

connectivity

aesthetics

low impact

pedestrianism

accessibility

roadscape

traditional neighborhood

walkability

mixed use

contextual design

connectivity



Lower Ridge Road Corridor Study

Report on Existing Conditions and Plan for Future Development

City of Conway, Arkansas
Planning and Development Department
July 2008

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Lower Ridge Road Corridor Study

Report on Existing Conditions and Plan for Future Development

Prepared by the Conway Planning and Development Department
for the Conway City Council and
Conway Planning Commission

City of Conway, Arkansas

July 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	iv	V: Long-Range Plan	23
		Cross-Sections	23
Vision Statement	v	New Roads	24
		Multi-Use Path and Bicycle Trail	26
I: Introduction	1	Land Uses	26
Organization of Document	1		
Basis for Document	1	VI: Implementation Strategies	29
		Cross-Sections	29
II: Existing Conditions	3	New Roads	29
Environment	3	Multi-Use Path and Bicycle Trail	29
Land Uses	3	Land Uses	30
Transportation	6	Implementing Other Action Items	30
Zoning	8	Conclusion	31
Demographics	9		
		Appendix A: Public Comments	
III: Public Input	13	Appendix B: Public Workshop Priorities List	
Methods of Gathering Input	13	Appendix C: Visual Preference Questionnaire	
Role of Public Input	14	Appendix D: Public Presentation	
IV: Guiding Principles and Development Policies	17		
Vehicular and Pedestrian Safety	17		
Accessibility and Connectivity	18		
Aesthetics and Contextual Design	19		
Sustainable Development	20		

TABLE OF MAPS

Lower Ridge Road Corridor Study Area	iii
Parcels and Land Uses	4
Traffic Counts	6
Area Streets	7
Zoning	8
Environmental Factors	21
Proposed Roads	25
Proposed Land Uses	27

Lower Ridge Road Corridor Study

Study Area



- Lower Ridge Road
- Street
- Water body
- Quarter-mile buffer
- Half-mile buffer
- One-mile buffer

May 20, 2008

Sources: GeoStor, ESRI,
Faulkner County Assessor

City of Conway, Arkansas
Planning & Development



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Conway Planning and Development Department began work on the Lower Ridge Road Corridor Study in conjunction with the Old Morrilton Highway Corridor Study in February 2008. The resulting long-range plan reflects a synergetic process that includes the voices of a diverse group of stakeholders. Land owners, residents, elected officials, and recreationists were consulted as the plan moved from the conceptual stage to draft to its present, final form. The study represents a collaborative approach to land use planning, relying heavily on scenario testing and public participation in the planning process.

Existing Conditions

The study identifies the strengths and weaknesses that contribute to the corridor's present condition. The Cadron Ridge hillside is a natural barrier that prevents development throughout much of the northern portion of the study area. Hillside excavations are among the primary concerns on the north side of Lower Ridge Road; these excavations threaten to further erode the hillside on the north, while creating runoff problems for residents on the south. The lack of infrastructure throughout the corridor is a weakness that must be addressed if the corridor is to see any large-scale development. The need for

sewer service is a recurring theme in the study as is the need for an enhanced transportation network.

Public Input

The Conway Planning and Development Department conducted a series of events at which the public was encouraged to participate in the planning process. A public presentation and a separate workshop offered opportunities for stakeholders to offer suggestions and ask questions. Input gathered at all of the public events and through an online visual preference questionnaire was considered by the Planning and Development Department in the formulation of the long-range plan.

Guiding Principles and Development Standards

The study relied on a standard set of guiding principles to lead the planning process. The principles are vehicular and pedestrian safety, accessibility and connectivity, aesthetics and contextual design, and sustainable development. An examination of each principle led to the identification of policies, each of which included a series of action items. The long-range plan is based on the action items.

Long-Range Plan

Though the study was prompted by short-term development concerns, the goal of the study was to produce a long-range plan that will enable responsible and sustainable development. The long-range aspect of the plan encourages the creation of a gridded road network and the development of pedestrian-oriented traditional neighborhoods, where mixed land uses, mixed housing types and prices, and open space create a sense of community.

Implementation Strategies

The Conway City Council is encouraged to carefully consider the study's findings and recommendations and adopt the long-range plan. Cooperation between the City and Conway Corporation, between the City and local development community, and among Planning and Development, Streets, Parks and Recreation, and other city divisions is necessary in order for the area to develop in an orderly and sustainable manner. Cooperation between the City and Faulkner County is also encouraged and is, in fact, a necessary component of a successful plan for the Lower Ridge Road corridor.

Vision Statement

Lower Ridge Road will become a safe, easily-accessible, and well-connected corridor where diverse and sustainable land uses will serve the needs of residents, commuters, passers-by, and recreationists in the Conway area.

I: INTRODUCTION

Lower Ridge Road Corridor Study: Report on Existing Conditions and Plan for Future Development is the result of an intensive planning process initiated by the Conway Planning and Development Department. The purpose of the study is to identify existing conditions and create a long-range vision of effective, sensible land use patterns within the Lower Ridge Road corridor. In crafting this vision, the Planning and Development Department relied heavily upon available technical expertise as well as the opinions and foresight of stakeholders as expressed directly or through their elected City representatives.

Lower Ridge Road has become a major thoroughfare for residents of northeastern Conway and neighboring unincorporated Faulkner County. Though the road was not originally designed to serve as a major arterial, population growth, proximity to US Highway 65 and US Highway 64, and immediacy to three Conway schools keep a steady flow of traffic moving along the road, making Lower Ridge one of the busier roads in northeastern Conway. This study considers the four and one-half mile portion of Lower Ridge Road bounded by Highway 65 on the west and the Forest Acres Overlook subdivision on the east. The study area is partially contained within the corporate boundaries of Conway and is wholly contained within Faulkner County.

Existing hillside excavations and the need for better road connectivity were the catalysts that initiated the study. In addition to addressing those short-term concerns, the Lower Ridge Road corridor plan identifies areas that are suitable for future large-scale redevelopment should appropriate infrastructure become available.

Organization of Document

This document includes: a report on existing conditions in the Lower Ridge Road corridor (chapter two); a summary of the public input portion of the study (chapter three); identification of guiding principles, policies, and action items (chapter four); the long-range plan (chapter five); and implementation strategies (chapter six).

Basis for Document

The principles that guided the Lower Ridge Road Corridor Study were:

- Vehicular and Pedestrian Safety
- Accessibility and Connectivity
- Aesthetics and Contextual Design
- Sustainable Development

The guiding principles provide an appropriate framework for the long-range land use plan for the Lower Ridge Road corridor. Policies

and action items are based on the four guiding principles.

Vehicular and Pedestrian Safety. Safety is the primary aspect of the Lower Ridge Road corridor plan. Drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians face numerous safety challenges. The most obvious challenge for drivers is the awkward connection between Lower Ridge Road and Highway 65. The plan includes a realignment of Lower Ridge Road, which will allow traffic to safely access Highway 65 by using an existing traffic signal. Bicyclists and pedestrians are challenged by the lack of adequate facilities suitable for cycling or pedestrian uses. The plan includes a paved, multi-use path along a portion of Lower Ridge Road as well as sidewalks along all existing and new roads within the corridor.

Accessibility and Connectivity. Linkages between Lower Ridge Road and other parts of Conway are limited. Presently, East German Lane and Highway 65 are the only roads that provide direct access from Lower Ridge Road to the remainder of the city. The plan includes an extension of Museum Road, which will give drivers an additional north-south route. The plan reflects the current Comprehensive Plan by including a portion of a long-awaited city-wide loop that would

connect Lower Ridge Road with both Highway 65 and Highway 64. In order to better serve existing and potential neighborhoods, the plan includes a conceptual gridded road network. Finally, in conjunction with the plan's inclusion of traditional neighborhoods, the plan identifies sites within the corridor that would be easily-accessible and suitable for commercial and/or mixed use nodes.

especially sanitary sewer service—and calls for a prohibition on large-scale development throughout the corridor until proper infrastructure is in place to handle such development.

Aesthetics and Contextual Design. Uncontrolled development in the study area will detract from the corridor's natural characteristics. Hillside excavations have already damaged the aesthetic quality of the area and threaten to destabilize portions of the hillside. The plan identifies five existing hillside excavations that are appropriate for planned unit developments; as part of the planned unit development process, the owners of these excavations and the City would work together to plan appropriate uses for the excavations. The plan also identifies areas appropriate for traditional neighborhoods, which are compact, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use areas that include various types of housing, commercial activities, and open space.

Sustainable Development. Because of the unique natural characteristics of the Cadron Ridge, the plan is especially attentive to environmentally-sensitive areas. The plan includes a tree preservation plan and strict controls on hillside development. The plan recognizes the limitations of existing infrastructure—

II: EXISTING CONDITIONS

This chapter examines the Lower Ridge Road corridor's existing characteristics including its natural environment, land uses, transportation network, zoning, and demographics. An understanding of these issues is necessary in order to effectively plan future land uses in the area.

Environment

Lower Ridge Road is situated on the south side of the Cadron Ridge hillside in east Conway and neighboring unincorporated Faulkner County. The hillside itself is the corridor's primary ecological resource. Several small creeks and drainage ditches are present in the corridor.

Hillside Excavations. Minimal buffer exists between the hillside and roadway along much of Lower Ridge Road, leaving little room for development on the north side of the road where at least five hillside excavations currently exist. Residents along the south side of Lower Ridge Road report runoff problems caused by the excavations. No erosion control measures are visible at any of the excavations. The City of Conway currently prohibits cutting deeper than ten feet (vertical) into a hillside without a City-approved excavation plan. However, Faulkner

County has no such prohibition. Further, the Conway hillside excavation ordinance did not take effect until 2006. Thus, protection of hillsides is a relatively new practice that affects only those hillsides that are within the City's corporate limits.

Water Bodies. Lower Ridge Road is not adjacent to any major water bodies. Several small streams and ditches run through the corridor, most finally connecting with Lake Conway to the south. Beaverfork Lake on the north side of Cadron Ridge is largely unaffected by activities in the study area.

Land Uses

The Faulkner County Assessor's Office identifies 457 unique parcels within a half-mile radius of Lower Ridge Road. Approximately 93 percent of those parcels are residential in nature; the remaining parcels are used for commercial, civic, and religious purposes.

Housing

Most of the houses in the corridor are located within subdivisions. Housing sizes and styles vary by subdivision. Major subdivisions within the study area include Sun Valley Estates, Rolling Hills, Thousand Oaks, Ridgefield Estates,

and Forest Acres Overlook. The dominant housing style within each of those subdivisions is single-family ranch, though several mobile homes are located in Sun Valley Estates. Approximately two dozen homes exist independent of subdivisions along Lower Ridge Road. Several of these homes are farmhouses that sit on large agricultural tracts on the south side of the road. A few homes sit on the hillside on the north side of the road and are connected to the road by winding driveways.

