



Kick Start Lenoke: Action Plan

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Executive Summary

This document, the Kickstart Lonoke Action Plan, is a strategic blueprint for the growth and development of Lonoke, Arkansas over the next five years. The action plan was created as a result of public forums and action teams working together over the past several months to identify a vision and goals for the community, as well as promising long term strategic opportunities.

Many people and organizations worked together on this effort, including representatives from the City of Lonoke, Lonoke Area Chamber of Commerce, Lonoke School District, Arkansas State University at Beebe, Lonoke County government, the Lonoke County Museum, Central Arkansas Planning and Development District, churches and non-profits, business owners, local banks, and many other community leaders and citizens. To craft this document, the community worked with the University of Central Arkansas' Community Development Institute and the Breakthrough Solutions program at the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service.

The interaction between the universities and the community began in August 2016, when a group of community and economic development professionals visited Lonoke to assess the community's current situation and help them identify breakthroughs to move the community forward. As a result of that session, a community survey taken by over 250 community members, and monthly meetings attended by an average of 50 residents, priority areas and several breakthroughs have been identified as part of this process.

A summary of these key breakthroughs are identified in the next section. The priority areas identified were: Jobs and Education, Housing and Real Estate, Downtown and Retail Development, Beautification and Recreation, Branding and Marketing, and Infrastructure. Many projects are already underway, and many others are planned and outlined in this document.

Community and economic development is a long term effort that can take many years to bear fruit. The Lonoke Action Plan lays the groundwork for those efforts and helps focus the enthusiasm and passion that the Lonoke citizens have exhibited throughout the planning process.



Community Breakthroughs

In times of rapid change, successful communities create breakthroughs to move forward toward their desired future. Congratulations to Lonoke for developing these breakthroughs:

Breakthrough – Community Identity and Brand: With leadership and technical assistance from THRIVE in Helena, a powerful community identity and brand is being developed that will differentiate Lonoke as a unique, vibrant community that attracts tourists, retirees, families, and businesses from all over the nation.

Breakthrough – Robust Jobs and Education: With direct involvement from the Lonoke Chamber of Commerce, Lonoke Industrial Development Commission, ASU Beebe, U of A Pulaski Tech, and the Lonoke school system, Lonoke is working closely with local employers to develop a capable workforce, with a long term goal of establishing a technical school satellite facility in the community.

Breakthrough – Housing Opportunities and Development: Seeking to develop opportunities for new housing and renovated housing through community action, informing the community of resources, and working with developers.

Breakthrough – Downtown and Retail Development: Working with the Lonoke Planning Commission to create and implement a master plan for a vibrant retail, arts, and historic downtown Lonoke.

Breakthrough – Beautification and Recreation: Serve as a catalyst for several organizations to implement strategies to enhance the trail system, parks, arts and culture, and beauty of the community.

Breakthrough – Infrastructure: Establishing, funding, and implementing a long-term plan that will lead to infrastructure in place – water, sewer, streets, sidewalks, storm water, street lights, electricity, and signage – for the foreseeable future.



