



STERLING

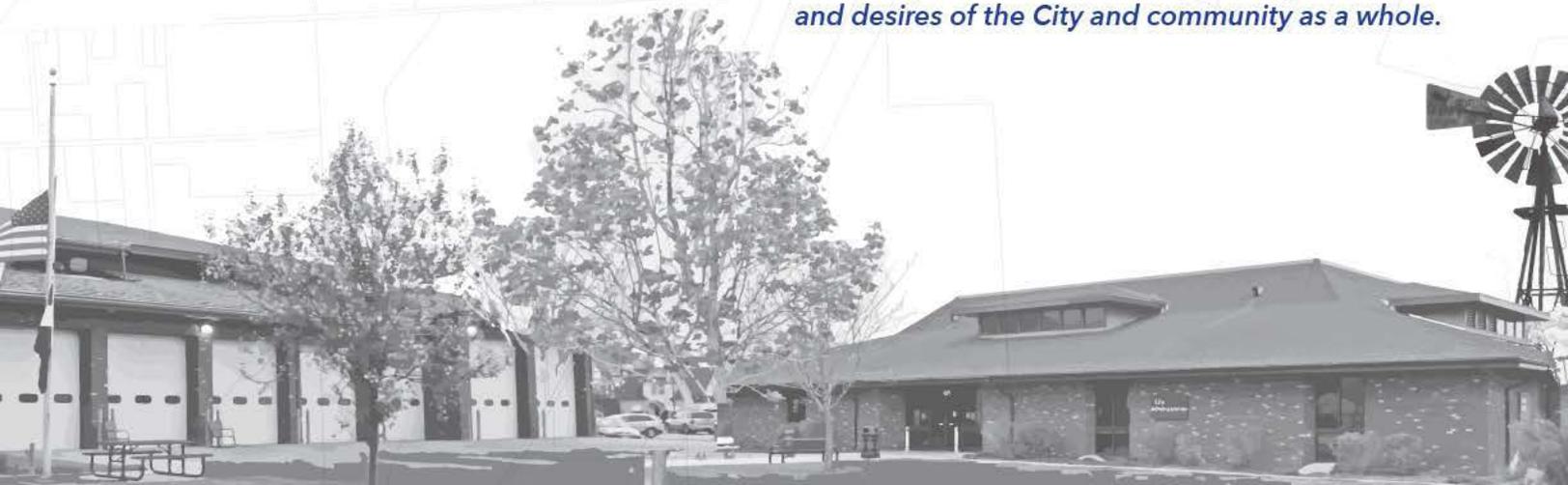
MASTER PLAN UPDATE

2013

VISION STATEMENT

The 2013 Sterling Master Plan presents a collective vision to guide the future growth and development of our city. Sterling will thrive as a hub in Northeastern Colorado for retail, recreation, entertainment, education, medical services, and tourism. It will continue to offer a safe and diverse small town environment, where residents of all ages will enjoy opportunity and a good standard of living. The city's vibrant and historic downtown will attract entrepreneurs, and local businesses and organizations will continue to serve the community with integrity.

As we move forward, we will strive to present an image of our city in a positive and insightful way in order to retain and attract residents, businesses, and visitors. We will continue to preserve the importance of our culture and heritage, while understanding that change occurs over time. We will promote collaboration between the City and the public to achieve this vision, and will be proactive and forward-looking to the needs and desires of the City and community as a whole.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The City of Sterling would like to thank all of the individuals, organizations, and businesses that participated in and contributed to the development of the 2013 Sterling Master Plan Update.

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Randy Brigham - Ward 1
Alice Pitcher - Ward 2
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Colorado State University Northeast Regional Engagement Center
Downtown Colorado, Inc.
Logan County Chamber of Commerce
Logan County Economic Development Corporation
Logan County Heritage Center
Logan County Planning and Zoning Department
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Sterling High School
Sterling Urban Renewal Authority

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Special thanks to Steve Mullen for assisting the planning team with the growth challenge workshop.

ADOPTION

The 2013 Sterling Master Plan was adopted by the
Planning Commission

On May 15, 2013

By: _____
Roger Hosea, Planning Commission Chair

The 2013 Sterling Master Plan was approved by the
City Council

On May 28, 2013

By: _____
Heather Brungardt, Mayor



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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles of the Sterling Master Plan are intended to reflect the goals and values of the community. They are broad concepts which describe the community's aspirations and provide the general framework that has been woven into the goals of this Plan. The symbols below are carried throughout the Plan Elements section to show how the plan goals support and achieve these principles.



Promote Economic Prosperity for the City of Sterling and its Residents.



Strengthen and Revitalize Sterling's Downtown.



Support Sustainable Development Patterns and Projects.



Improve the Appearance and Safety of Sterling's Neighborhoods and Commercial Areas.



Preserve and Promote Sterling's Culture and Heritage.



Build and Foster Partnerships between the City, Residents, Businesses, Property Owners, and Community Organizations



Connect the Generations within the Sterling Community.



PLAN INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Just as people grow and change over time, so do cities. A master plan is a guiding document to help a community accommodate that change intentionally and efficiently. Also referred to as a comprehensive plan or strategic plan, a master plan identifies and promotes the community's long term vision and intentions, and recommends appropriate courses of action to shape future growth and development.

Sterling's previous master plan was written and adopted in 1995. The 2013 Sterling Master Plan Update builds upon and strengthens many of the values and goals identified in the 1995 plan. It identifies the collective vision and direction for how Sterling should evolve over the next 20-30 years, with recommendations that reflect what the community would like to see both change and continue on in the coming decades.

Benefits of an updated master plan include:

- ✦ To establish and maintain a strong "sense of place"
- ✦ To protect community character and quality of life
- ✦ To provide a balance between the natural and built environment
- ✦ To maximize the benefits and minimize the negative impacts related to growth
- ✦ To arrive at a future of our own choosing
- ✦ To maintain high quality services
- ✦ To focus financial resources and obtain grant funding for community-identified projects and needs
- ✦ To keep our community attractive to citizens, businesses, and visitors

This update also provides an Implementation Plan, to help ensure that the vision and goals articulated by participants translate into changes that will benefit the community now and in the future.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANNING EFFORTS

In recent years the City of Sterling in coordination with community partner organizations and agencies have pursued a number of valuable planning efforts aimed at improving image, connectivity, and economic prosperity within the downtown core. There have also been joint efforts between the City of Sterling and Logan County to plan for natural disaster and emergency management, and efforts by numerous community organizations to strengthen the city and region. The Sterling Master Plan builds on these efforts, and was developed to complement and reinforce goals and recommendations identified in the following documents:

- ✦ *Downtown Sterling Technical Assistance Report (2013)*
- ✦ *Downtown Sterling Roadway Conversion Report (2012)*
- ✦ *Downtown Master Plan Concepts Report (2011)*
- ✦ *Logan and Morgan Counties Housing Needs Assessment (2007)*
- ✦ *Logan County/City of Sterling Emergency Operations Plan (2007)*
- ✦ *Urban Renewal Plan for Downtown Sterling (2005)*
- ✦ *Our Vision, Our Future - Logan County Economic Development Corporation (2001)*

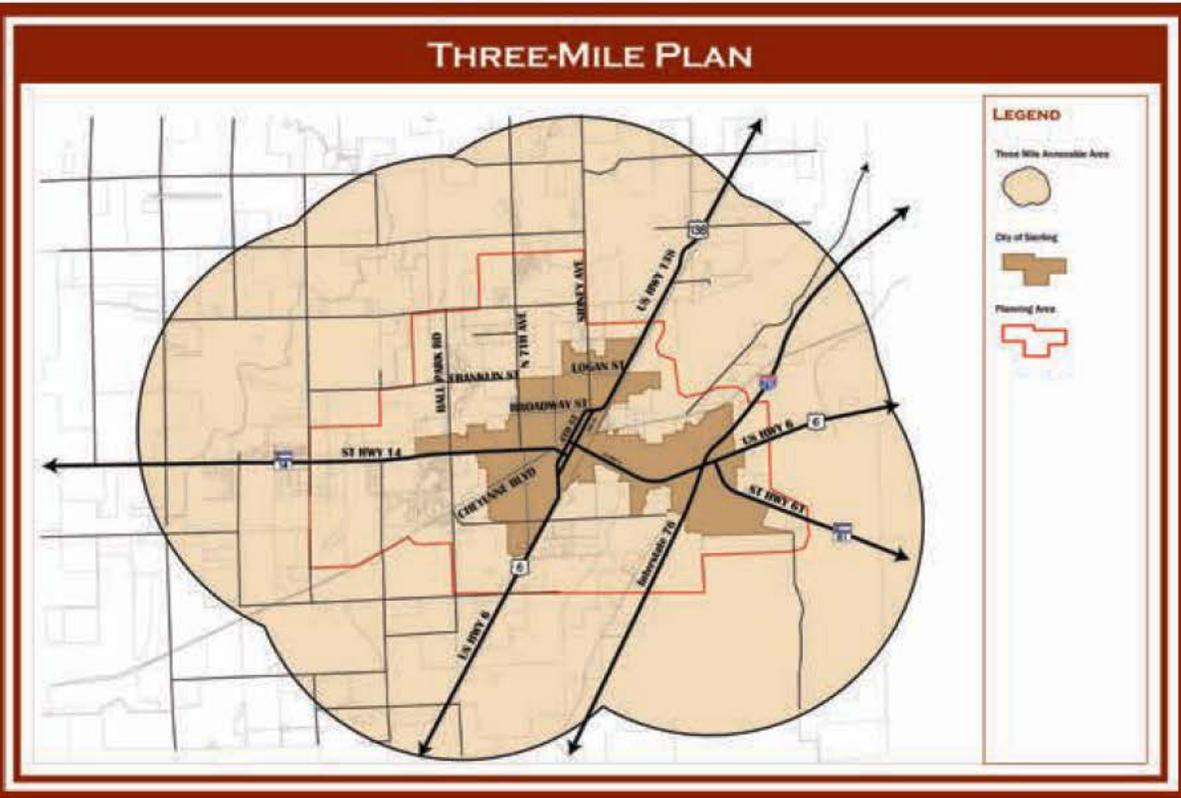
While aspects of the above plans have been incorporated into the relevant sections of the Sterling Master Plan, users should refer back to the original documents for detailed direction on specific recommendations.



STATUTORY AUTHORITY

Colorado State Law (CRS §31-23-206) requires the Sterling Planning Commission to adopt a “Master Plan” for the physical development of the City. CRS §31-23-206 provides the framework for such a “Master Plan” or comprehensive plan. This document complies with the above-referenced State statute by providing for planned and orderly development and balancing basic human needs for a changing population with legitimate environmental concerns. It is the policy of the State of Colorado “...to clarify and provide broad authority to local governments to plan for and regulate the use of land within their respective jurisdictions.”

The Master Plan has legal status in that once adopted, “...no street, square, park or other public way, ground or open space, public building or structure, or publicly or privately owned public utility...” may be built or authorized without review and approval by the Planning Commission (CRS §31-23-209). In keeping with this definition, the Master Plan for the City of Sterling will guide development and growth within Sterling, while also providing direction to other municipalities and governmental entities nearby. The Plan is designed to work with these other agencies by encouraging Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs) and other area plans that address all the concerns of nearby municipalities and government organizations. This Master Plan is intended to serve as the ‘Three Mile Plan’ required by CRS §31-12-105.



AMENDING THE PLAN

The Sterling Master Plan is a citizen-based document for City Staff, Planning Commission, and City Council to advise and direct decision-making for the City. As the community grows, the Plan must be able to adapt accordingly through amendments to both the written and graphic components of the Plan. The Planning Commission, City Council, and City Staff should reevaluate and update the Plan in response to changes in the community every three to five years. Amendments may be necessary to address future development trends; to reflect the adoption of a specific policy or plan; because of a directive from City Council or the Planning Commission; or upon request by staff. In addition, residents and/or developers may also request amendments to the Plan at any time following adoption.

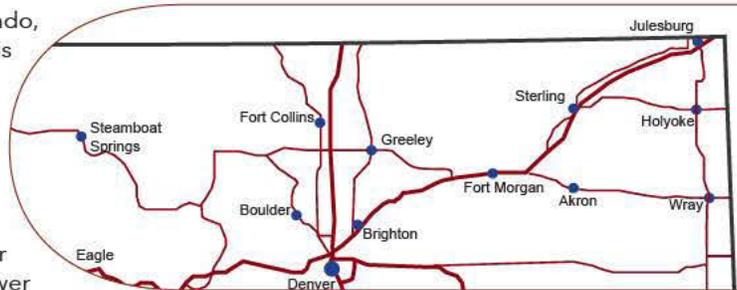


The Planning Commission must review all proposals to amend the Plan. If an amendment is proposed, City Council and the Planning Commission must determine if the changes are in the best interest of the City by holding a public hearing regarding the amendment. An amendment to the Master Plan must be approved by resolution of the Commission and subsequent approval by City Council. When evaluating proposed Plan amendments outside of the City's regularly scheduled Plan review and amendment processes, the Commission should consider whether:

- ✘ The amendment expedites implementation or improves/clarifies one or more of the goals, objectives, or actions of the existing Master Plan.
- ✘ The amendment is not a detrimental impact to existing or planned City facilities, services, or transportation facilities.
- ✘ Ample opportunity for public input concerning the proposed change has been provided.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

The City of Sterling is located in Northeastern Colorado, approximately 130 miles northeast of Denver. It is situated along the South Platte River at the intersections of Interstate 76, and Highways 6, 138, and 14. The city is the most populous in Logan County, representing 65% of the county's overall population with a 2011 estimate of 14,725. The city's population is somewhat younger, more ethnically diverse, and has slightly lower incomes than the county overall. The city also has slightly lower rates of homeownership than the county, and slightly lower rates of college attendance and graduation.



Sterling is a major retail, employment, and cultural hub for the region, and has been the county seat for more than a century. Major employers and services today include Northeastern Junior College, the Sterling Correctional Facility, the Sterling Regional Medical Center, the RE-1 Valley School District, Wal-Mart, Sykes Enterprises, and the Sterling Municipal Airport. Major cultural and recreational amenities include the Overland Trail Museum and Recreation Area, the South Platte River Corridor, the Riverview Golf Course and Northeastern Eighteen, and the nearby North Sterling State Park and North Sterling Reservoir.

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT INFLUENCES

Throughout its history, the area in and around present day Sterling has been a crossroads for travelers and a hub for the movement of people, goods, and services. The first settlers to the Sterling area arrived during the 1860s via the Overland Trail, a branch of the Oregon Trail, in search of wealth in the Rocky Mountains and beyond in California. Between 1871 and 1873, settlements were established a few miles north and south of present day Sterling, focused largely around farming. When the announcement in 1881 confirmed that rail lines would extend through the territory, land for Sterling was donated, surveyed, and platted by Minos King. Railroad surveyor David Leavitt named the new town after his hometown of Sterling, Illinois. The town's initial 19 blocks followed the diagonal of the Railroad and Platte River, and consisted of a few buildings including a train depot, the Pacific Hotel, a lumberyard, a general store, and a few scattered homes. Within just a few years the town had grown enough to file for incorporation in 1884, and in 1887 was named as the county seat for the newly created Logan County.

"The period of 1910-1919 marked the completion of one of the most gigantic undertakings in the history of the county - construction of the North Sterling Reservoir - and a bonanza has resulted.

Work on an intake ditch for the reservoir got underway in May, 1909, two years after serious negotiations began for permanent water storage to boost Logan County's already rich soil. Four hundred teams of horses were necessary for working on the seventy mile long intake line." Bud Wells in The Logan County Ledger, 1976





Agriculture flourished for Sterling following the early development of irrigation systems in the area, and it has remained the foundation for the Sterling economy and culture. Sugar beets were introduced in 1899, and soon became a large scale staple crop, with the Great Western Sugar Company opening a factory in Sterling in 1905. The sugar industry drew laborers from across the country and the world, growing the city’s population in the first decades of the 20th century. Crop production was diversified over time to include dryland wheat and hay, which also supported the region’s livestock industry and future beef plant.

A number of other developments over the last 75 years have influenced Sterling’s development patterns and population. Northeastern Junior College, originally called Sterling Junior College, opened in 1941 and has since served as an educational hub for Northeastern Colorado. In the late 1940s and 1950s an oil boom stimulated the next surge in Sterling’s population, bringing it to nearly 11,000 in 1960. This level was generally maintained until the establishment of the Sterling Correctional Facility in 1999, which increased the city’s population to 14,777 by 2010. In 2010 the Sterling Regional Medical Center opened the David Walsh Cancer Center to serve residents and people throughout Northeastern Colorado. This may bring new workers, visitors, and possibly residents to the city in search of treatment. And throughout Sterling’s history, cultural attractions such as the Overland Trail Museum and the designation of the North Sterling Reservoir as a state park and recreation area have contributed to tourism in Northeastern Colorado.



Downtown Sterling has always been the heart of the community, but over the past few decades much of the development in Sterling has focused on automobile-oriented commercial growth to the west of town, along and around West Main Street. This focus was identified in Sterling’s 1995 Master Plan, to accommodate a growing demand for regionally-serving commercial services. Population and residential development followed, shifting out of the city’s core and to the west.



Looking to the future, Sterling’s economy will continue to be grounded in agriculture and ranching. However, there are additional influences that will impact Sterling’s population and development in the future and that are central to this Master Plan Update. The aging of the city and region’s population has already put a strain on the provision of health care and other services, and is creating increased demand for accessible and affordable housing in Sterling. In addition, Northeastern Colorado is home to the Niobrara Formation, a long-time oil and gas resource that may see resurgence thanks to technologies such as

horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing. Finally, access to water has been central to Sterling in the past, and will continue to impact the health, incomes, and quality of life for residents, farmers, and ranchers, particularly as drought continues to plague the region.