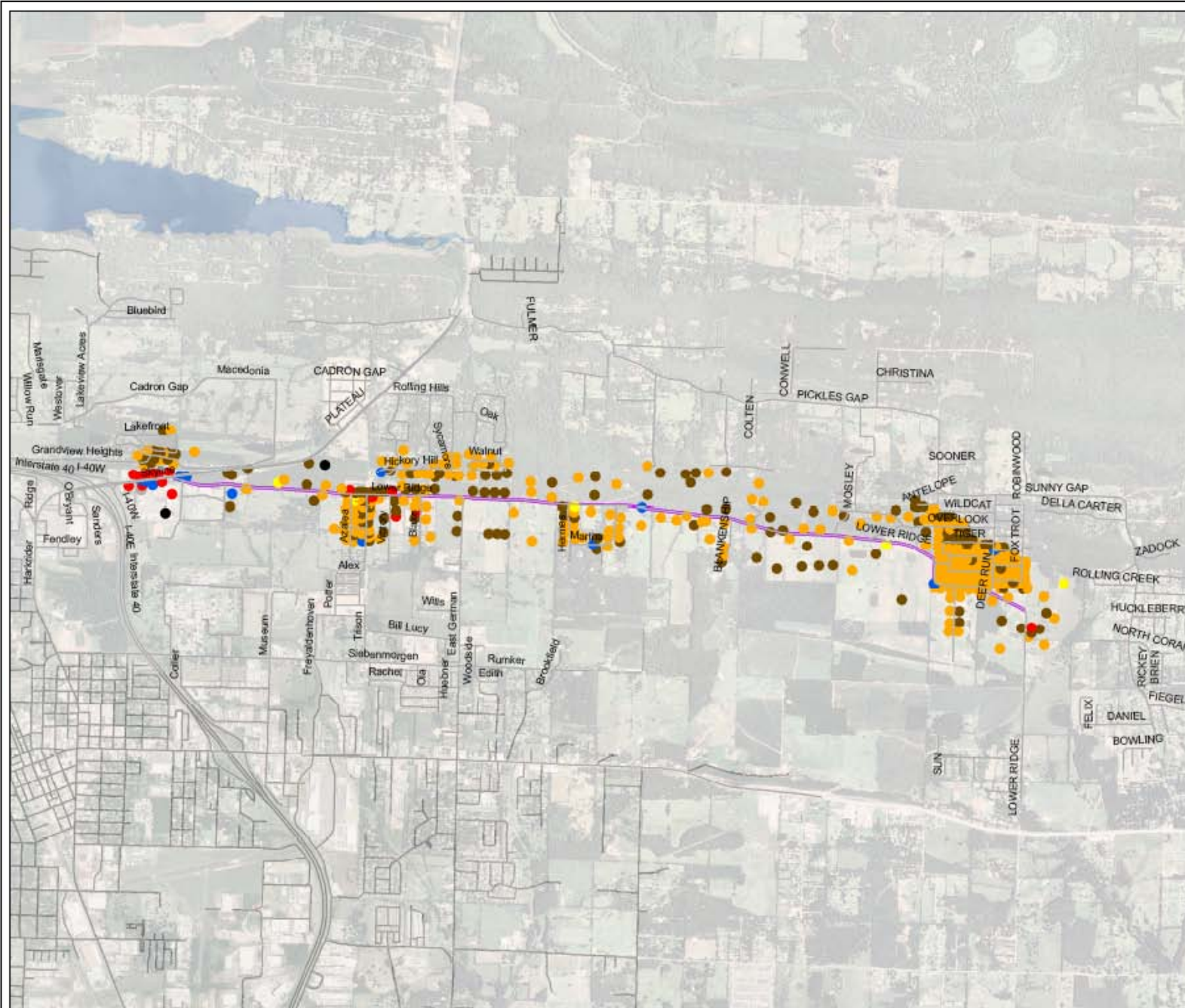
Multi-family housing is present on the fringe of the study area near the intersection of East German Lane and Bill Lucy Drive. The existing complex—Park Ridge—will soon be joined



Example of hillside excavation along Lower Ridge Road. Presently, five such excavations are present along the stretch of Lower Ridge between Highway 65 and East German Lane.

Lower Ridge Road Corridor Study

Parcels and Land Use



- Lower Ridge Road
- Street
- Water body

Parcel use

- Other
- Commercial improved (117)
- Exempt (14)
- Improvement only (1)
- Mobile home (7)
- Residential improved (278)
- Residential vacant (138)

May 20, 2008

Sources: GeoStor, ESRI,
Faulkner County Assessor

City of Conway, Arkansas
Planning & Development

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at this site by as many as three additional complexes. Plans for both Park Ridge Phase II and The Pointe at Conway have been submitted to the Planning and Development Department for review. Park Ridge Phase II will include income-sensitive housing for low-to-moderate income residents. The number of duplexes and townhouses within the study area is negligible.

Commercial Use

Though a few businesses are scattered throughout the corridor, most commercial use within the study area is confined to the southwest corner of Lower Ridge Road and Skyline Drive (US Highway 65). One of Conway's largest shopping centers—Conway Towne Center—sits



Aerial photograph of Conway Towne Center. Courtesy of Tyler Surveying and Mapping, Inc.

directly west of Don Owen Sports Complex. Conway Towne Center consists of an L-shaped structure and a separate, smaller rectangular structure. Primary tenants at Conway Towne Center include JC Penney, Sears, and Cinemark. The shopping center property is owned by Centro Properties Group and has a high number of vacancies. (Office Depot, which is located within Conway Towne Center is not owned by Centro.) Access to Conway Towne Center is limited to two intersections with Highway 65. There is a traffic light at the shopping center's primary connection with Highway 65. There is no direct access to the shopping center from Lower Ridge Road. Vehicular traffic from Lower Ridge Road must make an awkward and difficult left-hand turn onto the busy highway in order to access the shopping center.

Institutional and Civic Uses

Institutional and civic uses in the study area include schools, a residential facility for the developmentally disabled, and churches.

The Conway Public Schools district operates three schools within the study area. Theodore Jones Elementary School (enrollment 437) is located at the intersection of Freyaldenhoven Lane and Andrews Drive. Raymond and Phyllis Simon Intermediate School (enrollment 697) is located near the northwestern



Commercial structure that previously housed a heating and cooling business on the southwestern end of Lower Ridge Road. An applicant recently sought a conditional use permit to allow an adult day care to occupy the facility.

corner of the intersection of Siebenmorgen Road and East German Lane. Bob Courtway Middle School (enrollment 625) is located on Bob Courtway Drive south of Siebenmorgen Road.

The Conway Human Development Center, which is operated by the Arkansas Department of Human Services, sits on 409 acres on the north side of Siebenmorgen Road. The center is one of Conway's largest employers with approximately 1,200 employees. More than 500 disabled individuals reside at the center's residential facility.

Several churches are located within the study area. These include Liberty Missionary Baptist Church on Lower Ridge Road, Pentecostal Church of God on Azalea Loop, and Victory Baptist Church on Victory Lane.

Recreation

Athletic facilities within the corridor include Don Owen Sports Complex and City of Colleges Park. Don Owen Sports Complex is operated by the Conway Parks and Recreation Department. Located on Lower Ridge Road east of Conway

Towne Center, Don Owen includes basketball courts, racquetball courts, and a walking track.

City of Colleges Park is under construction on Siebenmorgen Road near the intersection of Siebenmorgen and Museum Roads. Upon completion, City of Colleges Park will include five

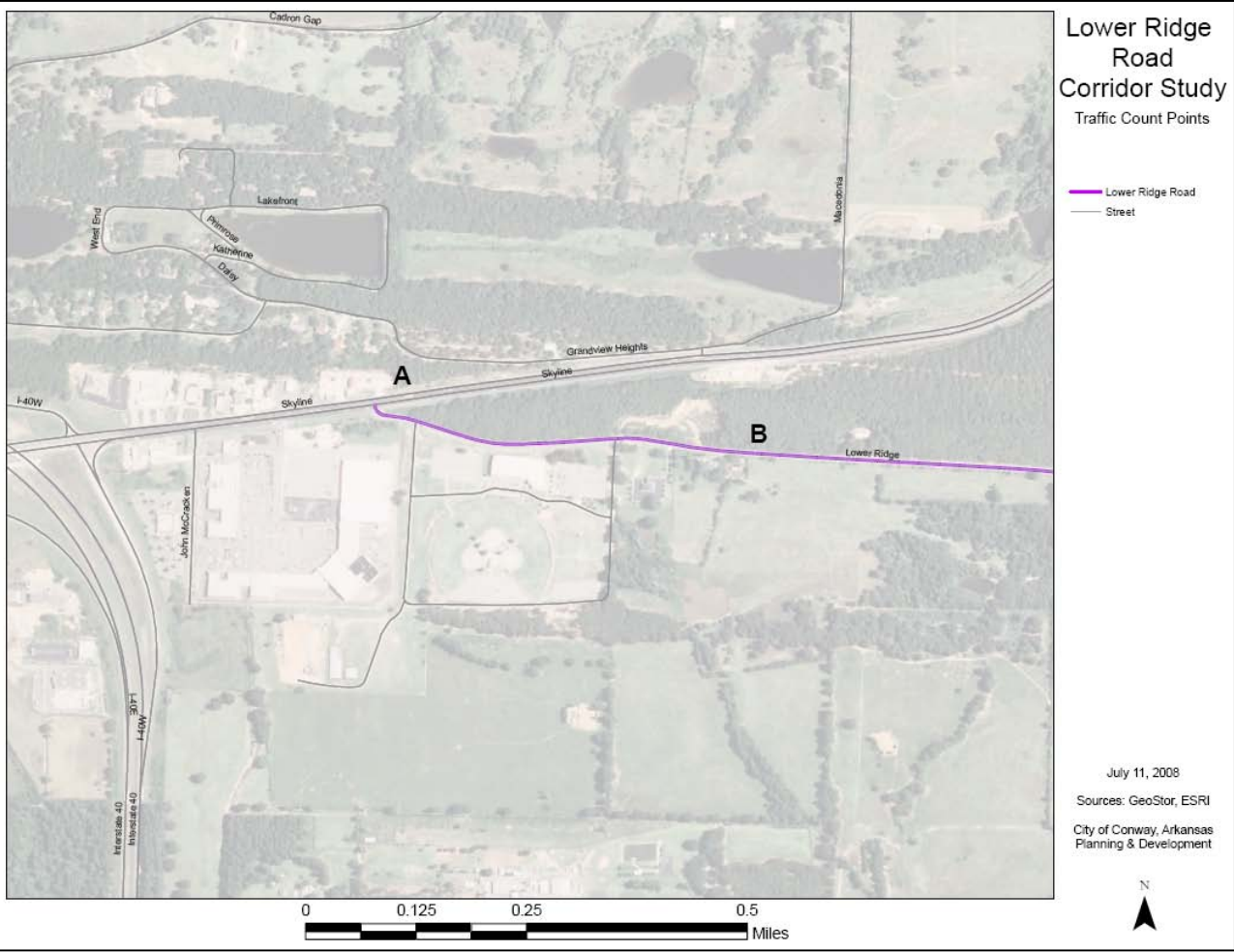
softball fields for girls' fast-pitch softball games, a walking trail and boardwalk, and picnic areas.

A 15-acre park (Curtis Walker Park) is located at the northeastern end of Museum Road. The park includes a football field, baseball field, and outdoor basketball courts. Presently, the park is not connected to the City's other parks, though the existing Comprehensive Plan proposes a trail system leading from Don Owen Sports Complex through Curtis Walker Park to Lake Conway.

Transportation

Traffic Counts. The Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) measures traffic volume in the Lower Ridge Road corridor annually. According to AHTD's annual traffic report, Lower Ridge Road near Don Owen Sports Complex has seen little change in daily traffic over the last several years. In 2004, the average daily count was 4,700 vehicles; by 2006, that number had actually decreased to 4,600. *(Numbers for 2007 were not available at the time this report was published.)* Nevertheless, many stakeholders perceive at least a modest increase in traffic volume along nearby portions of Lower Ridge Road in recent years.

The critical portion of Highway 65 near the Lower Ridge Road intersection has seen a pronounced increase in traffic volume over the last four years. In 2004, the average daily traffic count



Location		Average Daily Traffic Count			Change	% Change
		2004	2005	2006	2004-2006	2004-2006
A	Highway 65 @ Lower Ridge	25,900	27,400	28,800	2,900	11.20%
B	Lower Ridge @ Don Owen	4,700	5,000	4,600	-100	-2.13%

in this area was 25,900; in 2007, the count was 31,500, representing a 22 percent increase. The increased traffic corresponds to an increase in population in the northern portion of Faulkner County.

