



VISION 2030: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ROGERS-LOWELL AREA, ARKANSAS

Submitted by *Market Street Services Inc.*
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MARKET ST

VISION 2030: PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Rogers-Lowell area has a strong track record of resident-driven and collaboratively implemented strategic plans. In 1989, the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce collaborated with city and regional leaders to produce Vision 2000: A Strategic Plan for Rogers-Lowell. Since then, the community’s vision has been updated five times, most recently in 2008 with the development of Vision 2025. And now, as the community and region emerge from the Great Recession and continue to experience an influx of new residents from outside the region, its leadership has recognized the need to revisit the vision once again, acknowledging that many initiatives from Vision 2025 have been completed and that a new set of priorities need to be established. The process of updating the vision is predicated upon resident input and a spirit of collaborative and action-oriented implementation. Inherent in this approach is a commitment to advance what is best for the larger region – Northwest Arkansas – and not simply that which is best for Rogers-Lowell. The community and its residents understand that they are part of a larger economy, and indeed a larger community; one that collectively provides greater opportunity, resources, and amenities than any single community can provide.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The strategic planning process is guided by a diverse Steering Committee of leaders from the public, private, and non-profit sectors. These individuals have overseen the entire planning effort, helping to identify strategic priorities for the Rogers-Lowell area, build consensus, and serving as public advocates for the betterment of the community and its economic development.

Committee Member	Representing Organization
Raymond Burns	Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce
Ric Clifford (co-chair)	Clifford Consulting
Dr. Janie Darr	Rogers Public Schools
Allyson Dyer	Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce
David Faulkner	Pinnacle Hills Promenade Mall
Michael Harvey	Northwest Arkansas Council
Mayor Greg Hines	City of Rogers
Nick Hobbs	J.B. Hunt
Tom Hopper (co-chair)	Crafton Tull
Dr. Evelyn Jorgensen	Northwest Arkansas Community College
Greg Lindley	Simmons First
Mike Malone	Northwest Arkansas Council
Herbert Morales	World Trade Center
Charley Nevin	Hillshire Brands
Karen Parker	Walmart
Eric Pianalto	Mercy Health Northwest Arkansas
Cameron Smith	Cameron Smith & Associates
Greg Stanfill	Arvest Bank
David Thrasher	Thrasher & Chambers
Katie Wright	Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce
Angie Tucker	Tucker’s Appliances
Jerry Walton	Hunt Ventures
Marge Wolf	Northwest Arkansas Food Bank
Whitney Yoder	Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce

SCOPE OF WORK

The six-month strategic planning process included extensive stakeholder input and quantitative research to inform the development of strategic recommendations and implementation guidelines.

PHASE I: STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Input from residents, businesses, and community leaders helped identify core issues facing the community and helped to define a consensus vision for the community's future. The Steering Committee's guidance and feedback was complemented by a series of interviews and focus groups conducted in January and February 2014. Interviews and focus groups were supplemented by a widespread community survey that was open to all residents and businesses of the Rogers-Lowell area. The input phase also supports and informs the development of a new Downtown Master Plan for the City of Rogers, a separate but complementary initiative to this strategic planning process.

PHASE II: COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The Community Assessment provided a detailed examination of the Rogers-Lowell area's competitiveness as a place to live, work, and do business. The Assessment leveraged quantitative and qualitative research, and highlighted the key "stories" facing the Rogers-Lowell area and the larger Northwest Arkansas region in 2014 and beyond. Collectively, these stories examined the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges as identified by resident input and key demographic, socioeconomic, and economic trends. When relevant and appropriate, the performance and competitiveness of the Rogers-Lowell area was benchmarked against two communities with which the area competes for both jobs and workers (Springfield, Missouri and the Springfield metropolitan area, and Overland Park, Kansas and the Kansas City metropolitan area).

PHASE III: COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

The third phase of the process brought together the findings from the first two phases to create a holistic, consensus-based Community Action Plan to guide collaborative economic development and community improvement initiatives in Rogers-Lowell in the years to come. Strategic recommendations are driven by the research findings – both qualitative and quantitative feedback – and supportive of residents' vision for the community. Examples of best practice programs, policies, and initiatives from communities around the country are included to help inform strategic recommendations and their subsequent implementation. The Community Action Plan is also informed by a Marketing Review that analyzed the effectiveness of local and regional community and economic development marketing efforts.

PHASE IV: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

The final phase of the strategic planning process was the development of Implementation Guidelines to support the effective and efficient implementation of the Community Action Plan's strategic recommendations. For each of the various recommendations, the Implementation Guidelines identified lead implementers, key partners, potential costs, an appropriate timeline for implementation, and metrics for gauging implementation success. This final phase of the process is supported by an Organizational Analysis of the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce, including an analysis of staff and financial resources necessary to support collaborative, effective, and efficient implementation in partnership with the City of Rogers, the City of Lowell, and a variety of other critical implementation partners.

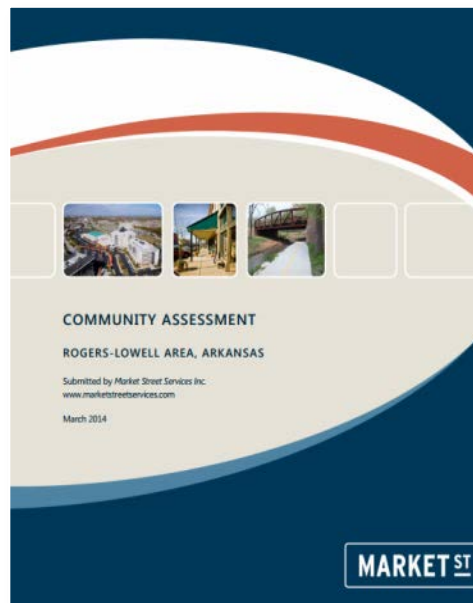
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The Community Assessment seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the trends and issues facing Rogers-Lowell in 2014 and beyond within the context of residents' vision for the future and considering the larger implications of regional development. Nine key "stories" frame the discussion, each weaving multiple data points with resident input to highlight the issues that merit strategic attention. These stories represent themes that emerged from extensive public input provided by Rogers-Lowell area residents, businesses, and community leaders, as well as in-depth analysis of data covering demographic, socioeconomic, and economic trends within the community.

The full Community Assessment (available at www.rogerslowellvision.com) includes a detailed discussion of the relevant data and resident input supporting each story, as well as information on data sources, methodologies, and input methods used to guide the research. More than 1,750 residents participated in the public input process through interviews, focus groups, and a community survey. Roughly one hundred individuals participated in interviews and focus groups conducted in January and February 2014 while nearly 1,650 individuals responded to the community survey. Such tremendous participation and input from residents of Rogers-Lowell ensures that the Community Assessment is well-informed and that the Community Action Plan is rooted in consensus – the community's collective vision for the future.