These changes indicate an opportunity for Sterling to take a new and more proactive approach to planning, economic development, and the provision of services in the coming years and decades: Sterling’s aging population will require more diverse housing options and more walkable neighborhoods; water and resource concerns will make compact development that emanates from the city’s core outward more efficient and cost-effective in terms of the provision of municipal utilities; diversifying Sterling’s economic base will allow it the flexibility to better respond to shifting practices and technology in agriculture and the energy industry in the future, particularly continued mechanization; finally, successful revitalization of Sterling’s downtown, the historic heart of the community, can help to strengthen community ties and promote Sterling to visitors from across the region and state.



PLANNING PROCESS

The City of Sterling 2013 Master Plan is built on community participation and represents a collaborative effort between the Sterling Planning Commission, City Council, community organizations, City Staff, and Sterling residents and community members. The thoughtful feedback provided by these engaged stakeholders directly shaped the vision, goals, policies, and strategies of this Plan.

Community Engagement

The Sterling Master Plan Update process was based on the belief that community input and consensus are necessary in order to develop a plan that is appropriate and reflective of Sterling's unique culture and situation. That input and consensus has helped to create community support and ownership that will help see the Plan through adoption and implementation. Nearly one thousand community members have contributed to this Plan, through numerous events and activities. The following provides an overview of the techniques, activities, and events utilized throughout the planning process to involve a full and representative cross-section of the Sterling community.

Data Gathering - Downtown Assessment. Enthusiasm for a comprehensive update to Sterling's 1995 Master Plan began with the outreach and efforts of the Downtown Master Plan Concepts Report spearheaded by the City of Sterling, Logan County Economic Development Corporation, and Sterling Urban Renewal Authority. Building on this enthusiasm, The Planning Team kicked off the project with the Downtown Assessment Technical Assistance visit led by the non-profit organization, Downtown Colorado, Inc. Within a two day visit (July 16-17, 2012), the Technical Assistance Team met with several community stakeholder groups to better understand the needs and desires of the city, past revitalization efforts, and current ideas regarding the future of downtown Sterling. The observations and recommendations from the two day visit are documented in the Sterling Technical Assistance Report, and provided a foundation for the rest of the Master Plan Update project.

Sugar Beet Days Planning Booth. On September 15th and 16th, 2012, the Planning Team hosted a booth at the Sugar Beet Days Festival, to engage residents and to inform them about the upcoming Master Plan Update. The Planning Team gained valuable input regarding what citizens saw as opportunities and challenges for Sterling's future as well as where they thought the heart of Sterling was. The Planning Team developed a "Heart of Sterling" map from the input collected at the Festival, with clusters of activity shown downtown, at Northeastern Junior College, West Main, and Pioneer and Columbine Parks.





Project Website. The Planning Team developed a project website specifically for the Sterling Master Plan Update. This website was continually updated throughout the planning process to provide background information, notice of and results from upcoming events, and any relevant planning documents generated through the process. The site also provided a comments section for additional feedback, and links to relevant community and municipal websites.

Community Survey. The Sterling Community Survey was a tool designed to gather information from the community to help define the community’s vision, values, goals, policies, priorities, and implementation strategies. The survey was developed and administered by the Sterling Planning Commission, in conjunction with the Planning Team, between September and November of 2012. A paper copy of the survey, printed in both English and Spanish, was mailed to 7,746 households, businesses, and P.O. Boxes. An online version of the survey was posted on the City, Chamber of Commerce, and project websites, and emailed to the project’s list-serve.

I would like Sterling to be a place where . . .

“Our children want to go to school, or return from school to work and start a family. Where the job they settle down with can actually support a family and provide a sense of safety/security.”

- Community Survey Respondent

The Planning Team received a total of 683 responses to the survey, equating to a 9% response rate. Major themes that emerged included the desire to improve the city’s image and attract living-wage jobs, the need for affordable utilities and more activities for young people, and support for diversification of housing options and retail opportunities. Survey respondents also indicated that they enjoy the small town atmosphere, friendliness, and sense of community found in Sterling, and that community events contribute to a strong sense of community in the city.

Community Workshops. The Planning Team hosted three community-wide workshops, each with a different area of focus:

- ✘ **COMMUNITY KICK-OFF WORKSHOP** - This workshop was attended by approximately 40 people. Most of the event was devoted to interactive planning exercises designed to get the community thinking and talking about where Sterling’s strengths are and where there is room for change. These included a visioning exercise, a transportation patterns exercise, and a mapping exercise to identify areas to stay, go, or be improved.
- ✘ **GROWTH CHALLENGE WORKSHOP** - At this second workshop, the Planning Team challenged 25 participants to create a land use plan for future growth and development based on population projections for the year 2030. Participants located homes, jobs, parks, trails, open space, and public service on an aerial map (Game Board) of the Sterling planning area. Each team utilized a “Growth Challenge Gazette” to understand growth efficiency and landscape sensitivity as well as the community’s preferences that were derived from the community survey and results from the Community Kick-Off Workshop. The concepts and values that emerged from four growth challenge game boards were used to craft the Guiding Principles and three land use plan alternatives to be considered at the Consensus Workshop.
- ✘ **COMMUNITY CONSENSUS WORKSHOP** - The final community workshop was the most well attended of the three, with 52 participants. The Planning Team utilized keypad polling to gauge community support for the Growth Challenge Workshop land use alternatives, and to gain consensus around the emerging framework and guiding principles of the Master Plan.

Key “take-aways” were support for a framework of growing from the city’s core; a desire to improve streetscapes, signage, and gateways; and a desire to maintain and enhance parks, open space, and trail connections throughout the city.





Student Workshops. The Planning Team hosted two student workshops: one with Northeastern Junior College leadership students, and another with members of the freshmen and senior classes at Sterling High School. A summary of the events is provided below:

- ✘ **STERLING HIGH SCHOOL** - The Planning Team met with 145 freshmen and seniors. Using keypad polling technology, the Team asked all participants about their experiences as residents of Sterling, and what could be changed to make their community more responsive to their needs and lifestyles. Key themes included desire for a greater variety of stores and restaurants, concern over illegal drug use and personal safety issues, and the importance of utilizing social media to engage youth.



- ✘ **NORTHEASTERN JUNIOR COLLEGE** - The Planning Team facilitated a workshop with the Northeastern Junior College students and staff to gain an understanding of student needs and thoughts for the community's future. Comments included the desire for more restaurants and for extended business hours to match the schedules of college students, the need for more transportation options for students without access to cars, and for improved lighting downtown.

Senior Luncheon. On December 13, 2012, the Planning Team joined a group of senior citizens for lunch at the Logan County Heritage Center and led a discussion about the issues that impact Sterling's seniors most: housing, transportation and accessibility, health and recreation, and opportunities for social interaction. Participants shared both their concerns and their hopes for how Sterling will adapt to the community's aging population over the next few decades. Topics that received the most attention were the need for more accessible housing and public transportation options, the high cost of utilities, the poor quality of sidewalks, lack of medical specialists, and the desire for more participation in clubs, organizations, and activities.



Business Roundtable. On December 14, 2012 the Planning Team invited Sterling business owners to reflect on the preliminary findings from the previous evening's Growth Challenge Workshop, as well as the input received from community members to date. The roundtable provided an opportunity for open discussions, and for business owners to share their thoughts on quality of life issues, downtown revitalization, infrastructure needs, jobs/housing balance, and how to capitalize on and overcome challenges that are on the horizon.



HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

The Sterling Master Plan is intended as a comprehensive yet flexible guide for residents, businesses, and property owners regarding future development and redevelopment in the city. For residents and property owners, the Plan can help shape expectations about future use of property. For City Staff and officials, as well as Planning Commission members, it will be used to evaluate development and project proposals to ensure that they align with the community's vision and the overall intent of the Master Plan.

The Plan utilizes both written and graphic elements to identify and explain methods for achieving the community's vision for the future. The written components of the Plan include the Community Vision Statement and the Guiding Principles, which provide the framework for the goals, policies, and strategies set forth in the seven Plan Elements referenced in the following section. The



graphic components of the Plan include:

- ✘ Future Land Use Plan
- ✘ Future Transportation & Connectivity Plan
- ✘ Public Infrastructure, Services, & Environmental Constraints Plan
- ✘ Parks, Trails, Recreation, & Tourism Plan
- ✘ Three-Mile Plan

The graphic maps are found throughout the plan within the relevant Plan Element section. The graphic elements and the Master Plan generally are advisory, and are not binding to the City or its governing body. They should also be reviewed regularly and amended as needed to ensure that the Master Plan remains a current and relevant document.

Finally, the Sterling Master Plan includes an Implementation Program, provided at the end of the document. This is a crucial tool that prioritizes the recommendations presented throughout the Plan, identifies the responsible parties, and outlines steps to be taken.

PLAN ELEMENTS

The core of the Sterling Master Plan is the seven Plan Elements, which address key areas of need in the community:

- ✘ Growth and Land Use
- ✘ Economic Development
- ✘ Neighborhood and Housing
- ✘ Transportation and Streetscape
- ✘ Public Infrastructure and Services
- ✘ Parks, Trails, Recreation, and Tourism
- ✘ Community Services and Involvement

Within each Plan Element are a series of goals, objectives and implementation strategies (actions) which align with the Plan's Guiding Principles in order to achieve the community's vision for the future:

- ✘ A **Goal** is a broad statement of values or aspirations needed to achieve the vision. Goals help guide the community's decisions about public and private investment and development. Goals are not tied to specific dates, projects or targets, though they may encompass previous and continued efforts. Goals are enduring, and provide a general direction for more refined objective statements to assist decision-makers.
- ✘ An **Objective** describes the intent of the goal, and guides the actions of staff, developers, and policy makers.
- ✘ An **Action** is a specific task or process used to implement an objective and work toward achieving the goal.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Future Land Use Plan is the principal graphic component of the Sterling Master Plan. It emerged from the Community Engagement efforts, in coordination with the City's current zoning map and existing conditions.

The Plan provides a framework to guide future development, depicting land uses throughout the urban growth boundary area (land for future city growth and expansion). These land use designations were developed so as to provide for an overall equal balance between housing units and potential jobs. The Future Land Use Plan also identifies three "Opportunity Areas," which offer unique opportunities for broader redevelopment. The characteristics of specific elements of the Future Land Use Plan are described in the tables below:





FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

Category	Characteristics
Agriculture/Rural Residential	<p>Land in this category serves as a transition from the urban development within and directly adjacent to Sterling city limits to the agricultural and open land surrounding it.</p> <p>Uses within this category include open space, small-scale agricultural uses, and rural large-lot development with a maximum density of one (1) dwelling unit per five (5) acres. Rural residential lots are encouraged to cluster so as to preserve open space and have an adequate buffer from agricultural operations.</p>
Low Density Residential	<p>This residential category includes existing traditional single family areas, both within the city limits and in existing housing developments to the west and south of town. It also encompasses vacant and/or agricultural land best suited for annexation into the city to connect to existing housing developments outside of current city limits.</p> <p>Uses are largely single-family residential development on a variety of lot sizes, ranging in density from one (1) dwelling unit per five (5) acres to six (6) dwelling units per acre. Accessory uses may also be permitted. Land in this category corresponds roughly to what is currently within the R-1 Low Density Residential zone district.</p>
Medium Density Residential	<p>This designation encompasses much of Sterling's traditional single-family core neighborhoods northwest of downtown. The houses in these areas are generally smaller, and the land often underutilized. The focus for this area is to encourage reinvestment and redevelopment with quality design.</p> <p>This category encompasses a variety of residential development types, including single-family and two-family attached housing. Densities range from seven (7) to twelve (12) dwelling units per acre. Land in this category corresponds roughly to what is currently within the R-2 Medium Density Residential zone district.</p>
High Density Residential	<p>This land use category is largely made up of existing residential areas directly adjacent to downtown, to the West Main Street commercial area, and to the hospital. New development within this zone district will increase housing options for residents that seek a more compact, urban environment in proximity to commercial and office development.</p> <p>This category designates areas for multi-family development including tri-plexes, condominiums, townhouses and apartments. It also includes most existing mobile home developments. Residential densities are thirteen (13) dwelling units per acre or higher. Land in this category corresponds roughly to what is currently within the R-3 High Density Residential and MH Mobile Home zone districts.</p>
Downtown Mixed-Use	<p>This land use designation applies to Sterling's downtown area, and provides a concentrated pedestrian-oriented commercial center for the city. The purpose of this designation is to provide a variety of uses to attract more users/visitors to the downtown area throughout the day and throughout the year.</p> <p>Uses in this area include retail, office, civic and cultural facilities, and high density residential. Dwellings and offices are encouraged to locate above ground-floor retail and services. Land in this category corresponds roughly to what is currently within the CBD Central Business District zone district.</p>
Commercial	<p>This land use applies to existing commercial areas just outside of the downtown core, and around Northeastern Junior College. Future efforts for this zone district include revitalization to make the areas more pedestrian-friendly and attractive.</p> <p>Uses include a broad mixture of non-residential commercial development to serve both local and regional markets. Land in this category corresponds roughly to what is currently within the CB Community Business zone district, with the exception of West Main Street.</p>



FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

Category	Characteristics
Commercial Mixed-Use	Commercial Mixed-Use applies to areas along and around West Main Street, and is intended to help stimulate reinvestment and redevelopment in the area. Uses include a variety of larger scale retail and office uses, as well as high-density residential. Dwellings and offices are encouraged to locate above ground-floor retail and services.
Employment	This category encompasses a variety of existing and future production-oriented workplaces, most located on the east side of Sterling. This location is intended to accommodate development associated with a possible future energy boom. Uses include industrial, business and office parks, and temporary uses that support employment, such as housing, retail, etc. Land in this category corresponds roughly to what is currently within the LI Light Industrial and HI Heavy Industrial zone districts.
Public Facility	This designation is applied to public purposes including, but not limited to, libraries, schools, parks and open space, civic buildings, the Sterling Municipal Airport, and the Sterling Medical Center. Uses are found at sites throughout the city.
Parks & Open Space	This land use category applies to existing areas used for outdoor recreation purposes, and areas intended to preserve the natural, scenic, or historical features of the landscape. Efforts for this designation should focus on maintenance and enhancement, and on improving connectivity between parks and open spaces and adjacent neighborhoods/amenities. Land in this category corresponds roughly to what is currently within the current OS Open Space zone district.

AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

Category	Characteristics
Downtown Opportunity Area	The Downtown Opportunity Area corresponds to Sterling's historic downtown. Efforts should focus on the rehabilitation of existing structures and redevelopment of underutilized sites, and should respect the area's historic character. The goal of these efforts is to solidify downtown Sterling as the commercial, entertainment, and cultural heart of the community and surrounding region.
West Main Opportunity Area	The West Main Opportunity Area follows West Main Street to the city's western boundary, and includes a few blocks to the north and south. Efforts in this area should focus on streetscape beautification, improvements for pedestrians and cyclists, and infill development that provide a mixture of uses and housing types.
Energy Opportunity Area	The Energy Opportunity Area encompasses the industrial and commercial areas located east of downtown Sterling, and extending beyond the city's current eastern boundary. Due to proximity to I-76, this Area will be the location of all development associated with a potential future energy boom, including industry, business and office parks, and temporary housing. As one of Sterling's major gateways, any development should be of high quality and design, and work to connect I-76 to Sterling's core.



PLAN ELEMENTS

GROWTH AND LAND USE

Over the last half century Sterling has seen modest growth in population and new industry. During this time, the city has continued to expand commercial development, particularly on the west side of town, establishing the area along West Main Street as a retail and service hub for the city and surrounding area residents. Low density residential development has also followed this trend, expanding largely to the west. Looking forward, Sterling can expect continued modest population growth, with an annual growth rate of 2% and a projected population of 22,397 by 2030. There is a possibility for higher rates of growth in response to a predicted energy boom.

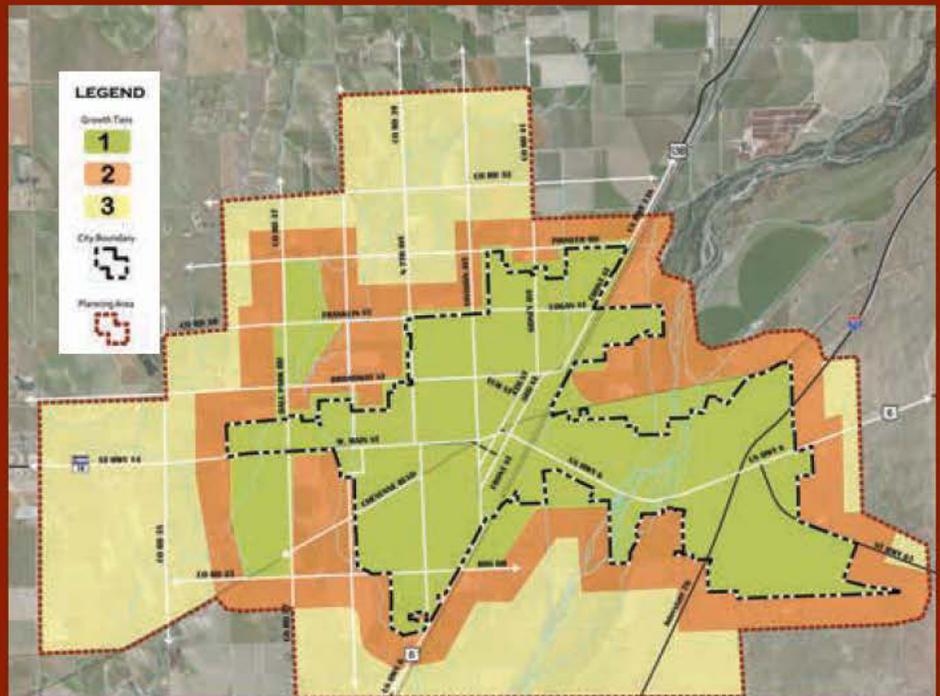
Growth Efficiency

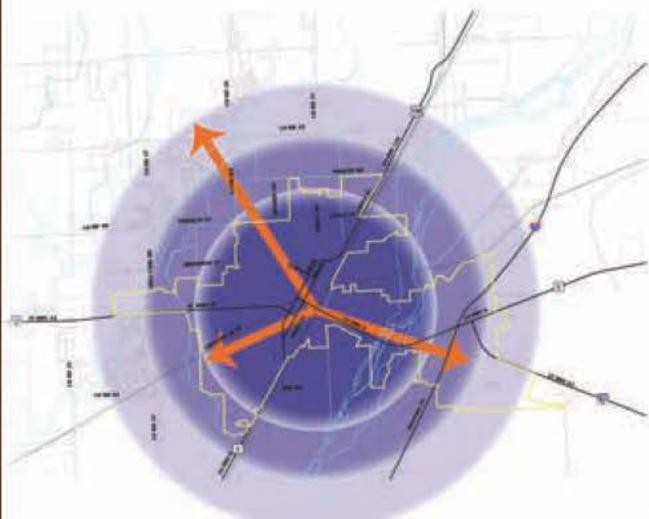
The intent of the Growth and Land Use element of the Master Plan is to guide future growth in Sterling from the city's core outward. It seeks to provide infrastructure as efficiently as possible without imposing burdens on existing residents, to discourage unsustainable development in sensitive areas including the floodplain, and to still allow flexibility for landowners and developers. The purpose of this approach is to protect and strengthen the community's character, quality of life, natural resources, agricultural uses, and to ensure that new development is accommodated efficiently and in a compact manner.

