



Northwest Arkansas

PEA RIDGE, ARKANSAS

Envisioning the future of the city's parks and open space



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ON THE COVER: Gravel roads, found across Northwest Arkansas,
are becoming a popular destination for people exploring the area
on bicycles. (ULI)



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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

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Since 1947, the ULI Advisory Services program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for complex land use challenges. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services. National and international panelists are specifically recruited to form a panel of independent and objective volunteer ULI member experts with the skills needed to address the identified land use challenge. The program is designed to help break through obstacles, jump-start conversations, and solve tough challenges that need an outside, independent perspective. Three- and five-day engagements are offered to ensure thorough consideration of relevant topics.

Learn more at americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services.

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Urban Land Institute harnesses its members' technical expertise to help communities solve complex land use, development, and redevelopment challenges. Technical assistance panels (TAPs) provide expert, multidisciplinary, unbiased advice to local governments, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use and real estate issues in the region. Drawing from its professional membership base, ULI Northwest Arkansas offers objective and responsible guidance on various land use and real estate issues ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The sponsoring organization is responsible for gathering the background information necessary to understand the project and present it to the panel. TAP panelists spend two days interviewing stakeholders, evaluating the challenges, and ultimately arriving at a set of recommendations that the sponsoring organization can use to guide development going forward.

Learn more at nwarkansas.uli.org.

Technical Assistance Panel and Project Staff

Panel Chair

Mary Madden, AICP

Principal
Madden Planning

Panel Members

Jenny Burbidge

Owner + Principal Landscape Architect
Prism Design Studio

Ryan Hale

Founder and CEO
Laneshift

Dan Heintz

CEO and Chief Experience Designer
Velocity Group

Molly Robb

Principal Engineer
Odyssey Engineering, LLC

Project Contributors and ULI Project Staff

Matt Mihalevich

Active Transportation Manager, City of Fayetteville

Wes Craiglow

Executive Director, ULI Northwest Arkansas

Megan Brown

Director of Signature Programs, ULI Northwest
Arkansas

Kelly Annis

Report Writer, Branch Communications

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New housing developments can be seen beyond the farmland at the entrance to the city along State Highway 72.

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The gravel roads of northwest Arkansas have become a draw for bicycling enthusiasts and the Respect Rural Roads (R3) campaign encourages users to respect the space and needs of everyone on these roadways.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The natural beauty and agricultural promise of northwest Arkansas have drawn people to the area for generations. Today, as rural communities like Pea Ridge gain in popularity, civic leaders are facing an exciting challenge: maintaining the parks, open space, and green vistas that community members hold dear while still balancing the needs of a growing community. For the leadership of Pea Ridge, this focus is manifesting in the formation of a parks and open space master plan.

With the assistance of the Urban Land Institute Northwest Arkansas District Council (ULI), Pea Ridge is embarking on a planning process that will help the City shape a parks and open space master plan that will support residents and visitors today and well into the future. To help shape this planning process, Pea Ridge leadership turned to ULI for guidance through its trusted technical assistance panel (TAP) process. Specifically, City leadership asked ULI to address how Pea Ridge can better connect the resources it has today, how it can leverage economic development opportunities around its recreational assets, and how it should evaluate future potential land acquisitions in support of its parks and open space network.

Through the TAP process, ULI convened a panel of real estate professionals with the expertise needed to answer the City's questions and help provide guidance as Pea Ridge embarks on a master planning process for its parks and open space. The panel toured the city's recreational assets and interviewed a wide range of civic leaders, elected officials, and community stakeholders. The TAP process culminated in a presentation of the panel's recommendations to the Mayor of Pea Ridge and the City's planning director.

Systems-level Framing

With all of the great work underway and the efforts on the horizon for Pea Ridge, the panel strongly recommends the City apply a systems-level framing to its work in the planning arena and more broadly across all City functions. In systems-level thinking, each function is seen

as a critical part of the connected whole, and nothing operates in isolation. With this framing, the parks planning processes are directly connected to other City functions, collaboration and task alignment are keys to informing work across the city, and collectively, this work shapes the experience of being in Pea Ridge for both residents, employees, and visitors.

A systems-level framing for Pea Ridge will help align its planning efforts—both the imminent parks planning and other master planning efforts—and should help the City better define its value proposition to current and future residents and business owners. All planning efforts should complement the broader comprehensive plan for the community and enhance resident and visitor experiences in the following areas: creating a sense of place and enhancing the physical identity of Pea Ridge; providing opportunities for deeper emotional connections, a sense of welcome, and a strengthened social network across generations; celebrating the history and culture of the city while also welcoming new residents, visitors, ideas and ideals; and enhancing and expanding economic opportunities in the city.

In addition to the systems-level perspective, the panel also outlined a decision-making framework based on the values and desired experiences outlined in the systems-level framing above. Civic leaders can use this framework to identify whether or not an initiative makes good sense for the community, supporting residents living their best lives, and then identify the broader impact of that decision on the city today and into the future.

Planning Recommendations

The panel then addressed the specific questions posed by the City, specifically the need for greater connectivity between the city's open space assets, the potential for economic development around the parks and open space, and considerations relating to the potential acquisition of additional recreational land.

To enhance connectivity between the city's parks and open spaces, the City should prioritize investments in active transportation (walking and biking) improvements and collaborate with the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ArDOT) to create safe connections for active transportation modes along and across roadways. The City should also focus on strategically filling gaps between and connecting recreational assets, primarily through additional sidewalks and connecting infrastructure for people on bikes. Accessibility in all forms should be front of mind in these improvements and the potential for cultural connections should be explored to further enhance the community's sense of belonging and pride of place.

Economic Development Opportunities

As the City considers where and how to exert its economic development energy, both around the parks and citywide, the panel strongly encourages the City first focus on infill opportunities. By focusing on infill development, residents can benefit from a clustered commercial approach where goods, services, and amenities are located in close proximity to one another, making commercial areas more walkable and bikable. It is also important to recognize that economic development activities can create both fiscal and social returns on investment. There may be opportunities for a new business to locate in Pea Ridge, which will deliver fiscal returns, but a new soccer field can deliver value too, to the community, in the form of strengthened social connections among community members and those playing the sport.

Other Considerations in Acquisitions

Pea Ridge has an impressive array of parks and open spaces today. As it may be presented opportunities for acquisitions

in the future, the panel outlined the following considerations for evaluating potential land acquisitions: strive for geographic distribution across the city; build connectivity between the parks; ensure accessibility is incorporated; create a variety of park and open space types; and pursue resource conservation and environmental stewardship.

RFQ Recommendations

The next step in this process will be the City's issuance of a request for qualifications (RFQ) to identify a consulting team to provide the master planning work. While this will not be the first time the City has embarked upon an RFQ process, the panel strongly believes that a collaborative approach, maximizing a range of specific expertise, is critical to the success of the effort and the eventual return for the City. To that end, the panel provided guidance for the RFQ process and emphasized that none of this planning work should be completed in a silo. Cross-collaboration between professionals with a range of expertise will best support the broader acceptance of the planning efforts and ensure that the results are designed for a broad population of residents and visitors who are drawn to Pea Ridge's parks and open spaces.