This Executive Summary provides a brief review of the nine stories that are discussed in detail within the full Community Assessment. These nine stories are:

1. Rogers-Lowell and Northwest Arkansas: A Regional Mindset
2. Growth and Migration: Rogers-Lowell and Its Position within Northwest Arkansas
3. The Changing Face of Rogers-Lowell: Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity
4. Education and Incomes: Opportunity in Northwest Arkansas
5. Economic Transition in Rogers-Lowell
6. Traffic, Transportation, and Infrastructure
7. Public Education in Rogers-Lowell: Preserving an Asset
8. Quality of Life: Community Appeal to Various Groups
9. The Future of Downtown Rogers



ROGERS-LOWELL AND NORTHWEST ARKANSAS: A REGIONAL MINDSET

It is clear from the community input gathered during this process that a discussion of the challenges and opportunities facing Rogers-Lowell in 2014 cannot be decoupled from a discussion of Northwest Arkansas; the community's residents believe that Rogers-Lowell has more to offer than that which is simply contained within its jurisdictional borders. Rogers-Lowell and its counterparts within the region – Bella Vista, Bentonville, Fayetteville, Siloam Springs, Springdale, and many other distinct communities – all have their own unique attributes and all combine to create a region that, when working together, is truly greater than the sum of its parts. Residents have indicated that they are proud of the progress that has been made in Northwest Arkansas towards greater regional coordination and cooperation. But they are also keenly aware that this growth will continue to pose a series of challenges on *all* communities in Northwest Arkansas and not simply the community in which they reside. So while there is consensus among Rogers-Lowell residents that there has been progress towards regionalism, and acknowledgement by some that the community has been a leader in this regard, there is still a strong desire for continued emphasis on regional coordination to mitigate challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

GROWTH AND MIGRATION: ROGERS-LOWELL AND ITS POSITION WITHIN NORTHWEST ARKANSAS

Northwest Arkansas' rapid growth is among the greatest sources of pride and concern for residents. The City of Rogers has grown from just under 5,000 residents in 1950 (4.4 percent of regional population) to more than 56,000 in 2010 (12.1 percent of regional population). Population and migration statistics reveal that Rogers is clearly attracting families with children, an attribute mentioned repeatedly during public input, while continuing to attract experienced professionals aged 45-64 and those at or near retirement age (65+). However, the data covering household sizes and birth rates reveal something compelling: while many communities attract singles and young married couples before they have children, families are by and large moving to Rogers *after* having children. Many residents expressed concern that Rogers-Lowell may not be as attractive to singles or young professionals as other communities in the region.

THE CHANGING FACE OF ROGERS-LOWELL: DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND EQUITY

Minorities are driving population growth nationwide and the United States is steadily approaching projected majority-minority status by 2040. Northwest Arkansas is home to a relatively small African American population. As of 2010, two percent of the region's population was African American (only 0.4 percent in the City of Rogers). The implication is clear: Northwest Arkansas may not be viewed by African Americans as a place that is welcoming, inclusive, or socially enjoyable. Resident input supported this conclusion. Meanwhile, the growth of the Hispanic population in Rogers has mirrored and actually exceeded national trends. According to the 2000 Decennial Census, Hispanics represented roughly one in five residents in the City of Rogers (19.3 percent). Just ten years later the Hispanic population had grown to nearly one in three residents (31.4 percent). Although Rogers is rapidly diversifying, it is really becoming a community of two demographics: whites and Hispanics.

Income gaps at various levels between Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites are not as wide in Rogers as the gaps that are observed in the comparison communities and across the nation despite larger than average gaps in educational attainment. This implies that Hispanic households in Rogers are either more likely to

have two income-earners, or their single income-earners are more likely to be employed in higher-wage occupations. In 2012, the labor force participation rate for principally Spanish-speakers in Rogers was 79.2 percent vs. 70.1 percent nationwide.

When asked if “the Rogers-Lowell area is a welcoming and inclusive place that would be attractive to a diverse set of individuals from a variety of backgrounds” nearly 88 percent of Hispanics surveyed indicated they agreed, an encouraging finding as similar surveys in other communities have revealed that between 25 and 50 percent of minorities often feel unwelcome in the community they call “home.” As the community continues to grow and plan for its future, it will be critical to remain focused on the needs of a rapidly-expanding Hispanic population while promoting integration and equity in a variety of areas to ensure that the community does not become spatially, socially, and economically segregated.

EDUCATION AND INCOMES: OPPORTUNITY IN NORTHWEST ARKANSAS

Education has long been referred to as “the great equalizer” with an abundance of evidence showing the relationship between education and earning potential. As of 2012, 27.1 percent of the region’s adults (age 25 and over) possess a bachelor’s degree or higher, trailing the national average of 28.6 percent. Relative to the regional average, a slightly larger share of residents in the City of Rogers possess a bachelor’s degree or higher (27.5 percent) but a significantly larger share do not have a high school diploma (20.7 percent). The data support the inferences made in the previous section: Rogers is a somewhat bifurcated community along socioeconomic lines within the region, characterized by comparatively large populations at the two ends of the educational attainment spectrum.

Fortunately, the data also reveal that the community and the region are gaining ground on the average American community. Between 2007 and 2012, the percentage of the population with a bachelor’s degree or higher grew more rapidly in Rogers and across Northwest Arkansas than it did nationwide, and the population without a high school diploma declined much more precipitously. During the same five-year period, the median household income in the City of Rogers increased from \$45,826 to \$52,308, growing by 14.1 percent, far exceeded the rate of growth across the region (3.2 percent) and the nation (3.5 percent). As a result, the median household income in the City of Rogers now exceeds the national median by roughly \$500, just five years after trailing the national median by more than \$4,000. And when considering that the region’s cost of living is considerably lower than the average American community, it is clear that households enjoy a relative advantage in terms of their incomes’ buying power.

