



COMMENTS SHAPING THE FINAL DRAFT MASTER PLAN DOCUMENT

The following is a summary of comments received from the public regarding the May 6, 2010, Draft Master Plan that have informed the June 14, 2010, Final Draft Master Plan. While each comment is unique, many involved specific concerns beyond the scope of this master planning effort. To this end, it is important to remember that the plan is an aspirational blueprint for growth, and that all recommendations within in require further study, refinement, and stakeholder support before they can be realized.

Land Use

The plan seems to be focused towards the heart of Argenta and does not capitalize on the Arkansas River as a major asset to Argenta and Central Arkansas. How does the plan reflect future development that engages the river and connects to it? I would like to see how and where office buildings could be developed along the river. Perhaps the plan could show how Argenta could leverage office along the river to increase land value throughout Argenta.

Response: The Arkansas River is a resource for Argenta, and connecting to it with trails, walkways, and nearby development is a part of the future vision. During the master plan charrette the consultants also studied how to enhance the connection to the river by establishing active uses along it near Riverfront Drive.

South of Riverfront Drive, it was initially believed that a “road diet” could open up space along for buildings fronting the levee. Unfortunately, upon studying the physical, regulatory, and fiscal feasibility constraints of such concept it was determined to be unviable.

North of Riverfront Drive the plan identifies eight redevelopment sites and conceptually illustrates mixed-use buildings of five to six stories based on what is currently viable in the marketplace. Longer term, the plan does not preclude more significant development of office uses in this area as market forces change. In fact, page 45 notes that buildings of thirteen stories are permitted under existing and proposed zoning. Furthermore, efforts to create office jobs would be consistent with the economic development recommendations of the plan.

There was no clear discussion about how to address the levee. Could there not be berms at places, say at a plaza/park that the horizontal plane could warp upwards providing a natural green lawn sloped to the top of the wall. I realize the Corps of Engineers would have to be involved as to this and what happens on the other side but isn't this a long range plan.

Response: Page 58 of the master plan has been updated to incorporate a new project:

Redesign the north side of the levee/flood wall to better connect the river to Argenta. A proposed “road diet” along Riverfront Drive would open up land on its south side to incorporate into the existing park. In this area a more inviting

connection to the river could be created through terracing, steps, or other elements. Its rounded outline could also be shaped to blend into the landscape. West of the Broadway Bridge, where a flood wall is used, the concrete wall could be designed as attractive feature by using decorative bricks or blocks (although this will generally increase the cost). Final design details could only be determined after thorough investigation with the Army Corps of Engineers.

Transportation

I'm not sure of the reasoning for closing of one leg of the Main Street Bridge but putting all of that traffic on Main Street (especially in the mornings) would create quite a bottleneck. There are also sidewalks and handicap access to the park from the Maple Street "leg".

Response: The proposed closure would direct commuter traffic onto Main Street and support retail revitalizations efforts. In addition, it would create a more viable development site, while ensuring that outside passes through Argenta on the community's terms. Adequate facilities to access the park will be provided as part of removing the leg.

Closing any portion of Riverfront Drive is not desirable. While there are times that the drive isn't used much, it is a key east/west route and has the only truck height underpass that can serve much of the industry (and jobs) on Pike Avnue. It also serves as an outlet for fans attending Verizon Arena events and Dickey-Stephens Park. It would also have a lot more traffic if the on ramp to the Broadway Bridge were added, also relieving the bottleneck at the foot of the bridge from traffic that had to turn left on Karrot and then onto Broadway (or turned before that).

Response: The plan does not call for closing Riverfront Drive. Rather, it calls for a "road diet" to two lanes with left turn lanes at locations as needed. Such section is consistent with current and anticipated usual traffic volumes; it can accommodate between 18,000 and 25,000 cars per day, depending on the community's tolerance for congestion at peak hours. The road diet will improve the physical and psychological connection between Argenta and the river, while also improving livability of the district.

I realize that a "transportation hub" would be great, but this system is going through a major addition at this time and would be very expensive to move. While there might be funds to pay for a portion of it, I believe the transportation dollars could be better invested in other areas.

Response: The plan includes many transportation recommendations, some of which are short-term and some of which are long-term. The proposal multimodal facility clearly falls into the latter category, and would likely require an alignment of local, states, and federal efforts to be realized. This said, it has been included in the plan as a long-term aspiration that could position Argenta for future transit funding if it becomes available.

Other

The proposed market square will be too small and too confining. On a recent Saturday 20 booths were set up, according to the market manager. Compare this to the 5-10 booths that were common three years ago when the CAFM began operation and you get a sense of the growth curve of the CAFM. The current space is almost full, and it will take only one or two more farmers to cause the market to have to expand into an adjacent lot.

In the drawings in the document it looks like the area allocated to the market is less – perhaps only half the size – of the current market. In the illustrations it looks like maybe 20 booths, but without any space for expansion, without space for the farmers to drive up to their places, and without space for intermittent features such as musicians or adjacent food festivals.

Response: The proposed market square includes space for 24 initial booths/stalls on a landscaped plaza. In addition, the plan incorporates a flexible area west of the plaza that could serve as additional stalls or parking. Here, an additional 23 stalls could be provided, including those operated from the back of trucks.

Provide greater design detail about the market square design, incorporate bathrooms, and provide sufficient parking.

Response: As with all projects identified in the master plan, a great deal of design will need to be provided as the market square is implemented. The master plan is intended establish a vision and framework for sustainable growth, but cannot design and describe every element of that vision. Following completion of the master plan, a detailed design and programming process for the market square will be essential before it can be constructed.

This said, the text of the master plan has been updated to show a more details concept for the space, reference the need for bathrooms, and remind future implementers of the importance of parking.

Incorporate Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.

Response: Many of the principles of CPTED are already inherent in the land use and design recommendations of this master plan. However, to provide a very clear summary of these principles, an information box has been added to the Historic Resource and Urban Design Recommendations.

There was never a mention of a new City Services building in any of the meetings I attended, but it appears from the plan that the current building would be converted to other uses. I would strongly oppose that as it took us years to get all of these services into one building with an abundance of shared parking with bus service from all areas of North Little Rock. Not only does it employ about 100 people in the building, it brings hundreds downtown each day for everything from paying bills, get permits, board rooms for city meetings and general city business.

Response: The proposed building is envisioned as a long-term option for public safety facilities, including fire, police and MEMS, but not city staff. Because the current facilities function reasonably well, new facilities will not be needed for at least a decade. However, if and when new facilities become needed, this plan attempts to suggest an appropriate location and design for such. The text in the Action Matrix on page 87 has been updated to reflect this.

A new fire station, police building school, and other public items that would be required would divert way too much of available city funds at a time that the budget is more than stretched and projected incomes from existing taxes will not meet the future budget needs on existing items.

Response: Achieving the plan vision will require public and private cooperation and funding partnerships. Although new facilities may not be needed today, they will invariably be one day. As such, the plan suggests appropriate locations for them. The text in the Action Matrix on page 87 has been updated to note that these are long term options and should only be pursued when fiscally prudent.