

DOWNTOWN CAVE SPRINGS

Envisioning the Future of the Historic Downtown



© 2023 URBAN LAND INSTITUTE

THIS REPORT IS SPONSORED BY:
The Walton Family Foundation with in-kind support
from the City of Cave Springs, Arkansas.

ON THE COVER: A view of Main Street in downtown Cave Springs,
Arkansas



Find this report and hundreds of others on Knowledge Finder,

the leading global resource of trends and best practices in real estate development and financing. Explore an ever-expanding library and find recommended content related to your interests, including reading lists, case studies, videos and webinars, books, and more.

knowledge.uli.org

About the Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of providing leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and the Asia Pacific region, with members in 80 countries.

More information is available at uli.org. Follow ULI on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

About ULI Northwest Arkansas

ULI Northwest Arkansas is a district council of the Urban Land Institute, a global organization which for more than 80 years has been dedicated to improving the quality of urban areas. ULI is the sum of its members, who themselves deliver the ULI mission through programs and events and positively shape the future of real estate and land use disciplines throughout Northwest Arkansas. Members include real estate developers, builders, finance and equity professionals, architects, engineers, urban planners, elected officials, engaged citizens, and more. ULI shares best practices through practical professional development education programs and ULI's research and publications. The organization sets the standard for high quality information on urban planning, real estate development, growth and land use. Simply put, ULI Northwest Arkansas's goal is a built environment that better serves more people.

ULI District Council Leadership

John Coleman

Regional Director, Entegrity
District Council Chair, ULI Northwest Arkansas

Brenda Anderson

CEO, Blue Crane LLC
Chair of Mission Advancement, ULI Northwest Arkansas

Matthew Mitchell

Partner, Friday, Eldredge & Clark LLP
Treasurer, ULI Northwest Arkansas

Wes Craiglow

Executive Director, ULI Northwest Arkansas

Megan Brown

Director of Signature Programs, ULI Northwest Arkansas

Rikki Manen

Director of Outreach and Development, ULI Northwest Arkansas

Alex Howland

Director of Core Programs, ULI Northwest Arkansas

ULI Advisory Services: District Council Programs

The goal of the ULI Advisory Services program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Drawing from its local membership base, ULI Northwest Arkansas conducts two-day TAPs offering objective and responsible advice to local decision-makers on a wide variety of land use and real estate issues ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The TAP program is intentionally flexible to provide a customized approach to specific land use and real estate issues. In fulfillment of ULI's mission, this TAP report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

Learn more at nwarkansas.uli.org.

Technical Assistance Panel and Project Staff

Panel Chair

Mary Madden, AICP

Principal
Madden Planning

Panel Members

Nate Bachelor, PE

Department Manager
CEI Engineering

Nathan Becknell

Principal and Manager
Traffic Engineering Consultants

Hannah Cicioni

Owner and Principal
CRD Real Estate and Development

Matt Hoffman

Director of Urban Design
MBL Planning;
President and Co-Founder
Pattern Zones Co.

Ryan King AIA | NCARB

Founder
Unit Architecture

Stacy Morris

Executive Director
Main Street Siloam Springs

Project Staff

Megan Brown

Director of Signature Programs, ULI Northwest
Arkansas

Juliet Richey, CFM AICP

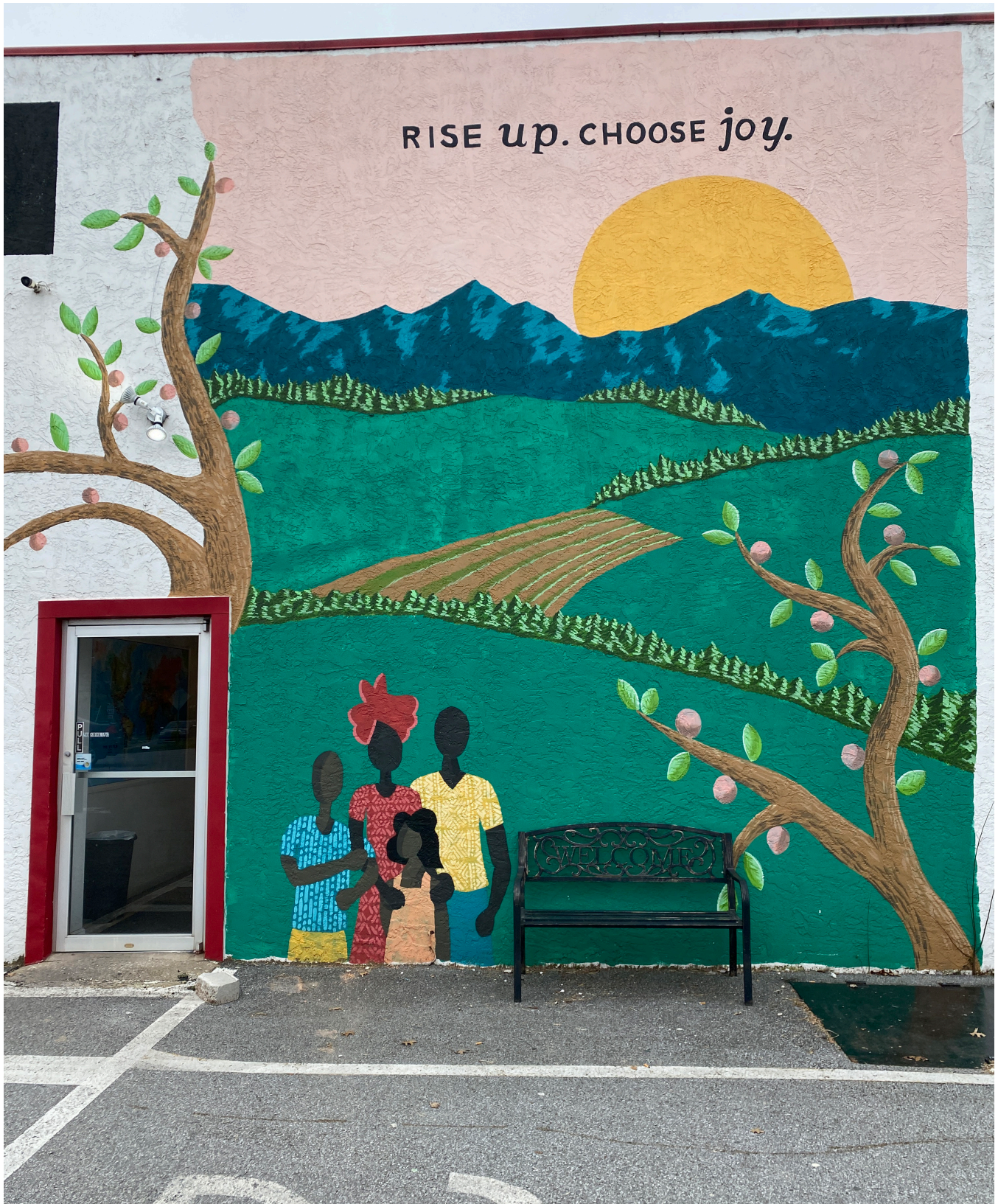
Urban Planning Leader
Garver USA

Kelly Annis

Technical Writer, Branch Communications

Acknowledgments

ULI Northwest Arkansas would like to thank the City of Cave Springs Technical Assistance Steering Committee for working with ULI Northwest Arkansas to envision the development of this technical assistance panel and inviting ULI to conduct this study. ULI would also like to thank Juliet Richey, Urban Planning Leader for Garver, for her leadership leading up to and throughout the TAP process.