Pea Ridge is full of residents and visitors who take great pride in the community, its small-town atmosphere, and the surrounding natural resources. It is clear that the residents love their city and are committed to seeing Pea Ridge grow in a manner that is authentic to its history as a rural community. City leaders recognize, understand, and share that commitment and are working every day to ensure that residents continue to love their city. The parks and open spaces that provide residents and visitors with welcoming spaces to play, gather, and further build strong social bonds are cherished in Pea Ridge, too, and the planning process before the City is exciting. Steps taken deliberately and intentionally can help ensure that the City identifies its goals and finds a consulting team ready, willing, and able to see that those goals are manifested in a plan that serves Pea Ridge well into the future. ULI stands ready to continue to support the City in these pursuits and looks forward to the continued partnership.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The city of Pea Ridge, like much of Northwest Arkansas, is experiencing a population boom. People are moving from other parts of the United States and other cities within the state to enjoy the small-town nature of Pea Ridge. Surrounded by farms, hills, and streams, the natural beauty of the area is also a significant draw.

Recognizing these population movements and with an understanding of the area's recreational and natural assets, the elected leadership and municipal staff of the City of Pea Ridge (the City) turned to the Urban Land Institute Northwest Arkansas District Council (ULI) for guidance in connecting and planning for the city's future parks and activity centers.

The city's current park inventory is marked by City Park at the northern edge of town, the Baker Hayes Urban Trail System near the center of town, shared use of the public school fields, and a few other smaller parks scattered amongst the city's neighborhoods. These parks are well maintained and range in popularity and use, with many neighborhood parks seeing only surrounding resident use. City Park is quite popular with residents, and visitors travel from surrounding areas to enjoy the accessible playground equipment. The parks, however, remain unconnected from one another, separated by fenced-in neighborhoods, streets, disconnected sidewalks, and state roads that are fast and lack adequate pedestrian crossings.

The trail system for people enjoying Northwest Arkansas by bicycle is impressive, drawing visitors from across the country to ride the trails and roads and participate in organized rides and races. The emergence of gravel road bicycling is also having an impact on the region and on Pea Ridge. With a number of legacy gravel roads surrounding and even running through sections of the city, bicyclists are finding and enjoying the roads around Pea Ridge and, at the same time, also discovering the city.



Pea Ridge, Arkansas, a rural community with a long agricultural history, is facing increasing development pressures. City leaders are striving to maintain its open spaces and green vistas while providing ample recreational opportunities for the community as well as opportunities for more people to eventually call Pea Ridge “home.”

Much like the city's parks, the trails remain apparently unconnected from one another, and enjoyment of the city's parks and trails generally requires a trip by automobile, complete with a bike rack for bicyclists, for access. Understanding this challenge and the potential benefits to the city, its residents, and its economy, City leadership turned to ULI for assistance in mapping a path forward for the parks, trails, and open space in and around Pea Ridge.

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, landscape architecture, and engineering, reviewed the materials supplied by the City, interviewed stakeholders from across the community, and applied their expertise to the challenges at hand. The panel's recommendations, found across the following pages, can provide guidance to the City as Pea Ridge continues to build out its parks and open space assets to the benefit of the resident community and the city's visitors.

Questions for the Panel

1. What connectivity options should be considered between our parks and other activity centers?
2. Are there any economic opportunities that should be explored?
3. What range of uses and other factors should the city consider when targeting acreage for new park land acquisition? (natural resources, outdoor recreation, heritage preservation, working ag lands, location within the city, economics, etc.)



The panel interviewed a wide variety of community stakeholders, including elected leadership, and toured a number of key sites across the city.

STUDY AREA CONTEXT

Pea Ridge is a city that has been largely built upon the success of its farmers and small business owners, made stronger and sustainable by the strong community values that seem to permeate every corner of the city. The faith community is an important foundation for much of what happens in Pea Ridge as is the public school district and its associated youth sports. Neighbors tend to know one another, they often go to church together, and their kids play on the school teams together. This small-town atmosphere is what draws new residents in and keeps generations of residents happily in place.

Open Space and Rural Trail System

Throughout the stakeholder interviews, the city's open space was highlighted and noted often as a beloved feature of living in Pea Ridge. "Open space" takes many forms across the area and includes formal parks, sports fields, trails, the nearby national military park, and even farmland. While not all of these open spaces are available for recreation, residents appreciate the views found across town and the sense that the city still values its agricultural foundation.

The designated parkland across the city has largely grown as the neighborhoods have grown. Small parks can be found tucked deep inside individual neighborhoods, often resulting in a sense that those parks are private and not open to the general public. In other instances, areas designated for stormwater management are often fenced off with little understanding of how these areas could be differently designed to become an open space amenity while still helping to manage stormwater runoff. Homebuilders have been meeting the city's formula for open space yet doing so with seemingly little regard for how these open spaces fit into—or could better fit into—the broader urban fabric of the city.

City Park, the exception to this neighborhood-centric park pattern, can be found along a very public road, is designed to be very open and welcoming, connects pedestrians to neighborhoods on its western edge, and has been made physically accessible for all ages and physical abilities. Fields within City Park are crowded at game times, the splash pad is a summer favorite for young children, and



Farmland surrounds Pea Ridge and helps support the city's economy.



Gravel roads have become increasingly popular biking trails for people from across the region.

the playground equipment is a draw well beyond Pea Ridge due to its ADA accessibility. A new amphitheater will soon replace the undersized bandstand in the park's center giving performances a larger platform, both literally and figuratively. Pea Ridge residents are proud of City Park and rightfully so.

The region's rural trail system, promoted and protected through the [Rural Recreational Road \(R3\)](#) network, is an impressive amenity for residents and visitors alike. With over 120 miles of gravel road trails spinning out of Pea Ridge, people are discovering the rolling hills and creeks of Northwest Arkansas on bikes and using Pea Ridge as a hub.



Six-foot privacy fences surround yards and entire neighborhoods creating walled communities that become isolated islands.



Sidewalks along this roadway would connect residents in these houses with the commercial area directly south.

Takeaways from the Stakeholder Interviews

These stakeholder insights helped inform the panel's understanding of the community's values, goals, and points of possible concern.

- Family is important
- Youth sports create community
- Gateway to the rural life
- History, including agricultural foundation, is important
- Small-town feel is important to maintain
- Great school district and the administration is incredible community partner
- Churches help build community and contribute to quality of life
- Unique community elements should be retained
- The city is poly-centric with multiple activity nodes (old/new downtown)
- Area is becoming a bedroom community for the I-49 corridor
- Strong rural/agricultural economy foundation
- National park and biking bring visitors—and their wallets
- Greater connectivity is needed, particularly sidewalk connectivity
- Would like more types businesses and diversified economic opportunities (industry, hotel, restaurants, wedding venue, small businesses)
- Teens need more activity options
- Seniors lack services, including housing and wellness services
- The valley southwest of town marks the city/ rural divide and provides a decompression for commuters returning home
- Primary roadways are narrow and fast
- Development pressures and proposals are leading decisions vs. city values/vision leading decisions

Neighborhoods and Safe Connections

Housing subdivisions are springing up across Pea Ridge. This building boom is exciting for the city, confirming what residents already know—Pea Ridge is a great place to live. The neighborhoods built in recent years, however, have taken a rather isolationist approach to urban design. Cul de sacs are common, access is typically limited to one or two streets in and out, and six-foot privacy fences surround yards and thus the entire subdivision. This development pattern has created pockets of homes that are islands to themselves, disconnected from the rest of the community and broader city. Those living in neighborhoods close to the center of town still regularly get in a car and drive to school, church, or to eat. What would be a five-minute walk as the crow flies, instead requires 20-30 minutes as pedestrian connections to surrounding areas are limited to the sidewalks that accompany the one or two streets in and out of the subdivision.

