COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Nestled atop the rolling hills of Crowley Ridge in northeastern Arkansas the Census Bureau states that Jonesboro, Arkansas has a total area of 80.0 square miles, of which 79.6 square miles are land and 0.4 square miles are water. The City of Jonesboro is one of two county seats of Craighead County, Arkansas and the largest city in northeastern Arkansas. It is the fifth most populated city and one of the more progressive cities in the state of Arkansas. Jonesboro is home to Arkansas State University and is a regional center for manufacturing, agriculture, medicine, education and trade.

The Comprehensive Housing and Neighborhood Plan of Jonesboro analyzes the unique complexities of the city and extrapolates them based on the vision of the community to produce a housing and neighborhood sustainability plan and policy document to guide the future development of city development policies, regulations, provisions for community and city services and creates strategies and recommendation that serve as a blueprint for maintaining neighborhood stability. The Comprehensive Housing and Neighborhood Plan and Housing Policies will serve as the foundation for developing a Housing and Neighborhood Element of the Vision 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

This study is guided by the following principles:

1. To maintain neighborhood stability and reverse trends toward neighborhood decline with a focus on sustainability;
2. To understand existing housing characteristics, population trends, needs, development opportunities and the constraints on meeting housing demands;
3. To encourage diversity of housing types and prices to meet the diverse needs of the community;
4. To strategize where and how neighborhood revitalization should take place;

5. To guide public policy and community discussion about housing issues;
6. To encourage the involvement of diverse interest in the future development of housing and neighborhoods in Jonesboro;
7. To foster “Economic Opportunity For Populations Performing Below the Median” include mechanisms for improving the living conditions of lower income and elderly residents;
8. To enhance supportive services available to promote social equity and fair housing, and expansion of non profit and faith based resources engaged in housing development and supportive housing programs.

OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Comprehensive Housing and Neighborhood planning approach and methodology combines an evaluation of housing market conditions and characteristics, with an analysis of housing and neighborhood conditions, community visioning exercises, and a housing, homeless and special needs assessment resulting in the identification of key issues impacting neighborhood stability. The approach and methodology has resulted in a planning tool, data reference document, and policy options to encourage future housing development and maintain neighborhood stability for current and future residents of Jonesboro. The study is divided into seven planning areas.

Community Engagement of the broader public in the planning process soliciting input from participants representing broad community interest including neighborhood groups, community organizations, financial institutions, home builders, businesses, educators, non profits, foundations, religious institutions, local healthcare institutions and others in the city. The planning process has been guided by the City of Jonesboro Grants Department, Community Development Office, and Jonesboro Planning Department. The Housing and

Neighborhood Sub-Committee and other Vision 2030 Sub-Committees served as our technical steering and advisory committee for the planning process.

The Housing Market Analysis included an analysis and evaluation of housing conditions, problems and limitations in this market, and a gap analysis detailing the critical needs for housing, homelessness, supportive housing, assisted living, nursing home, affordable and workforce housing, senior housing, alternative housing products and housing types meeting the needs of the diverse population.

The Socio-Economic Overview and Analysis describes Jonesboro in terms of its demographic profile, including population, income and poverty, education and employment, transportation and mobility, and general housing characteristics. Most of the data for this section has been gathered from the 2000 and 2010 Census estimates, 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year estimates, City of Jonesboro, and other sources. We have used supplemental and more recent data from the East Arkansas Planning and Development District, Arkansas State University, U.S. Department of Labor and others whenever available. The Socio-Economic Analysis includes the following:

The **Housing Supply Characteristics** section describes the city's existing housing stock in terms of age, value, and location. This section also examines new construction, both single-family and multifamily, and where vacant land is available for future development.

The **Housing Supply by Tenure** section analyzes the characteristics of rental and owner-occupied housing, examining homeownership rates, cost burdens among homeowners and renters, and foreclosure information.

The **Housing Supply by Type** section analyzes single-family and multifamily housing stock, housing products, public and assisted housing, healthcare, elderly and special needs housing, and homeless facilities.

The **Housing Demand** section contains population, employment, and housing demand projections to aid the City in encouraging the development of appropriate housing options. It examines perceptions and other factors that will influence future housing demand and consumption.