The painted mural outside the JoyHouse Coffee Shop pays homage to the family farmers who supply the coffee shop's beans.

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	9
Introduction and Background	11
Study Area Context	13
Recommendations	15
Key Takeaways	26
About the Panel	28



A few community mainstays, like Nelson's Hardware Store situated inside the old grocery store, dot the west side of Main Street.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Cave Springs, Arkansas, is at an important inflection point in its history. Positioned for historic growth and with new highway infrastructure planned for the western edge of town, civic leaders are keen to identify the best path forward to continue to support current residents and businesses while strategically planning for the city's future. With an eye on development across the city and particularly downtown, city leaders are readying Cave Springs for anticipated sizable population growth and the unknown economic impacts that the roadway construction is expected to bring.

The construction of a "highway bypass" has often signaled the end of downtown economies in the United States' smaller cities and towns. Civic leaders have been in regular conversation with state transportation officials to define a path for the bypass that will best serve Cave Springs (the city). Yet, knowing that downtown Cave Springs may face an uncertain future, civic leaders partnered with the Urban Land Institute Northwest Arkansas District Council (ULI) for advice and best practices in meeting this challenge and instead charting a path for future success for downtown. ULI, using its trusted Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) program, convened a team of real estate experts to study the challenge at hand, interview community stakeholders, and apply their deep professional expertise to the challenges the city is facing. Specifically, the TAP panel was asked how the city can leverage its own land in support of future downtown development, to recommend how to best position downtown as an economic engine for the city, and to identify development policies to prepare Cave Springs for sustainable future growth.

The panel developed the following recommendations that the city is encouraged to consider as it prepares for future growth. Through the course of its work, the panel viewed the construction of the bypass as a positive development for the city and for downtown. As such, the following recommendations can assist the city in positioning the new highway infrastructure as an important means for actually growing and strengthening the city's downtown core.

Define Downtown

Downtown Cave Springs means many things to city residents and business owners and the geography of downtown remains undefined. Using a quarter-mile radius and the intersection of Main Street and Glenwood Avenue as its center point, the panel identified downtown as the area in which an average person could comfortably walk to any destination in roughly five minutes. (Beyond five minutes, many people will consider using a car rather than walk.) Within this geography, the city should begin to think of downtown as a walkable neighborhood comprised of a variety of land uses, including both commercial and residential spaces.

To support the vision of downtown as a walkable, mixed-use district, the city's land use code should be updated to create a new "downtown" base district. This updated code would call for the types of uses city leadership and stakeholders wish to see in Cave Springs. The code should support the city's vision for downtown, create a clear and easy path for development, and remain flexible, allowing the market to determine the range of uses and specific tenants that will line the city's Main Street.

The city is also encouraged to position the bypass as a "parkway," which is designed primarily to move traffic through the area. Neighborhoods could back up to the parkway, but development facing the parkway should be discouraged. Taking this further, the city should limit commercial uses along the parkway to help preserve the viability of the commercial operations in downtown Cave Springs.

Humanize Main Street

The key to the future of Main Street in Cave Springs is to cater to the human, pedestrian experience. To support this approach, the city is strongly encouraged to negotiate with Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) to gain control of Main Street from Healing Springs Road south to East Lowell Avenue. During the course of these discussions, the future maintenance and operation of the dam near the intersection of Highfill Road should also be discussed and plans for future funding put in place.

Once the parkway is in and commuter traffic moves off of Main Street, downtown will no longer exist as a speedway for those passing through and can instead begin to cater to pedestrians. Sidewalk expansion, outside cafe-style seating and dining, and clearly defined parking options can support a safe and enjoyable pedestrian experience downtown. Further connectivity along Main Street north of Healing Springs is also important and will require additional pedestrian infrastructure over the culvert to provide safe passage.

Parking is an important asset to downtown and the city should conduct an inventory of existing parking in order to plan for future parking needs of future downtown businesses. Testing new parking ideas with low-cost options and inviting the community into the process will help with resident education and support community acceptance of any final parking plan designed for downtown.

The city has the ability to control certain aspects of the new bypass. By zoning for limited use along the roadway and referring to the bypass as the “Cave Springs Parkway,” the city can shape the narrative around this new infrastructure. The city can also connect to the parkway’s new trail system with connector trails from Main Street. These connectors could encourage trail users to also bike, run, or walk into downtown Cave Springs for refreshments or shopping.

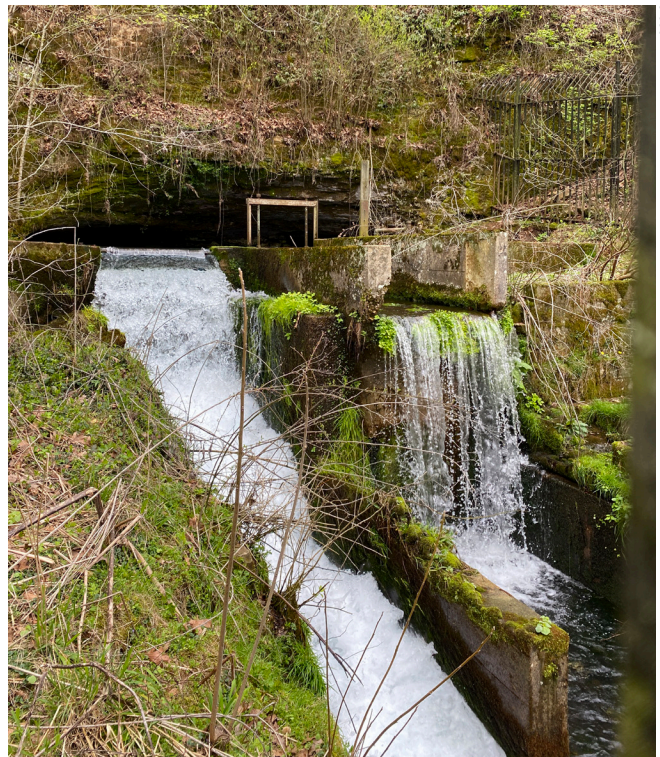
Leverage Institutionally-owned Land

Within the downtown core as defined by the panel, there are 62 acres held by 45 property owners. Given that the city, the Illinois River Watershed Partnership, and the First Baptist Church are three of the largest landowners downtown, the city is encouraged to seek and nurture

partnerships to jointly leverage these institutionally-owned parcels for development and mutual benefit.

With regard to the redevelopment of the Cave Springs City Hall building in particular, the city should consider issuing a request for proposal for the redevelopment or a public private partnership, which would allow the city to maintain certain controls over the property while opening the door to additional private development. By leveraging development partners, the city can leverage its property where appropriate and generate funding for other economic development initiatives, which will continue to build and enhance the city’s economic and community development growth goals. As development work progresses downtown, the city could launch programming along Main Street in available open space, such as the Community Building, to encourage additional retail activity downtown.