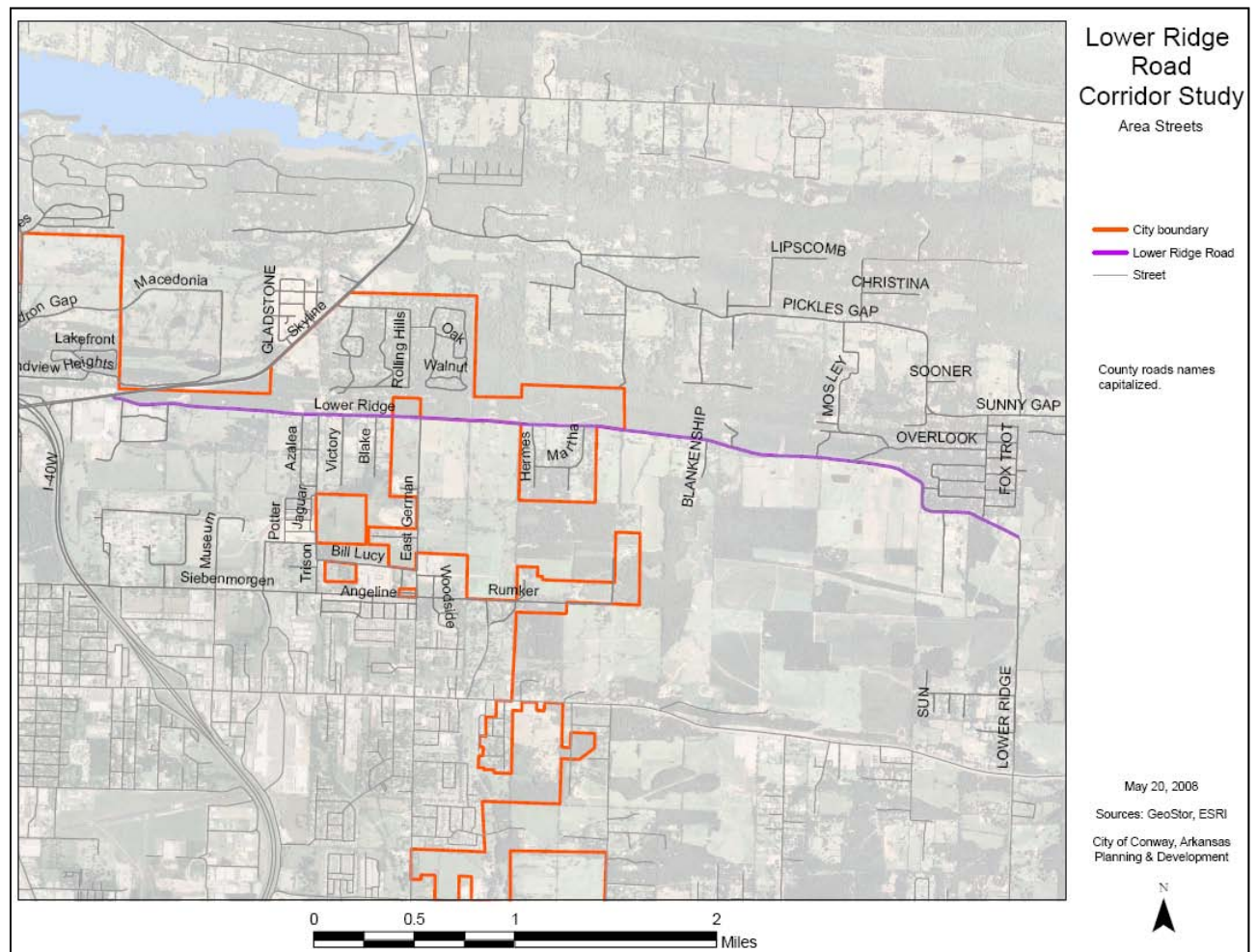
Traffic Calming. Stakeholders report that vehicles often speed along Lower Ridge Road, East German Lane, and other roads within the study area, far surpassing posted speed limits. Because Lower Ridge Road is partially within the City of Conway and partially within unincorporated Faulkner County, patrolling duties are split based on city boundaries by the Conway Police Department and the Faulkner County Sheriff's Department. Records from the Conway Police Department indicate that the intersection of Lower Ridge Road and Highway 65 is the most dangerous point within the study area. Between June 2006 and June 2008, City police responded to 62 separate accidents at that intersection.

The most prominent traffic calming measure within the study area is a roundabout near the intersection of Siebenmorgen Road and Museum Road. The roundabout is one of several new roundabouts in Conway and is designed to ease traffic congestion caused by vehicles associated with the three nearby schools.

Major Roads. Major roads that intersect with Lower Ridge Road include US Highway 65

(Skyline Drive) and East German Lane. Nearby minor arterials include: Siebenmorgen Road, which runs parallel to Lower Ridge approximately three-quarters of a mile to the south of Lower Ridge; Museum Road, which runs perpendicular to Lower Ridge but ends at Curtis Walker Park, thus not connecting to Lower Ridge; and Pickles Gap Road, which runs roughly parallel to Lower Ridge Road and is on the north side of the ridge.

Residential roads that connect to Lower Ridge Road on the south include Azalea Loop, Victory Lane, Blake Lane, Hermes Lane, Martha Drive, and Blankenship Drive. Residential roads that connect to Lower Ridge Road on the north include Moseley Lane, Bobcat Trail, and Deer Run Drive.



Pedestrian Activities. Pedestrian access along Lower Ridge Road and throughout most of the study area is limited due to the lack of sidewalks. Portions of sidewalk exist along both Siebenmorgen Road and East German Lane; additionally, a sidewalk is planned along Freyaldenhoven Drive. Most of the roads within the study area have narrow shoulders, providing bicyclists with little space.

Zoning

Presently, only the portion of Lower Ridge Road that is within Conway’s corporate limits is zoned. Though the City of Conway has the authority to zone property up to five miles outside its corporate limits via its extraterritorial jurisdiction, it has not claimed zoning along Lower Ridge Road.

Most of the zoned portion of Lower Ridge Road is currently zoned A-1 (Agricultural), which designates the area as appropriate for agricultural activity. A-1 zoning requires a minimum lot size of one acre and allows limited non-agricultural and non-residential uses by condition.

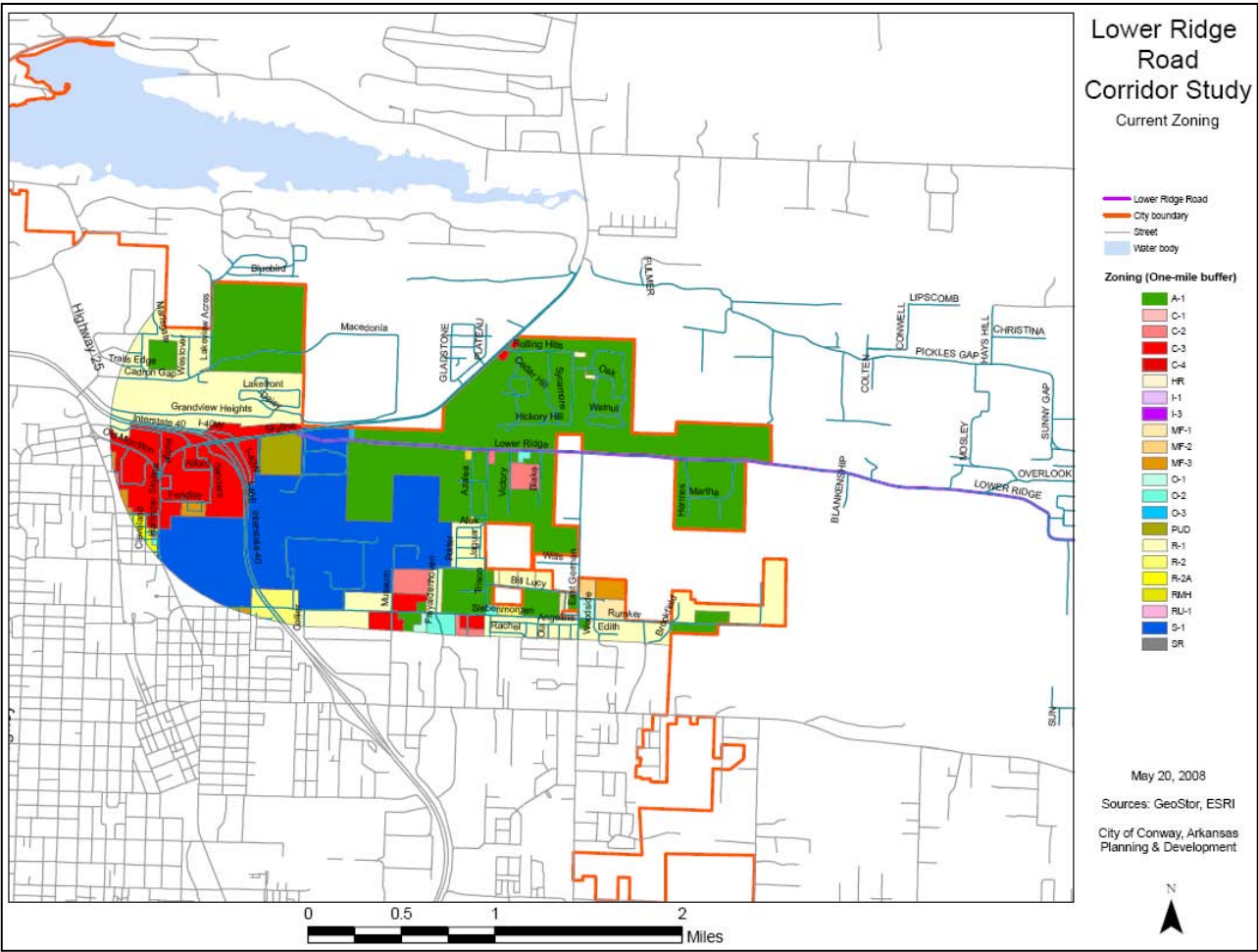
The portions of the study area that include Don Owen Sports Complex and the Conway Human Development Center are zoned S-1 (Institutional), which designates the area as appropriate for cultural, educational, medical, and governmental facilities. In Conway, areas that

house government-owned facilities including parks and schools are typically zoned S-1.

The portion of land south of Highway 65 and west of Lower Ridge Road that currently houses Conway Towne Center is zoned PUD (Planned Unit Development). Typically, PUD zoning is utilized for developments that necessitate some variation from the strict setback requirements of traditional zones; PUD zoning

may also be utilized where mixed-use developments are desirable.

Other zones that are present within the corridor include: C-2 (Commercial) at the eastern corner of Azalea Loop and Lower Ridge Road; C-2 on the eastern side of Victory Lane; O-2 (Office) on Lower Ridge Road between Victory and Blake; RMH (Residential - Mobile Home) at the western corner of Azalea Loop and Lower Ridge Road; and



C-3 (Commercial) near the intersection of Highway 65 and Interstate 40. Zoning along Siebenmorgen Road includes pockets of commercial, agricultural, office, and single-family residential.

Demographics

An examination of demographic trends is a necessary component of the planning process. These trends clarify the need for government services, such as schools and infrastructure. Demographic information is also helpful in determining the number and types of housing units and commercial activities that an area needs and can support. Further, by examining trends, citizens and government agencies can be proactive in steering growth toward desired areas and protecting neighborhoods and the natural environment from the unintended consequences of uncontrolled growth.

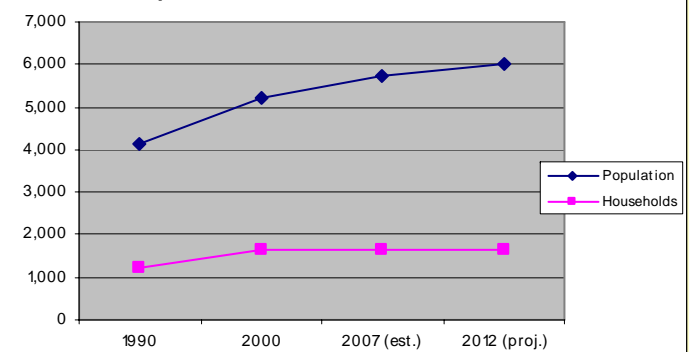
The Lower Ridge Road study area is divided between two block groups as delineated by the U.S. Census Bureau: the north side of Lower Ridge Road is contained within Census Tract 304, Block Group 2, while the south side of Lower Ridge Road is contained within Census Tract 304, Block Group 3. Because Block Group 2 extends beyond the study area, the demographic information contained within this report represents the study area and several households that exist to the northeast of the study area.

Population. Population in the study area increased from 4,151 in 1990 to 5,196 in 2000, representing a 25 percent increase. The 2007 population estimate was 5,719, representing an additional ten percent increase. The number of households increased from 1,224 in 1990 to 1,654 in 2000, representing a 35 percent increase; by 2007, the number of households had held steady, indicating a slight increase in household size.

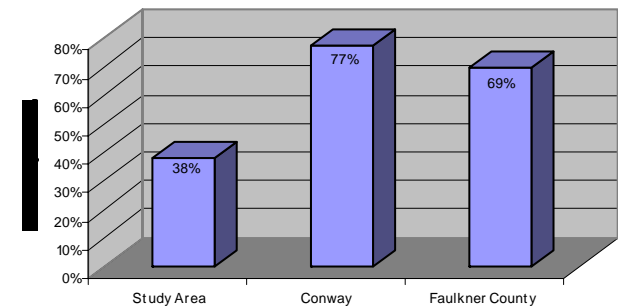
Population growth has been more pronounced in Block Group 2, which grew by 45 percent between 1990 and 2000. The population of Block Group 2 was 2,177 in 1990 and 3,156 in 2007. Subdivisions such as Rolling Hills, Thousand Oaks, and Forest Acres Overlook contributed greatly to the increase in population and households north of Lower Ridge Road. The pace of growth in the southern half of the corridor has been slower. Between 1990 and 2007, the population of Block Group 3 increased from 1,974 to 2,563, representing a 30 percent growth rate. New apartment complexes such as Park Ridge and subdivisions such as Makenna Cove could cause a significant increase in population in Block Group 3 in the next Census.