The Housing, Homeless and Special Needs Housing Assessment is an analysis of regulations, issues, solutions, opportunities, and standards relative to housing availability, affordability, financing, development and constructions including, “aging in place” and “visitable housing regulations” - allows elderly and disabled to age in place; green building and energy efficiency; sustainable development; multifamily housing quality and location; and government incentives and regulations to leverage the right development.

The Housing Conditions Survey and Neighborhood Planning Area Assessment involved an analysis of housing and neighborhood conditions for select neighborhood planning areas, utilizing a windshield survey technique documenting exterior housing conditions, vacant lots, premise conditions and neighborhood planning concerns. Neighborhood Assessments of areas not subject to the detail property conditions survey was performed based on a visual physical attributes evaluation and the collection of quantitative data for select neighborhood planning areas. Quantitative data includes housing, land use, zoning, education, streets, transportation, infrastructure, parks and open space and other pertinent conditions for the areas. This section builds upon the Socio-Economic analysis and serves as the foundation for determining the policy orientation as to which, how and to what extent recommendations and strategies should be applied to the geographies of the city in order to maintain neighborhood stability or reverse decline.

The Key Issues section analyses the fundamental issues and opportunities identified in the previous sections and defines alternative solutions, housing policy options, development and planning strategies, and regulatory changes designed to spur desirable development and reverse negative planning area trends identified in the study. Some of the recommendations and policy alternatives may address specific areas of the city or a specific sub-market, while others are broad in their possible application. The recommendations are presented as options in the creation of an overall housing policy.

Housing Policies, Strategies, and Recommendations are presented to guide sustainability, livability and equitable affordability in housing, encourage maintenance of housing and neighborhoods, support future housing needs by developing strategies, financing alternatives and identifying resources and housing products necessary to implement the strategies. Where it was appropriate, we identify and illustrate “project opportunity areas” and design “prototypical demonstration projects” as examples of implementation options.

Our Focus on **Economic Opportunity For Populations Performing Below the Median** include mechanisms for improving the living conditions of lower income and elderly residents, enhancing supportive services available to promote social equity and fair housing, expansion of non profit and faith based resources engaged in housing development and supportive housing programs, employment development strategies, and activities that “affirmatively further fair housing.”

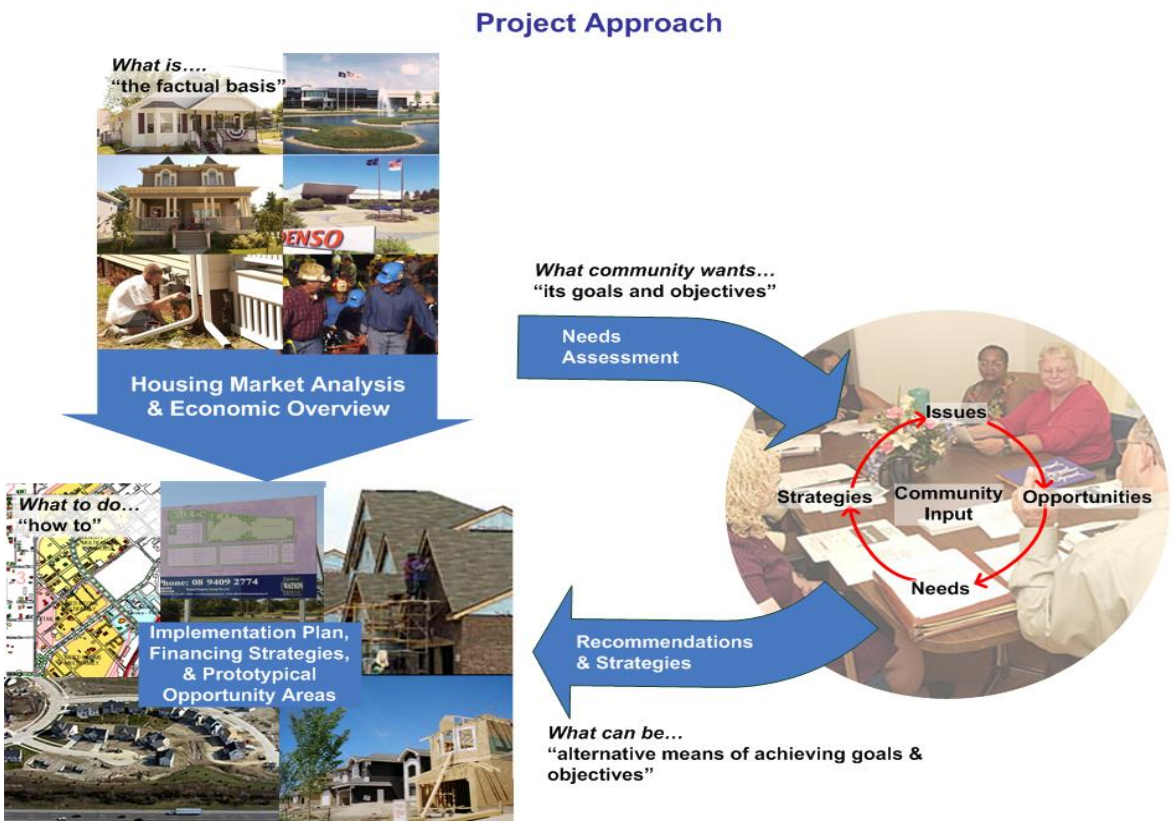
STUDY APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The Comprehensive Housing and Neighborhood Plan has been developed based on an analysis and assessment of needs within the geographical boundaries of the City of Jonesboro as the primary market for the analysis. Our sub-market geography is comprised of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) eligible census tracts of Jonesboro as determined by U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines.