The future for downtown Cave Springs is bright. With these recommendations, downtown can be shaped into a walkable, mixed-use neighborhood that is cherished by residents, a draw for regional visitors, and an important economic engine for the City of Cave Springs.



The underground spring that gave Cave Springs its name can be found on the Illinois River Watershed Partnership land in the middle of the city’s downtown.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Northwest Arkansas is growing quickly and nowhere is that more apparent than in Cave Springs, population 5,916. The city has doubled its population in just the past five years, and more growth is on the horizon. The popularity of the region and the construction on the way to meet the demands of this growth has the municipal leadership of Cave Springs contemplating how to best meet the needs of its existing residents while planning for the city's future.

Cave Springs is located within the booming Northwest Arkansas market. Surrounded on the north, east, and south by Bentonville, Rogers, Springdale, and Fayetteville, the population growth in the area is pushing further west, and Cave Springs is in the path of that anticipated growth.

With an eye on the future of downtown Cave Springs in particular, civic leaders partnered with the Urban Land Institute Northwest Arkansas District Council for advice in managing and planning for the future of downtown. Main Street, also known as State Highway 112, runs through downtown Cave Springs and connects residents and visitors to the city's commercial center, to the beautiful spring and lake that gave the city its name, and to the bustling national airport five miles due west of Cave Springs.

On the horizon, however, is a highway bypass that will circumvent downtown Cave Springs to the west. The Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) has worked with city leadership over the course of two years to arrive at a route and design that is satisfactory to city leadership and traffic engineers. Knowing that the bypass is eminent, elected and civic leaders formed a steering committee to address this challenge and worked with ULI to craft a study that would focus on key planning topics, including leveraging city-owned property for future development, positioning downtown



Cave Springs, centered above, is shown with the proposed Highway 112 bypass marked by the white roadway running north and south on the west side of the map. City-owned parcels are shaded in yellow while the shades of green denote land owned by the Illinois River Watershed Partnership and Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission.

Cave Springs as an economic engine for the city, and preparing the city for anticipated significant future growth.

ULI, using its trusted technical assistance panel (TAP) program, convened a panel of ULI members from the region who had the expertise to assist the city with these challenges. The TAP panel, experts in the areas of

development, urban planning, economic development, architecture, and traffic engineering, reviewed the materials supplied by the steering committee, interviewed stakeholders from across the community, and applied their expertise to the challenges at hand, ultimately arriving at a series of recommendations that the steering committee can put into use as Cave Springs plans for its future.

Questions for the Panel

1. How should the city leverage existing city-owned land for future development downtown (*i.e.*, city facilities, parking, public-private development, etc.)?
2. Given the growth trajectory and the highway bypass, how can the city best position downtown Cave Springs and the surrounding area to become an economic engine for the city? (*i.e.*, downtown events, activation of downtown spaces, placemaking)
3. What land use and development policies can help prepare the city for sustainable future growth? (*i.e.*, creation of downtown core and subdistrict zoning, building design standards for both district and subdistrict, open space integration, active transportation)



The TAP panel and city steering committee toured downtown Cave Springs.



Following the tour, the panel met with a wide variety of community stakeholders and related professionals to further inform the panel on the opportunities and challenges before the city

STUDY AREA CONTEXT

The natural beauty of Northwest Arkansas is on full display in Cave Springs. From the rolling hills and picturesque pastures, to the natural spring and clear streams, the area has been a draw to residents and visitors for decades. Recent corporate growth in neighboring cities is relocating employees to the region and attracting new businesses and additional residents to be a part of the growing market. Movement around the region will become a challenge in the coming years as the population locates further from town centers and commuters need more expeditious paths to places of employment. ARDOT is planning for this growth, most notably for Cave Springs, by designing a bypass to pull traffic from downtown to a new roadway west of town.

Downtown Cave Springs, the area loosely defined as sitting between Healing Springs Road to the north and East Lowell Avenue to the south, is marked by a few buildings that exude historic charm. It is home to a smattering of local businesses, including a coffee shop and cafe, a locally-owned hardware store, and a few other more service-oriented businesses. Also downtown, the spring that gave the city its name, the associated lake, and the surrounding parkland is held by the Illinois River Watershed Partnership

and is a key feature and recreational draw to Cave Springs. There are also a number of municipal buildings and parcels owned by the City of Cave Springs in downtown, including the Cave Springs City Hall, the police station, fire station, and a historic community center building, which is slated for renovation.

Residents and business owners alike are charmed by the small town nature of Cave Springs. While both groups would like to see additional businesses open downtown,



The Cave Springs Community Building is a wonderful historic structure, situated next to the spring, that could again become a notable Cave Springs asset.



The roadway at the northern edge of downtown is tight for vehicular traffic, with no room for pedestrians or bicyclists, and posted (and actual) speeds through downtown make walking next to the street an unsafe proposition.

they are protective of its historic character and the neighborly approach to doing business in Cave Springs.

Moving through Cave Springs is an interesting adventure. North and south automobile traffic, much of which is simply passing through downtown, enjoys a 35 mile per hour speed limit and is relatively unimpeded with only one stop sign downtown at the intersection of Main Street and Healing Springs Road. The posted speed limit is high for a downtown, pedestrian environment, illustrating the challenge of this roadway serving as a “highway” and “main street.” Automobile traffic moving east and west, intending to merge onto Main Street, faces a more challenging path as there are few breaks in the flow of cars to allow new cars to merge onto the roadway. This same east-west crossing is nearly impossible for pedestrians to manage safely.

Pedestrians moving around downtown are severely limited by unattached and inadequate sidewalks. Cars regularly park in areas that are also considered sidewalks, and there is only one crosswalk near Highfill Road to

help people move across Main Street. This creates a dangerous environment for residents, business owners, shoppers, and visitors.

The spring-fed lake, the pavilion, and the trails around and through the Illinois River Watershed Partnership (IRWP) property are wonderful assets for Cave Springs, drawing recreational visitors and educational tours to the city. As a significant landowner downtown, the leadership at the IRWP has demonstrated a willingness to work in partnership with the city as it considers future land use and development in downtown Cave Springs.

Finally, Cave Springs elected leadership and professional staff are clear and consistent assets for the community. Dedicated and professional, city leadership is working hard to best position Cave Springs for the future while maintaining its small-town charm. At the same time, the city, with its small staff, has limited capacity for big moves on its own. Partnerships and outside assistance may be needed to help move initiatives forward.