Sidewalks play a critical role in the safety, walkability, and recreation found within a city or town. Children should be able to walk to school. Wheeled access—strollers, wheelchairs, scooters, skateboards, and more—is also important for residents of all ages, and safety while on these wheels, in the form of a physical separation from the street, is important. Many of the neighborhoods and older parts of the city have sidewalks, but often connections beyond and to other assets are lacking. With all the recreation Pea Ridge and the surrounding areas have to offer people walking, strolling, running, or biking, there are few safe connections between parks, trails, and other recreational infrastructure (and little wayfinding signage identifying connections where they may exist).

Natural Resources and Town Center

The natural beauty of the area is remarkable. Sugar Creek and its tributaries provide recreation opportunities while keeping the region both hydrated and drained. The hills and hollers make for interesting hiking and biking. The city has grown up around these resources and the residents and City leadership are keen to preserve these natural assets.



The gap in fencing allows school children to walk directly from this neighborhood to the public school on the east side of the field.



This sidewalk connects a neighborhood to City Park beyond.



Sidewalks would be a welcome addition to this commercial area.



The buildings in the historic downtown are small and could provide a new business owner with an easier financial entry point to a brick-and-mortar location.



In some instances, businesses have combined storefronts to create space for expansion, yet the human scale of the building remains, creating a welcoming streetscape.

The city's historic downtown district, centered generally around the intersection of North Curtis Avenue with East and West Pickens Road, is quintessential small-town America. Small buildings line the street, close to the sidewalk, and are of a size that is generally attainable and manageable for a small business. While some businesses have acquired adjacent parcels and expanded their store's footprint, many small storefronts remain separate, waiting for the next occupant to set up shop. The streets running through this section of town are designed to easily accommodate both cars and pedestrians. Sidewalks and crosswalks are in place and the posted speed limit is lower than other parts of town, which creates an atmosphere that encourages drivers to slow down and helps keep pedestrians safe while walking around the area.

Big Box Retail and Chains

At the other end of the economic development spectrum are the big box retail and national chain establishments found in the city's southern corridors and gateways. These businesses bring services to Pea Ridge that will be familiar to those visiting and, for residents, may signal that Pea Ridge is now "on the map" from a growth perspective. For all the good that these national retailers may bring to a community, however, there is also the potential for associated negative impacts. Local retailers may have difficulty competing with the low prices on goods that national chains can offer, and smaller retailers may not be able to stock a wide variety of merchandise. The national chains are also typically less connected to the local community and therefore less likely to support, sponsor, or participate in local events or activities. They can detract from the small-town character that residents prize and are less likely to remain in place during a downturn or significant dip in the economy. Economic development should seek balance between local and national and large and small, and an eyes-wide-open approach, for both City leaders and community members, is helpful in these pursuits.

SYSTEMS-LEVEL FRAMING

As City leadership considers the future of its parks and open space and looks toward hiring both a Parks and Recreation Director and a consulting team to more fully define and design an Open Space & Master Plan, the TAP panel set forth the following recommendations. These recommendations take two forms: one set addresses the steps the City should take to more fully support its residents today, and the second set addresses the steps the City is encouraged to take as it shapes the request for qualifications (RFQ) for master planning services for its parks and open space. Undergirding all of these efforts is a systems-level approach and decision framework that aligns existing and future planning efforts and provides clear connections between these concepts and the details of the Open Space & Master Plan RFQ.

Systems-level Thinking

The City is encouraged to apply a systems-level thinking dynamic to all of its planning work. Using this approach, each plan is a critical part of the connected whole and nothing operates in isolation. The City's processes—zoning, land use, municipal investment decisions, branding, and storytelling—and tasks—business recruitment and retention strategies, programming and public space activation, etc.—are connected to each other and together shape the experience of living in, working in, and visiting Pea Ridge.

City Processes + Tasks = Connected Bigger Picture

This systems-level thinking and approach requires consistent and frequent resident involvement, multi-disciplinary teams, and cross-functional collaborations in order to achieve long-term success. This collaborative approach also provides the City with the ability to flex and pivot where and when needed through the course of planning efforts as these collaborations test pilot ideas and provide input and feedback in real-time. The process may prove more labor-intensive in early stages, yet the long-term impacts will be more effective and sustainable over the long term due to this real-time testing.

Systems-level Thinking Applied to Pea Ridge Planning

For Pea Ridge, this systems-level thinking and approach will help align a number of planning efforts, both those underway and on the horizon, and should help the City better define its value proposition to current and future residents and business owners. All planning efforts should take the following into account and work to enhance each impact area:

Create a sense of place. The work should strengthen a sense of arrival to the city of Pea Ridge and enhance its reputation as a destination.

Enhance the physical identity. Efforts should include intentional design and development that enhances the unique physical identity and qualities of Pea Ridge.

Provide opportunities for deeper emotional connections. Work in the community should be additive to the potential emotional connections residents have for their city, with a focus on deepening a sense of home for residents and a sense that visitors can understand Pea Ridge as a place they want to enjoy today and would want to return to enjoy in the future.



The national military park east of the city is a draw for visitors to the area.



The museum in the historic downtown area adds character to the neighborhood while maintaining the city's cherished history.



The city's welcome sign notes the city's pride in its high school sports teams.

Care for spiritual wellbeing. Whether sought in a formal worship setting or while watching the sunset, the spiritual wellbeing of the community and its members should be supported and celebrated through supportive connections to one another and to the broader world surrounding Pea Ridge.

Celebrate the culture of the place. The planning work should respect the history of the land, the residents, and the community that has grown up in Pea Ridge over generations. This rich culture, which embraces such diverse events as the Civil War Battle of Pea Ridge and the present-day Mule Jump, is what helps bind people to a place and inspires generations to continue to call Pea Ridge home.

Support a sense of welcome. The small-town character of Pea Ridge is supported by the neighborliness evidenced across the community. People wave at one another, engage easily in conversation, and welcome one another—and strangers—into their city. The City's plans and regulations can greatly influence this sense of welcome, either supporting it or, as in the case of allowing the proliferation of six-foot privacy fences around neighborhoods, working in opposition to it.

Respect history and welcome the new. The area has a rich history, one which lives on in the generational stories residents tell and more that is documented through such channels as the National Park Service. This history is important to the lasting character of Pea Ridge, yet it is imperative that the community also continue to welcome the new—new ideas, people, and culture—to Pea Ridge. People feel welcomed today and this should continue even with the population growth on the city's horizon.

Enhance economic vitality. The City is charged with supporting and enhancing the economic vitality of Pea Ridge. All planning work should provide the resources to support and manifest community goals and opportunities.