ECONOMIC TRANSITION IN ROGERS-LOWELL

Northwest Arkansas has been among the fastest-growing economies in the country in recent decades, one that has historically been characterized by relatively low unemployment rates. The influence and impact of Walmart, Tyson Foods, J.B. Hunt, and associated supplier networks on the region’s growth is well documented and widely acknowledged by residents. But much has changed in the Rogers-Lowell economy over the course of the last decade. The Rogers-Lowell area has gone from containing 20.5 percent of the metropolitan area’s jobs in 2003 to 19.3 percent in 2013. More than 2,700 new retail jobs were created in the Rogers-Lowell area over the course of the last decade. Retail employment in the Rogers-Lowell area now represents more than 25 percent of all retail employment in the Northwest Arkansas metropolitan area, up from 18.7 percent in 2003. The growth in retail has been followed closely by growth in the

complementary accommodation and food service sector. Health care and social assistance added over 1,500 new jobs in Rogers-Lowell, expanding at a pace (53.1 percent) that far exceeded the national rate of expansion (22.8 percent). The community also added nearly 1,100 new professional, scientific, and technical services jobs in the last decade, growing at a rate (78.7 percent) that is nearly four times that of the average community nationwide (19.4 percent). However, more than 2,200 manufacturing jobs have been lost, along with job loss in the transportation and warehousing sector. Very simply, the community is cementing its status as an anchor for retail, accommodation and food services, and professional services. It is losing ground as a center for manufacturing and transportation/warehousing, although it remains a key anchor for the latter given the immense presence of J.B. Hunt. However, these sectors – manufacturing and transportation/warehousing – remain vital to the community’s future and a commitment to their growth and expansion is important as they provide necessary and often high-wage employment opportunities for many of its residents.

TRAFFIC, TRANSPORTATION, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Where there is rapid growth there is – almost invariably – concern for a community’s infrastructure to keep pace with that growth. When asked to describe the greatest challenge facing Rogers-Lowell in 2014 and beyond, survey respondents overwhelmingly mentioned issues related to accommodating growth. Traffic, roads, transportation, and infrastructure were among the most frequently mentioned words in response to this question. Residents have numerous concerns when it comes to transportation infrastructure. Chief among them is the worry that Interstate 49 will become “gridlocked” during peak travel times. Residents also wish to see improved north-south connectivity, especially along the east side of town. Planned improvements to Highway 71 Business that, like improvements to I-49, are supported by the recently enacted, voter approved half-cent sales tax, will aid in this regard.

In many ways, the data covering commute times indicate that traffic in Rogers-Lowell and Northwest Arkansas has not led to commute times that are as severe as those experienced in many other comparable metropolitan areas. As of 2012, the average commute for residents of the City of Rogers was just 16.8 minutes, nearly five minutes lower than the regional average, four and half minutes lower than the statewide average, and nearly nine minutes lower than the national average. Just 14.6 percent of all Rogers-Lowell residents experienced a commute of 30 minutes or longer in 2012, well below the regional, state, and national averages. Regardless of what the data say, the perception exists that traffic is a problem. And if traffic is among residents’ greatest concerns in a community where commute times are considerably lower than the average American community, this speaks volumes about how truly successful the community and larger region have been in meeting the other needs of their residents.

PUBLIC EDUCATION IN ROGERS-LOWELL: PRESERVING AN ASSET

While residents view traffic and transportation infrastructure among the community’s greatest challenges to overcome, they view Rogers Public Schools among its greatest strengths. Many indicated that they were proud that the district had “planned well for growth” but were also quick to note that it was important for the community to “stay ahead of the curve.” Some residents noted that intra-regional movement among families was inevitable, and that this was actually an asset for the region; families have an abundance of quality choices for public education in Northwest Arkansas. As one individual noted, “A family relocating to Northwest Arkansas *could* make their decision about where to live within the region based on schools, but

they wouldn't *have* to." This is a rare quality. However, some residents expressed concern that the school system – while still high-quality – may be losing ground relative to other districts in the region.

The graduation rate in Rogers Public Schools has improved over the last three years, rising from 80.2 percent to 82.7 percent. However, greater improvements in graduation rates were actually made across the state and the graduation rate in Rogers Public Schools now actually trails the state average for Arkansas. This is a surprising finding given that student performance on end of course testing at every level is higher, and in many cases considerably higher, than what is observed across the state.

In recent years the school district has implemented its strategic plan – “Rogers Public Schools: From Good to Great” – with much success. The district’s strategic plan updates have highlighted that a greater focus will now be placed on improving graduation rates, following an investment in improved instruction. A continued commitment to soliciting parental and student input will be critical to the successful implementation of a strategic plan that is mindful of the changing needs of families and students.

QUALITY OF LIFE: COMMUNITY APPEAL TO VARIOUS GROUPS

The full Community Assessment discusses a variety of factors such as school quality, traffic and transportation infrastructure, and job opportunities, all of which help define quality of place and influence quality of life in Rogers-Lowell. However, many other factors influence a community’s attractiveness and the quality of life enjoyed by its residents. Although many residents praised the community’s amenities, particularly shopping and dining options, they lamented the relative lack of nightlife for both adults and youth. They are delighted by their access to nature and recent developments in cultural amenities; they look forward to planned improvements at Lake Atalanta and feel fortunate to be so proximate to a world-class institution like Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. They are anxious to see a more vibrant downtown Rogers. They enjoy a comparatively affordable single-family housing stock but acknowledge that a relative lack of apartments and condos may inhibit the area’s attractiveness to potential new residents that are either unable to afford or not interested in a single-family home purchase. And last but not least, residents feel safe in the community and in their schools, but the data indicates that the incidence of certain crimes is rising faster than population growth. Community aesthetics, beautification, and redevelopment needs were also cited by residents as among the community’s greatest challenges.

THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN ROGERS

When focus groups discussed the topics mentioned in the preceding section – entertainment, nightlife, housing, aesthetics, redevelopment, and general community attractiveness to different age groups – the conversation almost always came back to downtown Rogers. When survey respondents were asked to identify the community’s challenges, downtown was the most frequently mentioned issue behind traffic and transportation infrastructure. And when asked what they would like to see different about the community in ten years, survey respondents overwhelmingly cited downtown. The City of Rogers has very clearly heard this desire from residents already. The development of a new Downtown Master Plan is occurring alongside this broader process to develop a holistic Community Action Plan. The future of downtown Rogers is central to residents’ vision of the future for the entire community. Quite simply, community vision and downtown improvement cannot be decoupled.

VISION 2030: A COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

Although each and every resident has their own unique vision for the future of Rogers-Lowell, a series of visioning exercises conducted with focus group participants, the Steering Committee, and the thousands of residents that responded to the community survey reveal that there is a great deal of consensus within Rogers-Lowell regarding the community's desired attributes. This input – summarized in the full Community Action Plan – and the findings of the Community Assessment has demonstrated that residents of Rogers-Lowell:

- ✓ value high-quality **public education**;
- ✓ appreciate and want to maintain the community's **economic diversity**, growth, and prosperity;
- ✓ want to see continued planning and **infrastructure investment** to accommodate growth;
- ✓ desire **beautification and renewal** efforts that enhance community aesthetics;
- ✓ look forward to **downtown development** initiatives that create a more vibrant area;
- ✓ seek greater diversity in **amenities and entertainment** options that appeal to all ages;
- ✓ value the community's access to **nature and recreation**, and;
- ✓ hope to maintain a welcoming community that encourages resident **engagement and inclusion**.