Takeaways from the Stakeholder Interviews

- Cave Springs is a beautiful, natural area.
- The city is positioned geographically to be in the middle of everything.
- There are several large legacy landowners downtown.
- There are inconsistent definitions for downtown.
- Parking can be a challenge on event days.
- Traffic is a problem at 8 am and 4 pm, and most cars are just passing through the city.
- The lake, trails, and open space are key assets and amenities for the region.
- Nelson’s Hardware and Joyhouse Coffee are important downtown assets.
- Most residents appear to be interested in or open to non-single-family residential options for downtown.
- Stakeholders want growth, but “smart growth.”
- People would like to keep the nostalgic small-town feel.
- Community events (e.g., Christmas in the Cave) are important to the community and also creating parking challenges.
- Stakeholders would like to see more retail downtown, which could include a restaurant or two, a small grocery store, a bakery, a florist, and a salon.
- Potential commercial tenants are interested in locating in downtown Cave Springs.
- There is little interest from the community in allowing chain establishments to downtown.
- Walkability around town is an issue and particularly along Main Street.
- Stakeholders would also like access to trails.
- City capacity and resources may be limited.
- There is a “wait and see” attitude in town that is causing delays in any development action until the bypass is constructed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the course of the conversations with the steering committee, the stakeholders, and the panel, it was clear that there was no clear definition or boundary for downtown Cave Springs. Many pointed to the intersection with Healing Springs Road as the northern boundary and the intersection with East Lowell Road to the south as the southern boundary, but few had given much thought to the east and west borders of downtown beyond the buildings that currently line Main Street.

Starting at the intersection of Glenwood Avenue and Main Street, the panel drew a circle around downtown that would represent a five-minute walk, or one-quarter of a mile, from the center of the circle. A five-minute walk is typically deemed “comfortable” for those with average pedestrian mobility. Beyond that distance many people are more likely to choose to drive. Using this radius, the northern and southern edges of downtown generally aligned with the stakeholders’ musings, but the eastern and western edges expanded “downtown” significantly beyond residents’ current connotation.

Define Downtown

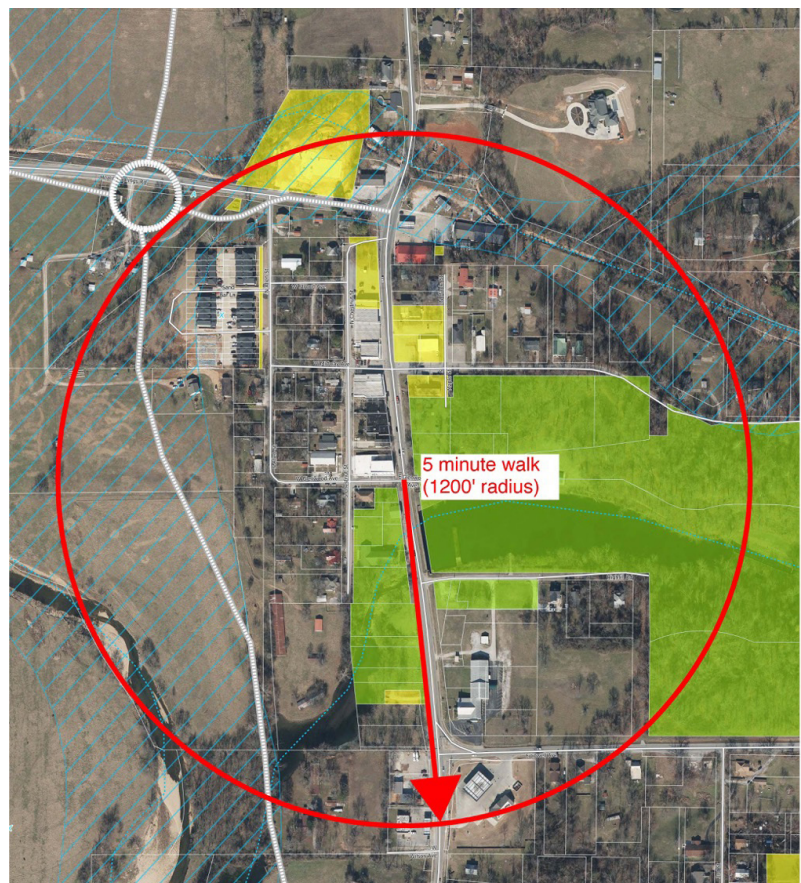
In defining “downtown” Cave Springs for this study, the panel considered its geographical definition—the above radius and the number of streets it encompasses—and also considered the vision and character of downtown.

To the north, beyond the radius and between Healing Springs Road and Shores Avenue, the area is defined by large tracts of land. While this area will be bordered by the northernmost roundabout of the new bypass, the area is outside of the panel’s established quarter-mile radius of downtown and should be viewed as adjacent to but not within downtown proper.

Similarly, to the south, between East Lowell Avenue and East Johnson Avenue, the city’s comprehensive plan points to this as future town center, which will have a character that

could be unique and separate from the historic character of the core of downtown.

While the land downtown that sits east of Main Street is dominated by large parcels that are protected and preserved for natural uses, there are additional parcels in this section of downtown that are owned by the city and could provide interesting development opportunities.



Downtown Cave Springs is shown in the context of a five-minute walk.

To the west of Main Street and within the quarter-mile radius, residential neighborhoods are already in place and a partial street grid serves the buildings there. These homes are within an easy walk of Main Street and should be considered as a part of the downtown neighborhood.

These characterizations and the identification of the five-minute walk radius for downtown, led the panel to its first recommendation.

Think about downtown as a neighborhood (not just a business district).

It is important for the city to envision downtown Cave Springs as a walkable neighborhood comprised of a variety of land uses. Identifying and further defining those uses within the fabric of downtown is important and should include retail, office, residential, recreational, and more. These uses can help define the sub-areas within downtown and help residents and business owners, both current and future, see themselves as a part of downtown Cave Springs.

To further promote the walkable downtown neighborhood and support the businesses there, it will be important to position the highway bypass as new transportation infrastructure only and not as a location for future commercial enterprise.

Position the bypass as a “parkway” lined by the backs of neighborhoods and not the fronts of commercial enterprises.

By designating land uses along the bypass today, before construction begins, the city can begin to shape the type of development that can be placed in the newly-opened land along the roadway. Neighborhoods to the east of the bypass can sprout further off of Main Street and wend their way to the far reaches of the downtown neighborhood, which will be contained on the west by the parkway. Houses can back up to the parkway, and commercial enterprises should be discouraged from locating along the parkway, on either side, east or west. Limiting the opportunity for commercial uses along the parkway will help preserve the viability of retail and other commercial operations along



This sketch depicts the downtown core and the surrounding sub-areas.

Main Street and the parkway users will enjoy a smoother commute with fewer interruptions from traffic exiting or entering commercial spaces. Making these intentions clear at the start of construction and putting zoning in place early will provide a framework for smarter growth and help reduce the opportunity for by-right development of strip commercial businesses that would pull patrons from Main Street’s commercial operators and cheapen the parkway experience with chain businesses and/or fast food operators.

This design and regulatory philosophy aligns with what the panel learned from community stakeholders and civic leadership. The community has a vision for their downtown, one that is marked by walkable retail lining both sides of Main Street. Limiting commercial uses along the parkway will help preserve downtown’s retail appeal and market potential.

Update the Cave Springs land use code to create a new “downtown” base district.