The vast majority of citizens that participated in the community workshops supported the implementation of tools to help achieve this growth efficiency framework, including increasing residential density and mixed-use development, applying the concepts of tiered growth focused around neighborhood centers (see graphics and definitions that follow). Proximity to paved roads,

Growth Tiers

- ✦ Growth Tier 1 encompasses all the area within Sterling's current city limits, as well as existing residential development just outside of the boundaries, and represents the city's highest priority area for growth and redevelopment. As development happens, the city's growth tiers should be amended to extend Tier 1 around new development and extend Tier 2 one-quarter mile (1/4) from existing infrastructure.
- ✦ Growth Tier 2 includes land within one quarter (1/4) mile of the Tier 1 boundary. This should be the second priority for new growth and development, as it provides the next level of economic efficiency.
- ✦ Growth Tier 3 contains the remaining land that is within the Planning Area Boundary. Development in this tier will require significant capital investment to extend infrastructure and provide services. Since changes in land use and transportation systems will directly impact the city, opportunities for an Inter Governmental Agreement (IGA) with Logan County should be considered to ensure that the City has input regarding any potential development applications within this tier.





Growth Efficiency Diagram

public water and sewer services, and existing development were the top factors affecting future growth identified in the Sterling Community Survey; the concepts of tiered growth and neighborhood centers were supported by 85% and 65% of Community Consensus Workshop participants respectively.

Neighborhood Centers

Neighborhood centers represent locations throughout the city that are or can become focus areas for services and amenities within walking distance of both existing and future homes. The uses provided at the different center locations will vary depending on where they are in the city. For example one center might focus on retail, another on public services, and another on parks or recreational amenities.

Efficient use of land should guide development in the centers, with higher density housing close to the center. Automobile, pedestrian, and bicycle connectivity within and between the centers should also be a priority consideration in development and redevelopment of the centers. The focus for implementation of neighborhood centers will likely occur when the City receives applications for the development of new residential neighborhoods and future redevelopment projects.

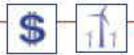
Together, these items provided the foundation for the Future Land Use Plan, which is referenced throughout the Growth and Land Use element. Equally important to attaining the goals identified in this section are policies and programs to spur the types of growth and redevelopment desired. Thus, while Growth and Land Use is a distinct section of this Plan, it was developed in concert with every other section, and should be implemented as such.



Neighborhood Center Diagram



GOAL 1: ATTAIN A BALANCED AND APPROPRIATE DISTRIBUTION OF LAND USES.



Objectives

- ✘ Provide adequate opportunities for new businesses and industries to locate in Sterling.
- ✘ Allow for a variety of housing types that serve different housing needs.
- ✘ Encourage construction of housing in close proximity to employment and services.
- ✘ Preserve and enhance existing parks and open space within the city.
- ✘ Ensure adequate public facilities as the city grows.
- ✘ Prepare for and mitigate negative impacts associated with the boom and bust cycles related to extraction and refinement of energy sources.
- ✘ Work to ensure that development is sensitive and responsive to environmental constraints, such as floodplain concerns northeast of town.



Actions

- Amend the City Zoning Map and Municipal Code to be consistent with the Future Land Use Plan.
- Use the Future Land Use Plan and other graphic components of the Plan as general guides to land use decision-making.
 - Evaluate development proposals for consistency with the Future Land Use Plan to ensure that there is a balance of land uses within the city.
 - Refer to the Public Infrastructure, Services, & Environmental Constraints Plan to identify potential constraints for development proposals as early as possible.
- Amend the subdivision regulations to include a rural subdivision review and approval process.
- Develop, adopt, and regularly review public land dedication requirements to ensure adequate land for parks, schools, and other public facilities.
- Create a commercial mixed-use zone district or revise the Community Business zone district to allow a mixture of land uses in conformance with the Future Land Use Plan.
- Create a downtown mixed-use zone district or revise the Central Business District zone to allow a mixture of land uses in conformance with the Future Land Use Plan.
- Adopt and implement oil and gas regulations.
- Consider adoption of an employment zone district designation within the Energy Opportunity Area as depicted on the Future Land Use Plan.





GOAL 2: PROMOTE A PATTERN OF GROWTH THAT EMANATES FROM THE CITY'S CORE OUTWARD.

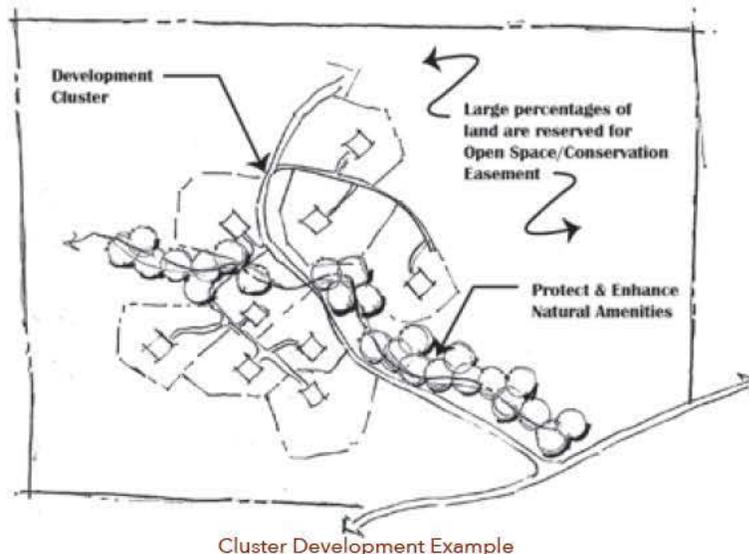


Objectives

- ✦ Focus new growth and development in proximity to existing development, paved roads, utilities, and public services.
- ✦ Encourage opportunities for redevelopment of underutilized land within the city limits.
- ✦ Strengthen Sterling's existing neighborhoods and commercial centers.
- ✦ Preserve farmland and prime growing areas on the fringes of the community.

Actions

- Encourage redevelopment and reinvestment within Growth Tier 1. Discourage development that is not within Tier 1 unless there is a significant public benefit from the development.
- Revisit the tiered growth program and map during the next Plan update and adjust as necessary.
- Require development outside of Tier 1 to pay all costs associated with extension of water, sewer, drainage, or street facilities as well as operation and maintenance of utilities. The City can also defer new development until the required improvements are in place, pursuant to the Capital Improvements Program or another acceptable plan that will fund required improvements.
- Encourage the "clustering" of new development in the areas that are designated agricultural/rural residential on the Future Land Use Plan to provide a variety of integrated housing types and lot sizes while conserving large amounts of open space, agricultural resources, and wildlife habitat.
- Adopt official annexation review criteria that incorporates the following: 1) adjacency to city limits, 2) location within Tiers 1 and 2, 3) provision of economic benefits to the city, 4) efficient provision of public facilities and services. Only annex properties that meet the above referenced criteria.
- Require annexation applications to include concept plans that conform to the intent of the Future Land Use Plan.
- Establish a standard for the level of service that should be provided for all public facilities and services prior to consideration of annexation of new properties. Require development to pay its proportionate share of extending public facilities and services.
- Foster intergovernmental cooperation with Logan County and neighboring municipalities by establishing and/or updating intergovernmental agreements relating to issues such as community boundaries, development review, resource sharing, regional trail construction, compact development, and provisions for public facilities and services.



FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

LEGEND

- Land Uses**
-  Agriculture/Rural Residential
 -  Low Density
 -  Medium Density
 -  High Density
 -  Commercial
 -  Commercial Mixed Use
 -  Downtown Mixed Use
 -  Public Facility
 -  Employment
 -  Parks & Open Space

Map Symbols

-  High School
-  Middle School
-  Elementary/Pre School
-  College/University
-  Airport
-  Park/Open Space
-  Golf Course
-  Fire Department/Station
-  Public Library
-  Hospital
-  Waste Water Treatment Plant
-  Future Water Treatment Plant

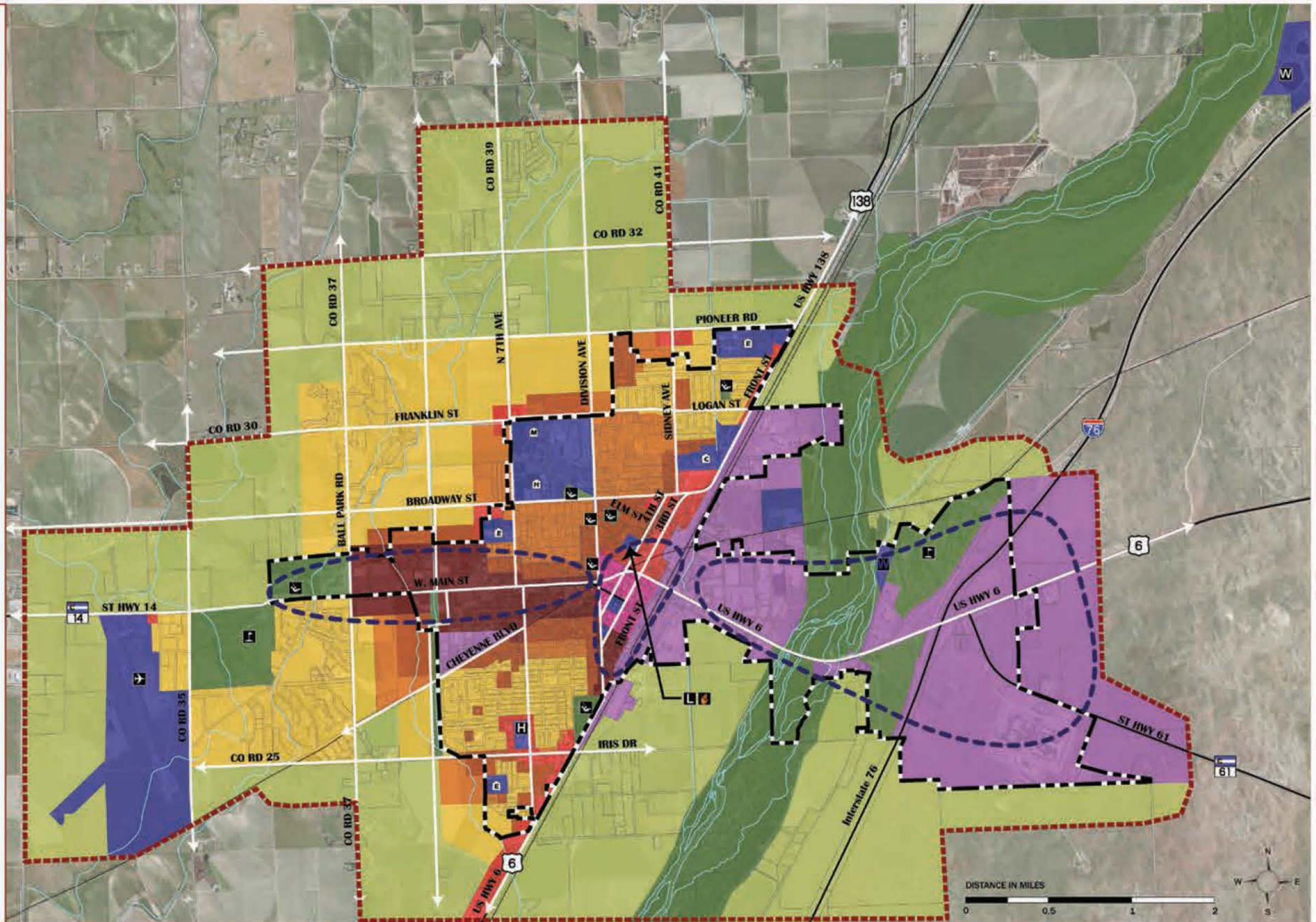
City Boundary



Planning Area

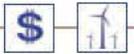


Opportunity Areas





GOAL 3: PURSUE ANNEXATION OF EXISTING RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISIONS ADJACENT TO THE CITY LIMITS AND SERVED BY CITY SERVICES.



Objectives

- Promote development that can be efficiently and properly served by city infrastructure in a cost-effective and efficient manner.
- Encourage development that fills in areas of vacant land adjacent to current city limits to create consistent patterns and character.

Actions

- Prioritize annexing land and existing development within Growth Tier 1 that is already served by city services.
- Update regulations that are sensitive to existing conditions in order to facilitate the annexation of unincorporated enclaves and developments adjacent to city limits. For example, develop programs to adjust curb and gutter/sidewalk requirements, or share costs for such infrastructure if there is significant public benefit.
- Develop fair and equitable cost sharing or reimbursement policies between property owners for situations in which the installations of public facilities directly benefit an adjacent property.
- Work with Logan County Planning staff to coordinate plans for future annexation and growth.

GOAL 4: DIVERSIFY LAND USES AND PROMOTE QUALITY DESIGN WITHIN STERLING'S HISTORIC DOWNTOWN.



Objectives

- Create a balance of uses including office, entertainment, residential, retail, etc., in downtown Sterling.
- Encourage redevelopment in and adjacent to downtown.
- Promote high quality design and redevelopment in downtown Sterling projects.

Actions

- Create a downtown mixed-use zone district for downtown Sterling, as depicted in the Future Land Use Plan.
- Work with Northeastern Junior College to locate student housing or new college facilities, and to host events downtown.
- Develop incentives for new high density residential and mixed-use development in downtown.
- Continue to encourage adaptive reuse of downtown buildings and rehabilitation of existing mixed-use properties.
- Develop and enforce design standards or guidelines for redevelopment and new projects in downtown Sterling.





GOAL 5: CREATE WALKABLE, PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS TO HELP SHAPE NEW GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT.



Objectives

- ✘ Plan new neighborhoods in clusters that are self-contained, if feasible, and that have identifiable characteristics. They should be centered on parks, civic uses, neighborhood convenience services or community facilities, and should be within walking distance of residents who live in and near those clusters.
- ✘ Encourage development and redevelopment that has strong connectivity to the rest of the city and surrounding region.
- ✘ Prioritize land uses that encourage walkable lifestyles for Sterling residents.
- ✘ Allow for the efficient provision of public services.
- ✘ Implement tools for healthy walkable and bikeable neighborhoods, including infill development, compact higher-density new development (where appropriate), mixed-use buildings, and improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Actions

- Locate the centers of new neighborhoods, as appropriate and viable, at the confluence of primary and secondary corridors, natural amenities, parks, civic uses, neighborhood convenience services, or community facilities.
- Encourage the development of neighborhood-specific civic, commercial, and community amenities (e.g., community gardens, equestrian centers, and childcare facilities) that are appropriately scaled to the area, meet the needs of local residents, and contribute to neighborhood character.
- Develop incentives to encourage new development to incorporate neighborhood center concepts and amenities (community, commercial, civic, recreational, etc).



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Sterling's economy has centered around agriculture since it was first established, supporting the farm and ranch industry during much of the 20th century. However, since the closure of the Great Western Sugar Company factory in the 1980s and the beef plant in the 1990s, Sterling has struggled to grow its economy, and has shifted the focus toward regional retail and commercial development. The oil and gas industry has also played a significant economic role in the past, and may see resurgence in the future. In order to sustain growth and population into the future, Sterling will need to take bold steps to understand and build upon its strengths.

The Sterling Community Survey highlighted the importance of economic development to Sterling's future, particularly to retain its younger population. Economic Development was identified as an important element to the community, with job opportunities, affordable utilities, and commercial development contributing to the issues. The availability and diversity of jobs, retail stores, and entertainment opportunities were also rated as "bad" overall. Survey respondents identified manufacturing as the most desired employer type, while





clothing, grocery stores, and restaurants were the most desired retail business types. Challenges expressed by business owners included attracting and maintaining a local customer base, cooperation with the City, and the need for high quality workers.

The Economic Development element of the Sterling Master Plan identifies strategies to achieve the community's economic goals, as identified during the Community Engagement phase of the planning process. Focus is placed on diversifying the local economic base, revitalizing the city's commercial areas to make them safe and more attractive, promoting the city's heritage, and returning downtown Sterling to its position as the heart of the community.

GOAL 1: STRENGTHEN AND DIVERSIFY STERLING'S ECONOMY.



Objectives

- ✦ Provide adequate opportunities for new businesses and industries to locate in Sterling.
- ✦ Support and attract living wage jobs.
- ✦ Encourage Sterling's youth, young adults, and families to remain in Sterling.
- ✦ Promote Sterling as a good place to do business.
- ✦ Expand the variety of retail opportunities in Sterling.
- ✦ Encourage entrepreneurship.