The Lower Ridge Road Corridor: Demographic Highlights

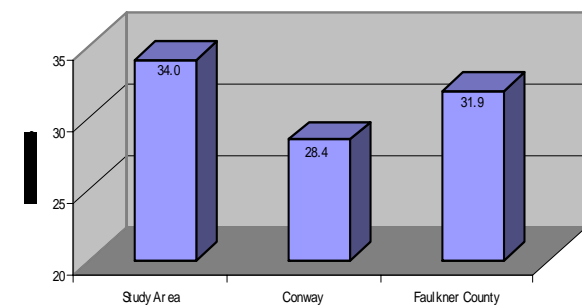
Population and Households, 1990-2007*



Population Growth, 1990-2007*



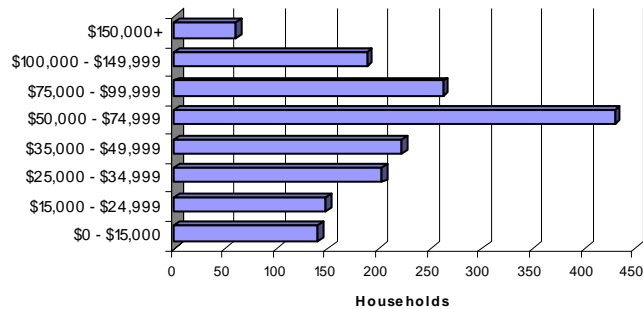
Median Age, 2007*



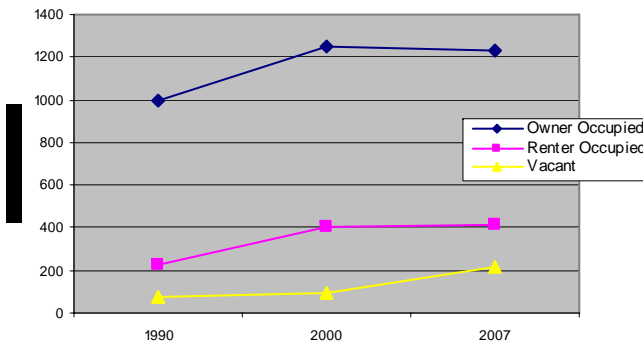
* Sources: US Census Bureau, Demographics Now

The Lower Ridge Road Corridor: Income and Housing Patterns

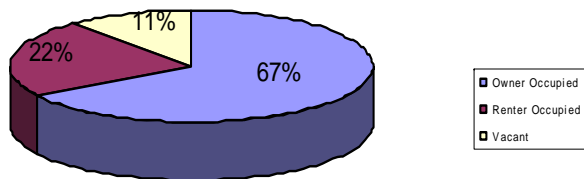
Households by Income Group, 2007*



Tenure, 1990-2007*



Tenure, 2007*



* Sources: US Census Bureau, Demographics Now

Young adults aged 25 to 34 make up the largest age group in the study area; in 2007, nearly 20 percent of residents in the study area fell between the ages of 25 and 34. Adults aged 45 to 54 make up the fastest growing segment of the study area's population. Between 1990 and 2007, the number of 45 to 54 year olds increased by 159 percent. The study area's median age (34) is nearly 20 percent higher than Conway's median age (28.4), likely indicating that the study area is not as affected by the student rental market as many other areas in Conway are.

The study area's racial composition is predominantly white, though whites as a share of the population are declining. In 1990, whites made up 92 percent of the study area's population; by 2007, that number had decreased slightly to 87 percent. The number of African-Americans and Hispanics increased during that same period by 172 percent and 352 percent respectively, though both groups remain small minorities within the study area.

Income. The median household income of the study area was \$56,069 in 2007. However, when adjusted for inflation to

year 2000 dollars, the 2007 median household income was \$45,446, which represents an actual decrease of \$1,412 between 2000 and 2007. Of particular interest is the gap between the northern portion of the study area and the southern portion. In 2007, the median household income of Block Group 2 (northern portion of study area) was \$59,770, while that of Block Group 3 (southern portion of study area) was \$42,249, representing a difference of \$17,521. Comparatively, the median household income for the city of Conway was \$44,680 in 2007. Because income levels typically closely follow tenure, it can safely be assumed that the difference in rental occupancy rates between Block Group 2 (9.8 percent) and Block Group 3 (44 percent) plays a role in the difference in income levels between the two areas.

Nearly 57 percent of households in the study area have annual incomes higher than \$50,000. Only 17.5 percent of households in the study area have annual incomes lower than \$25,000. Again, a significant gap exists between Block Group 2 and Block Group 3. Approximately ten percent of households in Block Group 2 have median incomes lower than \$25,000, while nearly 67 percent have median incomes higher than \$50,000. In Block Group 3, nearly 31 percent of households have median incomes lower than \$25,000, while 45 percent have median incomes higher than \$50,000.

Housing. Within the study area, there are 1,866 housing units of which 1,235 are owner-occupied and 418 are renter-occupied. Since 1990, the percentage of owner-occupied units has decreased from 71.6 percent to 66.2 percent. Owner-occupancy is much more prominent in the north side of the study area, where nearly 80 percent of residents are homeowners versus the south side of the study area, where 43 percent of residents own their homes. From 1990 to 2007, the number of vacant units increased from 94 to 213; currently, vacant units represent 11.4 percent of all housing units within the study area. Both portions of the study area have vacancy rates greater than ten percent. The number of vacancies is considerably higher than the typical five percent threshold. Speculative construction throughout the corridor is more than likely the reason for many of these vacancies.

Review. A comprehensive look at the demographics of the study area reveals the following trends: population growth is slowing; the population is generally older than that of most Conway neighborhoods; income levels vary greatly between the areas north of Lower Ridge Road and those south of it; and renter-occupancy is steadily increasing, particularly south of Lower Ridge Road. While population, income levels, and tenure in the northern portion of the study area are stable, the future of the southern portion of the

study area is less certain. Planned low-income rental housing will undoubtedly further lower the area's median income and increase the percentage of renter-occupied housing.

Existing conditions within the corridor necessitate the creation of a long-range plan. Without such a plan, transportation systems, land uses and usability, and neighborhood conditions could deteriorate, hindering future desirable development projects.

III: PUBLIC INPUT

Upon initiating the Lower Ridge Road Corridor Study in Spring 2008, the Conway Planning and Development Department immediately sought avenues for stakeholder participation. This chapter provides an overview of the methods used to collect public input and a summary of stakeholder comments.

Methods of Gathering Input

In June 2008, the Department planned two public events for the study: a Kick-Off Presentation and a Public Workshop. The events were publicized via the City of Conway's website, the Conway Planning and Development Department's website, promotional fliers, roadside signs, and a rolling advertisement on local public access television. The Conway *Log Cabin Democrat* opted not to cover either event, thus severely limiting public outreach efforts.

Following the two public events, stakeholders were invited to participate in an online visual preference questionnaire; further, the Planning and Development Department hosted an Open House at which stakeholders were invited to visit with city planners on an individual basis to ask questions, offer suggestions, and discuss the long-range planning process.

Public Kick-Off Event. The first event in the Lower Ridge Road Corridor Study public events series was the Public Kick-Off, which included a presentation on existing conditions and a draft vision for the area. The Planning and Development Department offered future land use alternatives, road cross-sections, and development policies that formed the starting point for discussions. The Public Kick-Off event was held Thursday, June 12, 2008, at Raymond and Phyllis Simon Intermediate School on Siebenmorgen Road in Conway. Thirty-five stakeholders signed the attendance roster. Two City Councilpersons attended the event and answered impromptu questions from attendees. Due to time constraints, attendees were asked to hold further questions and comments until the Public Workshop planned for the following week.

Public Workshop. The second event in the Lower Ridge Road Corridor Study series was a Public Workshop at which stakeholders had the opportunity to ask questions, make comments, offer suggestions, and participate in a small group visioning exercise. The Public Workshop was held on Tuesday, June 17, 2008, at Raymond and Phyllis Simon Intermediate School on Siebenmorgen Road in Conway. Conway's City Engineer, Planning Director, and two City

Councilpersons attended, and approximately 30 stakeholders participated in the workshop.

The Public Workshop included a small group exercise, whereby stakeholders were asked to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Lower Ridge Road corridor and offer their own visions of future development in the corridor. The Planning Director, City Planner, and two Councilpersons facilitated small groups of five to seven individuals each. The ideas generated by the small groups were written in large print at the front of the meeting room. Each participant was then given eight orange dots and was asked to distribute the dots among the ideas that best represented the participant's own vision of the corridor; participants were allowed to distribute the dots as they saw fit. Each participant was also given one blue dot—the “ultimate dot”—and was asked to place the blue dot beside the idea that he/she considered of utmost importance. The resulting priorities list is included in this report as Appendix B. This list was used as an aid—along with other public input, technical expertise, and best planning practices—in creating the Lower Ridge Road corridor plan.

Visual Preference Questionnaire. Stakeholders were asked to complete a visual preference questionnaire that was available online at the

Conway Planning and Development Department's website from Wednesday, June 18, 2008, until Monday, June 23, 2008. Paper surveys were available upon request. The visual preference questionnaire included 29 images representing streets, bicycle paths, sidewalks, intersections, commercial developments, multi-family residential developments, and environmental characteristics. The primary purpose of the visual preference questionnaire was to gauge interest in innovative

solutions to existing problems within the Lower Ridge Road corridor. The questionnaire included an open comments portion, which allowed stakeholders to offer comments while retaining anonymity if desired. Eighteen stakeholders completed the visual preference questionnaire.

Open House. The Planning and Development Department hosted an Open House at Conway City Hall from Wednesday, June 18, 2008, through

Friday, June 20, 2008, from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM each day. Stakeholders were invited to visit the Planning and Development to discuss future development options with city planners. One stakeholder visited the Open House.

Public Comments. Written public comments were accepted at the Public Workshop and the Open House, as well as on the visual preference questionnaire. Comments from seven stakeholders were submitted to the Conway Planning and Development Department. These comments are included in this document as Appendix A. The visioning (small group and prioritizing) exercise at the Public Workshop served as an additional avenue for public input.

Role of Public Input

Most of the identified stakeholders who attended the public events were landowners and/or residents of the Lower Ridge Road corridor. While many participants were primarily concerned with their own properties, there was a general willingness among participants to consider the effects future development could have on neighborhoods, traffic, schools, and other collective units.

Stakeholder input received at the public workshop closely followed the perceptions the Conway Planning and Development Department had developed during the initial stages of the study. Five issues were of primary importance to workshop participants: straightening the western end of Lower Ridge Road; extending Museum Road; extending water and sewer lines; connecting Museum Road to Highway 65; and handling water runoff from hillside excavations. While some issues—such as creating new and improved connections to Highway 65—are addressed by the plan, others—such as the City paying for water and sewer extensions—are not addressed due to the practical limitations of the planning process. Although some issues are not included in the plan, each issue raised at the public workshop will be presented to City leaders.

The visual preference questionnaire revealed near-consensus (greater than 75 percent



Image included in the visual preference questionnaire. Survey Gizmo hosted the questionnaire and stored participants' responses.

agreement) on six images. Among those images which more than 75 percent of participants found inappropriate were: image 12, a partial sidewalk abutting a busy street; image 18, a metal structure housing an auto parts store; image 24, a typical commercial strip; and image 28, a hillside excavation. Among those images which more than 75 percent of participants found appropriate were image 10, a sidewalk of typical width separated from the street by a landscaped strip and image 29, an undisturbed hillside covered by foliage. The plan addresses each of these concerns, as well as many others deemed appropriate or inappropriate by a significant majority of participants. An additional seven images were rated inappropriate by at least 60 percent of participants, while an additional eight images were rated appropriate by at least 60 percent.

Among the written public comments submitted by stakeholders either on comment forms or through the visual preference questionnaire were: an assertion that the plan will not be carried out in a timely manner; a suggestion that traditional neighborhood development overlay become the standard for future development; and three comments urging better access and connections. While some comments are not implementable, all are a valuable part of the planning process and will be presented to City leaders.