Expand economic opportunity and advancement. The City's economic functions should also include supporting opportunities for economic advancement. From pursuing affordable or attainable housing developments to supporting opportunities for employment to marketing

locations for a new business, the City's eye should be on how current and future residents participate in and help grow the Pea Ridge economy.

Provide for multi-generational lifestyles. Family is important to residents of Pea Ridge, and the City can support this value by providing services and support to the very youngest residents through to those topping 100 years old. As the city continues to grow, the provision of this array of services will grow increasingly important. People may choose to move to Pea Ridge, and it is up to the City to support that decision by ensuring residents are able to remain if they choose. From childcare services to after-school activities to employment opportunities to activities to support senior residents' wellbeing, the City should be evaluating these residents' needs and working to pursue service providers and businesses that can deliver.

Expand learning and local capacity. The City has an important role to play in sharing information, during planning efforts especially but also in the City's day-to-day operations. Sharing information about the community's assets (*e.g.*, which neighborhood parks are open to the public), raising the visibility of local businesses and initiatives, and helping to shape the future of the community, helping everyone see the role they play in the future of Pea Ridge is important. Critical, too, is the ability for City leaders and staff to have opportunities to broaden or deepen their own professional capacity. Additional learning opportunities should be promoted by City leaders and seized by municipal staff across all levels.

Strengthen the Social Network. The social network is alive and well in Pea Ridge. Community members know one another, attend youth sporting events together (even without a child in the game), and attend community events and celebrations together. The additional planning work that takes place across the community, regardless of its focus, should support and strengthen this robust social fabric.

Each of these systems-level functions, when folded into each and every plan that the City puts forth, will continue to support people living their best lives in Pea Ridge.

Decision-Making Framework

As the City embarks on the planning work on the horizon, particularly the planning around the city's park and open space network, the panel outlined the following framework as a way in which to support the decision making that must occur throughout planning processes. Each of the considerations below can help Pea Ridge civic leaders identify whether or not an initiative makes good sense for the community and then understand the broader impact of that decision going forward.

Establish clear and mutually agreed-upon definitions.

Common language is key to understanding and using agreed-upon definitions throughout the planning process, at community meetings, and throughout the delivery of improvements will be critical to understanding what is in play, what is at stake, and how the work will address these matters. Even something as simple as the word "park" will have multiple definitions across the community, calling to mind everything from the neighborhood park with a swing set to the entire trail system at Baker Hayes. Establish these definitions early and communicate them broadly.

Align with and incorporate current and future planning efforts.

Will the work contemplated conflict or align with other civic work, particularly planning work, underway? Systems-level thinking abhors siloed actions, views the entirety of the work along each step, and pursues alignment across the board.

Activate and frame transportation and connectivity corridors.

Development decisions should carefully consider transportation and connectivity corridors, helping to ensure that further activation is taking place on corridors with appropriate present and suitable future capacity. Connectivity between corridors can also be strengthened through the addition of new development that encourages traffic along alternate or connecting routes, helping to distribute traffic across the city's network and relieving pressure from the busy primary corridors.

Deepen and grow property and sales tax. As the city grows, its service needs grow and the City's budget should keep

pace. By working to ensure that new development has the potential to deepen and grow the city's tax base, municipal leaders can be sure that the funding will be in place to meet the residents' infrastructural and service needs.

Prioritize plans within current city limits and connect to regional assets. Growth for growth's sake only can often lead to sprawl. As the City considers where and how it should dedicate its precious time and resources, plans addressing the current city footprint should be prioritized. Beyond the city limits, focus should shift to connecting to other assets that are supported on a regional basis and less reliant on the City's support (e.g., connect to the regional trail network rather than create something wholly new).

Preserve and protect natural assets. Any plan that comes from City offices should work to preserve and protect the natural resources and assets that make the area so special. Sugar Creek and its riparian buffer are good examples of natural resources that should be proactively protected in light of the expected population growth and residential development that will accompany that growth.

Promote conservation of agricultural lands. The residents of Pea Ridge are proud of their agricultural heritage and many still farm today. Benton County, home to Pea Ridge, is second in the state in beef production. Promoting the conservation of agricultural lands supports preservation of community culture and the city's economy.

Connect commercial, residential, educational, and social nodes. The panel noted a number of community assets that would benefit from new or strengthened connections. All planning efforts should be pursued through a lens of connectivity—how can this work support connections to and between the city's commercial enterprises, residential neighborhoods, educational institutions, churches, and social nodes?

Recognize flexibility while protecting community values. There will be times when the planning or development context will require a certain degree of flexibility from the City. It is possible to provide context-sensitive flexible options while still maintaining and protecting the key values the community holds dear. Providing flexibility without regard for community values will alienate residents. Holding tight to values without any consideration of flexibility will limit the potential of Pea Ridge. A balance and continued flexibility are important.

Protect a sense of community and neighborhood feel. Stakeholders made clear that the small-town feel of Pea Ridge is highly valued. The City will need to proactively consider how its planning work and the ensuing development can help protect and enhance this sense of community while still accommodating growth.

Support people living their best life. Does this plan support residents in their pursuit of living their best life? This question is foundational to the city's future and supports systems-level thinking and decision making for the City.

PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

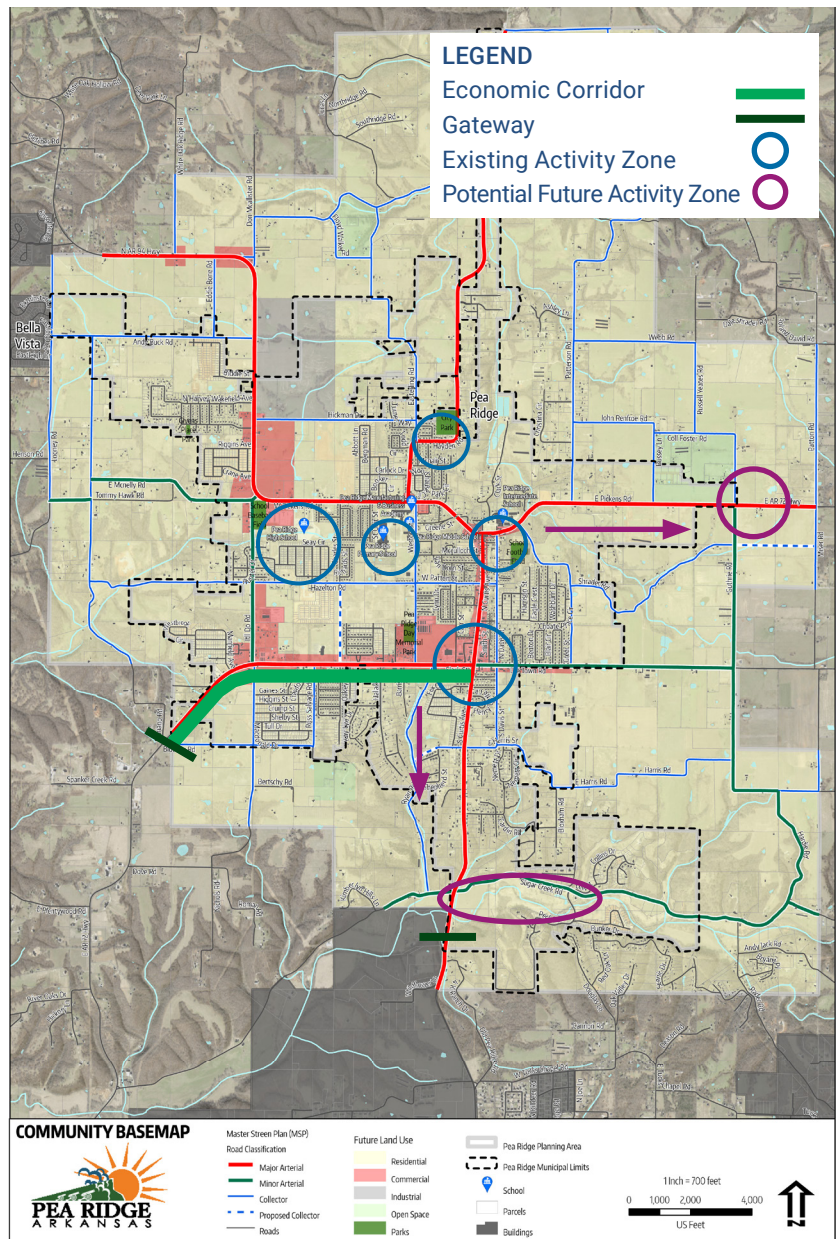
With the systems-level thinking and framing in place, the panel turned to the specific questions posed by the City, focusing on the opportunities for greater connectivity between city assets, the potential for economic development in association with the city’s parks and open space, and the other factors or considerations that should come into play when the City considers potential land acquisition for additional park or open space assets.