Actions

- Identify target business types and develop incentive programs to attract them.
- Support Logan County Economic Development Corporation efforts to develop and maintain a clearinghouse of information for potential businesses/employers on available land and buildings, and city incentive programs. Make information available online and in print at city buildings, Logan County Chamber of Commerce, Small Businesses Development Center, Logan County Economic Development Corporation, etc.
- Improve and increase regular communication between the City and businesses. For example: quarterly emails or mailings with new projects or programs, new businesses, upcoming events, etc.
- Work with the Logan County Chamber of Commerce to identify new creative strategies to encourage collaboration and communication between Sterling businesses.
- Create a business licensing system for the City to help track and regulate the type and number of businesses locating in Sterling.
- Consider developing a program for welcoming new businesses by providing standard information on city contacts and processes, events, committees or organizations they can join, etc.
- Partner with Northeastern Junior College and/or Sterling High School to develop internship programs to help support these efforts.
- Engage non-profit agencies like Downtown Colorado, Inc., to provide training to increase awareness of different business models and opportunities to enhance movie theater economic viability.
- Coordinate all efforts with the Chamber, Logan County Economic Development Corporation, Small Businesses Development Center, the Sterling Urban Renewal Authority, and the business community.





GOAL 2: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN STERLING AS THE COMMERCIAL, ENTERTAINMENT, AND CULTURAL HEART OF THE COMMUNITY AND REGION.



Objectives

- ✗ Increase economic activity in Sterling's downtown.
- ✗ Expand entertainment and activity opportunities downtown, particularly for Sterling's younger residents.
- ✗ Encourage Sterling residents to shop and spend time downtown.
- ✗ Promote downtown Sterling as a destination for visitors.
- ✗ Facilitate public-private partnerships that benefit the community.
- ✗ Work to create a clean and pleasant public realm within downtown Sterling.

Actions

- Work with downtown property owners to encourage new or creative use of vacant and underutilized storefronts and buildings. For example: local art displays, posters for upcoming events, temporary vendors or "pop-up shops."
 - Encourage collaboration between downtown businesses on programs that will benefit the entire district. For example, investigate the possibility for "shop local" programs and events, "the 3/50 project", or inter-business deals and specials.
 - Look into opportunities to host regional or state events at the CSU Engagement Center or at Northeastern Junior College.
 - Continue to host events such as the Sugar Beet Days Festival and July Jamz downtown. Look for opportunities to extend these events and/or create new events throughout the year.
- Work with schools and local organizations to host projects, programs, or events in downtown spaces. For example, showcase student work (art, music, projects, etc.) at downtown business locations or vacant storefronts.
- Continue to fund and implement the Sterling Urban Renewal Authority's Façade Grant, Building Improvement, and Relocation programs. Consider adding criteria related to enhancement of the pedestrian environment.
- Invite downtown groups and community stakeholders to meet regularly with the Planning Commission to activate the recommendations of the Sterling Downtown Assessment and Sterling Master Plan Update. Consider using the professional services of non-profit organizations like Downtown Colorado, Inc. to lead Plan activation.
- Support a downtown working group to guide downtown branding, marketing, and other projects. Consider creating a Downtown Strategic Plan based on the Sterling Downtown Assessment. Working group members should include representatives of existing organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Logan County Economic Development Corporation, Small Businesses Development Center, the Sterling Citizens Advisory Board, and the Sterling business community.
- Coordinate all efforts with the recommendations outlined in the Sterling Downtown Assessment.

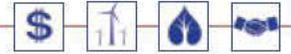


FUTURE LAND USE PLAN - DOWNTOWN & WEST MAIN ENLARGEMENT





GOAL 3: REVITALIZE THE WEST MAIN STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR.

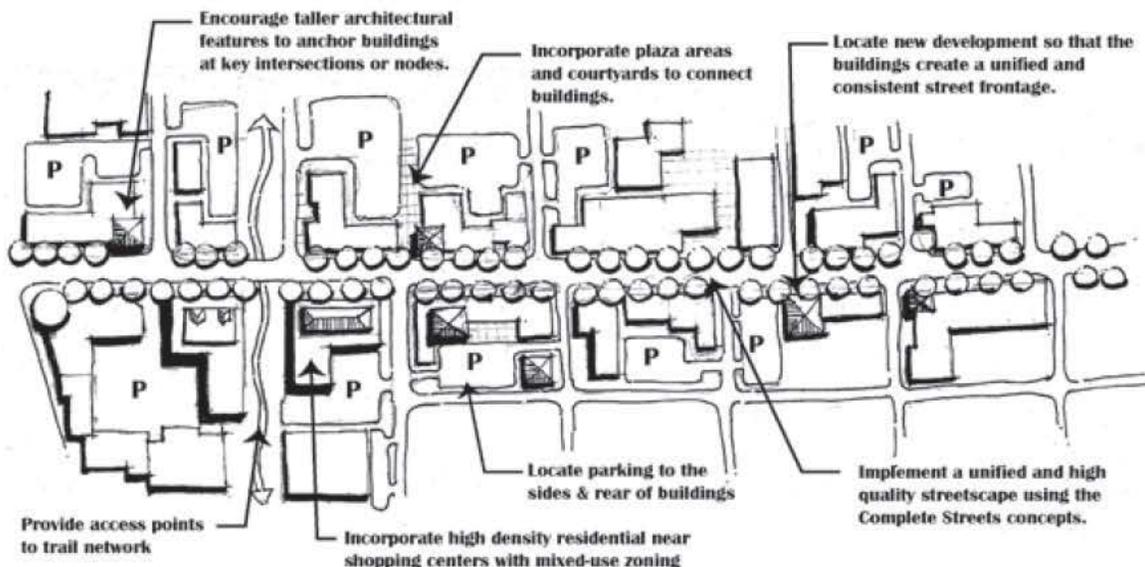


Objectives

- ✘ Encourage development within the West Main Opportunity Area that is multi-modal, with improvements to the pedestrian realm.
- ✘ Improve the appearance of the streets and building facades along West Main Street.
- ✘ Diversify businesses along the West Main corridor.
- ✘ Engage property owners, businesses, and developers in all redevelopment efforts within the West Main Opportunity Area to help spur new investment.

Actions

- Amend the land use regulations to include a commercial mixed-use zone district in the West Main Opportunity Area, as depicted on the Future Land Use Plan, to foster development of both activity-generating uses and a local customer base for those uses.
- Prepare a Corridor Restructuring Plan to reorganize the pattern of land use and redesign the public right-of-way to shift from auto-oriented to multi-modal transportation. Coordinate early with CDOT to plan for and implement any changes to State Highways, or any developments that could directly or indirectly impact the State Highway System.
- Consider marketing the West Main Opportunity Area to developers for needed senior housing, due to proximity to shopping, the hospital, and current transit access.
- Identify nodes along West Main Street that can become a focus for “neighborhood center” type development and redevelopment projects.
- Consider amending Sterling’s code to reduce surface parking and encourage parking behind or to the side of buildings.
- Revise parking lot landscaping standards to increase buffer landscaping and minimize the impact of large surface parking lots. Consider developing a program to encourage existing commercial areas to come into compliance.
- Develop and enforce design standards or guidelines for the West Main Opportunity Area or Commercial Mixed-Use zone.
- Consider developing a “green the streets” program for Sterling, and identify West Main as a pilot or priority area.



Conceptual West Main Corridor Improvements



GOAL 4: PRESERVE AND PROMOTE STERLING'S HISTORY AND HERITAGE.



Objectives

- ✘ Maintain Sterling's small-town atmosphere.
- ✘ Encourage heritage tourism activities within and around Sterling.
- ✘ Increase visitor and resident understanding of Sterling's history and role in Northeast Colorado.
- ✘ Celebrate the role of agriculture in Sterling's history, economy, and culture.

Actions

- Complete a historic building inventory for the city, including industrial and/or agricultural buildings.
- Pursue the designation of downtown Sterling as a National Historic District.
- Consider developing a local historic preservation ordinance, including a designation process and design standards or guidelines.
- Encourage adaptive reuse of Sterling's historic buildings through incentive programs.
- Create marketing information (brochures, maps, etc.) related to Sterling's unique history and culture. Have information available online, at local businesses, and displayed on maps or kiosks throughout downtown. Work with County and statewide heritage and tourism organizations to share information and materials so as to capitalize on heritage tourism industry and activities.
- Develop consistent signage and wayfinding throughout the city to direct, identify, and provide information about sites and locations important to Sterling's heritage.
- Continue to support and consider expanding events such as the Sugar Beet Days Festival to celebrate valued aspects of Sterling's culture and heritage, particularly agriculture.
- Engage non-profit agencies like Colorado Brownfields Foundation to assist in redevelopment, renovation, and adaptive reuse of property throughout the city.



NEIGHBORHOOD AND HOUSING

The quality and type of housing available to Sterling residents is tied closely to the city's future growth and economic strength. Sterling's population has remained relatively stable over the past few decades, with most of the population increase attributed to the opening of the Sterling Correctional Facility. However, economic and demographic changes are creating new demands for housing products that are not readily available in Sterling. Factors of increased demand include an aging population, older housing stock, and rising utility costs.

The major focus of the Housing element is to diversify the type of housing available as Sterling grows. Housing stock in the city and surrounding area today is dominated by large lot and very low density development, with single family homes representing nearly 70% of Sterling's dwelling units, despite more balanced zoning. While approximately three-quarters of Sterling Community Survey respondents continued to support single-family housing, 40% or more wanted to see more senior housing, townhomes, apartments, and condominiums. These rates of support were even higher for respondents over the age of 65 and under the age of 30, both of which are likely to be growing sectors of the population in the future. In addition, senior citizen participants expressed concern at the lack of accessible housing, a reflection of the era in which much of Sterling's housing was built.



The quality and appearance of the current and future housing stock also emerged as a major concern throughout the Community Engagement phase of the Master Plan Update process, and is another focus of the Housing element. More than half of the housing units are more than 50 years old, and by the end of the decade this number will increase to two-thirds. The community's visual attractiveness was rated as adequate overall in the Community Survey, and as unattractive by Sterling High School students. Maintenance of homes and yards was the concern most frequently identified. And finally, affordability of housing was identified as one of the top challenges to future economic development and growth on the Community Survey, and by senior citizens and students at Northeastern Junior College.



GOAL 1: ENSURE A VARIETY OF HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS AT ALL LIFE STAGES.



Objectives

- ✦ Increase the number of housing units that are accessible and promote universal design principles, to better allow residents the opportunity to age in place.
- ✦ Encourage diversity in the types, densities, styles, and prices of housing available to accommodate a variety of lifestyles and income levels.
- ✦ Support the development of higher density and mixed-use housing, particularly in and around downtown and within the West Main Opportunity Area.
- ✦ Address issues impacting the affordability of housing in Sterling.
- ✦ Facilitate new residential development by promoting Sterling as “developer-friendly.”



Actions

- Regularly review the information provided in the Logan and Morgan Counties’ Housing Needs Assessment and update as needed. Based on results of the housing inventory, consider expanding affordable housing opportunities in strategic locations in Sterling if needed and appropriate.
- Encourage new development to follow a “clustered” pattern, focused around “neighborhood centers.”
- Provide a variety of lot sizes, unit types, sizes, and styles to maintain and/or increase housing opportunities for residents with physical disabilities, and/or to include housing units that are affordable at different income levels in every neighborhood.
- Coordinate with Northeastern Junior College on the location and type of future student housing.
- Institute minimum density requirements in commercial and downtown mixed-use districts to promote a compact urban core.
- Develop and maintain an inventory of existing vacant/infill parcels and make available in print and on the City’s website for potential developers or investors.
- Consider the feasibility of creating a comprehensive incentive program to target development of various priority housing



types, such as high density, mixed-use, and senior housing, at key locations throughout the city.

- Identify priority locations for targeted/incentivized housing types, such as student or senior housing, based on access to amenities or needed services. Use this as basis for above-noted incentive program.
- Work to connect residents with existing housing resources, such as Northeast Colorado Housing or the Sterling Housing Authority, by making information available through community organization on services and assistance.

GOAL 2: IMPROVE HOUSING QUALITY THROUGHOUT THE CITY.



Objectives

- ✘ Ensure that new housing development is consistent in character and high quality design.
- ✘ Promote neighborhood preservation and enhancement through redevelopment of blighted, distressed, and underutilized properties.
- ✘ Encourage reinvestment in core residential neighborhoods.
- ✘ Identify and preserve historic homes.
- ✘ Address the health, safety, and aesthetic issues caused by vacant and abandoned properties.
- ✘ Work to improve energy efficiency of homes.

Actions

- Consider revising and/or strengthening the City's code enforcement policies and strategies, particularly with regards to property/yard maintenance throughout the city.
- Host community clean-up days 2-3 times a year.
- Review the 1994 dangerous buildings ordinance and update as necessary.
- Review the City code to identify any existing disincentives to re-investment in existing neighborhoods.
- Create and enforce design standards or guidelines for new residential development and redevelopment.
- Consider offering incentives or matching funds for residents to make certain improvements to homes within high priority areas of the city.
- Coordinate with community organizations and service providers to distribute information on state-wide and regional weatherization and energy efficiency programs such as LEAP, or services offered by the Northeast Colorado Association of Local Governments.
- Support and seek to help expand the work of local organizations such as Community Caring Hands, which utilize volunteers to provide housing repairs to seniors or those with physical disabilities or income restrictions. Alternatively, consider reaching out again to new housing construction or repair organizations such as Rebuilding Together or Habitat for Humanity to establish affiliates in and/or around Sterling.



TRANSPORTATION AND STREETScape

The automobile is the primary means of transportation for Sterling residents, and the city’s transportation network is important for connecting members within the community, as well as to resources in neighboring communities. Sterling’s core was laid out in a compact grid pattern, appropriate for multiple transportation modes. However, much of the residential and commercial development in recent decades has been auto-oriented, and located west of the core. While this focus has responded to demand for commercial goods and services, it has meant that less investment and attention has been spent on infrastructure serving pedestrians and cyclists, and those without access to vehicles.

This section of the Sterling Master Plan identifies steps to strengthen the city’s transportation network for all users, with a focus on improvements that are multi-modal in nature. The quality and condition of roadways was the top transportation concern for respondents to the Community Survey, followed by the need for public transportation, concerns about heavy truck traffic through town, road safety, and bicycle infrastructure. In addition, streetscape design and safety was ranked as the highest priority for city beautification efforts at the Community Consensus Workshop. Wayfinding signage and the appearance of city gateways were also identified throughout the Community Engagement process as important elements to improving the city’s image and making it more inviting to visitors.



The City of Sterling has already begun to plan for and implement some changes to address these concerns. A 2012 study prepared by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) reviewed the conversion of 3rd and 4th Streets from one-way streets to two-way streets to assist traffic flow. Efforts to implement these conversions have already begun. In addition, the “S-Curve” project identified in the 2011 Downtown Master Plan Concepts Report, which aims to connect Highways 14 and 6 through town, has been accepted by CDOT. Finally, CDOT recently applied to have State Highway 14 designated as part of the National Highway System, as an alternate connection between I-76 and I-25.

The Transportation and Streetscape element of the Master Plan works with these documents, supporting their recommendations and providing clarification and prioritization. It also goes beyond these documents to present recommendations to enhance the appearance, comfort, safety, and connectivity of the bicycle and pedestrian environments throughout Sterling. The Future Transportation and Connectivity Plan offers a graphic framework for the recommendations provided in this section.

GOAL 1: MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE STERLING TRANSPORTATION NETWORK.



Objectives

- ✦ Support and enhance road quality and maintenance.
- ✦ Improve connectivity and reduce congestion for motorists.
- ✦ Ensure adequate parking facilities throughout the city.
- ✦ Improve wayfinding and signage throughout the city.

Actions

- Identify problematic intersections and work with CDOT and/or the County as necessary to pursue adjustments in signage, signalization, timing of lights, etc. Specific intersections for consideration (based on comments from the community survey) include:
 - West Main Street and Division Avenue
 - West Main Street and 14th Avenue (Wal-Mart)



▫ North 3rd Street and Poplar Street

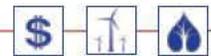
- Continue to plan for and fund the city's Capital Projects/Improvement Fund. Ensure that the Fund's priorities are aligned with the Master Plan Guiding Principles and recommended actions.
- Design a wayfinding system for the city. Develop themes, icons, and a hierarchy of signs appropriate for different areas of the city and transportation modes (automobile, pedestrian, and cyclist). Consider conducting a wayfinding inventory to identify areas in need.



- Investigate revisions to the parking standards for new development. Where possible, reduce surface parking and/or provide design and landscaping standards to improve lot appearance. Consider adding bicycle parking requirements for new developments and develop programs to encourage existing development to come into compliance with revised regulations.
- Encourage gridded street layout in new developments that ties into existing neighborhoods and the established street grid network.

- Revisit the concept of a bypass route around the core of the town, as set out in the 1995 Master Plan, Infrastructure section Action 9. Review and evaluate the continued necessity for the bypass, and consider moving forward with the project if needed.
- Prioritize improvements in the City's Opportunity Areas, and on high-traffic areas.
- Continue to search for and identify traditional and innovative methods for financing transportation improvements.

GOAL 2: DEVELOP A COMPLETE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM FOR STERLING, TO ENSURE THAT RESIDENTS WITH DIFFERENT TRANSPORTATION NEEDS AND DESIRES CAN ADEQUATELY ACCESS SERVICES AND AMENITIES.