IV: GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

The long-range land use plan for the Lower Ridge Road corridor should be based upon clearly-stated principles and supported by best planning practices. The purpose of this chapter is to identify these guiding principles and offer a corresponding set of policies and action items that will direct the Lower Ridge Road corridor plan. The guiding principles for the Lower Ridge Road corridor plan are:

- Vehicular and Pedestrian Safety
- Accessibility and Connectivity
- Aesthetics and Contextual Design
- Sustainable Development

Vehicular and Pedestrian Safety

Safety is the overriding concern of the long-range plan. The planning process for Lower Ridge Road was prompted, in part, by conditions that make driving hazardous.

Cross-Sections. Policy: Road cross-sections that clarify design and safety standards for future road projects should be created and followed whenever possible.

As is the case with most cities, public roads in Conway have historically been built on a strict budget and include few amenities. While leaving out traffic control measures, curbs and

gutters, and pedestrian paths has proven cost-effective, such deletions are becoming rare. In order for roads to be built, widened, and/or straightened in a sensible fashion, road cross-sections that reflect the community's desire for safety should be included in the long-range plan.

Action Item 1a: Draw road cross-sections for existing and new roads within the corridor.

Bike Paths and Sidewalks. Policy: Bike paths and sidewalks are desirable along scenic corridors and should safely accommodate recreational bicyclists and pedestrians.

The primary intent of Lower Ridge Road—as with most roads—is to move vehicular traffic efficiently. However, an unintended consequence of designing roads with only vehicular traffic in mind is the creation of unsafe conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians. Presently, Lower Ridge Road lacks sidewalks and adequate cycling facilities. While long-distance bicyclists often prefer to use standard traffic lanes, recreational bicyclists would be better served by a distinct, paved facility separated from the roadway by a landscaped buffer. Such a facility should be of adequate width to accommodate pedestrians as well. The Tucker Creek Trail in west Conway is an example of a paved multi-use path that is used by



This image of a sidewalk with landscaped buffer was among the images rated most appropriate for the Lower Ridge Road corridor by participants in the online visual preference questionnaire.

bicyclists and pedestrians. Residents along Lower Ridge Road would retain access to their properties via existing driveways that would cross the proposed bike and pedestrian path. Sidewalks should be planned on both sides of any new roads and along existing roads where possible.

Action Item 1b: Plan a paved multi-use path ten feet in width and parallel to Lower Ridge Road to serve bicyclists and pedestrians. The path should be buffered from the road by a landscaped strip.

Dangerous Roads. Policy: Vehicular and pedestrian safety should be the overriding factor in building new intersections or rebuilding existing ones.

Lower Ridge Road's connection with Highway 65 is a primary concern of stakeholders.

The existing connection forces drivers wishing to turn from Lower Ridge Road onto Highway 65 to make quick—and often dangerous—turns into heavy traffic. The intersection and the area immediately surrounding it are among the most dangerous driving areas in Conway according to accident statistics. A better intersection alignment designed with safety in mind could avert many accidents. Further, new intersections should be built to move traffic both safely and efficiently.

Action Item 1c: Plan a safer connection between Lower Ridge Road and Highway 65 utilizing the existing traffic light at Conway Towne Center.

Accessibility and Connectivity

A well-planned road network can ease traffic congestion, make neighborhoods more walkable, and decrease reliance on the automobile. Largely because of a lack of road connections, many stakeholders in the Lower Ridge Road corridor must use indirect routes to reach businesses and services that should be easily-accessible.

Road Network. Policy: The city should be connected by a sensible road network that allows for efficient access to areas where people live and work.

Lower Ridge Road has limited connectivity to other parts of Conway due to the lack of an

effective road network. Presently, East German Lane and Highway 65 are the primary connectors between the Lower Ridge Road corridor and the remainder of Conway.

As this report has already noted, the connection between Lower Ridge Road and Highway 65 is particularly dangerous; thus, East German Lane is the only safe route for vehicular traffic to and from Lower Ridge Road. Some residents and others utilize a narrow gravel road between

Azalea Loop and Makenna Cove as a north-south route. Many stakeholders report that traffic along East German Lane is particularly heavy on schooldays. Additional connections between Lower Ridge Road and the areas to the north and south of it should be planned in order to make Lower Ridge more accessible to residents, visitors, and emergency vehicles. The existing Comprehensive Plan calls for an additional connection between Lower Ridge Road and Highway 65 north of the existing connection. Schools, parks, recreational facilities, and other public facilities should be easily accessible by the public.



Both of these images were rated inappropriate for the Lower Ridge Road corridor by the majority of visual preference questionnaire participants. Above: Nearly 89 percent of participants (16 of 18) rated the pictured commercial strip inappropriate. Left: More than 77 percent of participants (14 of 18) rated the pictured metal retail structure inappropriate.

Action Item 2a: Plan the following new connections with Lower Ridge Road: 1) Museum Road extension; 2) Loop around Conway connecting to point on Highway 65 north of Rolling Hills.

Gridded street networks are desirable as a method of connecting neighborhoods, reducing travel time, and reducing traffic congestion. Should the Lower Ridge Road corridor eventually see the kind of development west Conway has experienced in recent years, a sensible gridded road network should be planned to accommodate such growth.

Action Item 2b: Plan a conceptual gridded road network to serve as an example of how such a network could accommodate future growth.

Commercial Activity. Policy: Commercial activity should be strategically centered in nodes which are convenient to both local residents and passers-by. Where possible, commercial activity should be mixed with other land uses.

The rising cost of fuel has made the need for clustered commercial activity evident to both consumers and developers. Clustered business activities could reduce the number of vehicular trips required to satisfy simple day-to-day needs. Unlike scattered commercial uses along lengthy stretches of road, commercial nodes at strategic locations encourage consumers to park their vehicles, thereby reducing the number of vehicular trips, traffic congestion, and curb cuts. Such nodes should be planned in conjunction with traditional neighborhoods.

Action Item 2c: Encourage commercial nodes by identifying strategic locations for clustered commercial activity and enhancing connectivity between these nodes and neighborhoods where possible.

Aesthetics and Contextual Design

Context-sensitive development that blends well with the surrounding natural and built

environment can enhance the city's visual appeal and protect property values. The City of Conway has enacted measures—including development review standards, planned unit development zoning, and a traditional neighborhood overlay—to, in part, improve the city's aesthetics.

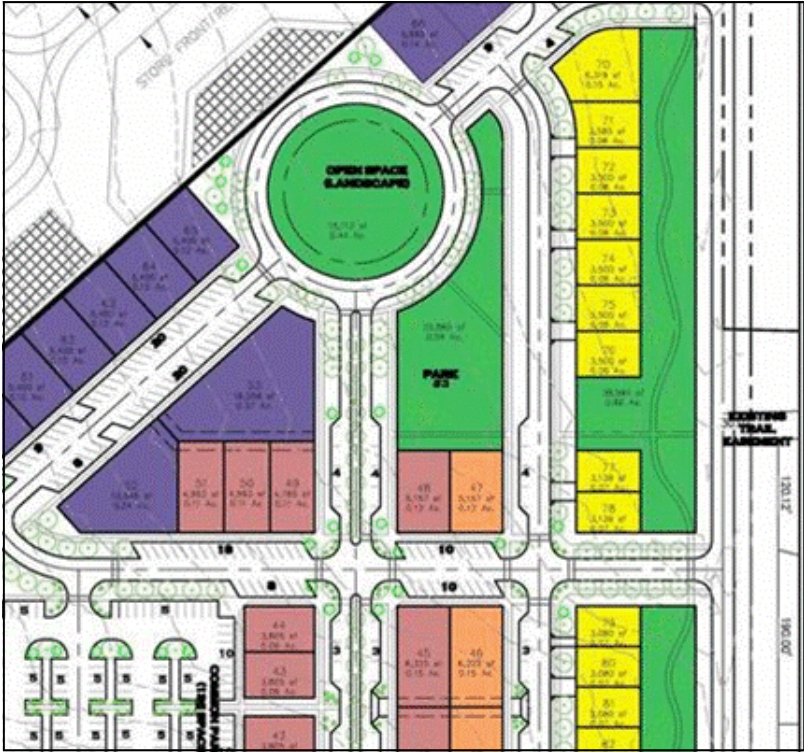
Design Standards. Policy: Design standards should improve the quality of life of residents by protecting and enhancing the City's appearance, identity, and economic vitality.

In September 2007, the Conway City Council adopted new development review standards for the City of Conway. The standards apply to all new developments that are not single family or duplex residences. Among the highlights of the new standards are the following: 1) impervious cover may not exceed 80 percent of any site; 2) masonry must occupy at least 51 percent of each façade of new buildings; 3) prominent landscaping must line the perimeter of the site and be incorporated into parking lot design; 4) joint and cross access is required for adjoining properties; and 5) each land use has both a minimum and maximum number of parking spaces allowed. Any new development within the

study area must adhere to the development review guidelines. No action items are necessary.

Planned Unit Developments. Policy: Planned unit developments should be utilized where necessary to promote coordinated development, mixed land uses, and open space.

Currently, planned unit developments are the primary means by which the City of Conway allows land uses that cannot be accommodated by traditional zoning categories. Zoning categories such as Commercial and Office require specific setback distances between property lines and



Example of a traditional neighborhood. The development includes a mix of land uses and plentiful open space.

building lines. Further, mixed use developments are difficult to implement using traditional zoning. A planned unit development (PUD) is a creative approach to zoning that ensures that a development suits the surrounding environment and accommodates any unique circumstances that would make development under a standard zoning category either impractical or impossible. At least 20 percent of the land included in the planned unit development must be dedicated as open space.

Through aerial photographs, the Conway Planning and Development Department has identified five unique hillside excavations along the north side of Lower Ridge Road. To better control development of these existing excavations and prevent uses that would increase runoff, destabilize the hillside, or increase traffic volume to unacceptable levels, planned unit developments should be considered. Designating the excavations as appropriate for planned unit developments would give the owners of the excavations some flexibility in developing the excavations, while ensuring that the City retains the ability to determine whether the proposed development is suitable.

Action Item 3a: Use planned unit developments as alternatives to traditional zoning for all existing hillside excavations along Lower Ridge Road.

Traditional Neighborhoods. Policy: Compact, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use, traditional neighborhoods provide an alternative to sprawling subdivisions and typical strip commercial development and should be planned where possible.

In 2006, the Conway Planning and Development Department worked with Hendrix College and other entities to create a traditional neighborhood development overlay zone for The Village at Hendrix, a planned traditional neighborhood northeast of the Hendrix College campus. Traditional neighborhoods are compact and relatively dense neighborhoods where pedestrian activity is encouraged. These neighborhoods typically include housing of various types and price levels as well as a commercial core. Other features include an internal network of streets and significant open space. Reliance on the automobile is generally reduced in traditional neighborhoods, while walking, bicycling, public transit (where available), and other forms of alternative transportation are encouraged. Because of the proximity of Lower Ridge Road to schools and recreational facilities, traditional neighborhoods appear to fit the area well.

Action Item 3b: Plan traditional neighborhoods in appropriate locations throughout the corridor in order to take advantage of the corridor's proximity to schools and recreational facilities.

Sustainable Development

In order for the city to remain a viable place to live, work, and play for generations to come, development that has minimal impact on the natural environment is most desirable. The natural hillside, water bodies, and native foliage are aesthetically pleasing and serve important ecological roles. Besides the environmental factors involved, development should only occur where it is most sensible and most likely to succeed, i.e. where existing or planned infrastructure can adequately accommodate such development.

Hillside. Policy: Hillsides are natural assets that should remain undisturbed by development.

Through the enactment of Ordinances O-06-67 and O-07-43, the Conway City Council has placed controls on future hillside excavations. Ordinance O-07-43 (which amended the earlier O-06-67) requires that "any person engaging in excavation into a hillside or sloped area (ground slope is steeper than three feet horizontal to one foot vertical) where the maximum vertical height of the excavation exceeds ten feet for single family construction or non single family construction" must submit an excavation plan to the City Engineer for approval. While it may be possible to develop a single-family home on a large hillside lot without destabilizing the hillside or causing

significant runoff, commercial developments—which require more lot coverage—would threaten both hilltop residences and properties south of the hillside.