Connectivity

The City’s quest to enhance connectivity across its geography, particularly as it relates to its parks and activity centers, is on point. The panel outlined the following guidance to support this quest for better connections citywide.

Prioritize investments in active transportation improvements. There are a host of multi-modal connections that can and should be made across the city and priority should be placed on active transportation in an effort to facilitate better and safer non-vehicular movement around the city. Pedestrian connections, in the form of sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails, need immediate attention and further buildout. Connections for people on bikes or other non-motorized wheeled conveyance (e.g., strollers, wheelchairs, scooters, etc.) should also be considered. As it relates to bikes specifically, the City should consider how improvements to connections within the city could expand out to the surrounding R3 network.

Collaborate with ArDOT. The state-maintained roadways that serve Pea Ridge pose a unique set of connectivity challenges for the city. The roadways are narrow and fast, designed to move



In recognizing the various nodes of activity across the city, the panel began to envision how open space assets could support and begin to connect these activity centers

vehicular traffic as quickly as deemed safe by the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ArDOT). While this works well for vehicles, it creates significant challenges for pedestrians and people on bikes. These roadways generally lack shoulders where bikes could travel, the sidewalks are not consistently present, and crosswalks are few and far between. This ArDOT infrastructure effectively isolates sections of the city, dividing it into quadrants that are difficult for pedestrians to navigate beyond. Coordination with ArDOT will be critical to solving these connectivity issues along the state roadways.

Strategically fill gaps and connect assets. A balance between qualitative and quantitative connectivity work is worth striking. There are a host of places where the City can fill gaps in the sidewalk with new sidewalk construction. As the parks master planning takes shape and funds are budgeted for implementation, the panel strongly encourages City leaders to strategically consider where investments can have exponential connectivity benefits, where 100 feet of sidewalk can connect children to school and families to activities versus other areas where 100 feet of sidewalk connects two remote commercial parcels. Both are important connections, yet the ability of the former to have broad impact should create a funding priority. Similarly, the city is home to a number

of community assets that would be well-served by more purpose-driven connections. These connections include, but are not limited to, connecting the Baker Hayes trailhead to the R3 network and to the commercial center, connecting the new community center to the nearby schools, and better connecting the historic town center to the emerging commercial center to the south.

Pursue accessibility in all its forms. The accessibility of these various connections is also important to highlight. Fences can keep small children safe but also create barriers to easy entry around recreational spaces. Sidewalks can connect community assets, but if the sidewalks are not wide enough to allow two people to walk shoulder to shoulder, people will drift into the street or grass instead in order to walk together. The City has demonstrated that it understands accessibility in its playground equipment at City Park; it is now time to expand that definition of accessibility to better facilitate movement across further reaches of the city.

Create cultural connections. Connectivity also relates to the community's connections to its culture and to one another. As planners begin to specify where and how physical connections should manifest, it will be helpful to consider how these physical connections can help create or strengthen connections to the city's history, to



People are flocking to northwest Arkansas to enjoy the region's various recreational opportunities. Connecting these assets to one another and to the city's commercial assets should be a priority.

the agricultural foundation of the community, to the social fabric of the schools and places of worship, and more. Incorporating placemaking elements into the physicality of these connections can help enliven cultural ties.

Economic Development Opportunities

At this stage in the trajectory of Pea Ridge, the City is at a point where it can and should be discerning in its economic development efforts. Pursuing economic development opportunities that will add value in the long term is important, and uses that contribute to the city's tax base and support school tax revenue should be a priority.

Prioritize infill locations. Location is an important consideration when evaluating economic development opportunities. Pursuing investments in existing and emerging nodes close to the city center should take priority over annexation opportunities that may arise on the edges of town. The infill opportunities near the current centers of activity in the city make good use of existing infrastructure and are more cost-effective to support with city services than developments that push out further beyond existing service lines. These city-center opportunities will be easier to connect to other existing assets, via sidewalks or curb cuts, will be more easily and readily accessed by the

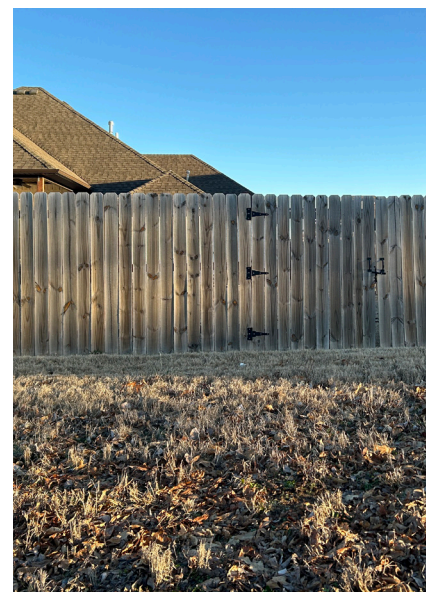
community, and will ultimately better support the success of the new business venture.

Pursue complete neighborhoods. The panel recommends prioritizing a “complete neighborhood” concept in its planning and development work. According to StrongTowns.org, a complete neighborhood is one where, “outside of commuting to work or having a ‘night out,’ you can get everything you need within walking distance.” While this may be a small stretch for Pea Ridge today, planning now for that type of community in the future can begin to create viable nodes of activity that will be attractive to and catalytic for future development. This complete neighborhood approach will be a marked difference from the current fenced-in neighborhoods that dot Pea Ridge like disconnected islands today. Working to create future connections—limiting fencing, increasing street connectivity, improving sidewalk connectivity, and planning for proximate commercial activities—will serve residents well today and very well in the future.