Core Values

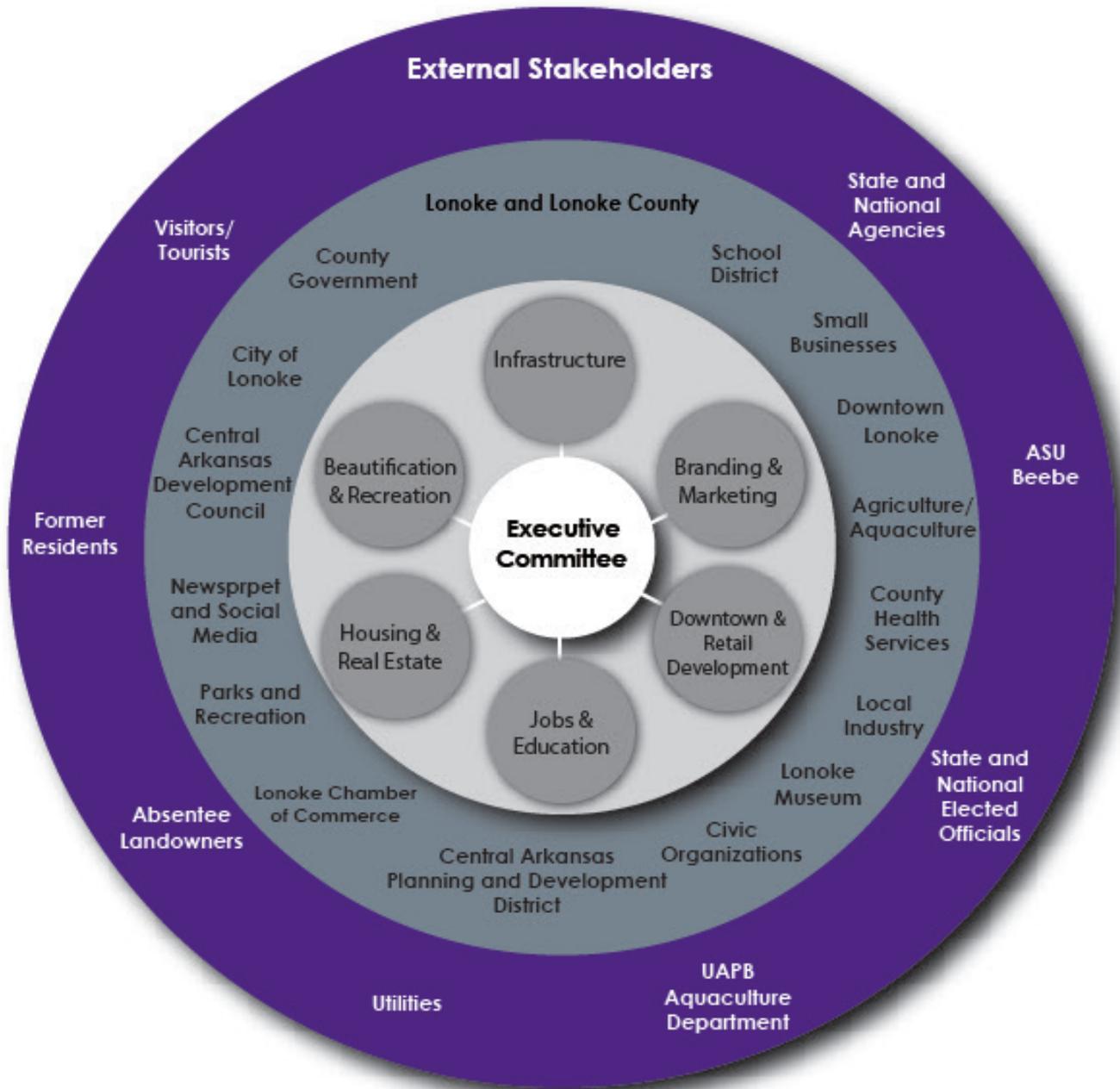
- Serving as a catalyst that brings people together to make things happen,
- Creativity, seeking breakthroughs that will move us forward,
- Being pro-active, with a can-do attitude,
- Responsiveness to new opportunities and challenges as circumstances change.

Vision Statement

We envision A VISIBLE, ATTRACTIVE, and CONNECTED Lonoke.

- Kick Start Lonoke envisions a community that is visible to innovative, forward-thinking companies, creative professionals, and families of all ages, when experienced in person or on-line
- Kick Start Lonoke envisions a community that is attractive and possesses a mix of skilled labor, residential options, a comprehensive education system, and accessible real estate.
- Kick Start Lonoke envisions a community that is connected to our region and state by economic relationships and logistics, and connected to our neighbors by a spirit of unity and cooperation, accessible sidewalks, green space, and walkable streetscapes.

Kick Start Lonoke Stakeholder Analysis and Organizational Structure



Executive Committee

Kick Start Lonoke was guided by an Executive Committee composed of a diverse group of community leaders from a variety of sectors. Thank you to the Executive Committee for its leadership and commitment to Lonoke's future!

Dr. Suzanne Bailey, Lonoke Public Schools, Jobs and Education Co-Chair

Diana Bowen, Lonoke County Cooperative Extension Service
Ryan Biles, SCM Architects and Lonoke and Planning Commission Chair, Downtown and Retail Development Co-Chair

Evelyn Bryant, Central Arkansas Development Council, Housing and Real Estate Co-Chair

Terrance Clark, THRIVE, Branding and Marketing Co-Chair

Karen Dill, Dill Real Estate, Housing and Real Estate Co-Chair

Jason Dorsey, Lonoke First Assembly, Branding and Marketing Co-Chair

Suzanne Dorsey, Lonoke First Assembly, Author

Gene Eagle, Former President, Arkansas Development Finance Authority, Infrastructure Co-Chair