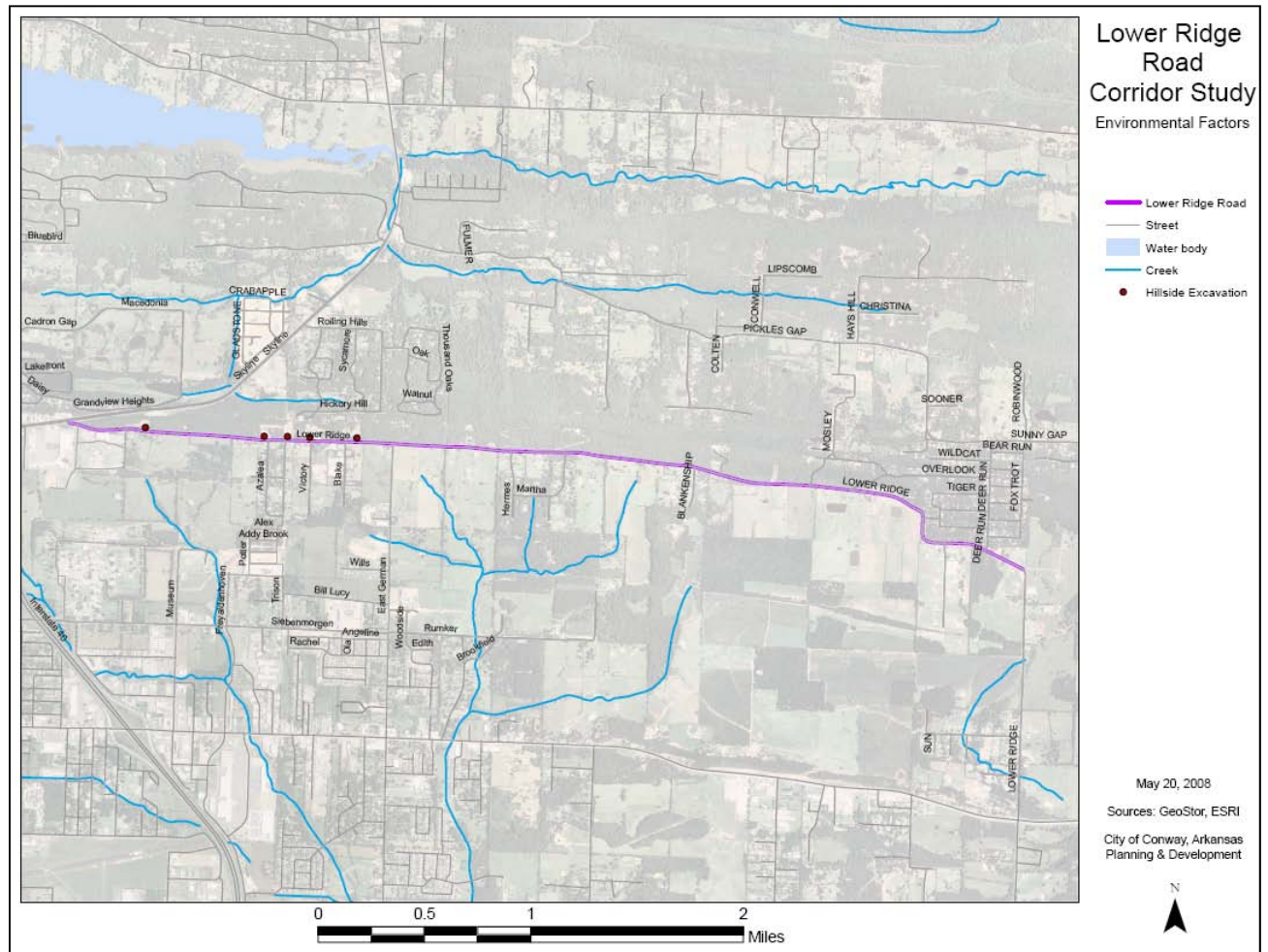
Action Plan 4a: Disallow commercial activity on hillside where slope exceeds three feet horizontal to one foot vertical.

Water Bodies. Policy: All development should be conducted in such a way that the integrity of local water bodies is not jeopardized.

Presently, none of the water bodies within the Lower Ridge Road corridor are listed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as impaired. Nevertheless, the city's actions can have long-term effects on those water bodies. Developers should be especially mindful of the negative impacts large-scale developments can have on nearby streams and lakes. State and Federal regulations govern the amount and types of waste that developments may contribute to local water bodies.

Action Item 4b: Require developers of non-single family residential property to provide evidence of compliance with all State and Federal environmental regulations in the Development Review process.

Tree Protection. Policy: Trees provide shade and visual relief for residents, drivers, and recreational



users; serve as natural buffers between the road and pedestrian-related areas; and act as natural erosion barriers on the hillside. Therefore, mature, viable trees should be protected from development where possible.

Presently, Conway lacks an ordinance to protect trees in areas other than those that fall under the auspices of the Old Conway Design Review Board. Uncontrolled, intensive

development within the Lower Ridge Road corridor could result in the unnecessary loss of trees throughout the corridor; tree protection is especially important along the hillside on the north side of Lower Ridge Road because of the natural erosion-controlling qualities.

Action Item 4c: Encourage a tree preservation plan for all future developments, excepting only

single-family residential developments. Incentivize the preservation of significant trees (twelve inches in diameter measured at breast height from base) through the development review process..

Infrastructure. Policy: Septic systems are not adequately suited for large-scale developments; such developments should be discouraged until public sanitary sewer service becomes available.

The lack of a public sewer service makes large-scale development impractical throughout most of the Lower Ridge Road corridor. Sewer service would be both physically impractical and cost-prohibitive in the northern half of the study area. While expansion of sewer service to the southeastern portion of the study area might be physically feasible, the low residential density of the area would place an excessive cost burden on area residents. Though sewer service would be more physically practical in the southwestern portion of the study area, the cost of an expansion to this area would probably require the issuance of bonds or the creation of a sewer district.

Action Item 4d: Disallow any large-scale development within the portion of the Lower Ridge Road corridor that is not presently served by public sanitary sewer service until such service becomes available.

Though the action items listed are not all-encompassing, they provide a grounding for a long-range plan. As property is developed in the Lower Ridge Road corridor over the coming years and decades, it may be necessary to revisit the action items and make adjustments. The long-range plan that follows takes existing conditions into account and illustrates most of the action items included in this chapter.

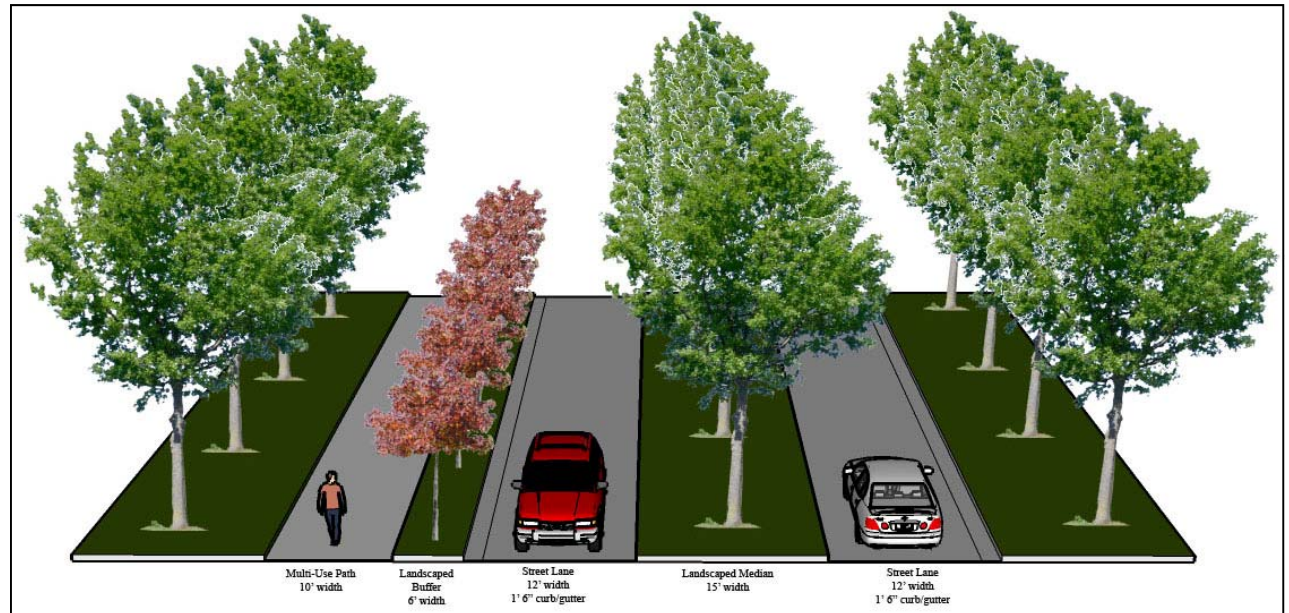
V. LONG-RANGE PLAN

The Lower Ridge Road corridor presents a unique set of opportunities and challenges. Because the area is largely unencumbered by existing development, the long-term potential for responsible, sustainable development seems boundless. However, the lack of infrastructure and the natural hillside present constraints that must be addressed for such development to occur. This chapter outlines the long-range plan for the Lower Ridge Road corridor. The plan addresses the action items listed in the previous chapter and is designed to serve as a guide for coordinated, responsible growth in the corridor over the next 30 years.

Cross-Sections

To satisfy action item 1a, the plan includes three road cross-sections: Highway 65 to East German Lane; East German Lane to Forest Acres Overlook; and roads south of Lower Ridge Road. Each cross-section includes a sufficient roadway, curbs and gutters, and pedestrian system.

Highway 65 to East German Lane. The south side of Lower Ridge Road between Highway 65 and East German Lane has seen significant development in the last several years; it is also the most likely portion of the study area to see



Cross-section of two-lane parkway for area of Lower Ridge Road between Highway 65 and East German Lane. The cross-section spans only 58 feet, leaving 42 feet (if right-of-way is obtained) for future road expansion.

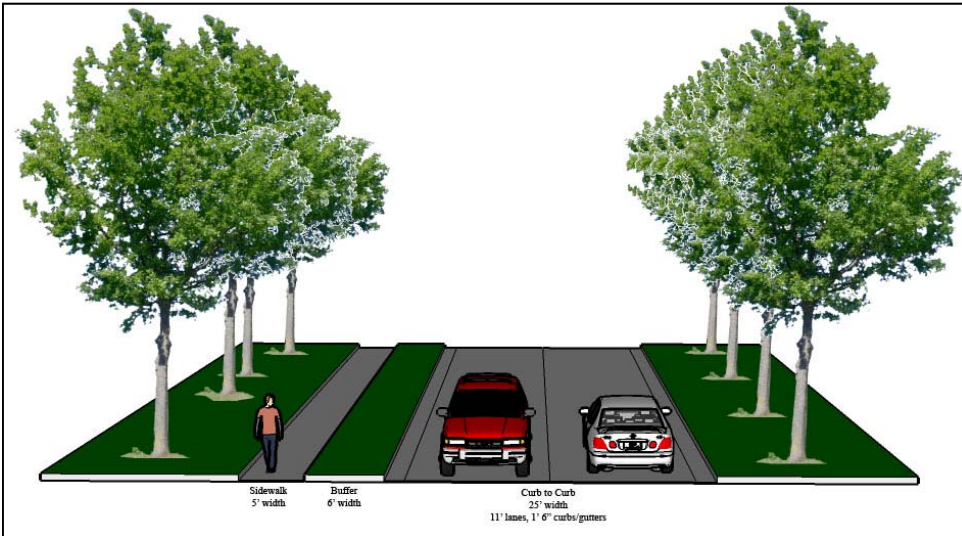
continued development over the next decade. In order to better serve the residents and commuters who regularly utilize this portion of Lower Ridge Road, the following improvements should be made: 1) curbs and gutters should be installed; 2) lanes should be expanded to an adequate width, preferably 12 feet each, exclusive of curb and gutter; 3) the road should be divided by a landscaped median, which will provide visual relief for drivers and serve as a traffic calming measure; and 4) a paved, multi-use path, ten feet in width, should serve pedestrians and bicyclists and should be buffered from the roadway by a landscaped strip six feet in width.

The completed cross-section for this portion of Lower Ridge Road spans 58 feet. Since Lower Ridge Road is identified on the existing Comprehensive Plan as a major arterial, the right-of-way should be 100 feet; however, right-of-way has not been secured along most of Lower Ridge Road, and some property lines extend to the road centerline. If proper right-of-way is secured in the future, the proposed cross-section would leave 42 feet for additional road expansion should the need for such expansion arise.