Cluster services and amenities. Similar to the idea of a complete neighborhood, clusters of services and amenities serve a surrounding community better than a long corridor of commercial uses. Clusters of services providing a variety of amenities (restaurants, coffee shops, retail shopping, and office space) can provide nearby residents with the variety



The infrastructure in the city's historic downtown creates an environment for pursuing infill development.



Gates in fences are a small start to better connections.

of commercial services they may need throughout the day. Clusters can also help create visual and physical variety in an area that makes it more interesting and appealing to visit and linger. This concept can and should also apply to the City's approach to park space and recreational amenities. Clustering a bike repair shop, daytime eatery, and outdoor gear shop near the Baker Hayes trailhead can provide important services for those using the trail in town and could provide an adequate draw to pull in the R3 riders, helping them spend their time and money in Pea Ridge.

Recognize fiscal and social returns on investment. All of these economic development decisions have some form of fiscal impact. Understanding, identifying, and calculating the potential return on the City's investment (ROI) should help guide municipal leaders in their decision-making activities. There will also be opportunities to create value in spaces that may not provide fiscal returns but will create important social value. For example, a new soccer field will not add directly to the city's revenue but may provide the facilities to keep families from having to travel to Bentonville to play, which may also allow families to stay in Pea Ridge for dinner after the game and thus creating indirect economic value for the city. The intentionality of the City's economic development activities and the understanding of both fiscal ROI and social ROI can help create priority activities and make good use of the precious economic development energy the City has on staff today.

Other Considerations in Acquisitions

As the City considers its park and open space inventory and evaluates potential acquisitions to expand its recreational offerings, the panel outlined the following attributes to factor into those acquisition considerations.

Strive for geographic distribution. Unlike the theory of clustering commercial assets and services, recreational assets should be dispersed across town. The city's park and open space assets should be distributed across the city's geography in order to provide proximate access for as many Pea Ridge residents as possible. While distributed, each of these open space assets can and should eventually be connected by a system of sidewalks or trails, providing



Sugar Creek, in the southern portion of the area, provides recreation opportunities for residents and visitors alike—and should be protected.

residents and visitors with easy, safe, and recognizable paths to travel between recreation points.

Build connectivity and accessibility. Property acquisition should also be contingent upon the City's ability to use these new parcels to connect existing assets or provide greater accessibility to existing parks. In some instances, a parcel adjoining an existing asset could be acquired and thus provide greater park visibility, additional space for a community pool, or sporting field space that may be currently lacking. In other instances, an easement could be acquired for sidewalk access, helping connect a proximate neighborhood more safely to an existing park. The quantity of open space may be initially appealing, but that factor should not come at the expense of quality. The goal should be a high-quality park and open space system for Pea Ridge.

Create a variety of park and open space types. In much the same way that geographic distribution matters, variety in park and open space types and amenities is also

important when considering potential land acquisition. Pea Ridge has a diverse population of people, spanning ages, abilities, and recreational interests. While it may be difficult to cater to every interest through one city park, a network of parks and open spaces that offer a wide variety of amenities, topographies, and uses can go a long way toward ensuring that nearly everyone can find something they will enjoy within the Pea Ridge park system.

Pursue resource conservation and environmental stewardship. The natural environment in the region is highly valued and incredibly important to residents and visitors alike. There may be a need at some point to acquire land for purposes other than active recreation, and acquiring land for natural resource preservation can become increasingly important as development pressures increase. Similarly, acquiring land to support environmental stewardship can be just as important and can take the shape of acquiring land in areas surrounding fragile natural ecosystems or to help maintain or improve water quality in area lakes and streams.

Include agricultural, historical, and cultural assets. On a much larger scale, the National Park Service exemplifies this recommendation in its preservation of the land on which the Battle of Pea Ridge took place. On a much smaller scale, the City may have opportunities to acquire land or properties that may be important to the city's history or to the storytelling of Indigenous tribes or early settlers in the area. Other assets, including cultural ties to the region's farming history could prove important to Pea Ridge's history and could be preserved, protected, and shared as a function of the city's park system.



City Park features a splash pad that is a big draw for families in Pea Ridge and in the surrounding rural areas.



The R3 network is a recreational asset for Pea Ridge that supports the influx of outdoor enthusiasts while protecting the area's rural way of life.

RFQ RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to answering the initial questions posed by the City, the panel also took care to outline a set of recommendations that the City can use to help shape its eventual request for qualifications for a consultant to create its parks and open space master plan. The panel was particularly keen to highlight the importance of assembling a multidisciplinary team to serve the City in this work, reinforcing the systems-level thinking needed to address parks and open space within the greater planning context for the city.

Team Expertise

The panel encourages the City to use a competency-based approach to RFQ interviews and strive to identify a team with multi-disciplinary expertise that includes landscape architecture, planning, and civil engineering at a minimum. This combined team would ideally have expertise in the following areas:

- Community engagement and public input
 - Planning and development
 - Public input and public review
 - Priority designations and the establishment of recreation zones
 - Programming for recreational facilities
 - Budgeting and business analysis of programming and infrastructure
- Community engagement
 - Economic analysis
 - Educational and recreational programming
 - Urban planning
 - Recreation planning
 - Ecological planning
 - Active transportation planning
 - GIS mapping
 - Branding and storytelling
 - Development services
 - Policy

Planning Process and Components

At the outset, the City will need to define the goals of the planning work, the scope of the planning process, planning components, and the typologies of open and park space it seeks to include in its recreational ecosystem. The following components typically serve as the foundation for a parks and open space master planning process:

- Inventory and analysis of existing facilities

Typology of Parks and Open Space

The stakeholder interviews laid bare the fact that many Pea Ridge residents think of athletic fields when they hear the word “park.” As the City embarks on this planning process, it is encouraged to use clear and consistent communication and provide educational information about the range of parks and open spaces that are possible in a city like Pea Ridge. This categorization often falls into four zones of use:

- **Conservation (protection) zones.** In a conservation area, the goal is the protection of the natural environment, including sensitive waterways and vulnerable ecosystems. These conservation areas are protected from development and may include the restoration of native habitats. Public access is limited if not prohibited, which may also limit the ongoing maintenance costs that are typically budgeted to maintain the area and clean up after (human) visitors.
- **Passive recreation zones.** Passive recreation areas are important as they often provide open space and

amenities for the most diverse population of users. Passive recreation could include walking, birdwatching, dog walking, and reading. Passive spaces should be ADA accessible, again to meet the needs of the diverse population, and could include other amenities like benches, dog parks, memorial statuary, and more.

- **Active recreation zones.** This is the category of use that typically comes to mind when discussing parks. Active recreational spaces are often home to organized sports fields, playgrounds, splash pads, bike parks, and pump tracks. The spaces should also be ADA accessible and may include additional infrastructure, such as staging, to facilitate regular programming and performances. Food trucks will often find a ready market in active recreation zones.
- **Agricultural and cultural zones.** Pea Ridge is unique in its park offerings in this category with the Pea Ridge National Military Park east of town. Other open space and park offerings in this category could include a farmer's market, heritage or heirloom farms, community gardens, master gardener programming, interpretive gardens, botanical gardens, arboretums, and art parks.