The city has the option to create a new downtown land use code to specifically encourage the kind of downtown that city leadership and stakeholders wish to see in downtown Cave Springs. With a goal of keeping the code and the process simple, the panel recommends that city leadership consider municipal staff capacity and city leaders’ political will when developing new regulations. When crafted well, the development path that adheres to the regulations and

district codes will be the easiest path for developers to pursue. By making the desired outcome easy, there should be fewer requests for rezoning, variances, and special use permits, all of which would be an additional burden on municipal staff time. The easiest path for development is the one that follows the course laid out by the city.

The existing street and block structure in downtown should be maintained, yet there are incomplete streets and unfinished rights of way that need to be completed. With these new streets in place, additional development opportunities may be unlocked across the downtown neighborhood.

Within the downtown base district sketched by the panel during the TAP, four sub-areas surrounding the Main Street core were identified. These sub-areas include: north of Healing Springs Road following Highway 112 to the

MAIN STREET SILOAM SPRINGS



Top Left: Downtown Siloam Springs, Arkansas, was noted by stakeholders as a downtown environment they would like to see in Cave Springs. Top Right and Bottom Left and Right: Neighborhoods bordering downtown districts can be charming and welcoming and include a variety of housing types.



GOOGLE EARTH/ULI PANEL



Top Left and Bottom Left: Parkways can serve as important vehicular and trail corridors with residential uses or open space lining or backing up to the roadway. Top Right: Commercial uses lining parkways will interrupt the flow of traffic with merging and exiting vehicles and draw commercial activity away from Main Street. Bottom Right: Limiting the type of commercial uses along Main Street can help maintain the city’s small town, homegrown character.

northernmost future roundabout; south of East Lowell Avenue to the southern most new roundabout; west of Chestnut Street to the new parkway; and east of Maple Street. Using clear, context-sensitive standards and with an eye on the vision for downtown, the city can identify and detail the scale and character of development that it wishes to see in those sub-areas. It will be helpful to maintain flexibility in the uses noted to allow the market to determine the specific enterprises warranted.

In addition to the commercial considerations downtown, housing should also be permitted. Beyond the single-family structures currently surrounding Main Street, the city should permit a range of housing types for the downtown core, allowing for housing above retail establishments on Main Street and two, three, and four-family housing of appropriate form and character in the streets surrounding. Young professionals, singles, and even some seniors prefer the proximity to downtown businesses and appreciate the convenience it provides. In turn, new residents become a built-in customer base for downtown shops and restaurants.

Humanize Main Street

The key to the future of Main Street Cave Springs is to cater to the human, pedestrian experience. Presently, the street, sidewalks, and intersections along Main Street cater to cars, leaving pedestrians with a harrowing journey as they move between businesses, to and from the IRWP trails and pavilions, and between surrounding housing and city service buildings. The realignment of the highway provides Cave Springs with a unique and compelling opportunity to better address pedestrian connectivity going forward. Accommodating these changes can and should be managed with an eye toward maintaining the current character of Main Street and downtown Cave Springs.

The construction of the parkway will certainly change the nature of the Main Street corridor. The volume of traffic between Healing Springs Road and East Lowell Avenue is expected to drop. While some may view this dip in traffic with dread, the reduction in car volume will actually open the roadway, create gaps in traffic, and allow for more

accessible pedestrian crossing, a current impediment business owners noted during the stakeholder interviews.

Gain control of Main Street.

Given the movement of traffic to the new parkway, the panel strongly recommends that the city gain control of the section of Main Street and 112 that runs from the fire station on the north, south on 112 to East Lowell Avenue. By controlling this portion of the roadway, the city has the ability to manage the daily use of the street, even closing it for special events such as community parades or Christmas in Cave Springs. ARDOT is not in the business of maintaining downtown streets and is instead focused on moving vehicular traffic. ARDOT may, in fact, be just as interested as the city in the city taking over the control of this section of roadway—it will be one less section of roadway that ARDOT must maintain. By taking control of the Main Street corridor, the city can ensure that the roadway supports downtown businesses and complements downtown’s character and charm.

Negotiate for the future of the dam.

Controlling Main Street is not without costs, particularly as a portion of Main Street also serves as a dam at its intersection with the lake on the IRWP property. The dam will need ongoing maintenance and repair and may one day need to be replaced completely. In Cave Springs’ negotiations with ARDOT over the control of Main Street, consideration should be given to the maintenance and future funding of repairs to the dam. The Federal Emergency Management Agency or Arkansas Natural Resources Commission might provide avenues for funding this type of work.

Plan for and cater to pedestrians.

Main Street north of the Healing Springs intersection will have a different character than Main Street in the core of downtown, yet pedestrian connectivity to the north is important in order to connect residents to their downtown. There is a bridged culvert less than 100 feet north of the intersection at Healing Springs that makes pedestrian crossing prohibitive. Narrow already for vehicular traffic, there is no sidewalk, nor is there a shoulder to assist in safe passage. Sidewalk access, perhaps via a pedestrian bridge



BRIEFING MATERIALS

The Main Street roadway will become much more pedestrian friendly with the transfer of a significant amount of vehicular traffic to the new parkway west of downtown



GOOGLE EARTH

The dam, as seen here during a draining event, will require ongoing maintenance and repair that should be negotiated with ARDOT in early days. By planning today and budgeting for future repairs, the city will be better prepared to take on the responsibilities associated with this important roadway dam.



The culvert at the northern edge of downtown creates tight passage for vehicular traffic, with no room for pedestrians or bicyclists.

TAP PANEL

that could also serve as a trail bridge, should be created over the culvert and could be funded through transportation or trail grants, bond funds, or local foundations.

Manage Main Street.

With the reduction in traffic, expected to dip from 14,000 to approximately 5,000 vehicles per day, the city can begin to view Main Street through a much different lens. No longer a thoroughfare funneling commuters through, back and forth twice daily, Main Street can become a space designed for pedestrians and commerce, featuring a more formalized parking plan (with clearly-defined spaces and lots), sidewalk expansion, and perhaps outside cafe-style seating and dining.



The sidewalk along this Main Street building is unsafe, due to the awning pulling away from the building's facade.

TAP PANEL

While many stakeholders pointed to Siloam Springs as an exemplary "downtown," not all downtowns are the same, and city leadership is cautioned against working to strictly replicate another city's main street or downtown in Cave Springs. Cave Springs has a unique character today that should serve as a north star for future growth.

Plan for Parking.

At present, the parking in downtown Cave Springs is ad hoc and loosely managed. Parking along Main Street, in particular, is haphazard and lacks mechanisms or controls to help guide patrons in their parking pursuits. Before taking any steps to revise or test new parking strategies, the city should conduct an inventory of existing parking (public, private, and publicly available) available in downtown. Although much of the parking is not striped today, measurements can be taken to help estimate the number of currently available spaces. Added to this inventory should be a count of space utilization at different points of the day and on different days of the week (*i.e.*, weekdays versus weekends). Ideally, this would also include the number of minutes or even hours those spaces are used during the inventoried time.



The sidewalk in front of Nelson's Hardware is used for pedestrian access and merchandising, with no buffer to the parking or street beyond.