Inherent in residents' vision for Rogers-Lowell is an acknowledgement that the community is part of a larger region – Northwest Arkansas – to which it contributes many assets and from which it derives many benefits. The community and its residents understand that they are part of a larger economy, and indeed a larger community; one that collectively provides greater opportunity, resources, and amenities than any single community can provide. Accordingly, the pursuit and realization of residents' vision for an ideal community requires a commitment to advance what is best for the larger region and not simply that which is best for Rogers-Lowell.

VISION STATEMENT

The Community Action Plan and its various recommendations are guided by a vision statement derived from resident input and reflective of the aforementioned attributes. The vision statement is a concise declaration of residents' ideal community, and is accompanied by a list of eight core assets and attributes – the community's "pillars" – that serve as the foundation upon which this ideal community is built.

"The Rogers-Lowell area is a vibrant, diverse, and cohesive community in the heart of Northwest Arkansas, providing high-quality economic, educational, and recreational opportunities for its residents. This vision will be upheld by continuing to invest in the pillars that serve as the foundation upon which our ideal community is developed and maintained."

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: OUR EIGHT PILLARS

The following graphic illustrates the strategic framework for this Community Action Plan. It serves as a visual representation of the interconnectedness and equal importance of developing the community's eight pillars that serve as the foundation of its vision for an ideal future.



The Community Action Plan that follows includes a set of recommendations to support the maintenance and continued development of these eight pillars. Separate sets of recommendations are presented for the City of Rogers and the City of Lowell, with a considerably greater emphasis placed on recommendations for the City of Rogers given its relative population and employment levels, and its financial support for this strategic planning initiative.

The full Community Action Plan (available at www.rogerslowellvision.com) delineates which recommendations should be implemented in the City of Rogers, the City of Lowell, across jurisdictional borders in the Rogers-Lowell area, or region wide across Northwest Arkansas. Best practices from other communities are cited in the full Community Action Plan when relevant and appropriate, with detailed descriptions of these best practices included in an Appendix to the full Plan. The full plan also includes a more detailed discussion of each recommendation; this Summary document simply provides an overview of the recommendations. For example, the full Community Action Plan includes a list of specific construction projects referenced in recommendation 2.1 to "Complete critical road widening and new road construction projects."

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS: CITY OF ROGERS

1. Public Education

- 1.1 *Continue to annually update and implement the Rogers Public Schools' (RPS) Strategic Plan.*
- 1.2 *Implement annual "Reach Out to Dropouts" events to reduce the dropout rate in RPS.*
- 1.3 *Identify an appropriate elementary school(s) to serve as a pilot program for The Leader in Me and phase in implementation of the program following necessary evaluation.*
- 1.4 *Develop a Partners in Education (PIE) program to support RPS.*
- 1.5 *Develop a Rogers-Lowell High School Business Plan Competition.*
- 1.6 *Develop and launch the Diploma Equivalency for All Residents (DEAR Rogers) initiative.*
- 1.7 *Expand technical education and training programs at NWACC to meet the needs of existing and prospective new employers.*
- 1.8 *Work with existing employers to evaluate the viability of implementing employer-sponsored adult education programs for employees.*

2. Infrastructure Investment

- 2.1 *Complete critical road widening and new road construction projects.*
- 2.2 *Conduct necessary planning to advance long-term (2017-2025) road infrastructure priorities.*
- 2.3 *Adequately prepare for the construction of the Rogers Eastern Bypass.*
- 2.4 *Complete construction of critical drainage and streambank stabilization projects.*
- 2.5 *Increase the utilization of reflective paint along key corridors to improve visibility.*
- 2.6 *Evaluate the need to increase capacity of the City's snow removal resources.*
- 2.7 *Work with area electric utilities to evaluate the potential costs and benefits of burying existing, above ground power lines when pursuing major redevelopment projects.*
- 2.8 *Conduct necessary environmental and engineering studies to evaluate the viability and cost of extending water and sewer infrastructure to underserved areas of the community.*
- 2.9 *Evaluate the viability of developing one or more carpool and park-and-ride lots near major interchanges to promote commute alternatives.*
- 2.10 *Support the continued expansion and optimization of Ozark Regional Transit (ORT) bus service throughout Rogers-Lowell.*
- 2.11 *Continue to support the expansion of the number of carriers and nonstop destinations served by Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport (XNA).*
- 2.12 *Support major transportation infrastructure projects of regional significance.*

3. Economic Diversity

- 3.1 *Continue to support a holistic and collaborative regional approach to economic development through implementation of the Northwest Arkansas Council's Regional Development Strategy.*
- 3.2 *Proactively identify and prepare available land that is viable for new industrial development.*
- 3.3 *Support regional efforts to finance the development of an industrial park adjacent to Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport.*
- 3.4 *Effectively implement – with the necessary economic development staff resources – a comprehensive existing business outreach program.*
- 3.5 *Enhance the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce website to presents a positive image and focus on the needs of entrepreneurs, existing businesses, and prospective new businesses.*
- 3.6 *Issue a local-sourcing challenge to area businesses, encouraging them to identify at least one local alternative to existing suppliers of goods and services located outside the region.*
- 3.7 *Identify new regional tourism promotions and marketing techniques that connect and leverage the unique assets of individual communities.*
- 3.8 *Formalize a Tourism Ambassadors certification in partnership with the "Welcome to Arkansas" and "First Impressions" guest service training program.*

4. Beautification and Renewal

- 4.1 *Develop corridor-specific beautification plans to integrate into transportation planning.*
- 4.2 *Establish an entity to coordinate and execute volunteer-led community beautification initiatives, potentially a "Keep Rogers Beautiful" affiliate of Keep America Beautiful.*
- 4.3 *Develop a matching grant program to encourage private investment in community beautification.*
- 4.4 *Launch an "Art on the Greenway" initiative in the City of Rogers that installs public art along the Razorback Greenway, serving as a pilot program for a regional initiative.*
- 4.5 *Develop plans for two or more "signature" beautification projects that are visible from major interchanges along Interstate 49 in Rogers-Lowell.*
- 4.6 *Establish a land bank authority to acquire tax delinquent and abandoned, blighted properties in support of redevelopment objectives.*
- 4.7 *Develop a façade grant program to support the enhancement of building exteriors.*
- 4.8 *Launch a new program providing enhanced City services to specific areas of the community for a limited period of time, promoting targeted redevelopment and beautification.*
- 4.9 *Adopt and promote the use of SeeClickFix – an online tool and mobile application that enables residents to report issues that need attention from the City of Rogers.*
- 4.10 *Conduct a thorough review of City ordinances and their enforcement to ensure that code and enforcement efforts support beautification objectives.*