Public Input and Engagement

The importance of and need for public engagement during any planning process will not be news to the City. Its importance, however, is such that it warrants the following reminders from the panel.

Use surveys to engage stakeholders. Strive for community involvement that is multi-generational and multi-lingual and that covers the broad array of demographics represented by the city of Pea Ridge.

Survey user groups. When considering the various types of people and groups who would be expected to access parks and open spaces, be sure to include respondents from these various user groups. These groups should also include users from the broader geography represented by the school district's footprint as Pea Ridge is considered their nearest town.



Even in February, the natural beauty of the area shines through in this conservation area.



The Veterans Memorial in the city's historic downtown is a good example of a passive recreational zone.



City Park provides both passive and active recreation zones.

Gather feedback on current facilities. The people who use Pea Ridge’s current parks and open spaces have first-hand experiences to share and can provide valuable insights. This work should include surveys during heavy use periods (e.g., Spring, Summer) and at times of day when there are many people present and at times when the spaces are nearly empty. Survey feedback should also elicit what may be missing from the current facilities to better understand what residents would like to see and experience in their city parks. Finally, as it relates to geography and scope, this survey work should include a sidewalk and trail inventory with associated feedback on each.

Use a ranking system. Surveys that employ “yes/no” options can provide some insights, but a ranking system that asks respondents to note their preferences on a scale can help define community values and current and potential for future alignment (e.g., “on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being most important, how important is a public pool to you?”) This same system of ranking can also help the City establish priorities for projects, aligning potential delivery dates based on community values. If a new play area for children under age three is consistently ranked highly, that project should be moved to the top of the project list.

Rethink public meetings. Cities often find that the same people show up to public meetings time after time, representing only a narrow slice of the city’s residents. By hosting public meetings at a variety of locations (e.g., go to where the people already meet instead of asking them to come to City Hall), at different times of day (evenings may be challenging for young families, but mid-day could work if the City provides a childcare option), and on various days of the week and weekend, there is an increased likelihood of reaching deeper into the community and finding the voices of the people who may be too busy to attend a public meeting at City Hall on a Tuesday night when they are busy wrestling homework, dinner, and bath times.

Get creative with user preference-gathering tools. Many communities are finding success and deeper insights by using photo examples of spaces and places to collect user preferences and experience information. A verbal question of what a busy park feels like might be difficult to answer

with precision, yet viewing a series of photos and labeling each as “peaceful,” “busy,” or “overcrowded” can help planners better understand how the community views use and appeal of parks and open space.

Scope Components for Master Plan

As the City maps out what it wants to accomplish through a parks and open space master plan, the panel recommends including the following scope components:

- **Create a sense of arrival and destination.** Ask for treatment around the agreed-upon gateways to the city and the various activity nodes (commercial and other activity areas). Use the plan to support efforts to create or support a sense of place, arrival, and destination within Pea Ridge.
- **Incorporate ecological and natural features access.** The region is rich in natural resources and ecological features. The plan should incorporate these areas and help the City define respective uses and access by the public.
- **Identify areas of focus.** The master plan should incorporate the city’s current parks, the proposed parks, trail systems and connections, and sidewalk connections at a minimum. Each of these features provides residents with important recreation, outdoor enjoyment, and connection opportunities and deserves focused attention.
- **Provide implementation strategy.** A plan will hold no value without the ability to implement the measures it proposes. The team creating the plan should be challenged to provide an implementation strategy and related phasing for the City’s use.
- **Provide multi-source funding mechanisms.** Open space features, including trails, sidewalks, and public spaces, should each tie to potential funding sources, and ideally multiple funding sources, for design and construction.

- **Seek alignment between codes and park plans.** The consultant should be charged with reviewing the city's current subdivision code and development standards in order to provide recommendations on how those standards can best align with, or be modified to better align with, the Open Space and Recreation Master Plan.
- **Guide the formation of a Project Steering Committee.** The ongoing facilitation of the master plan would be well served by a project steering committee. This committee would support the City in some of the ongoing decision making and operations of the parks and also provide the anticipated new Parks and Recreation Director with guidance and support in their work citywide.
- **Provide best practices for the management of each recreation zone.** The variety of parks and recreational zones that already are and may become a part of the city's system will require a wide range of maintenance support. The consulting team should provide guidance on best practices for each type of zone.
- **Provide a compliance checklist.** As development proposals and plans come before the city for review, the City will need a checklist of items to review for compliance with the new open space plan.
- **Establish decision-making tools for implementation.** The consulting team should provide guidance and decision-making tools for the City to employ in the implementation of the open space plan. Drawing from the decision-making framework provided by the panel earlier in this report, the consulting team should provide tools that City can use to determine what gets done, where, and when.
- **Integrate with the City's comprehensive plan.** While many might assume this to be the case, it is worth stating that the parks and open space plan should integrate with the goals and objectives of the City's comprehensive plan.
- **Include a tree canopy coverage assessment and recommendations.** The City can begin to highlight the importance of tree canopy to the health and wellbeing of Pea Ridge residents by including a tree canopy coverage assessment in this plan and including recommendations that developers can choose to follow that support tree canopy preservation or expansion. These would not be additional regulations but instead recommendations.
- **Pursue Tree City USA accreditation.** Similarly, by seeking accreditation by Tree City USA, as the City has recently initiated, Pea Ridge is signaling the importance of trees, nature, and the natural environment to its residents and civic leaders. This should also be factored into other future projects and planning efforts.
- **Floodplain impact review.** The panel also recommends that the City request a floodplain impact review be incorporated into the consulting team's work. Not a full-blown study, this impact review can identify and call attention to particularly sensitive areas of the city and its immediate surroundings that should be considered more carefully in the course of open space planning.

Resources and Guidelines

The following resources and organizations might prove helpful to the City and its professional staff as the planning work begins to take shape:

- [AASHTO Guide of the Development of Bicycle Facilities](#)
- [PROWAG \(Public Right Of Way Access Guidelines\)](#)
- [ADA \(Americans with Disabilities Act\)](#)
- [WALROS \(Water and Land Recreation Opportunity Spectrum\)](#)
- [Low Impact Development Principles](#)
- [NRI CRSW \(National Research Institute for College Recreational Sports & Wellness\) Space Planning Guidelines for Campus Recreational Sports Facilities](#)
- [NRPA \(National Recreation and Parks Association\) Programming and Guidelines for Recreational Facilities](#)
- [Sports Field Management Association](#)
- [Little League Field Specifications](#)
- [Northwest Arkansas Regional Open Space Plan](#)
- [Northwest Arkansas Regional Food Assessment](#)
- [Universal Design Principles](#)
- [FEMA Floodplain Study, Benton County Flood Mapping](#)
- [NACTO \(National Association of City Transportation Officials\)](#)



CONCURRENT AND SUPPORTING ACTIONS

As the City takes steps toward developing its long-range goals and plans for parks and open space across Pea Ridge, there are actions that can be taken today that will advance the City's goals in the near term while also supporting the eventual master planning work. The panel encourages the City to take the following steps while, at the same time, creating the RFQ for planning assistance.