TAP PANEL

As the city considers new parking options, it is encouraged to test ideas with striping and other low-cost options before launching a final plan that may come with significant infrastructure costs. The community should be invited into the process and encouraged to provide

feedback on parking options and potential new pedestrian zones in downtown. The community could also provide insights on the current commerce that takes place on sidewalks and in the city's existing right of way areas. Using this public feedback, the city can make informed decisions in its planning efforts and seek funding for improvements that the community will value.

During this process of organizing downtown parking, it is also a good time to place certain limits on parking duration. While business owners may not have issues today with long-term parking in front of their establishments, by posting limits today, the city and business owners can get in front of potential issues in the months or years to come when parking is closely managed. City leadership is also encouraged to manage the parking across downtown. Parking spaces do not belong to the proximate businesses and educational efforts and community and business engagement efforts can help everyone better understand the placement and management of parking throughout downtown Cave Springs.

As the city considers improvements to sidewalks and parking areas, the overall pedestrian experience in downtown should be evaluated. Pedestrian "amenity zones" should be considered and could include outdoor dining, retail on the sidewalk, enhanced sidewalks and crosswalks, and better intersection control. While not all of these assets will make sense in every section of downtown, the thoughtful inclusion and careful placement of pedestrian amenities can make the experience of walking through and shopping along Main Street much more enjoyable and welcoming, which will further encourage patrons to park and leave their cars behind while they safely visit downtown businesses.

Connect to, regulate, and brand the bypass as the "Cave Springs Parkway."

The construction of the parkway is an opportunity for Cave Springs. Not only will the parkway relieve Main Street of through-traffic, it also brings with it potential connections to the planned trail system that is to accompany it. West Glenwood or West Midway avenues could become direct connections to the trail system that will run alongside



TAP PANEL

Looking west from West Glenwood Avenue, a short trail connector could easily connect new parkway trail users to all that downtown Cave Springs has to offer.

the parkway and could offer connections from the trail to the businesses along Main Street. These looped trail connections should be thoughtfully considered and built into the city's infrastructure plans.

The city has the ability to control certain aspects of the new parkway, particularly how the city refers to the roadway and how the surrounding land uses are zoned. By referring to the bypass as a "parkway" or even the "Cave Springs Parkway," the city can begin to shape the narrative of that stretch of new roadway. As a parkway, traffic is encouraged to flow with little interruption. By regulating the zoning along the roadway, the city can avoid the addition of strip commercial, franchise operations, and gas stations along parkway, thereby further supporting and preserving the character and commercial livelihood of downtown Cave Springs.

Through its evaluation of Main Street, downtown, and the surrounding streets, the panel was pleased to note that much of the other infrastructure assets in Cave Springs—sewer, water, and other private utilities—are well-positioned to support the current uses as well as those that could be included in the expansion of downtown as noted by the panel.

Leverage institutionally-owned property.

Within the geography of the downtown core, as defined on page 15 by the panel, there are roughly 62 acres held by 45 different property owners represented by eight main stakeholders. There are three large landowners downtown that are institutional—the city, the IRWP, and the First Baptist Church.

- The City of Cave Springs is a significant landowner in the city’s downtown core. At present, the city owns 535 linear feet along Main Street and 390 linear feet along Healing Springs Road. On the east side of Main Street, the city owns an acre of land with an additional 0.6 acres under purchase consideration. The city also owns one-half of an acre on the west side of Main Street and 2.88 acres of land on Healing Springs Road where the new fire station is nearing completion.
- The Illinois River Watershed Partnership also owns a considerable amount of land in Cave Springs and in downtown specifically. With 31+ acres and 1,041 linear feet east of Main Street and 4 acres and 750 linear feet west of Main Street, the IRWP plays a significant role in determining the character of downtown and in supporting the recreational assets of the city’s core.
- The First Baptist Church, at the northeast corner of Main Street and East Lowell Avenue is also a notable downtown landowner. The church owns six acres of land, including 435 linear feet on Main Street and 618 linear feet on East Lowell Avenue.

The core of downtown encompasses roughly 3,600 linear feet in total, divided evenly into 1,800 linear feet on both the east and west sides of Main Street. Within that stretch of Main Street and the land held by the three institutions, there is an opportunity to begin a discussion with institutional stakeholders regarding the future potential to utilize some of this land in new ways which can still meet the goals and needs of these institutions and open up key parcels for (re)development. In addition to this institutionally-owned land, the city is strongly encouraged to pursue a purchase of the parcel directly north of and adjacent to City Hall in order to create a more compelling redevelopment opportunity for city hall.

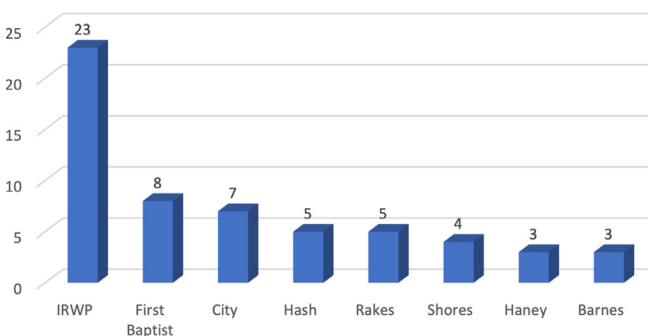
Consider development partnerships.

As the city considers various opportunities for development in the downtown core, the panel recommends seeking a private partner in development.

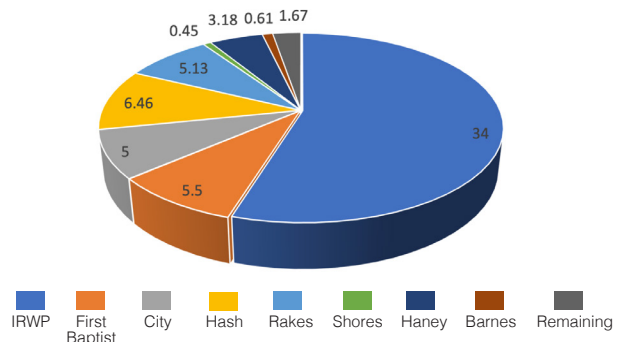
With regard to the redevelopment of the Cave Springs City Hall in particular, the city could issue a request for proposal (RFP). The RFP could stipulate certain conditions that would allow the city to preserve certain controls over the building and land use. The RFP could also lay out the structure for a public private partnership between the city and the developer with the potential to sell or lease land and/or buildings. Working with trusted partners, the following scenarios might provide a good starting point for the RFP structure.

- The city issues a phased RFP for a municipal building only.

Legacy Landowners (parcel ownership)



Legacy Landowners (acres owned)



Development Partnerships, Examples

In Siloam Springs, the city offered its city-owned historic post office building for development as a way to stimulate additional economic activity along its main street. Once redevelopment was finished by the private developer, the building was leased and later sold to a business that operates a bike shop. The city placed restrictions on the building, notably building preservation, to ensure that the integrity of the historic structure remained.



PHAT TIRE BIKE SHOP

Phat Tire Bike Shop now operates in the historic former post office building in Siloam Springs.

In Bentonville, the city recently sold its city hall building to a private developer at no cost. The city's stipulation in the negotiation was that the city could lease the building back from the developer. The city also placed restrictions on the building that would support the building's ongoing preservation.