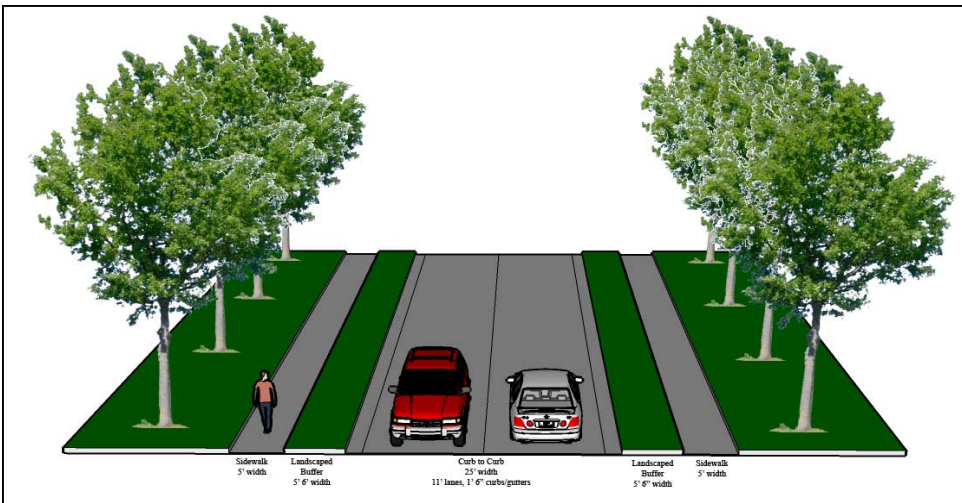
East German to Forest Acres Overlook. Land use patterns along the portion of Lower Ridge Road

between East German Lane and the Forest Acres Overlook subdivision should remain largely unchanged, making a major overhaul of the roadway unnecessary. The cross-section for this portion of Lower Ridge Road includes the addition of curbs and gutters along with a paved sidewalk,

which should be five feet in width and separated from the roadway by a landscaped strip six feet in width. Because the hillside abuts the existing roadway on the north, the sidewalk should be placed to the south.



Above: Cross-section proposed for portion of Lower Ridge Road from East German Lane to Forest Acres Overlook subdivision. Below: Cross-section representative of new streets within city boundaries upon full development.



Roads South of Lower Ridge Road.

Most existing roads within the study area presently lack dedicated pedestrian walkways. Exceptions exist on portions of Siebenmorgen Road and East German Lane near Simon Intermediate School.

The cross-section for these roads includes the addition of a pedestrian access system and curbs and gutters.

New Roads

The plan includes a realignment of the western end of Lower Ridge Road

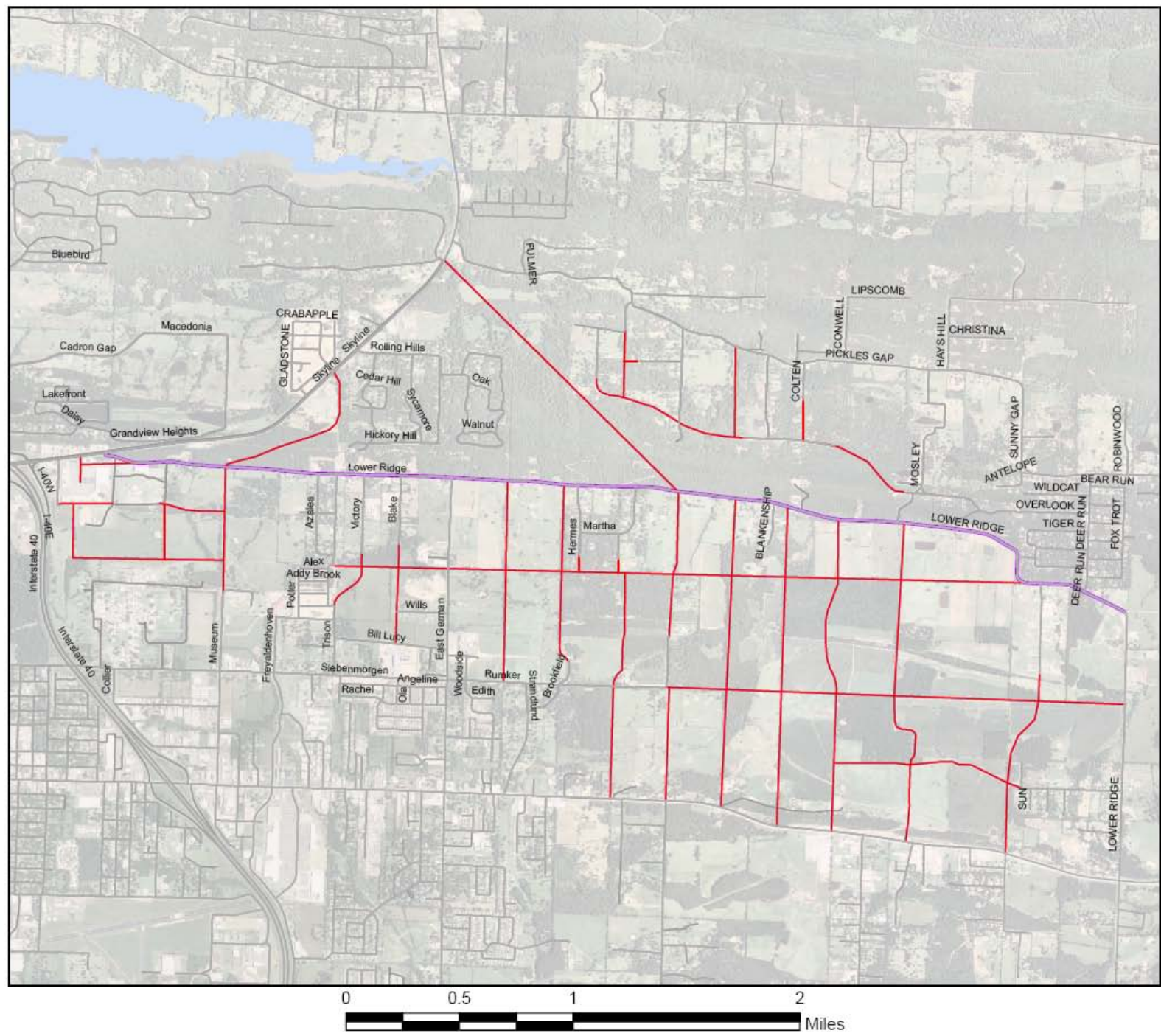
(action item 1c), extension of Museum Road (action item 2a), creation of the northeastern portion of the outer loop proposed in the existing Comprehensive Plan (action item 2a), and creation of a new road network (action item 2b). The corridor presently lacks a sensible, comprehensive road network, hampering accessibility and connectivity.

Connection with Highway 65. Among the most important aspects of the long-range plan is a safer Lower Ridge Road—Highway 65 intersection. As indicated in chapter two, the existing intersection is awkwardly positioned and has led to numerous traffic accidents. The plan includes a new Lower Ridge Road alignment, which would ultimately connect with the existing traffic light at Conway Towne Center. Westbound traffic on Lower Ridge Road would continue going westward past the Don Owen Sports Complex and connect to an existing east-west road that lies south of the former Hardees location; Lower Ridge Road would end at a “T” intersection—served by either a traffic light or stop sign—at the existing private drive that serves Conway Towne Center; a traffic light would be preferable in order to allow traffic from Conway Towne Center to safely exit the shopping center. Traffic would then turn right (north) onto the existing private drive, which ends at a “T” intersection with the traffic light at Highway 65. All lights would have to be well-coordinated in order to

Lower Ridge Road Corridor Study

Proposed Roads

- Lower Ridge Road
- Street
- Water body
- Proposed road



July 14, 2008

Sources: GeoStor, ESRI

City of Conway, Arkansas
Planning & Development



prevent traffic congestion. Besides improving safety, the new connection between Lower Ridge Road and Highway 65 could improve business at Conway Towne Center.

Museum Road Extended. Among the short-term projects planned by the Conway Street Department is the extension of Museum Road to Lower Ridge Road. The project is to be funded partially by impact fee proceeds and partially by capital improvement funds. The extended portion of Museum Road will be a standard two-lane roadway. As property abutting the road is developed, the owners of the property will be responsible for constructing sidewalks along their property lines.

Gridded Road Network. The plan includes a gridded road network, which will increase accessibility and connectivity within the corridor. The roads included in the plan are representational of a road network that could evolve over the coming decades as development expands within the corridor. The City of Conway recognizes that existing structures, property uses, and political jurisdictions may make some of the indicated roads impractical or impossible to construct. Further, right-of-way would have to be obtained in order to construct and/or expand any roads shown on the plan. The City generally

obtains right-of-way when subdivisions and other developments are platted.

All new roads built within the study area should be of adequate width and should include curbs and gutters; from curb to curb, the cross-section should be 25 feet. Additionally, as property is developed, sidewalks should be built in accordance with the City of Conway's development guidelines. Sidewalks should be five feet in width and should be separated from the roadway by landscaped buffers that are a minimum of five and one-half feet in width.

Multi-Use Path and Sidewalks

As the cross-sections illustrate, the plan includes a multi-use path and sidewalks (action item 1b). The multi-use path runs parallel to Lower Ridge Road, connecting Conway Towne Center and Don Owen Sports Complex to East German Lane. This path will provide bicyclists and pedestrians a safe route for both alternative transportation and recreation. The traditional neighborhoods included in the plan—as well as existing neighborhoods in the southwestern portion of the study area—would have quick access to the path. A system of sidewalks, also proposed in the plan, would connect more distant neighborhoods south of Lower Ridge Road to the path. These facilities will provide residents and visitors safer and more efficient access to

shopping, entertainment, restaurants, and recreational amenities.

Land Uses

The plan maintains the residential character of the Lower Ridge Road corridor, while offering alternatives to traditional single-family housing where appropriate. Two locations are identified as appropriate for traditional neighborhood developments (action item 3b); both include commercial opportunities (action item 2c). The plan also addresses the existing hillside excavations on the north side of Lower Ridge Road and proposes planned unit developments for those areas (action item 3a). High impact uses—including the proposed traditional neighborhoods—would be possible only with the expansion of public sewer service.

South Side of Lower Ridge Road from Highway 65 to East German Lane. The plan identifies several existing uses that should remain consistent. Among those uses are: 1) commercial use along Highway 65 between Interstate 40 and Don Owen Sports Complex; 2) institutional use in the area bounded roughly by Conway Towne Center and Don Owen Sports Complex on the north, Museum Road on the east, Siebenmorgen Road on the south, and Interstate 40 on the west; 3) public facilities including Don Owen Sports Complex,