The City displays a full range of conditions that must be addressed to maintain and strengthen neighborhoods and reverse the decline in older and inner city areas. Some of the neighborhoods are almost rural in character, containing large lot housing development, bordered by some agricultural uses.

Approach - Our approach for developing the Plan has been problem solving oriented. This means several things. First, we sought to understand the issues and concerns of Jonesboro relative to housing and neighborhoods, and to develop solutions that are specific to your needs. This orientation also means that we started the process with a focus on understanding the concerns underlying stated goals and objectives of the project. By understanding the underlying reasons for a particular goal, a wider range of alternatives were considered for its achievement. Secondly, by problem solving we mean: that the process proceeded from an understanding of ***what is - the factual basis*** - ; to ***what the community wants - its goals and objectives*** -; to development of ***alternatives means for achieving its goals – what can be***; to recommendations on ***how to implement*** **the means for goals achievement – *what to do.*** Finally, it means that the process was iterative. We produced draft materials for review and then revise them based on the collective feedback of the City and community in the process.

The diagram on the following page provides a graphic illustration of the approach.



Methodology - The methodology included four integrated phases:

Phase One: Project Initiation, Strategic Planning and Community Engagement – Our consultant team, with the support of the city administration initiated the project and established the factual basis within the planning area(s) and identified critical issues based on these facts. We hosted strategic planning sessions, focus groups sessions and community meetings to explore resident, industry and business attitudes and concerns about housing and neighborhood, including discussions on priority needs, issues, opportunities, and alternatives.

Phase Two: Needs Assessment, Existing Conditions Analysis and Goal Setting – Needs were identified based on technical analysis of data developed in phase one and the involvement of citizens, professional organizations and City leadership in refining technical issues and identifying and refining goals and objectives concerning housing and neighborhoods.

Phase Three: Socio-Economic and Needs Analysis – Socio-Economic Profiles were created to provided an analytical overview of current housing trends, supply and demand, building conditions, age, location, and cost of existing housing units, land uses, ownership patterns, public infrastructure, and transportation. The analysis considered supply and demand of various housing types and the specific housing needs of populations such as large families, the working poor, elderly, and homeless, as well as, issues relative to affordability and housing finance. This effort culminated in developing various profiles of Jonesboro including general demographic, housing, public transportation and infrastructure, income and workforce characteristics, building conditions and development trends, public policy, and housing and financing products, programs and lending options available to help meet residents' existing and future needs.

Phase Four: Summary of Key Findings, Recommendations, and Final Report – In this phase, we explored further housing needs in Jonesboro and alternative means for improving neighborhoods. This phase included the development of photographic images, conceptual development plans and project opportunity illustrations incorporated into our report that promote the recommended strategies, define development opportunities identified in the planning process, and offer visual aides helpful in determining perceptions to market, housing preferences and program needs.

HOUSING CONDITIONS SURVEY AND NEIGHBORHOOD ASSESSMENTS

The Housing Conditions Survey and Neighborhood Assessments were conducted in September and October of 2011 of all Community Development Block Grant eligible census tracts as defined by the U. S. Department of HUD Regulations. The Housing Conditions Survey consisted of an analysis of housing conditions utilizing a windshield survey of select properties in the city, documenting exterior conditions, vacant lots, and premise and neighborhood conditions.