SHREVE IMAGING FOR CORE ARCHITECTS

Bentonville City Hall was redeveloped for the city by a private developer.

- The city issues a phased RFP for a new municipal building and additional private development.

With ten acres of city-owned land and potential surplus acreage within the IRWP holdings, the development opportunity in downtown Cave Springs is compelling. The city is encouraged to nurture a close working relationship with IRWP to jointly determine the future path for any surplus or underutilized IRWP property, which might help advance the IRWP mission and support the vibrancy of downtown.

The city's role in this effort is clear and should start with the formulation of an RFP process leveraging city resources and existing professional relationships. The city will need to initiate a public-private partnership (PPP) and/or land sale to the private developer selected through the RFP process. Development should be outsourced to the private developer, freeing the city's limited professional staff to focus their time on their tasks already at hand.

In the near term, the city should identify phasing ideas that will require little overhead and expense. Some of these phased activities could include programming along Main Street, leveraging existing open space and parking lots. A farmers market is a good example of programming that could be outsourced at little cost to the city but with good potential for generating positive economic activity and additional foot traffic downtown.

Over the coming years, the city should continue to seek development partners, allowing it to relinquish property where appropriate while bringing funding and awareness to city initiatives. All of this will continue to build and enhance the city's economic and community development growth goals.

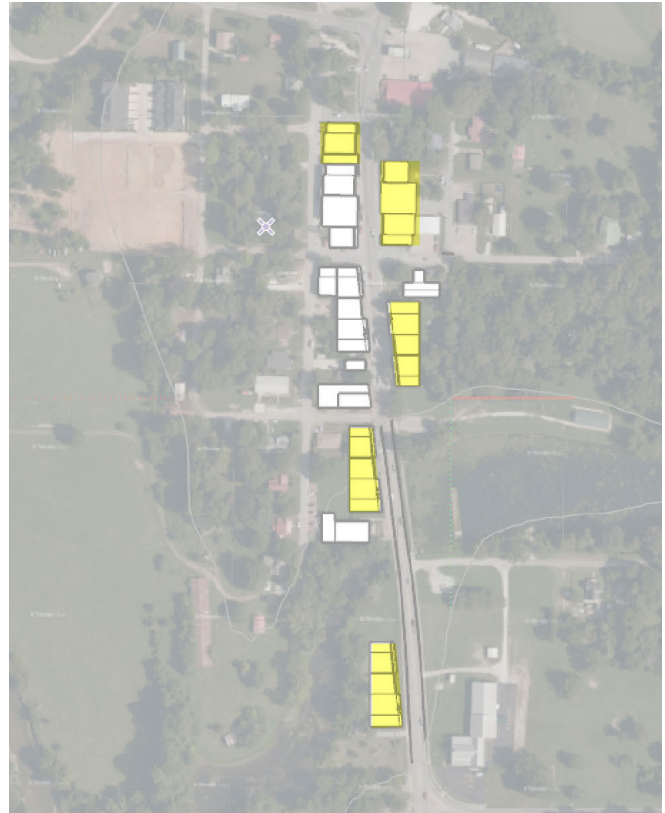
Through relationships with existing landowners along Main Street, the downtown core of Cave Springs could be shaped into a walkable, mixed-use downtown that is a valued resource for residents, a draw for regional visitors, and an economic engine for the city that still treasures its natural assets.

As the panel considered future potential development along Main Street, it considered the publicly-owned parcels and



GOOGLE EARTH, TAP PANEL

The downtown core with the massing of current businesses highlighted with white boxes.



GOOGLE EARTH, TAP PANEL

By using property already owned by the city and IRWP, the panel demonstrated the potential increase in development that is possible downtown, simply mirroring the massing of the west side of the street onto the eastern side of the street.



GOOGLE EARTH, TAP PANEL

Once built out, a Main Street streetscape similar to the panel's proposal to the left would create a walkable environment that supports the economic vitality of the city's downtown while preserving and showcasing the natural beauty of the spring and lake.



GOOGLE EARTH, TAP PANEL



GOOGLE EARTH, TAP PANEL

The above two sketches show what an aerial view of downtown would look like with both sides of Main Street built out.



GOOGLE EARTH, TAP PANEL

This is a conceptual view of Main Street looking north at the intersection with West Glenwood Avenue.



GOOGLE EARTH, TAP PANEL

This conceptual view is looking south on Main Street from the intersection at Healing Springs Road.

those controlled by other institutional landowners. The streetscapes sketched by the panel largely reflect the size and configuration of the buildings already present on the west side of Main Street as stakeholders consistently agreed that the size and scale of buildings on the west would be welcome on the east side of the street as well. The concept views the panel provided can begin to demonstrate how a person walking along or driving on Main Street would experience the street and buildings lining it.

The opportunities to create more retail and office spaces with potential for residential uses above should be compelling to the city. Adding this density provides additional tax basis for the city and puts more financial resources back into the city's coffers. For the City of Cave Springs, average commercial rental rates might range from \$8-12 per square foot. For the residential spaces, anticipated rental rates could range between \$0.85-1.65 per square foot for apartment rentals. These additional residential options for the city, the associated potential income for developers, and the taxes generated for the city make this type of development worthy of strong consideration.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

As the City of Cave Springs continues to prepare for future population growth and the construction of the nearby parkway, the panel encourages civic leaders to keep the following key points in mind, working to resolve its plan for the future and further define the path to get there.

Define downtown. The geography of the city's downtown is best considered within the context of a quarter-mile or five-minute walk. While this should represent the core of downtown, additional sub-areas to the north and south should also be considered when planning for and creating infrastructure to support connections, particularly pedestrian connections to downtown.

Create a vision for downtown. Downtown Cave Springs has character and a small-town charm that residents cherish. The city should build on that character and create a vision for downtown that fully encompasses the defined geography and leverages its historic charm.

Update zoning. Updates to land use and zoning in downtown, particularly the creation of a new downtown zoning district, will support the city's pursuit of additional

economic growth downtown, introduce additional residential options downtown, and further limit strip commercial, auto-oriented chain establishments, or additional gas stations both along Main Street and along the new parkway..

Humanize Main Street. Main Street should become a welcome and walkable environment. The movement of pass-through vehicular traffic to the new parkway will help to calm Main Street traffic and make space for enhanced and safer pedestrian use. Crosswalks, connected sidewalks, and other pedestrian amenities should be identified and installed.

Understand and negotiate with ARDOT to modernize the dam and control Main Street. It is possible that ARDOT would be willing to cede control of Main Street to the



city, and the city should pursue this opportunity. It will be important, however, to address the ongoing operation and maintenance of the roadway dam during the course of the negotiations with ARDOT.

Inventory and plan for parking. Parking across town is rather haphazard today. The city should take the time to inventory the parking that is currently available throughout downtown and note peak usage days and times of day. With this information in hand, the city can then begin to plan for the more efficient use of Main Street shoulder area, land along adjoining side streets, and spaces in current parking lots. A downtown or district parking plan might be worth pursuing.

