenging to get quality candidates.

Parks: Parks are a great 3rd space to build a safe and welcoming environment for our community. As we look ahead, the focus groups identified a few topics that could better facilitate this in the community.

- A multi-use indoor sports facility is needed to better support our community.
 - Aquatics, Soccer, Basketball, Pickleball
- Parks should have a master plan to 3-5 years out.
- Connectivity and walkability to parks should be enhanced.
- Maintenance for Park Upkeep.
- Utilizing Parks for other public services.
 - Arts, Music/ Culture Events
 - Sustainability
 - Education
 - Water Quality

Public Education: Public Education is important for any growing community, the focus group highlighted three areas we should be considering as we reevaluate Vision 100.

- CTE/Workforce Education:
 - More awareness around programming and job opportunities for students.
 - Exposing Students to Career Opportunities sooner than high school.
- Addressing Mental Health needs for Students
- Educational standards should be consistent for Public, Cater, Private, and Home School Students.

Planning & Zoning: Planning & Zoning plays a large role in how we continue to develop our community. The biggest piece of discussion for this focus group was regarding the Unified Code Development Plan and there were a few key takeaways.

- Communication Concerns:
 - It is important to communicate the plan with planners, engineers, architects, etc.
 - Meetings between the city planner and developers.
- General Code Plan Questions:
 - Will the Unified Code Development Plan continue to be developed, changed, or adjusted?
- Need for Specific Rules regarding Codes for Parking Lots – No Technical Parking Plans

Vision 100 and Rogers' Path to Smart Growth

The City of Rogers' recent comprehensive growth plan and new Unified Development Code (UDC) were deeply informed by the values and goals outlined in the **Vision 100 Community Action Plan**. This plan, developed with extensive community input and championed by the Chamber, provided a clear expression of our residents' priorities as we prepare for a future population of 100,000. Vision 100 laid the groundwork for the city's forward-looking approach, ensuring that growth would reflect the community's vision.

Community-Driven Planning

The development of our comprehensive growth plan began with a review of the **Vision 100** framework, ensuring that every step aligned with what residents value most—balanced growth, quality of life, and economic vitality. This focus on community values led to a highly collaborative planning process, creating a roadmap for the future that incorporates public input at every stage.

Smart Growth and Form-Based Code

Vision 100 called for responsible, sustainable growth. In response, Rogers embraced **smart growth principles** by adopting a transect-based comprehensive plan and a nearly 100% form-based UDC. The form-based approach focuses on the physical form of development, prioritizing walkability, mixed-use spaces, and vibrant public areas. This ensures that our growth not only accommodates more residents but also enhances quality of life.

Administrative Efficiency

To encourage development that adheres to our growth plan, the UDC allows for **administrative approvals** for compliant projects, streamlining processes and reducing delays. This makes Rogers more attractive to investors and developers, while ensuring that new projects align with the community's values.

Positioning Rogers as a Regional Leader

By adopting **Vision 100** as a guiding document, Rogers has positioned itself as a leader in the region. Our focus on creating **intensity centers** and **place types** supports sustainable development and sets the stage for long-term prosperity. As one of the first cities in the region to adopt a nearly all form-based code, Rogers is promoting smart growth that serves as a model for other communities in Northwest Arkansas.

In summary, Vision 100 laid the foundation for a bold, community-driven approach to growth. It will help ensure that Rogers remains a thriving, connected, and vibrant city well into the future.

Arts & Entertainment: Arts & Entertainment are another important 3rd space opportunity to create a community that is welcoming to all cultures and experiences. The focus group identified a few areas in which we can improve.

- Diversity of Music Performances to offer more Representation of the Community.
- More opportunities for Arts & Culture Development in Uptown Rogers.
- Bring more Cultural Programming with better interactions between businesses and the general community.
 - Land Trust
 - Culinary Experiences
 - Outdoor Art
 - Film Festivals

Workforce: Workforce is key to any community that intends to continue growing in a healthy manner. The focus group was able to identify key concerns and ideas as we move forward with Vision 100.

- Regional Cooperation/Training Center? Is this possible due to the need.
 - Identify and Address Critical Needs within the Workforce
 - Ensure Businesses are Involved and Committed
 - Identify Experiences and Competencies that are needed for the Workforce needs.
 - Specify Career Technical Pathway Education Opportunities.
- Career Technical Education as a priority to address workforce needs.
 - Expanding Workforce Centers and Trade School Opportunities.
 - More Opportunities for short-term certifications, career advancement education, and upskill opportunities.
 - Continued Growth for School Age Workforce Development.
 - Explore additional LEARNS Act Rules/Regs to increase graduation rates in CTE Programming.
 - Inform and Change Perspectives while utilizing parental outreach about Workforce Opportunities towards more Purpose Driven Education Opportunities for CTE Programming.
- Increase workforce housing
- Cost of Childcare/ Early Childhood Education – Impacting the Future of the Workforce.

Regional Cooperation: Regional Cooperation is extremely important to the general landscape of Northwest Arkansas as we continue to grow. In order to thrive as a region, we must all work together for the greater good of our area. The Focus Group identified a few issues that should be addressed from a regional perspective.

- Handling Growth
 - The bigger cities are equipped to handle the growth, but smaller cities are not. How can we support one another with both planning and infrastructure needs.
 - Possibility for all cities adopting similar zoning and planning to ease the ability for developers to work with different cities.
 - Cities still maintain their individual identity despite growth.
- Regional transportation needs to be better.
- Housing
 - Walkability
 - Less Urban Sprawl
 - More Upward Mobility

Action Items:

It's inevitable that we are going to grow tremendously over the next 25 years. We need to learn from the success and failure of other areas of the country what we can do to manage that growth in a positive way, protecting the small town feel that everyone says we must maintain.