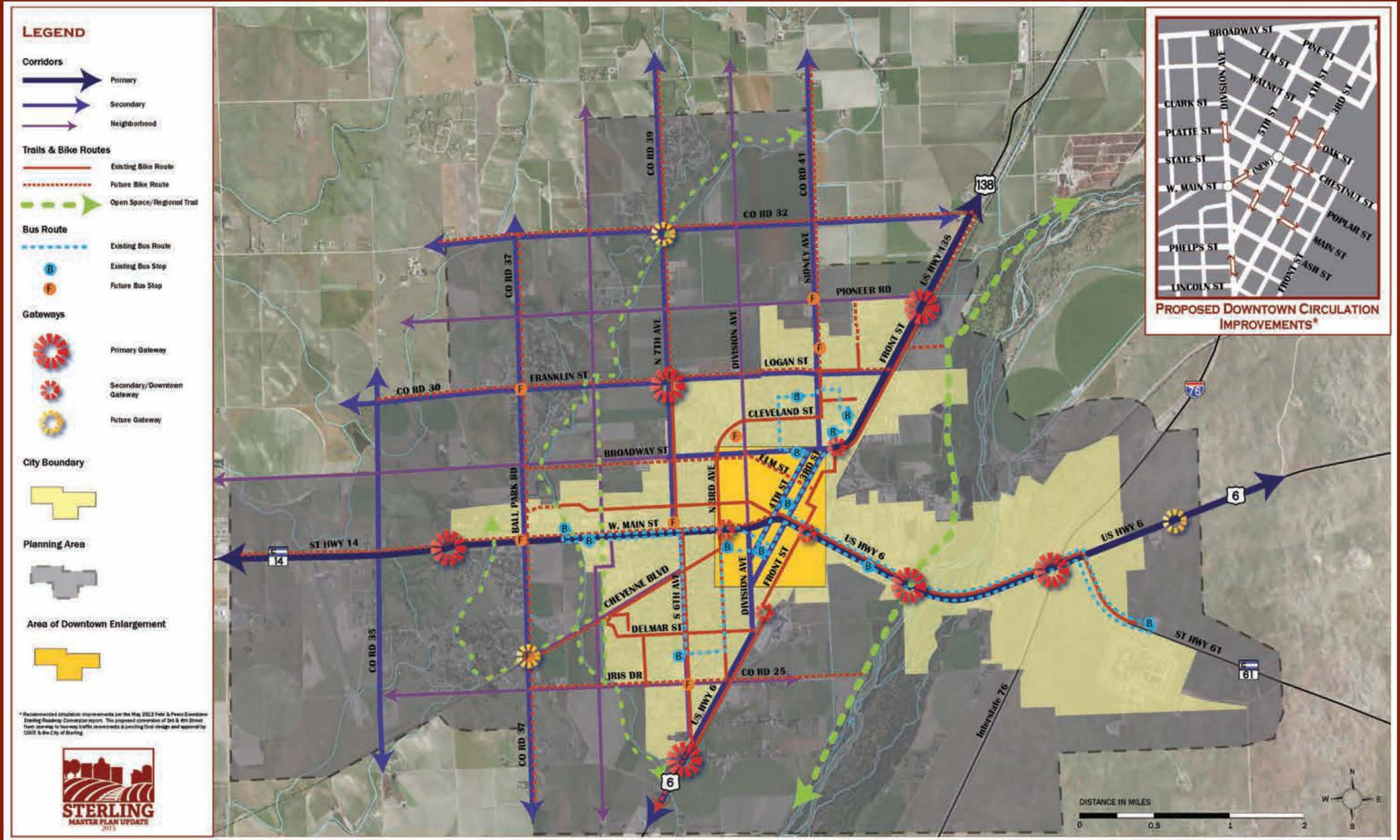
Objectives

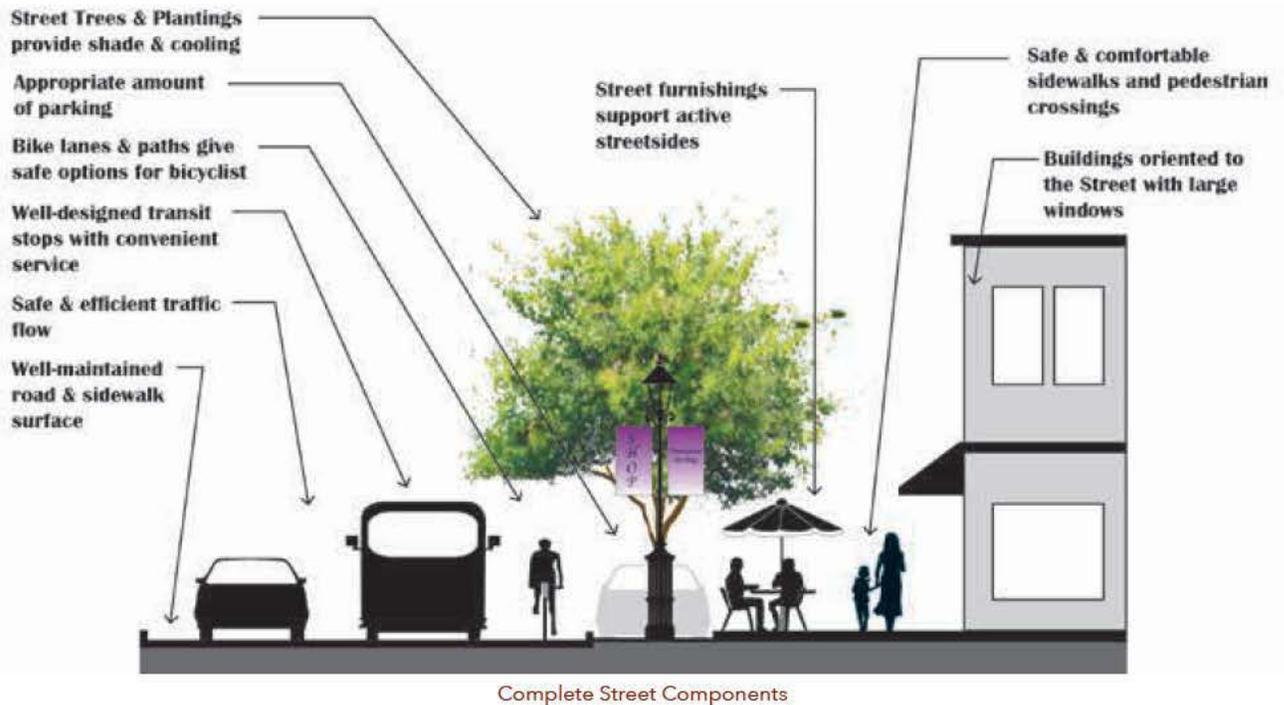
- ✦ Strengthen public transportation options within Sterling and to neighboring communities.
- ✦ Improve bicycle facilities and signage to safely and efficiently connect key locations throughout the city.
- ✦ Improve the quality and availability of sidewalks, especially within and between neighborhoods, commercial areas, and public facilities such as schools and parks.
- ✦ Ensure that the design and development of future transportation projects address the needs of all users.



Typical Multimodal Street Cross Section

FUTURE TRANSPORTATION & CONNECTIVITY PLAN





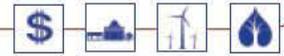
Actions

- Implement complete street policies to provide for the safe and convenient transport of all users of the roadway, including motorists, trucks and shipping, as well as pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit users, children, seniors, and people with disabilities.
- Conduct a walkability and sidewalk inventory to identify and prioritize areas throughout the city that are in need of repairs or improvements to pedestrian infrastructure, namely sidewalks and signage. Take into consideration the needs of mobility-impaired residents and visitors.
- Continue offering incentives, in the form of matching funds, to homeowners to make improvements to sidewalks. Prioritize funding within and between core neighborhoods and amenities.
- Prioritize projects and investment to ensure quality sidewalks to and around Sterling’s schools.
- Budget for bicycle route improvements and signage, as depicted in the Future Transportation and Connectivity Plan.
- In collaboration with CDOT, review preliminary design plans for the “S-Curve” project to ensure that all the safety and access needs of all transportation modes and users are addressed.
- Require new developments to address multimodal transportation concerns, particularly sidewalk and bicycle connections to existing neighborhoods.
- Work with the Northeast Colorado Association of Local Governments to expand or refine County Express and Prairie Express bus service. Consider adding stops as identified in the Future Transportation and Connectivity Plan.
- Prioritize improvements that will benefit and connect the following key neighborhood and commercial hubs throughout the City:
 - Downtown Opportunity Area
 - West Main Opportunity Area
 - Heritage Center/Recreation Center
 - Sterling High School/Middle School



- Campbell Elementary School
- Ayres Elementary School
- Northeastern Junior College
- Sterling Regional Medical Center
- Pioneer Park
- Overland Trail Recreation Area/Museum

GOAL 3: IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND DESIGN OF STREETSCAPING ALONG STERLING'S CORRIDORS.



Objectives

- ✘ Improve the image, comfort, and safety of Sterling's primary, secondary, and neighborhood corridors.
- ✘ Promote beautification projects along Sterling's corridors, particularly at city gateway locations.
- ✘ Create consistent character and recurring elements along corridors and within key districts, commercial areas, or neighborhoods.

Actions

- Develop a streetscape improvement plan for existing corridors, particularly within the City's Opportunity Areas, and identify a dedicated funding source to implement improvements. Prioritize detached sidewalks along primary and secondary corridors.

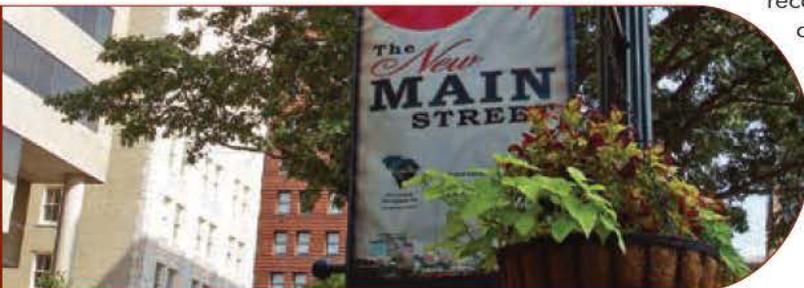


- Prioritize sidewalk pavement improvements along neighborhood corridors and streets.
- Revise the Design and Construction standards in the Subdivision Regulations to address pedestrian and bicycle transportation modes within new developments.

- Consider investing in seasonal or district banners along primary corridors, particularly within the City's Opportunity Areas, to announce entry into commercial or historic areas.
- Establish streetscape standards for new development outside of current city limits.
- Identify crossing improvements at key intersections, particularly within the West Main Opportunity Area and at railroad crossings. Coordinate early with CDOT to plan for and implement any changes on State Highways.
- Inventory the street lighting in Sterling's commercial areas, both for automobiles and pedestrians. If needed, develop a street lighting program to improve the perceived safety and comfort of these areas at various times of day. Coordinate early with CDOT to plan for and implement any changes on State Highways.
- Continue working with CDOT to implement comprehensive improvements to the streetscapes of Sterling's gateways, as

recommended in the downtown Master Plan Concepts and downtown Sterling Roadway Conversion Reports. Identify funding sources for improvements.

- Continue to coordinate all efforts with the Sterling Citizens Advisory Board, utilizing the hotel tax to fund prioritized streetscape and beautification projects.





PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

The provision of public infrastructure is at the heart of ensuring that Sterling remains a sustainable and resilient community into the future. Infrastructure was an important element of the 1995 Sterling Master Plan, and continues to play a central role in this Update. Infrastructure was ranked in the top three most important community elements in the Sterling Community Survey and the affordability of utilities was identified as a top challenge to future economic development and growth. In the last decade the city has already taken important steps towards this, particularly with the construction of the new water treatment plant slated for completion in the summer of 2013. However, there are additional opportunities to strengthen the City's services and increase sustainable practices. Specific concerns facing the City in the coming years and decades include:

- ✦ Capacity of the City to provide and treat water
- ✦ Impact of softer water produced by the new treatment plant on existing water lines
- ✦ Aging of the City's sanitary sewer system, including lift stations
- ✦ Ability of the City's storm water system to adequately respond to floods

The Public Infrastructure and Services element address these issues, as well as another critical public service that has become increasingly visible in communities throughout Colorado in recent years: emergency and disaster mitigation and response. The proliferation of extreme weather conditions, including drought and fire, makes consideration of such events important in the overall planning process. The city has already undertaken efforts to this end, in conjunction with the Logan County Office of Emergency Management, and over half of the Community Consensus Workshop participants felt that the Sterling community is prepared to respond to a natural or man-made disaster or emergency. However, because of the ongoing importance of such efforts, part of this Plan element is dedicated to steps the City can continue to take to help residents, businesses, and community organizations prepare for and efficiently and safely respond to emergencies. The Public Infrastructure, Services, & Environmental Constraints Plan offers a graphic framework for the recommendations provided in this section.



GOAL 1: ENSURE ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES TO SERVE STERLING'S FUTURE GROWTH.



Objectives

- ✦ Provide high quality and affordable potable water to existing and future residents.
- ✦ Encourage new development to locate adjacent to and tie into existing infrastructure so that development phasing supports the notion of a compact urban core.
- ✦ Identify appropriate methods (traditional and innovative) for financing public improvements.
- ✦ Discourage new development in vulnerable areas within the 100-year flood plain.
- ✦ Increase opportunities for sustainable practices.
- ✦ Maintain high quality treated water, sanitary sewer, and storm sewer systems.





Actions

- Work to establish and maintain appropriate water rates.
- Review current trash collection systems and investigate the feasibility for a citywide recycling program.
- Discourage new development that would require major extensions to City sewer and water lines (Tier 3 Growth Area). For example, utilize incentives such as accelerated development review and permit processing within Growth Tier 1.
- Require new development to obtain City water and sewer service.
- Establish and annually monitor capital investment plans for general and enterprise fund programs. This includes vehicle and major equipment inventory, building development and maintenance investment, water and sewer lines, streets, sidewalks, bridges, public property inventory, and investment schedules.
- Budget a minimum of 10% of general fund sales and use tax proceeds for capital replacement items (for example, the replacement of an existing swimming pool, recreation facilities, etc.).
- Consider acquiring particularly vulnerable land within the floodplain for dedication as park or open space.
- Seek and preserve resources to improve the infrastructure required to draw full potential of existing City water rights.
- Continue to actively monitor and evaluate the quality and capacity of the City’s sanitary and storm water sewer systems, as well as treated water lines. Budget for repairs and improvements as needed.
- Pursue efforts to bury overhead electrical lines in highly visible parts of the city, with emphasis on gateway areas, opportunity areas, and key destinations such as the Medical Center or Northeastern Junior College.

GOAL 2: CONTINUE TO ENSURE THAT STERLING IS PREPARED FOR AND CAN ADEQUATELY RESPOND TO NATURAL AND MAN-MADE DISASTERS.



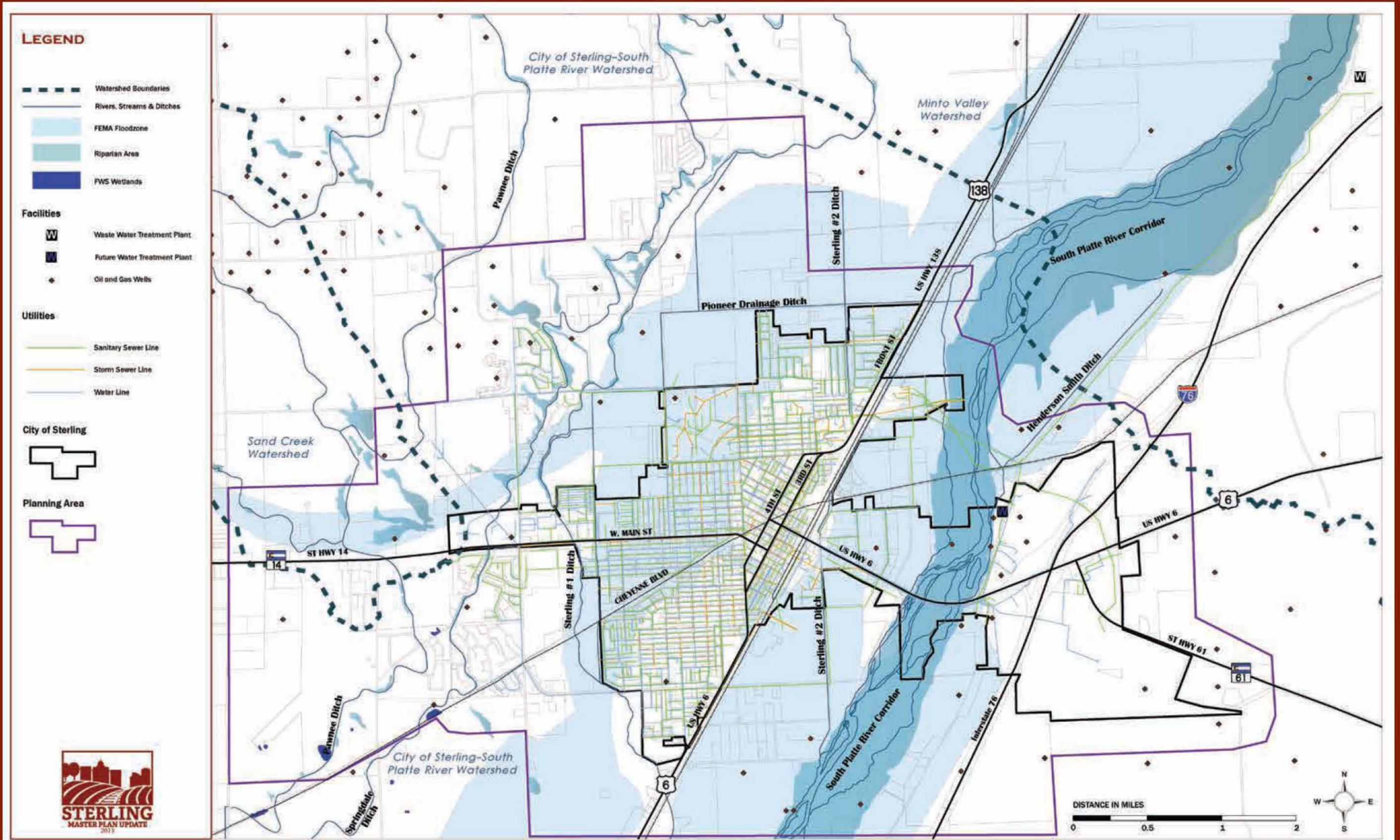
Objectives

- ✗ Increase resident understanding of resources available and steps to take to prepare for and respond to emergencies.
- ✗ Continue to foster and support partnerships with Logan County, local businesses, schools, community members, community organizations, and religious institutions to facilitate communication and sharing of information and resources.
- ✗ Ensure that businesses and community organizations are prepared to quickly recover from an emergency, since they provide needed goods and services.