5. Downtown Development

- 5.1 *Complete development of the Downtown Master Plan and fully integrate its recommendations into implementation efforts associated with this Community Action Plan.*
- 5.2 *Evaluate the viability of developing a multi-purpose events center in downtown Rogers.*
- 5.3 *Advance efforts to identify viable investors and development partners to redevelop the historic Peachtree Lane Hotel into a mixed-use anchor for downtown Rogers.*
- 5.4 *Create a visual buffer between downtown's retail district and adjacent industrial uses.*
- 5.5 *Develop and launch a Storefront Art Initiative, effectively transforming downtown Rogers into a walkable art gallery.*
- 5.6 *Identify areas of downtown where additional lighting could improve public safety and visibility at night.*

6. Amenities and Entertainment

- 6.1 *Support utilization of the Arkansas Music Pavilion (AMP) and aggressively promote its events and availability for use to internal and external audiences.*
- 6.2 *Work with area and nearby symphony orchestras to evaluate the viability of developing an outdoor summer concert series at the AMP.*
- 6.3 *Solicit input from residents on ways to increase the attractiveness of and attendance at Downtown Rogers' Third Fridays and other similar events.*
- 6.4 *Facilitate the development of one or more "food truck parks" and revise city code to support mobile street vending, establishing the City as a hospitable hub for food trucks in Northwest Arkansas.*
- 6.5 *Pursue expansion of passenger rail service along the Arkansas and Missouri Railroad through Downtown Rogers to support transportation alternatives for regional events and excursions.*
- 6.6 *Evaluate the viability of developing a zoological park and/or aquarium in Rogers-Lowell.*

7. Nature and Recreation

- 7.1 *Implement the new master plan for a revitalized Lake Atalanta recreational area.*
- 7.2 *Construct planned expansions to recreational facilities at Veterans Park.*
- 7.3 *Begin planning for a series of long-term parks and recreation improvement projects, including projects that increase the community's viability as a host for athletic tournaments.*
- 7.4 *Evaluate the viability of re-opening certain RPS athletic facilities for public, recreational use during non-school hours.*
- 7.5 *Install free public wi-fi networks to serve public parks in the City of Rogers.*
- 7.6 *Develop an adopt-a-park program to support maintenance and promote beautification at public parks in the City of Rogers.*

8. Engagement and Inclusion

- 8.1 *Develop a multilingual training program for providers of critical government, social, educational, and public health services.*
- 8.2 *Develop a volunteer-based Translator Corps.*
- 8.3 *Encourage minority participation in the Northwest Arkansas Emerging Leaders' (NWAEL) board service certification program, and intentionally identify board service opportunities.*
- 8.4 *Actively recruit new members for NWAEL and utilize NWAEL workgroups to support the implementation of volunteer-led community improvement initiatives outlined in this Plan.*
- 8.5 *Expand the First Leadership program to include a senior-year community service component to increase ties of high school students to the community and develop new leaders.*
- 8.6 *Formalize a Diversity Champions program at the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce.*

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS: CITY OF LOWELL

Many of the recommendations presented throughout the preceding "Summary of Recommendations: City of Rogers" section are initiatives that can or should be implemented across municipal boundaries in Rogers-Lowell. These initiatives, as previously mentioned, are delineated in detail in the full Community Action Plan. Recommendations for the City of Lowell (which include many cross-jurisdictional or regional recommendations for Northwest Arkansas) have been renumbered but follow a similar format and sequence to those presented in the Rogers section, with the primary exception being that Lowell recommendations are appended with (L) following the numbering system that is used to organize recommendations for the City of Rogers.

1. Public Education

- 1.1(L) *Continue to annually update and aggressively implement the Rogers Public Schools' (RPS) Strategic Plan.*
- 1.2(L) *Implement annual "Reach Out to Dropouts" events to reduce the dropout rate in RPS.*
- 1.3(L) *Identify an appropriate elementary school(s) to serve as a pilot program for The Leader in Me and phase in implementation of the program following necessary evaluation.*
- 1.4(L) *Develop a Partners in Education (PIE) program to support RPS.*
- 1.5(L) *Develop a Rogers-Lowell High School Business Plan Competition.*
- 1.6(L) *Expand technical education and training programs at NWACC to meet the needs of existing and prospective new employers.*
- 1.7(L) *Work with existing employers to evaluate the viability of implementing employer-sponsored adult education programs for employees.*

2. Infrastructure Investment

- 2.1(L) *Construct critical transportation infrastructure projects in the City of Lowell.*
- 2.2(L) *Begin planning for long-term transportation infrastructure projects in the City of Lowell.*
- 2.3(L) *Construct a west side fire station in the City of Lowell.*
- 2.4(L) *Begin planning for the construction of a new police facility in the City of Lowell.*
- 2.5(L) *Extend water and sewer infrastructure to the "Johnson Property" to support its development.*

- 2.6(L) *Complete sewer extension projects along Dixieland Road.*
- 2.7(L) *Complete development of a new storm warning system.*
- 2.8(L) *Work with area electric utilities to evaluate the potential costs and benefits of burying existing, above ground power lines in select areas of the community.*
- 2.9(L) *Evaluate the viability of developing one or more carpool and park-and-ride lots near major interchanges to promote commute alternatives.*
- 2.10(L) *Support the continued expansion and optimization of Ozark Regional Transit (ORT) bus service throughout Rogers-Lowell.*
- 2.11(L) *Continue to support the expansion of the number of carriers and nonstop destinations served by Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport (XNA).*
- 2.12(L) *Support major transportation infrastructure projects of regional significance.*