Michael Florence, Lonoke City Council Member, Jobs and Education Co-Chair

Charles Hunter, Arkansas Farm Bureau, Housing and Real Estate Co-Chair

LynAnne Ivy, Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department, Beautification and Recreation Co-Chair

Walls McCrary, Former State Representative, Infrastructure Co-Chair

Mayor Wayne McGee, City of Lonoke

Rick Pennington, Pharmacist, Lyons Drug, Downtown and Retail Development Co-Chair

Adam Starks, First State Bank and Lonoke Chamber of Commerce President

Valena Washington, George Washington Carver Alumni Association, Beautification and Recreation Co-Chair

Jessica Watkins, Student, Lonoke High School



Beautification & Recreation

Action Team Members:

Alice Bridges

Jason Miller

Nita Colclasure

Sherryl Miller

Tina Boyles

Anna McClung

LaRhonda Hammonds

Roy Don Lewis

Suzette Elmore

Tracey Mertsch

Bonnie Moody

Mike Brown

Sandy Puckett

Tiffany Hunter

Lynanne Ivy, Co-Chair

Valena Washington, Co-Chair

Goal 1:

Create programs and opportunities for beautification of Lonoke, including:

- Establish “Adopt a Spot” with the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department Establish “Adopt a Highway” along I-40/Hwy. 70/Hwy. 31/Hwy.89
- Establish “Wildflower Program” with sign to describe area includes natural prairie grasses and flowers indigenous to the Arkansas Grand Prairie.
- Establishing “Let’s Paint Lonoke” project to include collaboration with Lonoke High School art students in painting murals/window fronts of downtown buildings.
- Recruit local civic organizations to lead community improvement projects that require more significant repairs and painting and replacing awnings.
- Initiate “yard of the month” or “business of the month” signs to encourage local involvement in beautification.
- Focus on downtown beautification through the addition of plants, planters, hanging baskets, and other landscaping.
- Purchase and install welcoming and seasonal light pole banners throughout downtown.
- Work with City to get electrical outlets at light poles for future Christmas decorations.



Goal 2:

Enhance and extend existing walking trails, including additional lighting and signage:

- Currently working to extend walking trail to the golf course and add lighting along old path and the new extension.
- Seek grant funding to extend walking/biking trail further to the Lonoke Community Center.
- Seek funding from the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department for the construction of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists and other non-motorized forms of transportation, including sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, lighting and other safety-related infrastructure.
- Install bird watchers' signage along walking trail and at Joe Hogan Fish Hatchery.

Goal 3:

Maintain and expand park facilities to meet the growing demands of the community:

- Assess the existing park facilities and landscaping to determine improvement needs.
- Purchase additional park equipment, like splash pads, at Waggoner Park and Lonoke City Park.
- Expand Lonoke Baseball Complex to the Lonoke Sports Complex to add outdoor basketball courts and soccer fields.
- Add outdoor Olympic size pool for swim meets at the Community Center
- Establish facilities and a mentoring program for the Lonoke Boys and Girls Club
- Create a community fishing pond.
- Install signage at Joe Hogan Fish Hatchery, Aquarium and learning center.

Goal 4:

Support arts and cultural activities throughout Lonoke:

- Establish Calendar of Events for city website and local newspaper to encourage involvement in community events and programs.
- Create opportunities for community sidewalk art and mural paintings by local artists and Lonoke High School Art students.
- Build on and support new Christmas Parade and encourage citizens and businesses to “decorate the town” to include city parks and increase and improve decorations to the County Courthouse to draw in visitors.
- Coordinate with local church choirs to establish a “Carolers on the Square” program during the month of December.
- Inventory historical community assets for walking and driving tours, and establish tours of historic homes and businesses.
- Revive Minnow Madness Festival and capitalize on being the Minnow Capitol of the World, while also including the wide varieties of fish representative of the local aquaculture.
- Designate locations for a Farmers' Market and Arts and Crafts Exhibit for local artists.
- Establish Monthly Pickin' & Grinin' by local musicians or a Music Festival.
- Inventory places of interest for Lonoke Tour Guide Pamphlet, Map and Wayfinding Signage.
- Designate a Welcome Center to provide materials on places of interest.
- Build a movie theater at the old Kellwood location.

BRAND PROMISE PAGE/LOGO

Branding & Marketing

Action Team Members:

Ahsley Reed

Janie Sexton

Rosanne Florence

Susan Eoff

Dr. Suzanne Bailey

Marica Cheney

Sherryl Miller

Tiffany Hunter

Gaylon Eoff

Michael Florence

Shirley McGraw

Trae Reed

Terrance Clark, Co-Chair

Jason Dorsey, Co-Chair

Goal 1:

Develop a brand and visual identity for Lonoke. Develop sub-brands for districts in the city and sub-campaigns for select audiences.