Actions

- Work with Logan County Small Businesses Development Center to help businesses develop disaster response plans.
- Continue to partner with schools (elementary, high school, Northeastern Junior College) to coordinate emergency response planning and education.
- Develop or establish neighborhood emergency and communication hubs:
 - Identify neighborhood leaders.
 - Create neighborhood inventory maps of existing resources (generators, evacuation routes, tornado shelters, etc).
 - Create neighborhood communications networks.
- Continue to coordinate all efforts with Ready Northeast and the Sterling/Logan County Office of Emergency Management.
- Consider partnerships with the Logan County Citizen Corps to organize and implement actions.
- Look for opportunities to work with FEMA to design and construct flood control measures (i.e., berming, levies, etc.).

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, & ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS PLAN





PARKS, TRAILS, RECREATION, AND TOURISM

Sterling's rural location and small town feel play a central role in establishing the city's character, culture, and quality of life. In fact, the abundance of parks and open space (and the availability/diversity of recreational opportunities) were two of the most highly rated community items on the Sterling Community Survey.

The Parks, Trails, Recreation, and Tourism element of the Sterling Master Plan addresses the future of recreational resources with a focus on creating a balance between protection of the area's natural resources/amenities and supporting community and economic needs. Preserving open space and maintaining or enhancing the city's existing parks and open space were highly favored in both the Community Survey and the Community Consensus Workshop, and receive a great deal of attention. In addition, there is focus on creating a regional trail along the South Platte River, an idea supported by more than three-quarters of workshop participants. Such a project would help not only to protect a key natural amenity, but also attract visitors and help draw people into town from the I-76 corridor. The Parks, Recreation, Trails, & Tourism Plan offers a graphic framework for the recommendations provided in this section.



GOAL 1: MAINTAIN, ENHANCE, AND CONNECT STERLING'S EXISTING PARK AND OPEN SPACE SYSTEM.



Objectives

- ✦ Maintain the City's goal of providing 10 acres of developed park land per 1,000 persons. Ensure that parks and open space are multi-purpose and accessible to all Sterling's residents, including those with physical limitations.
- ✦ Connect the city's parks and open space to existing and future neighborhoods.
- ✦ Strive to locate parks and schools together or near each other whenever possible.

Actions

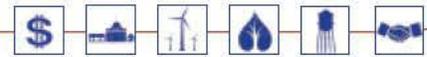
- Inventory existing parks, trails, and open space facilities. Work with citizens to evaluate opportunities for maintenance and upgrades while developing a funding strategy that takes advantage of all available resources for park development and improvements.
- Ensure that the majority of city parks, trails, open space facilities, play equipment, and recreation facilities is accessible to the disabled and people of all ages and abilities.
- Include art and interpretive signage in parks and on trails.
- Continue to include access to and through parks and open space in city-wide walkability inventory.
- Continue working with the school district to plan for, obtain, and construct future school and park sites in proximity to one another.





- Identify parcels or easements which could be used to better connect trails, parks, and open space to neighborhoods and downtown. Include funding for acquisition in Parks and Recreation budget.
- Continue to maintain the budget for planning and implementation of the Sterling Parks and Recreation Plan.

GOAL 2: DEVELOP A REGIONAL TRAIL ALONG THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER.



Objectives

- ✦ Protect and promote Sterling’s natural amenities, while balancing community needs.
- ✦ Connect future trail to the city’s pedestrian and bicycle network.
- ✦ Educate the community and visitors on the importance of natural resource habitat and ecological integrity within natural systems.

Actions

- Pursue intergovernmental cooperation with Logan County, the State, and neighboring municipalities to develop a regional trail along the South Platte River Corridor, with a trailhead in Sterling. Begin by reviewing recommendations and strategies from the Riverfront Park section of the 1992 report by the Army Corps of Engineers titled “South Platte River Corridor Recreational and Flood Plain Development at Sterling Colorado.”
 - Integrate trail planning (signage, education, promotion, etc.) with efforts to promote downtown Sterling and local businesses.
 - Explore incentives, regulations, and funding mechanisms to preserve, acquire, and manage valuable park and open space lands.
 - Revise the land use regulations as necessary to: limit development in the floodplain, encourage landowners and developers to conserve and enhance important wildlife habitat and views, and promote public access.



GOAL 3: PROMOTE HEALTHY LIVING AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLES.



Objectives

- ✦ Ensure a built environment that accommodates physical activity and healthy choices through daily activities.
- ✦ Increase recreational opportunities within the community through a well-distributed and connected network of indoor and outdoor places for physical activity.
- ✦ Expand community gardens and urban agriculture to improve neighborhood food access and create opportunities for physical activity.
- ✦ Work toward a well-distributed regional open space network for parks, trails, natural areas, and working resource lands.
- ✦ Tie existing parks into new corridor/greenway/gateway improvements.

PARKS, TRAILS, RECREATION, & TOURISM PLAN

LEGEND

Trails & Bike Routes

-  Existing Bike Route
-  Future Bike Route
-  Open Space/Regional Trail

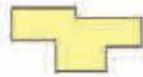
Parks & Open Space

-  Existing Parks & Open Space
-  Potential Park & Open Space

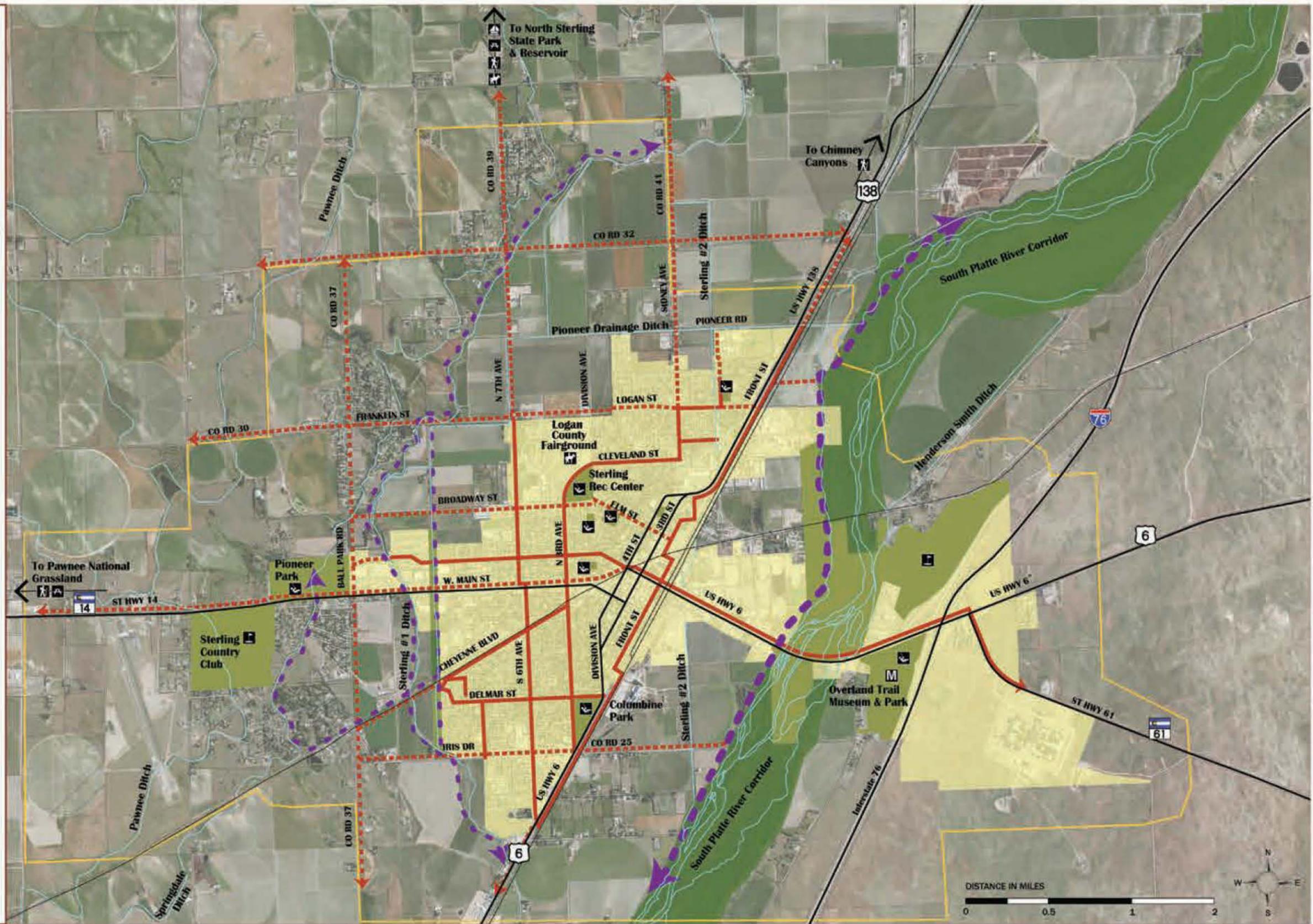
Facilities

-  Boating Activities
-  City Parks
-  Equestrian Facilities/Trails
-  Golf
-  Picnic
-  Hiking Trails
-  Museum

City of Sterling



Planning Area





Actions

- Acquire open space sites and regional trail corridors to accommodate future trail connection as identified in the Future Transportation and Connectivity Plan.
- Utilize streets and sidewalks to provide safe non-motorized connections for both daily commuting and recreational activities.
- Consider implementing community garden plots within public parks to engage the community in the production of healthful food choices.
- Develop tailored Level of Service (LOS) standards that address the amount and quality of recreational facilities required to meet the basic needs and expectations of the Sterling community. Ensure that all neighborhoods have equal access to recreational facilities as the community grows and demands for recreational activities increase.
- Provide highly visible signage (i.e., new monuments, banners, etc.) as near as possible to existing parks.
- When establishing new rights-of-way, create greenways that link to parks.



COMMUNITY SERVICES AND INVOLVEMENT

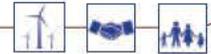
Since being named as the county seat more than a century ago, Sterling has developed into not only an economic but also a cultural and community hub for the region. As such it has been able to offer a wide array of services, activities, and amenities to residents, despite the rural setting and small town atmosphere. Much of this is due to the efforts of City Staff and the business community, but equally important has been the dedication of local organizations and community members. Looking forward, changes such as the aging of the population will make these services, amenities, and strong community ties even more essential for the city and its residents to thrive.



The Community Services and Involvement element of the Master Plan addresses the human needs of the city's residents in relation to community well being and quality of life. Sterling's small town "feel" and the friendliness of its people were the two aspects the Community Survey respondents liked best about Sterling. The most frequent response to the question of "Why do you live in Sterling?" was "To be near friends/family." Sterling offers a supportive community and high quality of life. The purpose of this section is to identify ways to ensure that those opportunities are available and extended to all residents.



GOAL 1: INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT IN CITY PROGRAMS, PROJECTS, AND ACTIVITIES.



Objectives

- ✘ Increase resident awareness of city news, events, projects, and opportunities for involvement.
- ✘ Target programs, projects, and outreach for youth.
- ✘ Foster a high level of community engagement and leadership in city government and local organizations.
- ✘ Expand opportunities for activities for the elderly and retired members of the Sterling community.
- ✘ Work to connect ranchers and farmers to the Sterling community.

Actions

- Work with Logan County Chamber of Commerce to continue to update a community calendar of events, coordinated between the City, schools, community organizations, and businesses. Make the calendar available online and in print and distributed via social media. Consider sending a quarterly or annual newsletter with events to residents and businesses.
- Engage residents in downtown revitalization efforts through working groups, advisory committees, and projects such as historic building inventories, walkability inventories, etc.
- Consider creating a youth council or City Council positions available to Sterling High School and Northeastern Junior College students.
- Partner with schools to encourage service-learning opportunities with Sterling’s parks and open space.
- Maintain and enhance Parks and Recreation programming, with special consideration of programs for youth and the elderly.
 - Expand classes and activities offered by the Senior Center and Recreation Center based on popularity and demand.
 - Work with schools, churches, businesses, service organizations, residents, and local farmers/ranches to develop a volunteer community garden program to provide fresh and local produce for the local food bank. Consider setting up a public/private partnership to convert vacant or blighted land within the city into temporary garden plots.
- Consider hosting a Citizen Academy as a way to educate residents, build positive relationships, and increase communication between city government officials and citizens, as well as inspire future municipal leaders.

FOOD DRIVE!



GOAL 2: SEEK TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR STERLING RESIDENTS.



Objectives

- ✘ Develop programs, events, and cultural activities that celebrate Sterling’s past.
- ✘ Work to embrace a sustainable and well connected community.
- ✘ Promote, support, and expand historic resources in the community.
- ✘ Provide opportunities for residents to take ownership in community improvements.
- ✘ Support and expand health and other services available for Sterling area senior citizens.



Actions

- Host community clean-up days 2-3 times a year to encourage residents to take ownership in the appearance of their community and individual properties. Consider having a community event to celebrate the effort and recognize volunteers.
- Utilize a city-wide fundraising event to secure funds for a unique city beautification project (i.e. downtown banners, community gardens, street tree plantings, seasonal flower pots, gateway signage, etc.).
- Make efforts to connect Sterling youth to programs such as Community Caring Hands which provide general yard maintenance (mowing, trimming, weeding, watering, etc.) to Sterling residents that are physically or financially unable to maintain the appearance of their property. Seek sponsors from within the community, county, and related industries such as contractors or landscape professionals to donate time, funds, and/or tools and equipment. Alternately, consider reaching out to nation-wide organizations such as Rebuilding Together (which have this as their focus) in order to establish a local affiliate.
- Continue to support and participate in the efforts and programs offered by the Northeast Colorado Association of Local Governments' Area Agency on Aging.
- Support and expand cultural activities such as the Sugar Beet Days Festival and July Jamz. Work to develop new entertainment opportunities for Sterling and area residents that celebrate Sterling's unique culture and heritage, and bring community members together.
- Consider creating a Sterling farmers' market to offer fresh local produce/goods and support local farmers, businesses, artists, and other local entrepreneurs, and locate it downtown.





PLAN IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

Implementation is the key step that connects a community's vision with its day-to-day activities. While the Master Plan establishes an overall vision for the future development of Sterling, the Implementation Program provides detailed steps that the City and its partners will need to undertake to achieve the plan's vision. This program contains:

- ✘ A *framework for implementation* that includes a summary of the types of actions necessary to achieve the Plan's goals, such as land development code revisions, on-going policy, and document consistency. Because the intent is to establish a manageable list of City actions, this chapter includes a Priority Action Matrix that outlines high priority actions necessary to implement this Plan in the short-term. The full Master Plan Action matrix is provided in Appendix D.
- ✘ Suggestions for *organizational* structure that will help harness the community's energy and enthusiasm for the Plan and focus it towards implementation. This section identifies steps to take and tools to use to help get new projects off the ground, as well as to coordinate the efforts of existing organizations to align with the vision, goals, and priorities set forth in the Master Plan.
- ✘ Methods to ensure *accountability* that include annual review and monitoring, actions needed to assess the Plan's effectiveness in responding to changing conditions, as well as strategies to maintain the Plan's implementation momentum.

Each of the above-referenced programs identifies major steps that will help Sterling be successful in the implementation of its Plan, with "helpful hints" that provide more specific examples and suggestions. As with the Sterling Master Plan, continued collaboration and community involvement are at the foundation of everything presented in this chapter. They are what made the planning process successful, and research has shown that they are the most important element to successful implementation. This Implementation Program will offer ways to harness the interest and excitement generated by the planning process, and to focus it towards accomplishing the community's vision.

Refer to the full Action Matrix and Code Review Report in Appendices G and H for additional detail and reference.

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

A first step for implementation is to identify what the community's priorities are, and to ensure that they are integrated into daily decision-making and ongoing efforts. This framework must be in place, or in process, for any additional efforts to be effective.

Land Development Code Revisions, Policy, and Document Consistency

A major part of the implementation framework is being sure that the City's policies, regulations, and procedures are aligned with the vision and goals of the Sterling Master Plan. Updating them to ensure consistency with the Master Plan is an important step to help make implementation occurs as part of City Council, Planning Commission, and City Staff's daily activities. Certain development regulations and zoning should be amended to achieve the development patterns this Plan aims to attain.

In general, revisions to the Code should occur soon after adoption of the Master Plan; however, a comprehensive update may not be a possibility right away. As such, this chapter describes focused amendments and priority actions that could help spur appropriate desirable redevelopment by removing "barriers," and providing direction in the preparation of work programs and the prioritization of municipal resources (time, money, etc.). Because the intent is to establish a manageable list of City actions, the Priority Action Matrix and subsequent summary below is limited to the high priority actions necessary to implement this Plan. It identifies the strategy/actions, responsible parties/partners, measurements of success, and available resources. This matrix is designed to operate as a roadmap used regularly by the Master Plan Task Force, discussed in the following section.

PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS

	Strategy/ Action	Responsible Parties/Partners	Priority	How to Measure Success	Steps to Take	Resources Available
Growth and Land Use						
1.1	<p>Amend the City Zoning Map and Municipal Code to be consistent with the Future Land Use Plan:</p> <p>1.3 Amend the subdivision regulations to include a rural subdivision review and approval process.</p> <p>1.5 Create a commercial mixed-use zone district or revise the Community Business zone district to allow a mixture of land uses in conformance with the Future Land Use Plan. (Also see Growth and Land Use Actions 1.6 and 4.1, Economic Development Action 3.1).</p> <p>1.7 Adopt and implement oil and gas regulations.</p> <p>2.3 Require development outside of Tier 1 to pay all costs associated with extension of water, sewer, drainage or street facilities as well as operation and maintenance of utilities. The City can also defer new development until the required improvements are in place, pursuant to the Capital Improvements Program or another acceptable plan that will fund required improvements.</p> <p>2.5 Adopt annexation regulations. Include annexation review criteria to encourage annexation that meets the following criteria: 1) adjacency to city limits, 2) location within Tier 1, 3) provision of economic benefits to the city, 4) efficient provision of public facilities and services. Only annex properties that meet the above referenced criteria.</p> <p>2.7 Establish a standard for the level of service that should be provided for all public facilities and services prior to consideration of annexation of new properties. Require development to pay its proportionate share of extending public facilities and services.</p> <p>3.3 Develop fair and equitable cost sharing or reimbursement policies between property owners for situations in which the installations of public facilities directly benefit an adjacent property.</p>	Public Works; PC; Council; Stakeholders; Residents; Business Owners; Energy Operators; Service Providers; Local/Community Organizations, etc.; DOLA	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Revised code sections and zoning map adopted. ✓ Staff and city officials trained on development review and code implementation strategies. ✓ New developments reflect Master Plan vision and goals. ✓ Capital Improvement Plan adopted. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review Land Use Regulations Review Report along with the Implementation chapter of the Master Plan. 2. Planning Commission to review recommendations, identify high priority revisions to pursue. Host Implementation Workshop. 3. Draft revisions to code (consider enlisting the services of a professional consultant). 4. Hold public meetings to present proposed revisions and gather public input. Include key stakeholders, such as residents, land owners, energy operators, businesses, schools, local organizations, etc. 5. Planning Commission recommends approval of Code changes and City Council adopts revisions. 6. Budget for and schedule development review/code implementation training for Staff, Planning Commission, and Council. 7. Explore funding alternatives such as the Energy and Mineral Impact Assistance Fund. 8. Annually revisit Code review/ recommendations to identify further revisions that can be made. 9. City Department Heads to work with City Manager to identify capital improvement needs on an annual basis. 10. Create centralized inventory of those needs based on Council prioritization. 	<p>Colorado Model Land Use Code for Small Communities (Colorado Department of Local Affairs) http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite?c=Page&childpagename=DOLA-Main%2FCBONLayout&cid=1251594474243&pagename=CBONWrapper</p> <p>International Code Council http://www.iccsafe.org/Pages/default.aspx</p> <p>Smart Codes: Model Land Development Regulations (American Planning Association) http://www.planning.org/apastore/search/default.aspx?p=3960</p> <p>Sustainable Community Development Code: A Code for the 21st Century (Rocky Mountain Land Institute) http://www.ourplanningworks.com/docs/greentech/Sustainable%20Community%20Development%20Code%20Beta%20Version%201.1.pdf</p> <p>Energy and Mineral Impact Assistance Fund (Department of Local Affairs). Contact your Regional Manager, Greg Etl for questions and Impact Hearing Schedules. http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/DOLA-Main/CBON/1251594715231</p>
Economic Development						
1.4	Work with the Logan County Chamber of Commerce to identify new creative strategies to encourage collaboration and communication between Sterling businesses.	Chamber; LCEDC	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ New strategies identified and put into place. ✓ Collaborative projects initiated by/for businesses. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set up meetings with LCEDC, Chamber, City officials, and businesses to identify what does/ doesn't work. 2. Implement new strategies/ programs. 3. Review programs/strategies annually with stakeholders to assess effectiveness, identify improvements. 	<p>Downtown Colorado, Inc. http://www.downtowncoloradoinc.org/</p>
2.7	Invite downtown groups and community stakeholders to meet regularly with the Planning Commission to activate the recommendations of the Sterling Downtown Assessment and Sterling Master Plan Update. Consider using the professional services of non-profit organizations like Downtown Colorado, Inc. to lead Plan activation.	PC; Public Works; City Council	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ DCI activation scheduled. ✓ Downtown committee established per the Implementation Plan. ✓ Regular committee meetings held, responsibilities assigned. ✓ Master Plan recommendations initiated/implemented. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact DCI to set up activation. 2. Hold initial meeting to establish implementation committee. 3. Invite Master Plan participants to attend first meeting, volunteer for committees and subcommittees. 4. Hold regular (monthly or quarterly) meetings to implement Master Plan recommendations. 	

PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS

	Strategy/ Action	Responsible Parties/Partners	Priority	How to Measure Success	Steps to Take	Resources Available
3.5	Consider amending Sterling's code to reduce surface parking and encourage parking behind or to the side of buildings.	Public Works; PC; Council	Immediate	✓ Appendix A, Chapter VIII of Code amended and adopted.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review existing parking requirements. 2. Conduct parking analysis per Opportunity Area. 3. Draft revised parking standards. 4. Host public meetings/workshops with key stakeholders. 5. Pursue adoption per Growth & Land Use Steps 3-6 above. 	<p>Colorado Model Land Use Code for Small Communities (Colorado Department of Local Affairs)</p> <p>The Parking Handbook for Small Communities (National Main Street Center) http://www.downtowndevelopment.com/parking_handbook.php</p>
4.2	Pursue the designation of downtown Sterling as a National Historic District.	SURA; LCEDC; Council; Community	Immediate	✓ NHD application completed and submitted.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct a historic building inventory. 2. Submit application for National Historic District. 	<p>Guide to Nominating National Historic Districts to the National Register of Historic Places in Colorado (Colorado Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation) http://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/files/OAHP/crforms_edumat/pdfs/901.pdf</p>
	Optimize historic building use and re-use.	Building Official; Public Works; NJC; PC; Council	Immediate	✓ Vacant downtown and historic buildings find new uses.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct public meetings with downtown building owners to evaluate barriers to use and reuse. Invite NJC representatives, residents, and all downtown groups in the meetings. 2. Continue to support the completion of the Historic Survey Assessment for the pursuit of a National Historic District 	<p>International Code Council http://www.iccsafe.org/Pages/default.aspx</p>
Neighborhood and Housing						
2.3	Update the "dangerous" or vacant buildings ordinance.	Public Works; Code Enforcement; PC; Council	Immediate	✓ Dangerous building code revised and adopted.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review existing dangerous building code to identify needed changes. 2. Draft revisions to Code. 3. Pursue adoption per Growth & Land Use Steps 3-6 above. 	<p>International Code Council http://www.iccsafe.org/Pages/default.aspx</p> <p>Colorado Association of Code Enforcement Officials http://www.caceo.org</p>
Transportation and Streetscape						
2.6	Review preliminary design plans for the "S-curve" to ensure that all the safety and access needs of all transportation modes and users are addressed. Coordinate with CDOT for any needed changes.	Public Works; CDOT; PC; City Staff	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Meeting organized with CDOT and consultant to review "S-Curve" design. ✓ Revisions made as necessary. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Schedule meeting with CDOT regional rep. Consider also inviting a professional with expertise in pedestrian infrastructure and planning. 2. Review S-Curve project and plans. 3. Revise project as needed. 	<p>Karen A. Schneiders Region 4 Transportation Planner Colorado Department of Transportation (W) 970/ 350-2172 (C) 970/310-5392 karen.schneiders@state.co.us www.coloradodot.info</p>
Community Services and Involvement						
2.6	Consider creating a Sterling farmers' market to offer fresh local produce/goods and support local farmers, businesses, artists, and other local entrepreneurs, and locate it downtown.	Council; Sterling Arts Council; SURA; LCEDC	Immediate	✓ A regular/seasonal farmers' market established.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review previous efforts to establish a farmer's market. Talk with people involved to understand what the challenges and strengths were. 2. Contact the Colorado Farmers Market Association early on to understand the process, current trends, relevant legislation, etc. Invite Sterling Public Works, Logan County Chamber of Commerce and LCEDC, and organization such as the NE Colorado Gardeners to participate. 3. Host a series of public meetings to discuss potential locations downtown, organization, etc. 4. Establish an organizational structure for the market, such as a Board of Directors. 5. Organizing body should work to establish logistics, marketing, vendor relations (fees, etc). 	<p>Planning and Developing a Farmers Market: Marketing, Organizational, and Regulatory Issues to Consider (Colorado State University) http://www.coloradofarmers.org/images/ABMR-Feb05-01.pdf</p> <p>Colorado Farmers Market Association http://www.coloradofarmers.org/</p>



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OPPORTUNITY AREAS

For each of the three opportunity areas depicted on the Future Land Use Map, it is recommended that a modest series of mixed-use districts which are appropriate for areas of varied scale and intensity be established in a new unified development code. By providing a venue for mixed-use development, future specific area and/or corridor restructuring plans, as well as individual new development will be able to address mixed-use concepts in a consistent manner.

West Main Opportunity Area

Currently, the majority of the West Main Street corridor is zoned Community Business. Upon review of the allowed uses, it appears there is an “anything goes” approach that allows virtually any form of retail development, but prohibits residential uses. This approach is the primary obstacle to the evolution of a new pattern of vital centers and neighborhood segments that are representative in healthy mixed-use corridors. The most direct and effective way to implement a restructuring of a commercial strip is to modify development policies to specify the proper location and distribution of regional and neighborhood-centered retail along with a mixture of uses and housing types. This will need to be studied in detail through the future Corridor Restructuring Plan. In the meantime, the City should consider creating a Commercial Mixed-Use zone district. In addition to establishing a new district focused on mixed use, it also may be possible to implement mixed-use development through targeted modification to the existing zone districts along West Main. For example, some neighborhood-serving commercial uses could be allowed by right in some of the existing high density residential districts, perhaps subject to a maximum size cap (i.e., 5,000 square feet per business) to ensure that the districts retain a predominately residential character. The city could also consider locational criteria, such as adjacency to commercial zones or major thoroughfares, for allowing the mixing of uses on individual properties.

Community Engagement Regarding Mixed-Use. First, the City should facilitate a community engagement program with property owners, citizens, and other stakeholders in the Opportunity Area to discuss potential options. Discussion topics should include whether it is more palatable and easier to proactively rezone properties in the Opportunity Area, or to provide incentives for incremental rezoning to new Commercial Mixed-Use zone district(s).

Short-Term Considerations. It is understood that a reorganization of entitlements may not be feasible in the near term. As such, it is recommended that the City employ one of the most powerful tools a community can deploy to stimulate corridor restructuring: Finance the first steps. In combination with land use code changes, the City can use streetscape improvements as the catalyst for change. Installing segment-based streetscape improvements will enhance credibility and make it easier for investors to picture desired new land use patterns. An effective new thoroughfare design will likely also decrease the functionality of outmoded retail.

Potential Public Financing Tools. Tools to encourage infill and redevelopment in the West Main Opportunity area are listed below.

- ✘ Urban Renewal Area
- ✘ Special Improvement Districts
- ✘ Public Improvement Fees
- ✘ Tax rebates

Downtown Opportunity Area

The majority of downtown buildings should be mixed use with ground-floor retail and service uses and upper-floor office and residential uses. This combination optimizes parking facilities and keeps downtowns in use 24 hours a day. Consider revising the Central Business District zone district into a true mixed-use zone district or revise it to allow a full range of high-intensity uses, including retail, multi-family housing, offices, entertainment and civic uses. Below is a list of recommended changes to the Schedule of Permitted Uses table for the Central Business District:

- ✘ Multiple family dwelling should be allowed as a use by right instead of a conditional use.
- ✘ Duplexes should be permitted as a conditional use.
- ✘ Add and allow community residential facilities and live-work spaces as uses by right.
- ✘ Add “Dwelling unit located at ground floor” and “Dwelling unit located above ground floor.” Allow units located at ground



floor as conditional uses and units above ground floor by right.

- ✘ Allow colleges and universities, commercial schools, and professional training facilities as a use by right.
- ✘ Allow hotel, motels, inns, bed and breakfasts as a use by right instead of as conditional uses.

Historic Building Use and Reuse. Many factors affect the reuse of older buildings, including the real estate market, lending practices, and building code requirements. The problem with building code requirements has been that most building codes are written with the development of vacant land in mind. One of the unintended consequences of this traditional “greenfield” orientation is that regulations can make the rehabilitation of existing buildings more difficult than new development or demolition.

There are a number of historic buildings within the downtown area. Consider adopting the 2012 International Existing Building Code to encourage the use and reuse of existing buildings. The scope of the regulations covers repair, alteration, additions, and change of occupancy for existing and historic buildings, while achieving appropriate levels of safety without requiring full compliance with the new construction requirement contained in other building code.

Potential Financing Tools.

- ✘ Urban Renewal (Continue to use)
- ✘ Local Marketing District
- ✘ Business Improvement District

Energy Opportunity Area

In exploring the opportunities for the creation of an employment district, it was found that most of the permitted uses within the City’s light industrial zone districts are typically included in employment districts. As such, the City should consider converting the light industrial zone district. Alternatively, the City could expand the intent of the light industrial zone district to provide locations for a variety of workplaces including uses associated with oil and gas development (i.e., temporary housing, water treatment facilities, outdoor storage, etc.), research and development activities, offices and institutions. The combined district should also accommodate secondary uses that complement or support the primary workplace uses, such as hotels, restaurants, convenience shopping, childcare, and housing.

The City should also adopt oil and gas regulations as part of a Unified Land Development Code adoption. The *Model Land Use Code* includes a template for Oil and Gas Drilling and Production regulations and other informational documents (Oil and Gas Regulation: A Guide for Local Government) that are helpful as the City considers adopting oil and gas regulations. Lastly, the City might want to consider providing expedited review processes for energy operators that exceed new state standards on fracking applications. The review process would include requirements for the energy companies to sign a memorandum of understanding that outlines best practices and has tighter guidelines than new state regulations. The Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, and not the City, would monitor the drilling process. The City could set requirements that deal with potential impacts above the ground, such as noise, water, and storage of waste water.

Once regulations are adopted, gas, oil, and other hydrocarbon well drilling and production (as permitted by state and local regulations) should be incorporated into the Land Use Table (Sec. 402 Schedule of Permitted Uses) as conditional use review.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POTENTIAL NEW GROWTH AREAS, FUTURE RESIDENTIAL, AND INFILL

Agricultural/Rural Residential

Create a rural residential zone district for lands designated “Agricultural/Rural Residential” as depicted on the Future Land Use Plan. This zone district would be for very low-density residential uses intended to encourage the preservation of open space, natural features, and agricultural land in conjunction with the clustering of single-family detached dwellings. The maximum density should be no more than one (1) single-family dwelling per five (5) acres. To incentivize preservation of agricultural lands or open space, the City should include a conservation density bonus. For example, the maximum density allowed would be no more than one (1) single-family dwellings per two (2) acres. Be sure to include requirements that this must have at least fifty to



seventy-five percent (50-75%) of the land preserved as agricultural lands or open space.

Amend the subdivision regulations to include a rural subdivision review and approval process. The review process should be crafted to permit the use of IRS tax code compliant conservation easement tax credits.

Neighborhood Center Concept for Future Residential and Infill Areas

As compared to other areas in the community, infill and redevelopment areas and new growth residential areas should allow a wider range of uses. As such, it is recommended that a mix of uses be allowed in low-density residential areas as designated on the Future Land Use map or adopting an infill and redevelopment zone district accordingly. Areas designated for low density residential uses should allow a mix of housing to ensure more efficient use of infill lands with greater housing options. Standards for building height, lot area, setbacks, and design can help to control the scale and compatibility of new housing with established single family residences. By allowing neighborhood commercial uses in residential zones, a community can encourage a sense of “place” and bring services closer to where people live. The impacts of commercial activities can be controlled with standards for floor area, parking location, screening, signage, and architecture. The following is a list of uses to add to the existing single-family residential zone district, neighborhood business, or a new infill and development zone district:

- ✦ Duplexes and triplexes on corner lots
- ✦ Zero-lot line housing
- ✦ Attached single family (townhome) or row home units that are similar to duplexes and triplexes in size and character
- ✦ Accessory dwellings (i.e., secondary housing units located above a garage, or in a detached cottage)
- ✦ Neighborhood commercial uses (i.e., individual businesses that do not exceed 3,000 square feet in floor area)
- ✦ Civic uses

Annexation

The land use regulations should be updated to include annexation regulations to establish a procedure to bring land under the jurisdiction of the City and include supplemental requirements for annexation in compliance with the *Colorado Municipal Annexation Act of 1965*, as amended. The regulations should include annexation review criteria to encourage annexation that meets the following:

1. Adjacency to city limits
2. Location within Tier 1
3. Provision of economic benefits to the city
4. Efficient provision of public facilities and services

Regulations should include language that do not allow properties to be annexed unless that meet the above referenced criteria.

Capital Improvement Program

A Capital Improvement Plan or *CIP* is typically a short-range plan, usually four to ten years, which identifies capital projects and equipment purchases, provides a planning schedule, and identifies options for financing the plan. Essentially, the plan provides a link between the City’s Master Plan goals, objectives, and annual budget. For Sterling, it is important to link the CIP to the following:

1. Maintain and strengthen the city’s economic vitality
2. Preserve the city’s unique character and history
3. Sustain a family-friendly community for citizens and visitors
4. Enhance recreational and cultural opportunities
5. Repair an aging infrastructure
6. Ensure the efficient use of public funds
7. Establish a standard for the level of service that should be provided for all public facilities and services prior to consideration of annexation of new properties



8. Require development to pay its proportionate share of extending public facilities and services
9. Develop fair and equitable cost sharing or reimbursement policies between property owners for situations in which the installations of public facilities directly benefit an adjacent property

City Staff is tasked with the development of a framework to analyze both the proposed projects and the long-term financial impact on the City. Concurrently, the City Manager should work with department heads to identify capital improvement needs and to create a centralized inventory of those needs based on a City Council prioritization process.