3. Economic Diversity

- 3.1(L) *Attract new "sit-down" restaurants to the City of Lowell.*
- 3.2(L) *Market the community's central location within Northwest Arkansas to prospective new residents and businesses.*
- 3.3(L) *Evaluate current zoning and rezone lands as needed to support development objectives.*
- 3.4(L) *Continue to support a holistic and collaborative regional approach to economic development through implementation of the Northwest Arkansas Council's Regional Development Strategy.*
- 3.5(L) *Proactively identify and prepare available land that is viable for new industrial development.*
- 3.6(L) *Support regional efforts to finance the development of an industrial park adjacent to Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport.*
- 3.7(L) *Effectively implement – with the necessary economic development staff resources – a comprehensive existing business outreach program.*
- 3.8(L) *Enhance the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce website to presents a positive image and focus on the needs of entrepreneurs, existing businesses, and prospective new businesses.*
- 3.9(L) *Issue a local-sourcing challenge to area businesses, encouraging them to identify at least one local alternative to existing suppliers of goods and services located outside the region.*
- 3.10(L) *Identify new regional tourism promotions and marketing techniques that connect and leverage the unique assets of individual communities.*
- 3.11(L) *Formalize a Tourism Ambassadors certification in partnership with the "Welcome to Arkansas" and "First Impressions" guest service training program.*

4. Beautification and Renewal

- 4.1(L) *Develop plans for two or more “signature” beautification projects that are visible from major interchanges along Interstate 49 in Rogers-Lowell.*
- 4.2(L) *Adopt and promote the use of SeeClickFix – an online tool and mobile application that enables residents to report issues that need attention from the City of Lowell.*

5. Downtown Development

NOTE: Recommendations related to “Downtown Development” are specific to improvement efforts associated with downtown Rogers; accordingly, there are no Lowell-specific recommendations for this community “pillar.”

6. Amenities and Entertainment

- 6.1(L) *Evaluate the viability of developing a zoological park and/or aquarium in Rogers-Lowell.*

7. Nature and Recreation

- 7.1(L) *Begin planning and construction on a series of parks and recreation improvement projects.*
- 7.2(L) *Evaluate the viability of re-opening certain RPS athletic facilities for public, recreational use during non-school hours.*
- 7.3(L) *Evaluate the demand for and viability of developing a variety of major new parks and recreation facilities at the “Johnson Property.”*

8. Engagement and Inclusion

- 8.1(L) *Develop a multilingual training program for providers of critical government, social, educational, and public health services.*
- 8.2(L) *Develop a volunteer-based Translator Corps.*
- 8.3(L) *Encourage minority participation in the Northwest Arkansas Emerging Leaders’ (NWAEL) board service certification program, and intentionally identify board service opportunities.*
- 8.4(L) *Actively recruit new members for NWAEL and utilize NWAEL workgroups to support the implementation of volunteer-led community improvement initiatives outlined in this Plan.*
- 8.5(L) *Formalize a Diversity Champions program at the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce.*

VISION 2030: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

While the *Vision 2030* Community Action Plan identifies “what” the community will pursue to strengthen its eight pillars and realize the community’s consensus vision for the future, the Implementation Guidelines help define “how” the community will pursue effective and efficient implementation of the Community Action Plan. The Implementation Guidelines document (which is briefly summarized here) assesses existing organizational capacity to implement the Community Action Plan, and outlines the ways in which Rogers-Lowell will develop the volunteer structures and staff capacity necessary to maintain the positive momentum generated by decades of successful visioning and implementation efforts. Specifically, it includes a discussion of the Steering Committee’s new roles and responsibilities as an Implementation Committee. It also reviews the roles and responsibilities of key implementers – the City of Rogers, the City of Lowell, the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Northwest Arkansas Council – in facilitating a collaborative approach to implementation and providing the necessary resources to fulfill the community’s vision and carry forward the implementation effort.

For each recommendation in the *Vision 2030* Community Action Plan, the full Implementation Guidelines document identifies potential lead implementer(s); potential implementation partners; a timeframe for implementation; cost estimates for implementation, and; potential sources of funding. Finally, it presents a set of performance metrics for tracking and measuring the success of implementation efforts and their impact on key community attributes and outcomes.

This summary presents a very brief overview of key recommendations from the Implementation Guidelines, in addition to overviews of the implementation timeline and performance metrics.

IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

Successful communities rely on both volunteers and professional staff; neither can effectively cultivate a community’s vision in isolation. As the visioning process comes to an end and the implementation effort commences, the Vision 2030 Steering Committee should formally transition to an Implementation Committee. The Implementation Committee will serve as the “keeper of the goals,” playing a critical role as a convener and coordinator of implementation efforts across numerous organizations over time. The members of the Implementation Committee must be “champions” of the visioning process, its recommendations, and the implementation effort. They must work to inform and educate the community and its leadership, and build support for specific initiatives. They must constantly remind themselves and the community that the *Vision 2030* recommendations were derived from extensive research and public input, a wholly inclusive process that engaged various constituencies and varied interests. In this regard, the Implementation Committee will serve as an educator and ambassador. But most importantly, the Implementation Committee should serve as a catalyst. It should be the primary convener of implementation partners and will need to consistently remain focused on actions and results. The members of the Implementation Committee will need to engage a wide variety of organizations, institutions, and individuals that are necessary partners to carry out the Community Action Plan’s recommendations. In spirit and in action, the Implementation Committee should support the primary implementers (the City of Rogers, the City of Lowell, the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Northwest Arkansas Council) and their elected or appointed boards, councils, and commissions.

ROGERS-LOWELL AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce has historically played a central role in the community's strategic planning and community improvement initiatives. Its influence in these areas extends far beyond its formal role – in partnership with the cities of Rogers and Lowell – as convener of the community's visioning processes (*Vision 2020*, *Vision 2025*, *Vision 2030*, etc.). Complementing support for its membership, community improvement is the Chamber's core mission. Achieving the community's vision is central to supporting a vibrant and prosperous community that promotes responsible economic growth and addresses challenges that impact the community's – and its businesses' – competitiveness.

Throughout the *Vision 2030* strategic planning process, the Chamber and its staff has provided all necessary support to the Steering Committee and the community at large, and its staff has provided invaluable subject matter expertise and knowledge of the community to both the consultant team and the Steering Committee. The Chamber is without question best positioned to continue providing these necessary support services to the Steering Committee as it transitions to the Implementation Committee.

In addition to this day-to-day role supporting the Implementation Committee, the Chamber can and should maintain all current programs and initiatives that align with the objectives of *Vision 2030*. The staff structure and budget of RLACC has always aligned with the community's objectives and not simply the organization's objectives – this is an important feature of any entity that serves as a catalyst or activator of a community's strategy. The Chamber will also assume some new responsibilities as a component of the Plan's implementation, from management of a Partners in Education program (see recommendation 1.4) to developing a Diversity Champions program (see recommendation 8.6). But these responsibilities align with existing competencies and areas of influence for the Chamber, an organization that has demonstrated a commitment to supporting public education and advancing minority business development and community inclusion.