Goal 2:

Strengthen web presence of Lonoke (municipal, economic developers and businesses).

Goal 3:

Develop strategies to deliver on the brand promise such as marketing tools, training community members, hiring a brand director and rolling out branded items for businesses and organizations to distribute.

Goal 4:

Work with existing Action Teams to reinforce Lonoke's brand and promote recreational opportunities through activities such as:

- Developing a corridor park on 31s toward downtown
- Developing a community festival
- Establishing a Lonoke Welcome Center
- Commissioning murals in key locations
- Developing a cohesive signage system

Goal 5:

Set up technical assistance programs to help businesses develop competitive branding materials and encourage businesses to take advantage of travel based websites and online resources.

Goal 6:

Develop a monthly event calendar to celebrate various important moments in Lonoke throughout the year (e.g. monthly event for families on weekend days and open evenings during the week – most likely on Thursdays).

Goal 7:

Develop morning radio show or local paper column for the brand director to use as pulpit to talk about the marketing plans for the city.



Downtown & Retail Development

Action Team Members:

Alyssa Frisby
Gary Elmore
Marcia Cheney

Angel Cleveland
Jeribeth Edwards

Ashley Reed
Lesley Schmeckenbecher

Ryan Biles, Co-Chair

Rick Pennington, Co-Chair

Goal 1:

Transition the Downtown & Retail Development Action Team into a standing committee of the Chamber of Commerce, form a Downtown Merchants Association and focus on becoming a Main Street Arkansas community via the Arkansas Downtown Network.

Goal 2:

Design a Master Plan to emphasize connectivity, walkability, and strengthen connections between downtown Lonoke and gateway nodes via enhanced paths and signage.

Goal 3:

Improve the pedestrian experience by creating greenspace in downtown, developing streetscape improvements (landscaping, street trees, ornamental lighting, banners and greenspace) along paths and at intersections, and increase walkability by extending and connecting the multi-use recreational trail and sidewalk system to downtown.

Goal 4:

Develop partnerships to create a free Wi-Fi zone, offer reduced-cost fiber for downtown businesses and establish a small business/entrepreneur incubator or maker space in a vacant storefront.

Goal 5:

Create an inventory of downtown Lonoke properties, complete with a database of owners and available spaces.

Goal 6:

Develop a corporate office space in downtown for future industry located at industrial site.

Goal 7:

Work with local realtors to market and highlight live/work units in downtown.

Goal 8:

Highlight fine arts and work of local students/artists in galleries developed in empty storefronts. Also create murals, sculptures and other public art projects.

Goal 9:

Promote retail development throughout the community that is complementary to downtown businesses and meets citizen demand.



Housing & Real Estate

Action Team Members:

Alyssa Frisby

Brook Knox

Danny Whitehurst

Tiffany Hunter

Angel Cleveland

Charles Hunter

Shane Whitehurst

Walls McCrary

Ashley Reed

Dan Stowers

Tanya Childers

Karen Dill, Co-Chair

Evelyn Bryant, Co-Chair

Goal 1:

Designate neighborhoods for regeneration and organize a community clean-up for these areas. Work with the Lonoke Planning and Zoning Commission to recognize these areas and possibly waive building permit fees and alter certain codes to allow for more new construction.

Goal 2:

Meet with CAPDD and other government offices to learn more about programs earmarked for low income individuals to repair their homes.

Goal 3:

Set up a system and provide assistance to help low income families get the information they need to update and repair their homes.





Goal 4:

Meet with developers on expanding existing subdivisions and seek out developers to invest in new subdivisions.

Goal 5:

Work with the Lonoke brand director on marketing initiatives.

Infrastructure

Action Team Members:

Alec Fletcher	Amanda Adaire	Barbara Elmore
Conya Spencer	Harrell Boyles	Jim Bailey
Leigh Ann Pool	Lewis Clark	Lloyd S. Shephard
Mayor Wayne McGee	Mike Florence	Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Lucas
Phillip Howell	Rep. Roger Lynch	Robert Pack
Roger Davenport	Shelley Clark	Tyler Shaw
Woody Evans		

Gene Eagle, Co-Chair

Walls McCrary, Co-Chair

Goal 1:

Alleviate the flooding from storm water runoff that overflows ditches, streets and yards backing up sewer lines in Lonoke. Complete more research to determine if storm water runoff can feasibly be directed and retained for a fishing lake or to contribute to crop land irrigation.