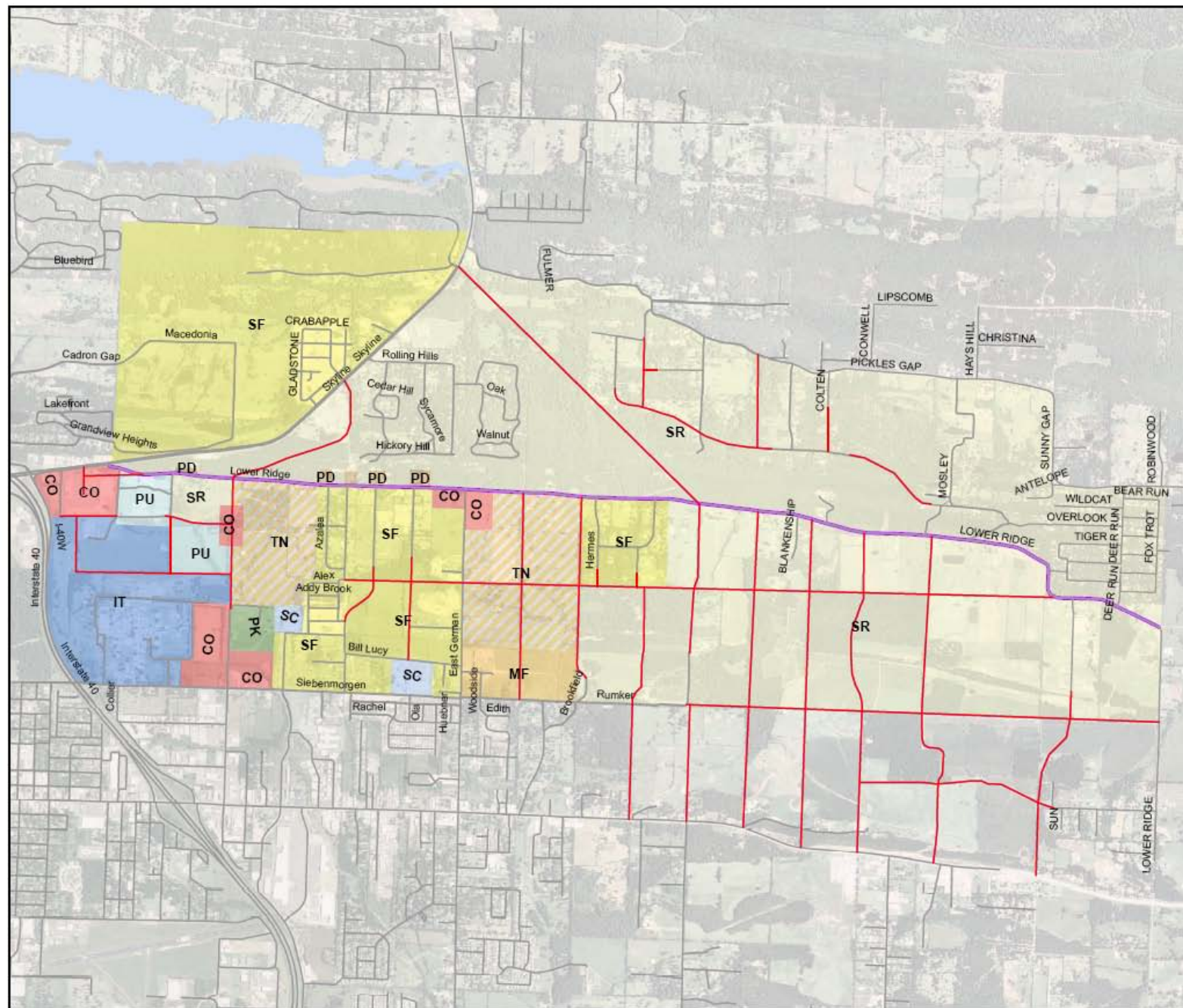
Lower Ridge Road Corridor Study

Proposed Land Uses

- Lower Ridge Road
- Street
- Water body
- Proposed road

Proposed land use

- Commercial (CO)
- Institutional (IT)
- Multi-family housing (MF)
- Planned unit development (PD)
- Park (PK)
- Public (PU)
- School (SC)
- Single-family residential (SF)
- Suburban residential (SR)
- Traditional neighborhood (TN)



July 11, 2008

Sources: GeoStor, ESRI

City of Conway, Arkansas
Planning & Development



Theodore Jones Elementary School, and Simon Intermediate School; and 4) single-family housing in the area bounded roughly by Lower Ridge Road on the north, East German on the east; Siebenmorgen Road on the south, and Freyaldenhoven Drive and Azalea Loop on the west.

The primary new land use identified in the plan is a roughly 118-acre traditional neighborhood in the area bounded roughly by Lower Ridge Road on the north, Azalea Loop on the east, Curtis Walker Park on the south, and Museum Road Extended on the west. This traditional neighborhood should feature multiple housing types, including single-family homes, townhouses, and apartments and should be appealing and accessible to residents of all income levels. The developer(s) of this neighborhood should also plan an internal network of streets, sidewalks, and open spaces. The proposed traditional neighborhood includes a commercial and/or mixed use core, which would be placed along Museum Road Extended. This core should be compact and should house businesses and/or institutions that can serve both the traditional neighborhood and passers-by. Curtis Walker Park and Don Owen Sports Complex would be neighborhood amenities for residents of this neighborhood, and Theodore Jones Elementary School would be within walking distance. The proposed traditional neighborhood cannot be developed without public sewer service.

North Side of Lower Ridge Road. The plan identifies the portion of the study area north of Lower Ridge Road as appropriate for suburban residential housing developments. As opposed to typical agricultural zoning—where one-acre lots are necessary for each residence—suburban residential lots may be one-third acre or larger. Many of the lots within Forest Acres Overlook, for example, are of this size. Where smaller lots are deemed appropriate based on percolation and drainfield requirements, the plan encourages suburban residential developments.

The hillside presents significant challenges to any development in the area. Further, the lack of sewer service makes any large-scale development impractical. The hillside itself is deemed appropriate for single-family homes where hillside excavation conditions can be met.

The plan identifies several existing hillside excavations and proposes using those excavations as planned unit developments. As chapter three noted, planned unit developments are appropriate in areas where traditional zoning and use categories are inadequately suited to address the unique issues faced by the areas. Planned unit developments would allow an array of uses, including commercial and multi-family housing. To ensure that a development on a property designated for a planned unit development is suitable for the area, the property owner(s), developer, and the Planning and

Development Department must work together to formulate a plan that is acceptable to all affected parties.

South Side of Lower Ridge Road from East German Lane to Forest Acres Overlook. The only significant change in land use patterns on the south side of Lower Ridge Road between East German Lane and Forest Acres Overlook is the addition of a traditional neighborhood at the southeastern corner of Lower Ridge and East German. The 212 acres included in the proposed traditional neighborhood is presently used for agricultural purposes. The plan identifies a compact commercial and/or mixed use core at the intersection of Lower Ridge and East German; the core should accommodate the needs of residents of the traditional neighborhood as well as passers-by. As with all large-scale projects included in the plan, the traditional neighborhood cannot be developed without public sewer service. The plan designates the remaining area as appropriate for suburban residential development.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

This chapter outlines strategies for implementing the long-range plan for the Lower Ridge Road corridor. Implementation of specific aspects of the Lower Ridge Road corridor plan begins with adoption of the plan itself by the Conway City Council. A resolution passed by the City Council would be necessary in order for the plan to replace the corresponding portion of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Upon adoption into the Comprehensive Plan, the Lower Ridge Road corridor plan will become the guiding long-range plan for growth and development in the Lower Ridge Road corridor.

Cross-Sections

Future road projects undertaken by the City of Conway and/or the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department should adhere to the road cross-sections included in the plan. When constructing new roads, the City should ensure that roads are of the appropriate width, include sidewalks or paths as indicated on the plan, and have a landscaped buffer five and one-half to six feet in width between the road and sidewalk. Additionally, the continued enforcement of design standards through the Conway Planning and Development Department's development review process ensures that all new developments will

include sidewalks; property owners must construct sidewalks on all street frontage abutting the developed property. If necessary, the development review guidelines should be adjusted by the City Council to indicate that sidewalks must be built in accordance with the appropriate cross-section. Further, upon adoption of the plan, the City Council should communicate to the Street Department and all other affected City departments its desire that future road and roadscape projects adhere to the adopted cross-sections.

New Roads

New roads should be constructed in conjunction with the extension of other infrastructure including public sanitary sewer service. Roads should be built in a sensible, grid-like pattern where possible. The City of Conway will be responsible for constructing roads within the City's corporate limits. Faulkner County will be responsible for constructing roads in the unincorporated portions of the study area; though this plan is not binding on the Faulkner County government, city and county officials should work cooperatively to implement the plan in the unincorporated portion of the study area.

The plan illustrates a conceptual network

of roads that are aligned on a traditional street grid. Natural barriers, existing structures, and property lines may prohibit the development of the road network as presented in the plan. Where possible, however, new road proposals should be evaluated based, in part, on how the roads relate to neighborhoods, existing roads, and long-range plans for nearby roads.

The extension of Museum Road to Lower Ridge Road is the sole road project currently planned for construction within the corridor. The realignment of Lower Ridge Road—though not currently included in the City's list of capital improvement projects—should be undertaken at the City's earliest opportunity, particularly considering increased interest in commercial, residential, and civic uses within the corridor.

Multi-Use Path and Sidewalks

Implementation of the proposed multi-use path requires adoption of the cross-sections as outlined previously. Multi-use paths should be ten feet in width in order to adequately serve pedestrians and bicyclists. All new developments in Conway (excluding only single-family residential on non-subdivided lots) require sidewalk construction. In order to create the desired cross-section and not put an unfair burden on property

owners on the side of the road where the proposed path is to be constructed, sidewalk funds collected from new developments along Lower Ridge Road should be pooled and held by the City until such time that the proposed plan is feasible. Where bicycle paths are not immediately executable, the City of Conway should place roadside signs alerting drivers of the presence of bicyclists. On-street striping is also desirable where possible. Funding for some of the proposed sidewalks may be available through grant programs, including the Safe Routes to School program, which is administered by the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department. The City and Conway Public Schools should pursue Safe Routes to School grants annually and include the Lower Ridge Road corridor as a priority for future Safe Routes applications.

Land Uses

The long-range plan for the Lower Ridge Road corridor provides a guide for future land development and should be adopted as a replacement for the corresponding portion of the City's Comprehensive Plan. After initial review by the Conway Planning Commission, the City Council should adopt the long-range land use plan for the corridor in lieu of the Comprehensive Plan. The plan would act as a guide for the Planning Commission and City Council in considering future

rezoning requests, though neither body would be bound by the plan.

The section of the current Zoning Ordinance (O-94-54) pertaining to planned unit developments should undergo extensive review by the Conway Planning and Development Department to ensure that the ordinance adequately addresses the needs of areas such as the Lower Ridge Road corridor. If the Planning and Development Department deems any changes necessary, it should recommend them to the City Council for adoption. Further, the Conway Planning and Development Department should revisit the existing Traditional Neighborhood Development Overlay Ordinance—which was designed to address specific concerns at The Village at Hendrix—and make any changes necessary for the ordinance to be applicable to the proposed traditional neighborhoods in the Lower Ridge Road corridor.

Implementing Other Action Items

Some of the action items listed in chapter four are not included in the long-range plan; these action items identify controls rather than planning tools. Action items that are identified as controls include: 1) disallowing commercial development on hillside where slope exceeds three feet horizontal to one foot vertical; 2) requiring developers of non-single family residential

property to provide evidence of compliance with all State and Federal environmental regulations in the development review process; 3) requiring a tree preservation plan for all future non-single family developments; and 4) disallowing any large-scale development where public sanitary sewer service is not available. Though these controls cannot be shown on land use maps, they are integral to a successful long-range plan for the Lower Ridge Road corridor. Within the areas deemed appropriate for planned unit developments, each of these controls should be conditions for Planning Commission and/or City Council approval.

The disallowance of commercial activity on the hillside (action item 4a) can be achieved by the passage of a City Council ordinance amending ordinance O-06-67 to specifically forbid commercial development on the hillside where the slope exceeds three feet vertical to one foot horizontal. This restriction would not apply to the existing hillside excavations.

Action item 4b, which would require developers to submit evidence of compliance with all Federal and State environmental regulations, can be implemented by amending Article 1101 (Site Plan Review) of the Conway Zoning Ordinance. Section 1101.6 should include action item 4b as subitem "C".

Implementation of a tree preservation program (action item 4c) would require either a new ordinance or an amendment to the Conway

Zoning Ordinance. Because the tree preservation program would include incentives for landowners and/or developers (such as allowing a modest increase in the number of parking spaces), a specific matrix outlining the exchange arrangement should be created.

Action item 4d, which would disallow large-scale development where public sanitary sewer service is not available, can be implemented by strict enforcement of Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) sanitary sewer requirements. Presently, the Permits Office in the Conway Planning and Development Department requires an approval letter from ADH prior to issuing building permits. Because ADH does not typically allow large-scale developments where sewer service is unavailable, no new ordinance or amendment should be necessary.

Conclusion

Conway has grown rapidly over the last two decades, and though growth has slowed, the city continues to push outward, particularly to the west. As traffic congestion, land value, and land demand continue to increase in west Conway, other parts of Conway should be prepared for future population expansions. The Lower Ridge Road corridor offers many amenities: natural beauty, recreational facilities, new schools, and proximity to Interstate 40 and Highways 64 and 65.

While these characteristics are appealing to individuals, the large tracts of flat agricultural land are appealing to subdivision developers, land speculators, and others interested in large-scale development.

This document offers a long-range plan for land uses in the Lower Ridge Road corridor. The plan recognizes the uniqueness of the area and capitalizes on the corridor's natural characteristics. Protection of natural resources is supported by the plan, while mixed land uses and low impact developments are encouraged. Concepts such as traditional neighborhoods and commercial nodes are included in the plan as well. The corridor envisioned in the plan would have clearly-defined neighborhoods, small commercial centers, well-connected transportation routes, pedestrian and bike paths, and a clear transition from the urban area to the rural area.

In order to protect residents from undesirable development and encourage desirable development in the Lower Ridge Road corridor, the long-range plan outlined in this document should be adopted and its various aspects implemented when possible. The plan serves as a framework for sensible, sustainable development in the Lower Ridge Road corridor. While landowners and government rules and regulations will ultimately determine the type of development that will occur and the timeframe in which it will occur, the long-range plan included in this

document should be consulted for all future land use and transportation planning.