Three new positions at the Chamber will help the community effectively implement Vision 2030: a Director of Community Vision, a Manager of Existing Business Outreach, and a part-time Communications Coordinator. Funding for new initiatives to be led by the Chamber should be supported by a new capital campaign to be launched in 2016 to begin funding initiatives in 2017 and beyond. Some early commitments will be beneficial and necessary as the implementation timeline calls for certain recommended hiring to occur in 2016 such that implementation efforts can begin in earnest in 2017.

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS COUNCIL

The Northwest Arkansas Council has historically played an important role in the advancement of many of the region's major infrastructure projects. The launch of its Regional Development Strategy in 2011 and the corresponding enhancement of staff capacity and strategic focus have expanded the roles and responsibilities of the Council immensely. Although it works on behalf of all communities in Northwest Arkansas for the collective benefit of the region, the Northwest Arkansas Council clearly plays an important role in the implementation of *Vision 2030*, especially as it relates to the Community Action Plan's third pillar, Economic Diversity.

As the Community Assessment discusses, Northwest Arkansas is one of only a few multi-polar, polycentric regions in the United States, an attribute that underscores the relative importance of regional planning in

Northwest Arkansas. A regional approach to economic development marketing is appropriate in most metropolitan areas, and especially so in Northwest Arkansas. Each individual community can and does benefit from the collective assets of the region, and the recognition from prospective investors, employers, and employees that Northwest Arkansas and its individual communities have an attractive asset base. Accordingly, a regional approach is essential, effective, and efficient. This is a critical role of the Council in supporting the implementation of *Vision 2030*. Thankfully, this relationship and cooperation related to regional marketing – in addition to cooperation on locally-implemented existing business retention and expansion (BRE) outreach – has been established and developed in recent years, and the community does not have to nurture a new approach to the ways in which economic development is staffed or funded in order for *Vision 2030* to be implemented. The Implementation Guidelines for Vision 2030 are fully aligned with the roles and responsibilities, implementation timelines, and performance metrics that are outlined in the Council's Regional Development Strategy and its corresponding Implementation Plan.

CITY OF ROGERS

The City of Rogers has provided immense financial and staff resource support to the visioning process. It is not unusual for local governments to advance visioning initiatives, but many do so in isolation as a local government exercise. The fact that the City has partnered with, and in many ways entrusted, the entire community and its residents – thousands of which provided their input – is a testament to the City's understanding that successful communities are built through partnerships that seek to engage residents, understand community needs, and efficiently utilize and leverage both taxpayer and private dollars to respond to those needs. Elected and appointed leadership will have critical roles in executing various components of the Plan. Both – key staff and key elected officials – should be represented on the Implementation Committee. Approval of Vision 2030 by the Mayor's Office and City Council will also be necessary to support the Vision Plan's implementation.

Not surprisingly, the City's role in implementation will be immense. In addition to the City's functions and day-to-day operations that are covered by existing budgets, there are many new projects, programs, and initiatives outlined in *Vision 2030* that are currently lacking funds to implement. While their implementation – the construction of roadways, the development of parks, the improvement of downtown areas, etc. – do not represent a change in the scope of government services or the "roles and responsibilities" of the City of Rogers to its taxpayers, they do represent an expansion of service levels in some areas. The *Vision 2030* Community Action Plan calls for a more active role in aesthetics and redevelopment through initiatives outlined in the "Beautification & Renewal" and "Downtown Development" pillars.

Given the emphasis on downtown development in *Vision 2030* and the likely need for additional capacity to catalyze redevelopment objectives contained in the forthcoming and complementary Downtown Master Plan for the City of Rogers, the City and its partners should give careful consideration to the potential establishment of a new **Downtown Development Corporation** and the hiring of a **Redevelopment Manager** to guide a variety of beatification, renewal, and downtown development initiatives in partnership with various non-profit and governmental entities currently supporting these efforts.

The *Vision 2030* Community Action Plan outlines numerous transportation and parks projects that are already underway or supported by budgeted funds, in addition to numerous other projects that have been identified as critical needs but that currently have no dedicated funding. While it is hoped that the

community will be able to fully implement all recommendations outlined in the *Vision 2030* Community Action Plan, some projects will not be able to be funded, or will be determined to be lower priority than other essential government functions in the budget-setting process. That being said, it is important to remember that thousands of residents and businesses provided their input during this visioning process and that a great deal of work from community leaders, city staff, existing businesses, and the public at large went into the identification of appropriate recommendations. One thing is clear – in order to adequately respond to the input of residents, fully implement the recommendations of Vision 2030, and maintain a level of service that residents have come to expect, the City will need another bond referendum in the years ahead. The timeline for implementing necessary medium and long-term transportation infrastructure and parks projects outlined in the Community Action Plan and these Implementation Guidelines provides an appropriate estimate of the timeframe for this referendum: likely in 2018 or 2019.