Become a Main Street Affiliate. The Main Street organization is one that has proven supportive of smaller cities and rural towns as those municipalities develop economic development strategies to support their small businesses and related economic engines. City leaders may wish to become a formal Main Street community, which comes with its own set of requirements and activities. In the meantime, however, for a nominal fee, the city can become an affiliate member and gain visibility among peers while also gaining access to helpful economic development tools and information.

Include plan context during public presentations. As development proposals come before the City and are presented at public hearings, information and context around how the proposal aligns with the City's other planning activities (*e.g.*, master street plank, trails, land uses, etc.) will be important to help support the public's understanding of how all of the pieces fit together for the community's benefit.

Update codes to include connectivity requirements. Amendments or updates to the city's existing codes to include pedestrian connectivity can be achieved by enhancing the vehicular codes to support walkability and connections without requiring a full (and time-consuming) code rewrite.

The following four measures will take more time and intention to put into place, but work should begin in the near term and continue as the other planning work launches.

Conduct a flood study on Sugar Creek. Sugar Creek is an important natural resource and recreation amenity for the community and visitors. The City should conduct a flood study along the waterway to better understand and plan for impacts from potential future floods.

Adopt a Floodplain ordinance. As development continues further from the town center and closer to Sugar Creek and

its tributaries, it is important to map and plan future land use around the waterways.

Conduct an economic market study. An economic market study will further support City leaders' work in attracting new businesses to Pea Ridge by adding additional detail around industry potential in the area, buying power, and broader market trends that could impact current Pea Ridge businesses. Having the information from such a study can better position City leaders to respond to development proposals, particularly from outside groups who often think in terms of their own short-term goals, as opposed to the long-term interests of the city of Pea Ridge.

Actively pursue grants. Additional funding—from all levels of government and private foundations—can further support the City's current and future planning efforts as well as the implementation that will follow. Grants for additional technical assistance are available across a variety of agencies (as well as ULI) and the [Federal Land Access Program](#) (FLAP) can assist communities with roadway and other transportation improvements on land adjacent to federal land.

The City's vision for Pea Ridge, as held by leaders and residents, is one founded on community values and a love of nature. By employing a systems-level approach and a decision-making framework to planning efforts, City leaders can be confident that their work will continue to align with the community's vision. By strategically and effectively connecting the City's parks and open space, residents and visitors alike can continue to enjoy the recreation for which Northwest Arkansas has become known. As one stakeholder noted, Pea Ridge is a gateway to rural life. With careful planning, it can remain natural and rural while still being the type of connected community residents deserve.

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).



Jenny Burbidge
Owner + Principal Landscape Architect, Prism Design Studio

Jenny is an Arkansas native with a passion for the outdoors. She graduated from the University of Arkansas with her Bachelor's

in Landscape Architecture from the Fay Jones School of Architecture. She proceeded to pursue and grow her career in Landscape Architecture and Project Management for the next 10+ years. Her experience includes multi-family housing,

commercial, urban design, park design, and masterplanning. She holds an emphasis on designing community and urban spaces. She started Prism Design Studio in October of 2022, and just celebrated it's one year anniversary. Jenny is a Licensed Landscape Architect in Arkansas, Mississippi, Missouri and Louisiana. She is also President of the Board of Directors for the Northwest Arkansas Land Trust (NWALT); Past-President of the Arkansas Chapter of Landscape Architects (ASLA); and a member of the Illinois River Watershed Partnership (IRWP) Recreation Advisory Committee. Jenny, her husband, and three children enjoy time outdoors, going to watch Kansas City MLS & NWSL soccer games, and raising their 40+ chickens. Her husband owns Ozark Adventure and Recreation (OAR) and runs a kayak rental and campground from their property on War Eagle Creek.



Ryan Hale
Founder and CEO, Laneshift

Ryan is the Founder and CEO of Laneshift, a consulting firm that specializes in bicycle and pedestrian planning & design. Ryan spent 5.5 years as a staff member of the

Walton Family Foundation, helping plan and grow NWA's extensive network of bike and pedestrian infrastructure. During his time at the Foundation, Ryan oversaw the approval and administration of grants concentrated in NWA, with a primary focus on bike and pedestrian infrastructure. From the development of the Razorback Regional Greenway to the Back 40 mountain biking trail system and the redevelopment of Lake Atalanta, he played an instrumental role in shepherding these projects to completion. In the process, he has developed some lifelong relationships with partners who are committed to strengthening our community. Ryan has seen first-hand how investments focused on active mobility can transform communities.



Dan Heintz
CEO and Chief Experience Designer, Velocity Group

Leveraging his unconventional and varied professional background, Daniel offers an unorthodox approach to identify and activate

a client's unique DNA of Place™. He served as Executive Director of Fayetteville Downtown Partners, where he produced the Fayetteville Arts Festival, structured the formation of the Fayetteville Arts Council, co-wrote the initial Fayetteville Public Art Policy, crafted the state's first municipally formed Arts District in downtown Fayetteville, and changed state BID law to include the arts as a fundable line item. He served as Executive Director of Downtown Bentonville, Inc., managing and facilitating economic development, experience design, and marketing for the 1,768-acre downtown district. Growing the non-profit downtown association from two to seven employees, expanding organizational revenue by 300%, directly recruiting over \$50 Million in downtown investment, and producing 400+ events that generated over 750,000+ visitors to downtown, his work fostered a growing art, entertainment, culinary, and entrepreneurial scene which has earned national attention. Since starting the Velocity Group in 2014, he has worked on a wide variety of projects all over North America, including downtown master plans, regional economic development initiatives, branding and marketing strategies, private development projects and tenant programming, event production, art and cultural initiatives, restaurant and hospitality concepts, public outreach and engagement, and public policy work. Daniel is a nationally recognized thought leader in experience design, economic development, and systems thinking. He has taught at the University of Notre Dame's Mendoza School of Business and presented at TEDx, Tyson Foods, Walmart, American Institute of Architects, Arkansas Municipal League, Congress for New Urbanism, American Association of Landscape Architects, Sarkeys Southwest Regional Leadership Forum, National Town Builder Association, International Economic Development Council, and many others. In addition, he is the editor for the annual statewide magazine Block, Street, and Building: New Urbanism in Arkansas published by the Arkansas Times. In 2008, he earned an Experience Economy Expert certification from Joseph Pine and Jim Gilmore, whose thoughts on the rising consumer value of experience and authenticity were listed by TIME magazine as a Top 100 Idea Changing the World. Daniel holds a BFA in Film from the University of Colorado Boulder.



Molly Robb
Principal Engineer, Odyssey Engineering, LLC

Molly is a Civil Engineer, working as the Principal Engineer at Odyssey Engineering, LLC. Since starting her career, Molly has worked on hundreds

of commercial developments across the United States as well as many commercial and residential projects in the Northwest Arkansas and Southwest Missouri regions. Whether the project is an 80-acre residential subdivision or a national retailer, her experience, knowledge, and creativity keeps projects on schedule and within budget to help clients get the quickest return on investment possible for their projects. "I love being a part of the process that helps bring a client's vision to life."



Northwest Arkansas

ULI Northwest Arkansas
PO Box 11232
Fayetteville, AR 72703

501-269-8238
northwestarkansas@uli.org

nwarkansas.uli.org



knowledge.uli.org