The intent of the CIP is to provide a roadmap for city-wide improvements. To accomplish this, the City Manager - performing in the capacity as the City's chief operating officer- will use the CIP in his/her requests for funds to begin working on these projects. City Council approval is required for any appropriation of funds and for any authorization to borrow funds to pay for improvements.

In efforts to ensure that new development "pays its own way," consider adopting policy or including regulations within the subdivision regulations to require development outside of Tier 1 to pay all costs associated with extension of water, sewer, drainage, or street facilities as well as operation and maintenance of utilities. The City can also defer new development until the required improvements are in place, pursuant to the Capital Improvements Program or another acceptable plan that will fund required improvements.

Neighborhood and Housing

Sterling's 1994 Uniform Code for the Abatement of Dangerous Buildings is provided in a stand-alone booklet referenced in the City Code. Owners are provided three options for Code compliance as follows: repair, demolish, or vacate and secure and maintain against entry. The risk with allowing the owner to vacate and secure/maintain against entry is that owner's can choose to vacate their properties and board them up **indefinitely**. Allowing this as an option is not consistent with the overall goal of creating vibrant neighborhoods that are attractive and safe.

The City should consider amending Section 403 - Repair, Vacation and Demolition to include placing a time limit of 120 days for repair or demolition of dangerous buildings and eliminate the option to vacate and board up the building indefinitely. Vacating and boarding up the building should be allowed only as an interim solution to protect the public while the owner is deciding whether to repair, renovate, or demolish the building.



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

With a framework in place, organizational structure is the first element that must be established in order to ensure the long-term success of a Plan. The Sterling Master Plan is the guiding document for the Public Works Department and Planning Commission, but the Plan addresses much more than those bodies can or should be responsible for. The Sterling community has a great resource in the dedication of its residents and community organizations, many of which are already working to achieve many of the goals and objectives laid out in the Sterling Master Plan. The challenge is to coordinate these efforts to align with the vision and goals in the Master Plan, and the priorities established in the Master Plan Action Matrix.

Training

The Sterling Master Plan addresses recommendations related to many different professional disciplines including land use, transportation, and economic development. While implementation in some of these areas may be led by individuals with specific expertise, others will be led by Sterling commissions and committees, such as the Planning Commission or Citizen Advisory Board. The City relies on these important volunteers, and will likely continue to in the future. Budgeting even relatively small amounts for training for these individuals and groups can help ensure that they are serving their community to the best of their abilities. Examples of trainings to consider include:

- ✦ Free and inexpensive trainings and educational resources related to land use planning and economic development are offered by organizations and agencies such as Downtown Colorado Inc., State Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), etc. DOLA conducts "Planning 101" sessions that provide a general overview for planning commissioners who are new to the game, or in need of a refresher. The Community Development Office requests that those wishing to schedule a Planning 101 workshop invite neighboring jurisdictions' planning commissioners and elected officials in order to reach a broader audience and effectively use state resources. The agenda can be calibrated to fit Sterling's specific needs.
- ✦ Statewide conferences provide interesting case studies of community projects around the state, and are a great networking opportunity. Examples of relevant trainings include the Colorado Chapter of the American Planning Association, Colorado Municipal League
- ✦ Free and inexpensive online webinars on a wide variety of topics are a great way to learn about cutting edge practices and concepts from around the county. Examples of organizations that offer quality webinars related to community planning include Downtown Colorado Inc., Planetizen, the Association of Bicycle and Pedestrian Professionals, Smart Growth America, and Enterprise Community Partners.

Task Force

The City should establish a Task Force or committee that would meet regularly, and which is charged with guiding the implementation of the Sterling Master Plan. This group should be made up of key stakeholders and partners that have expertise and experience in the key areas identified in the Master Plan. Examples of members include: City of Sterling department heads (Public Works, Parks, Code Enforcement, etc.), County Staff, Logan County Economic Development Corporation, Small Business Development Center, Sterling Urban Renewal Authority, Citizen Advisory Board, Logan County Chamber of Commerce, Sterling Planning Commission, City Council, Northeastern Jr. College, RE 1 Valley Schools, and citizens at large.

The Task Force will be guided by the Master Plan and Implementation Program, and separate documents with more detail may assist in guiding the work of some of these sub-committees. For example, the DCI Sterling Downtown Assessment will provide a vast amount of detail to individuals working towards downtown revitalization. Similarly, the Downtown Master Plan



Concepts report prepared by the Department of Local Affairs in conjunction with Colorado State University provides a number of recommendations related to signage and streetscaping that could be incorporated into work pursued by a beautification sub-committee. All efforts being pursued should be discussed fully by the Task Force, to ensure that they are in line with and not overlapping work that may be underway by the City, or other agencies or organizations. Alternatively, Sterling could pursue designation as a Main Street Community with the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). The process and organization involved may help shape the group's structure and provide areas of focus for different committee members.

Downtown Colorado, Inc., Activation

Even if you have your framework in place and a list of individuals interested in working with the Task Force and its sub-committees, getting everything off the ground and running can still be a daunting and challenging task. Downtown Colorado, Inc. (DCI) recognizes this challenge, and offers low-cost "Activation" assistance services for communities that have undergone their Downtown Assessment technical assistance visits. Sterling is eligible for USDA Rural Development funding to partially cover costs for assistance to develop and train committees geared toward implementation and reporting to maintain momentum and build partnerships around the plan. Activation processes assist in shaping implementation, reporting, communications, evaluation, and institutionalized planning into the structure the community is developing.

Implementation Coordinator

An implementation coordinator is someone responsible for coordinating the efforts of the Task Force. This can be an existing staff person or city representative, or may be a new hire. This position could be part-time or full time depending on how much of implementation they are tasked with (for example, do they only guide the Task Force, or are they also responsible for marketing and/or social media efforts?). A great option would be applying for an Americorps VISTA member to serve in this position. VISTA members serve 1-year terms working full time in community development and capacity-building roles.

The coordinator position is important to help maintain momentum between Task Force meetings, and to assist members in achieving their tasks. The Task Force will be made up of busy people with busy lives, each with higher allegiances to other roles. The coordinator helps find ways to insert the Master Plan Goals and Actions into the work they are already doing, and to keep the community's vision in the forefront of peoples' minds as they embark on their tasks.

Collaboration

Remember that much of the work outlined in the Sterling Master Plan will help existing organizations achieve their mission and goals. One job of the coordinator is to help Task Force members find ways to work Master Plan action items into their budgets, schedules, and work scopes, and to ensure that efforts are not being duplicated. These organizations have both resources and expertise that the City does not. For this reason, collaboration can be an incredibly efficient effective method for successfully implementing a Plan.



Getting to Work

The Task Force should meet regularly, either quarterly or monthly, and meetings should be open to the general public. The group will be guided by the priorities identified in the Master Plan Action Matrix and the Downtown Action Matrix in the Downtown Assessment Report. In the first year, the group will likely focus on the highest priority (“immediate”) action items, though not exclusively. Some of the recommendations may be longer term, but remember that planning can begin at any time.

At the first meeting, each member of the Task Force should come prepared, having read through the Master Plan and action matrix and identified one or more actions they want or are willing to be responsible for. These members can in turn organize and work with sub-committees (or the organization and agencies they represent) to best leverage skills and resources. As mentioned previously, many of these items or similar ones may already be on the radar of existing organizations.

At each subsequent meeting, Task Force members should provide updates on what they and/or their sub-committee members have accomplished in the interim time. If actions have been completed since the last meeting, then new actions can be selected. It is very important that the coordinator, or another designated individual, take detailed notes on what is reported back at each meeting. As is described in the following section, tracking, publicizing, and celebrating accomplishments, however small, can go a long way towards maintaining momentum and helping to build a case for requesting funding and resources in the future.

Getting People There

Despite the best intentions, many communities struggle to get people, particularly unaffiliated community members, to attend regular meetings. Here are a few tips to consider:

- ✘ **Be strategic about where you advertise for your event.** The city website or newspaper may not be the best way to reach people who aren’t otherwise involved in city events or activities. Consider the library, recreation center, schools, or local businesses.
- ✘ **Be strategic about how you advertise for your event.** Consider highlighting one project at every meeting that becomes the focus of flyers or other advertisements. For example “Community Meeting this Wednesday” may be easy to dismiss for a busy mom, but “Sidewalk improvements around Campbell Elementary” may catch someone’s eye.
- ✘ **Provide real food.** Community meetings are almost always at dinner time, giving people an added incentive to stay home. And even if you have cookies on hand, will that sugar rush really sustain them through a (potentially) three hour meeting? Try working with local businesses to get more substantial food donated for each meeting, and make sure you advertise that!
- ✘ **Offer childcare.** As with the dinnertime conflict, finding someone to watch the kids can be a real barrier for a lot of people who may want to attend. Find a community volunteer who might be willing to watch people’s kids at each meeting. You could even come up with some activities related to planning or development to connect the kids to what their parents are doing in the next room. And again, advertise your services!
- ✘ **Harness the complaints.** The City and its staff and representatives likely receive regular complaints about everything from broken sidewalks to the neighbor’s dog. Try to harness that energy, even if it seems negative, because that is a person who cares. Suggest that they bring their ideas to the next meeting, and join with members that are working on a related area.



ACCOUNTABILITY

Tracking and celebrating successes is every bit as important to implementation as the actual work being accomplished. It is easy for a Plan, once adopted, to fall to the wayside, whether intentionally or not. Often people return to their routines, not conscious of how they may or may not be accomplishing some of the recommendations, goals, or objectives of the Plan. This impacts the effectiveness of the plan, but it also impacts relations and trust between residents and government. The City should develop and be transparent about methods for holding individuals, organizations, and agencies accountable for accomplishing the community's goals. This accountability can also help demonstrate the work that is being done.

Annual Review and Monitoring

To assess the Plan's effectiveness in responding to changing conditions, both the City and Task Force will need to monitor actions affecting the Plan. City officials and Department Directors should be required to submit an annual monitoring and evaluation report regarding their progress two months prior to adoption of the budget. The annual monitoring and evaluation report should include the following:

- ✘ Definition of benchmarks;
- ✘ Detailed description of the department's accomplishments and items still outstanding;
- ✘ Explanation of whether or not the Plan's objectives are being met and correspondingly which City Council strategies are being accomplished;
- ✘ Identification of impacts to City service costs from implementation of the action items (positive and negative);
- ✘ Priority action items to be pursued under the coming year's budget;
- ✘ Documentation related to growth trends and how those trends either support or conflict with the original assumptions on which the Plan was prepared;
- ✘ List of any difficulties in implementing the Plan.

A similar process should occur within the Task Force (and hopefully at least one department head is also a Task Force member). Every year, each member should review the entire Action Matrix and/or Master Plan and identify which actions have been started and/or completed, or what steps have been taken towards specific actions. Remember that many of them may not be able to be completed in one year or even five years. Then, the priorities should be reviewed and updated so that there are always high priority items to be pursued in the following year. Finally, the information should be compiled and presented to the City Manager and City Council.

Social Media & the Web

Research, including work done during the Sterling Master Plan community outreach process, has shown that social media technology (websites, facebook, twitter, etc.), has become an important tool to not only share information, but also in helping communities listen, and in facilitating meaningful conversations between local government and broader cross-sections of the public.

Social media can be an equally powerful tool in plan implementation. We already mentioned utilizing project, organization and city websites to publicize and celebrate the work being done. But that is only the tip of the iceberg. The web, and tools such as facebook and twitter, can be used in efforts to market the Sterling community, for example through creating promotional videos. Or it can be used to highlight and celebrate successes, discussed more in the section below.

Technology continues to change and evolve at an amazing rate, and new ways to engage your community and get the word out about Sterling will present themselves. Embrace it!



Keeping clear records of what steps have been taken and efforts made is important to maintaining accountability, but it has many other benefits as well. As described in the following section, it helps maintain momentum and public support. But it can also help generate new resources: It is unlikely that the City of Sterling will be able to internally fund and finance all of the projects identified in the Sterling Master Plan and Downtown Assessment, even in the Plan's 30-year timeframe. But there is an amazing amount of public and private money available to communities (both local governments and organizations) in the form of grants. Being able to reference accomplishments already achieved, ongoing collaboration, and strong partnerships is a major aspect of successful grant-writing.

Celebrate Success

No matter how hard the City and Task Force work, if successes are not regularly acknowledged then the public may not see it, and may become frustrated by a government that they do not perceive as serving their best interests. Inviting the public to be part of the solution, through the Task Force and its volunteer opportunities, is an important step towards this end. But the City should also be very active in celebrating and publicizing what is accomplished.

One simple but important step is to make the Task Force's annual reports on the Master Plan Implementation available on the city, project, and partner/member organization websites. It can also be shared in a press release with local news after each annual meeting. But this kind of acknowledgment should also occur when specific projects are completed, as is discussed in "Maintain Momentum" below.

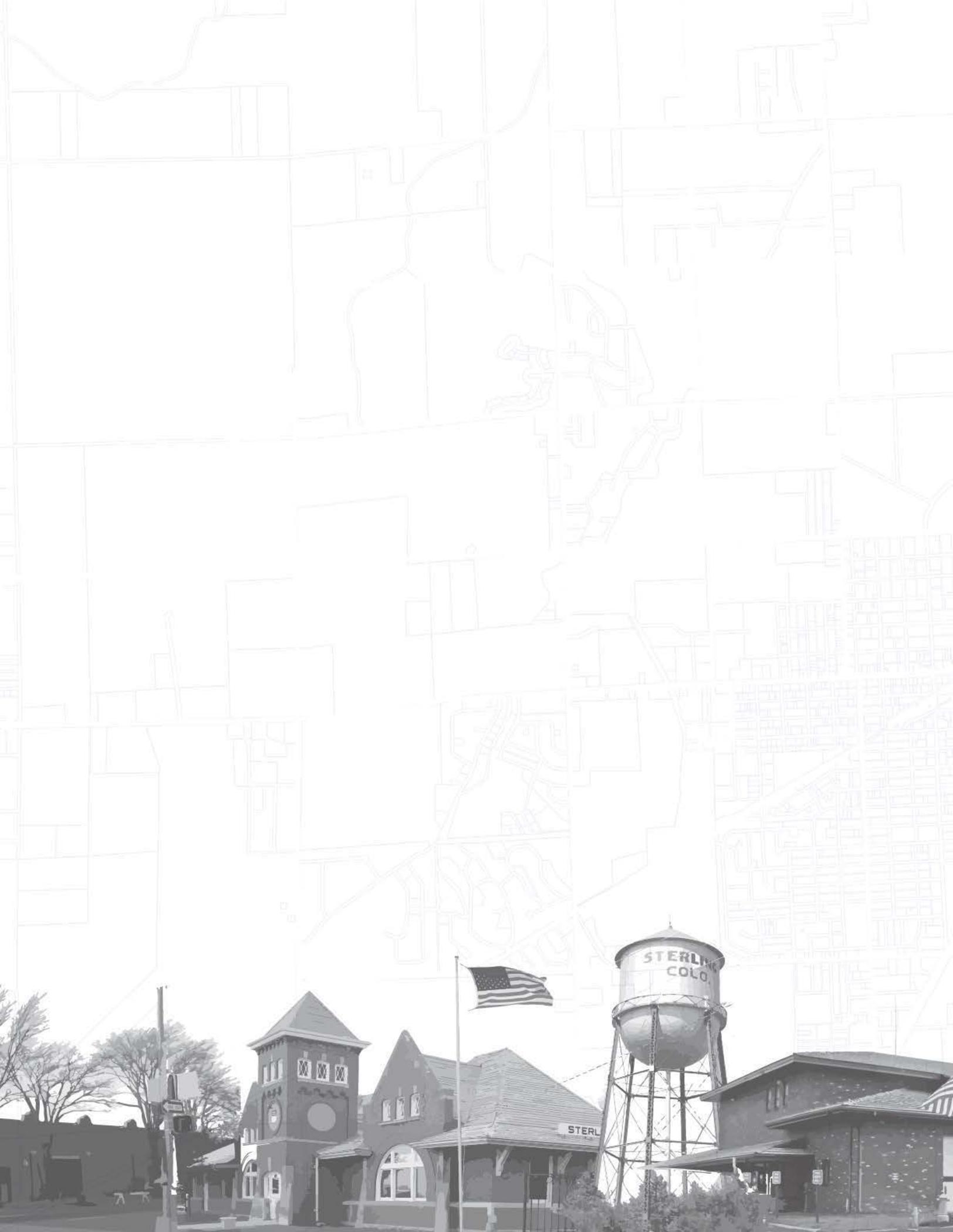
Maintaining Momentum

Many of the recommendations outlined in the Sterling Master Plan may take years to accomplish, or they may never have a physical, visible final product. This is the case with some of the land use, economic development, and community involvement items. Even if you celebrate the work being done, these sorts of projects may not keep the attention of the public.

For that reason, it can be helpful to plan and budget each year for a few small but visible projects, and for events to celebrate them. These projects should be identified as the "low-hanging fruit." For example, if the city invests in new signage or banners, if a building is renovated, or if a new section of sidewalk is repaired, host a ribbon-cutting!

These sorts of projects may be and most likely are a normal part of what numerous departments and organizations already do. But recognizing their contribution to the Master Plan's vision and goals, which so many community members worked on, helps to build and strengthen the connection between the city and its citizens.

Finally, the city should also take efforts to recognize individuals involved in the projects, not just the projects themselves. A lot of the work outlined in the Sterling Master Plan can be accomplished by the combined efforts of dedicated community volunteers. These individuals are motivated by the desire to improve their community, but additional recognition should always be provided. Consider a "volunteer of the year" award or similar process to show the city's support for the efforts the community is making. This may require budgeting for an annual appreciation dinner or luncheon, but can help create goodwill that will maintain support for the Plan's implementation into the future.



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