Leverage institutionally-owned land. While it seems, at first blush, that there is no land available for development in downtown Cave Springs, further inspection reveals that a great deal of land downtown is owned by three institutions—the city, IRWP, and the First Baptist Church. By working with these institutional citizens of Cave Springs, additional land might be unlocked for development downtown.

Identify properties open to outside development. Within the institutionally-owned parcel and even privately owned

parcels within the newly defined downtown, the city should be in conversation with land owners to identify potential parcels for private or outside development.

Formulate plans for RFP/private development. Working with its trusted professional partners and with the above parcel and development opportunities in hand, the city should issue an RFP for development. This RFP could help the city realize a new municipal building, better leverage the land that the city currently controls, and could catalyze additional development in the downtown core.

The City of Cave Springs may be small, but it is mighty. With knowledgeable professional staff on hand and professional service partners with deep experience and relationships across the region, the city is well-positioned to leverage this point in time to its advantage. The parkway on the horizon can and should become a welcome asset for the city rather than a death knell for its retail businesses. The potential for the parkway to relieve Main Street of speeding commuter traffic can open downtown for development, welcoming additional new charming retail uses and businesses and creating a safe and enjoyable experience for patrons, residents, and pedestrians. Planning and partnerships will be key to the future success of the City of Cave Springs.



ABOUT THE PANEL



Mary Madden, AICP
Panel Chair
Principal, Madden Planning

Mary Madden has more than 25 years of experience in the fields of urban planning and design, community development, and historic preservation at the federal, state, and local levels. Her practice includes planning and urban design for public and private sector clients, with an emphasis on revising zoning codes to promote smart growth, sustainability and New Urbanism. She has worked in communities ranging from aging mill towns to mid-sized cities; from vibrant college towns to booming suburbs. In addition to working directly with communities, Mary frequently speaks and writes on the topics of urban design and form-based codes. She is currently an active participant in CNU's Project for Code Reform. Before beginning solo-practice, Mary was a firm principal of Washington DC-based Ferrell Madden for almost 20 years. She also served for almost a decade in several positions at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Earlier in her career, she worked for the Mayors' Institute on City Design and at the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Mary holds a Master of Urban and Environmental Planning degree from the University of Virginia and a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture from Princeton University. She was a founding board member of the Form-Based Codes Institute (now a program of Smart Growth America).



Nate Bachelor, PE
Department Manager
CEI Engineering

Mr. Bachelor is a Licensed Professional Engineer and leads the firm's Local Development Department. Nate has a total of 17 years of engineering experience on a variety of private sector projects including multi-family residential development, downtown mixed-use projects, townhomes, office space, and restaurants. Over the past 10 years, Nate worked as a Project Manager on an assortment of project sizes and types exclusively within Northwest Arkansas before being promoted to lead the department.



Nathan Becknell
Principal and Manager
Traffic Engineering
Consultants, Inc.

Nathan is a Principal and Manager of the Fayetteville, Arkansas office for Traffic Engineering Consultants, Inc. (TEC) where he works on a variety of transportation focused areas including signal designs and timing, safety studies, bike/ped advocacy, impact analysis, and policy promotion. He received both his BSCE and MSCE from the University of Arkansas. Prior to his employment with TEC, Nathan has experience as a city engineer, road designer, and road constructor.



Hannah Cicioni
Owner & Principal
CRD Real Estate &
Development

Hannah Cicioni is Owner & Principal of CRD Real Estate & Development. With over 10 years in Commercial Real Estate and Real Estate Development, Hannah serves as Principal Broker for CRD, overseeing all aspects of the company. In addition, Hannah serves as lead for the development division of CRD. Prior to CRD, Hannah has been involved in land development and wildlife management consulting, as well as being the founder of a real estate development and consulting firm that specializes in historic preservation, residential, retail and mixed-use developments, in and around historic downtown settings nationwide. Hannah is also the Founder and Owner of TxAR House BBQ, located in Downtown Rogers. Through service on various boards for the City of Rogers and Rogers Lowell Chamber of Commerce, Hannah currently serves on the Planning Commission for the City of Rogers.



Matthew Hoffman AIA
Director of Urban Design
MBL Planning
President/Co-Founder
Pattern Zones Co.

Matthew Hoffman AIA is the Director of Urban Design for MBL Planning, and President/Co- Founder of Pattern Zones Co. Over ten years with the City of Fayetteville Arkansas, Mr. Hoffman served as Chairman of the Planning Commission, the Board of Adjustments, and the city's Long Range Planning Committee. His work in architecture and urbanism has been recognized by state and national awards from the American Institute of Architects, World Architecture News, the American Planning Association, and the Congress for the New Urbanism. Mr. Hoffman has been an invited speaker on architecture and planning topics at various events with the Urban Land Institute, the American Planning Association, the American Institute of Architects, and the Congress for the New Urbanism. Mr. Hoffman's portfolio at MBL Planning includes urban design projects in four different states, and he is a member of the master planning and architectural design team for Walmart's new 350-acre Home Office in Bentonville Arkansas. In 2021, Hoffman was welcomed to membership in The Urban Guild.



Ryan King, AIA | NCARB
Founder
Unit Architecture

Ryan is a transplant originally from Springfield Missouri, by way of Atlanta Georgia, but an Arkansas Native at heart. After graduating from the Fay Jones school of Architecture at the University of Arkansas with a professional degree in Architecture, Ryan immediately began a twenty-year career with Niles Bolton Associates, a large multidisciplinary design firm with award-winning projects across the nation. While at NBA, Ryan lead teams for numerous urban mixed-use buildings and developments ranging from \$20-300 million in construction cost. Over his career, Ryan played an integral role delivering projects totaling an estimated 15,000 dwelling units for market-rate housing and 20,000 beds for student housing projects. After moving back to Northwest Arkansas in 2019 to be close to his family, Ryan quickly began designing, developing, and constructing a handful of small-scale infill projects, generally targeted towards student housing. After successfully completing and stabilizing these projects, Ryan has

transitioned back to providing architectural services, building on the commercial design experiences of his past. Ryan founded Unit Architecture and began providing commercial design services to private developers in 2022, with an emphasis on multifamily, mixed-use infill conditions and a focus on meaningful and thoughtful design in Northwest Arkansas. Ryan's multifaceted experience in commercial design and construction uniquely positions the firm as a trusted advisor to the development team. Through experience-driven guidance and leadership, Unit Architecture strives to establish itself as a valued resource to the commercial real estate industry serving the Northwest Arkansas Region and communities beyond.



Stacy Morris
Executive Director
Main Street Siloam Springs

Stacy has a background in banking and finance and a passion for all things local. She has been with Main Street for 11 years and this is her third year as Executive Director. Stacy loves gardening and animals. A mother of two, she shares her home with her daughter Autumn, two dogs - Quinn and Sadie, a cat named Violet, Onyx the bunny, and a crazy flock of chickens. Her son and daughter-in-law recently made her a grandma so watch out - she WILL show you photos!



Northwest Arkansas

ULI Northwest Arkansas
PO Box 11232
Fayetteville, AR 72703

501-269-8238
northwestarkansas@uli.org

nwarkansas.uli.org



knowledge.uli.org