Goal 2:

Replace, improve, maintain and extend the water and sewer systems in Lonoke. Conduct forward thinking research on water storage capacity, the sources of safe drinking water that includes deep water wells into the Sparta Aquifer and a connection to the Community Water System and expansion of waste water treatment facilities.

Goal 3:

Construct, improve and maintain city streets in Lonoke.

Goal 4:

Develop a plan for replacement, repair and expansion of the sidewalks, walking trails and bike paths in Lonoke with an emphasis on American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, high traffic areas and connections to schools, city parks, day care centers, restaurants, centers of business and the church community.

Goal 5:

Coordinate with other Action Teams to determine how to improve signage on I-40, connecting state highways and thoroughfares in Lonoke.

Goal 6:

Complete a current assessment of existing and projected electrical power capacity and natural gas supply that can be delivered to zoned industrial sites in Lonoke to establish what types of industries can reasonably be served/targeted, and if new investments in electrical substations, transmission lines or gas lines are needed to connect Lonoke.

Goal 7:

Engage in discussions with City of Lonoke officials to consider expanding the number of affordable street lights on the corridors that connect the City to I-40 (Interchange to MFA).



Jobs & Education

Action Team Members:

Debbie Shelton
Dr. Kerry Mix
Jessica Watkins
Mary Abshure
Preston Haynie
Sandi King

Dianna Bowen
Harrell Boyles
Marcel Strobel
Megan Gray
Robby Bevis

Dr. Bentley Wallace
Janie Sexton
Marcel Vincent
Michael Florence
Rose Jones

Dr. Suzanne Bailey, Co-Chair Michael Florence, Co-Chair

Goal 1:

Develop an understanding of all businesses within and surrounding Lonoke.

Goal 2:

Identify the current Administration of the State of Arkansas's plan for Economic Growth and Development.

Goal 3:

Identify all forms of "higher education" and network to develop a strategic presence or pipeline to these institutions for Lonoke.

Goal 4:

Identify strengths and weaknesses of the workforce within Lonoke.

Goal 5:

Increase the incomes of residents of Lonoke to a standard much higher than residents of the "Delta Region" in the state of Arkansas.

Goal 6:

Develop an educated workforce pipeline for Lonoke and the region.

Goal 7:

Focus on and understand entrepreneurship to make Lonoke attractive for new business startups.



Goal 8:

Expand educational opportunities in conjunction with local industries so that our students are employable upon graduation and foster economic growth in Lonoke.

Goal 9:

Improve upon the workforce ready education currently available and communicate what we are doing in the area of education to all stakeholders.

Goal 10:

Recruit a technical school satellite location in Lonoke.

Goal 11:

Develop agriculture and aquaculture programs through partnerships with higher education institutions, local schools and businesses.

UCA & U of A Cooperative Extension

The Community Development Institute Central (CDI), established in 1987 at the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) in Conway, trains community and economic development professionals in Arkansas and surrounding states. The complete CDI experience is a three-year training program, with one week of training per year. Participants are exposed to a comprehensive, applied approach to the field of community and economic development. CDI is relevant for both new and seasoned professionals because it focuses on best practices and current trends. CDI is coordinated by the Center for Community and Economic Development team at UCA, as follows: Director Amy Whitehead, Assistant Director Shelby Fiegel, and Project Coordinator Corey Parks.

The Community Development Kick Start program was created to provide a unique opportunity for CDI graduates to apply their knowledge and skills to a real-life situation and to kick start a community and economic development process in one community.

Community Development Kick Start uses the Breakthrough Solutions Model from the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, with Dr. Mark Peterson, professor of Community and Economic Development, serving as facilitator and partner for this initiative. The Breakthrough Solutions Program is a partnership initiative with the purpose of equipping communities and regions in Arkansas to be vibrant, sustainable, and resilient in this 21st century economy.

Communities in Arkansas were invited to apply for this unique opportunity, and Lonoke was selected. Once the Lonoke community was selected as the Kick Start community, community leaders began collaborating with CDI and U of A Cooperative Extension Service in July of 2016.

To learn more about CDI visit www.uca.edu/cdi. To learn more about Breakthrough Solutions, visit www.uaex.edu/business-communities/strategic-planning/breakthrough-solutions.aspx.



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