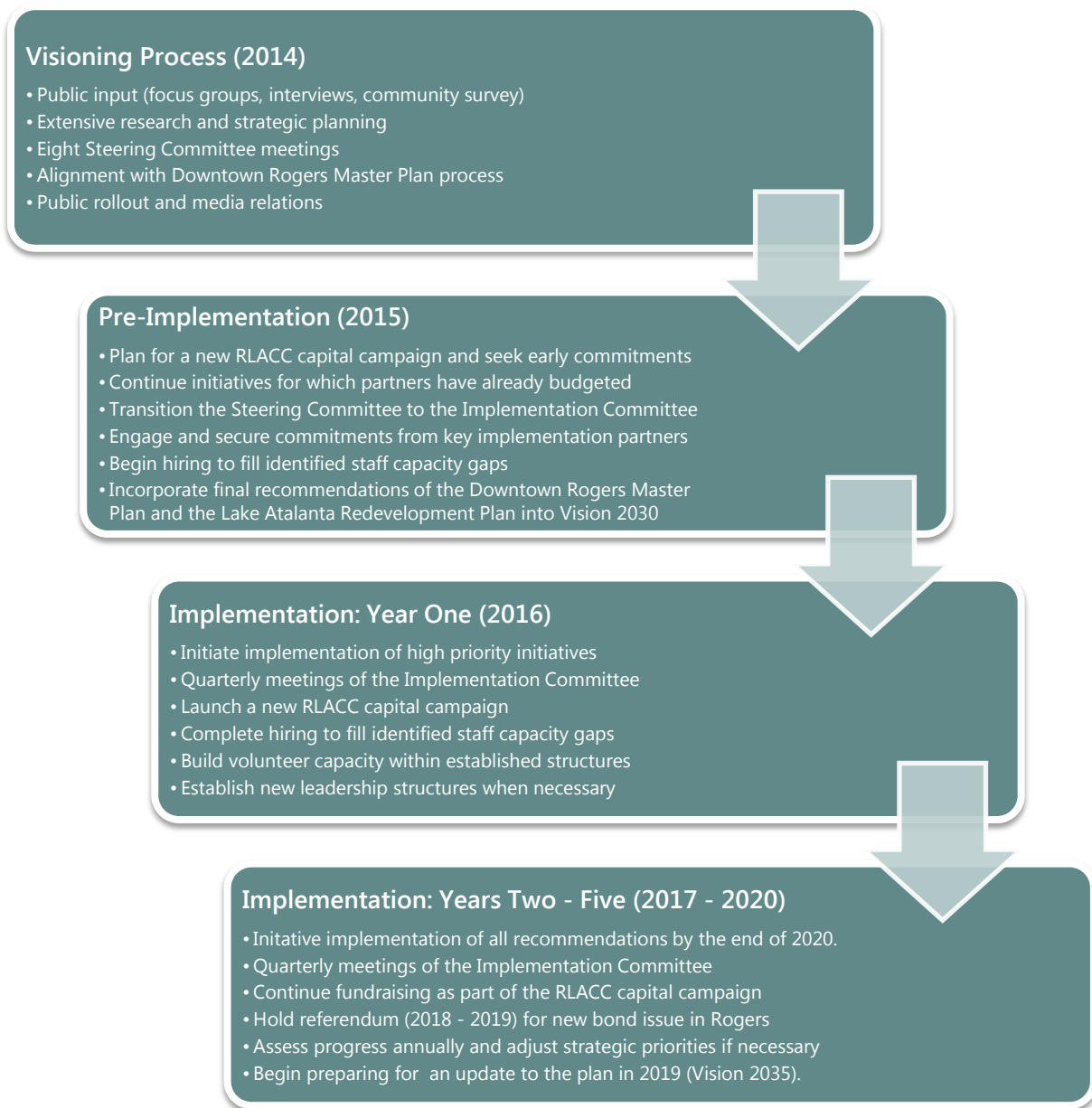
NORTHWEST ARKANSAS EMERGING LEADERS (NWAEL)

NWAEL is an important component of the region's approach leadership development. While many leadership development programs simply provide a formal curriculum and stop short of proactively identifying opportunities to become involved in the community and demonstrate leadership attributes, NWAEL provides "emerging leaders" with the opportunity to be actively involved in creating meaningful change. NWAEL's existing workgroups are effective mechanisms for coordinating volunteer initiatives that support residents' vision for the future of Rogers-Lowell. Many of these workgroups have missions that closely align with the "pillars" of the community's vision; they can and should be valuable partners in the implementation effort. NWAEL workgroups should be briefed on the various recommendations within the Plan that most closely align with their mission, and determine if there is interest, willingness, and capacity on the part of the workgroup to lead or support implementation of certain volunteer-based initiatives. The implementation matrices that follow have identified NWAEL as an important partner in leading or supporting the implementation of the following volunteer-oriented recommendations, among others:

- ✓ Recommendation 1.2: Implement annual "Reach Out to Dropouts" events.
- ✓ Recommendation 1.4: Develop a Partners in Education (PIE) program.
- ✓ Recommendation 4.2: Establish an entity to coordinate and execute volunteer-led community beautification initiatives.
- ✓ Recommendation 5.5: Develop and launch a Storefront Art Initiative.
- ✓ Recommendation 7.6: Develop an adopt-a-park program.
- ✓ Recommendation 8.2: Develop a volunteer-based Translator Corps.

Implementation Schedule

Successful communities never stop planning. But successful communities also do not allow the processes of conversing and strategic planning – as important as they are – to impede the process of *doing*. Any set of strategic recommendations needs a schedule for implementation. This Community Action Plan and previous vision plans for Rogers-Lowell are ambitious. All recommendations cannot be accomplished fully in a five-year period. But they can all be started. The graphic that follows provides a brief overview of the timing for key phases of the visioning process and its implementation. The remainder of this “Implementation Schedule” section provides a more detailed overview of the timeline and other implementation guidelines for individual recommendations within the Community Action Plan.



Performance Metrics

Performance measurement is critical to any economic development or community improvement initiative. The process of establishing and tracking performance metrics will allow the *Vision 2030* Implementation Committee, implementation partners, and the community at-large to assess progress towards implementing the *Vision 2030* Community Action Plan. Metrics can help determine if implementation is having the desired impact and producing the desired return on investment. The full Implementation Guidelines document includes an extensive set of performance metrics including but not limited to:

- ✓ **JOB CREATION:** Support the creation of more than 6,000 new jobs paying annual wages above the community's average between 2016 and 2021 in Rogers-Lowell.
- ✓ **ELEVATE STANDARDS OF LIVING:** Through support for local and regional high-wage job creation, raise median household incomes in by an average of 3.0 percent annually in the City of Rogers, exceeding the historical rate of income growth regionally and nationally.
- ✓ **INCREASE COLLEGE DEGREE ATTAINMENT:** Elevate the percentage of adults in the City of Rogers with at least some college from 50.2 percent in 2012 to 60.0 percent in 2021.
- ✓ **REDUCE SOCIOECONOMIC DISPARITIES ALONG RACIAL/ETHNIC LINES:** Drastically reduce the existing gap (54.7 percentage points) in high school degree attainment rates between white and Hispanic residents in the City of Rogers.
- ✓ **CATALYZE REDEVELOPMENT IN AND AROUND DOWNTOWN ROGERS:** Implement the Downtown Master Plan and the Lake Atalanta Redevelopment Plan while launching a new "5x5 program" providing enhanced City services in targeted neighborhoods over five week periods.
- ✓ **BEAUTIFY THE COMMUNITY AND DEVELOP A SIGNATURE ARTS IDENTITY:** Install at least five new pieces of public art annually as part of a new "Art on the Greenway" initiative, and develop two landmark beautification projects at key gateways to the community along the interstate.
- ✓ **IMPROVE GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES:** Consistently maintain annual dropout rates at Rogers Public Schools at or below one percent of students.
- ✓ **HELP EXISTING BUSINESSES GROW:** Conduct at least 100 site visits with local businesses each year, and recruit at least 100 local businesses to participate in a new local-sourcing challenge.
- ✓ **INCREASE VOLUNTEERISM AND ENGAGEMENT:** Commit 1,000 volunteer hours annually to a variety of recommended community beautification and revitalization projects.