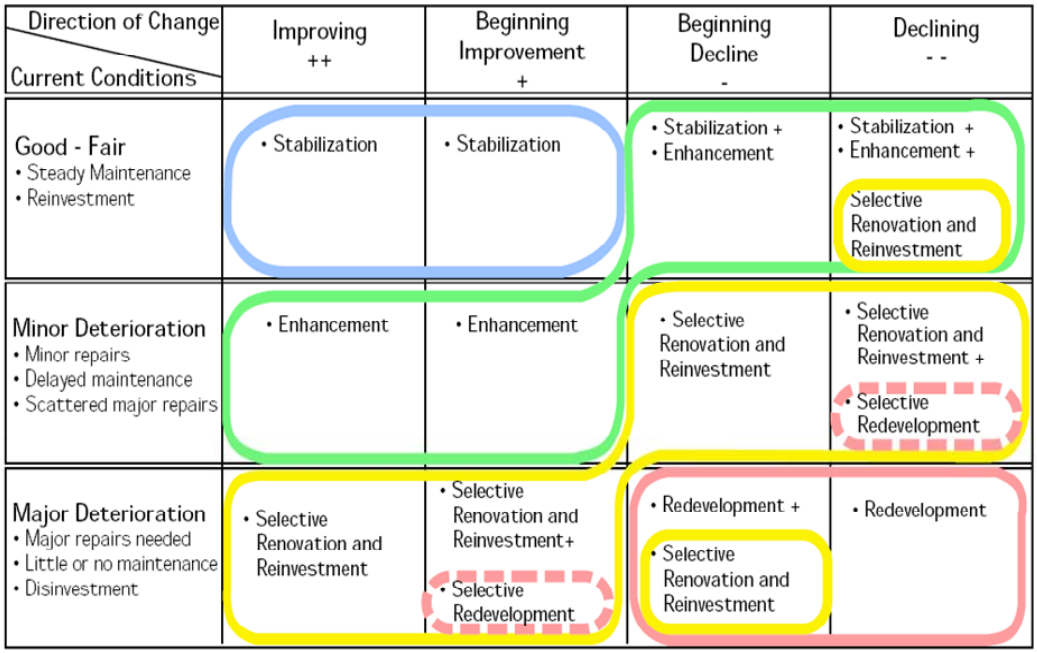
Neighborhood Assessments of areas not subject to the property conditions survey was conducted based on a visual physical attributes evaluation and the collection of quantitative data about these areas. Quantitative data includes housing, land use, zoning, education, streets, transportation, infrastructure, parks and open space and other pertinent conditions for the areas. This section builds upon the Socio-Economic analysis and serves as the foundation for determining the policy orientation as to which, how and to what extent recommendations and strategies should be applied to the geography of the city in order to maintain neighborhood stability or reverse decline.

Understanding where a neighborhood or planning area ranks on the sustainability spectrum, assist in determining the policy orientation as to which, how and to what extent revitalization strategies and redevelopment policies should be applied to the geography of the area in order to maintain stability or reverse decline. Once a fundamental policy direction and specific sustainability scheme can be determined the classification system was applied taking into account current conditions in the area and the direction of change perceived to be occurring.

Five classifications are used to determine a policy orientation for reversing decline as shown in Illustration 2 on the following page: The Neighborhood Classification Model.

- Stable Neighborhood Planning Areas / Stabilization
- Neighborhood Planning Areas in Transition / Enhancement
- Declining Neighborhood Planning Areas / Selective Renovation and Reinvestment
- Deterioration Neighborhood Planning Areas / Selective Redevelopment; and
- Residential Conversion to Non Residential Planning Areas / Redevelopment

Illustration 2: Neighborhood Planning Area Classification Model



Neighborhood Planning Areas have characteristics and conditions that differ over parts of their geography. It is important that sub-area classifications be determined and policy orientations be specific to those sub-geographies in order to achieve the intended goals of each of the five classifications. The descriptions of the classifications reveal both the recognition of the current conditions and a forecast of the direction of change, allowing the policy orientations to then determine the specific tools, programs, and resources to be applied.

The consultants engaged stakeholders that comprised all seven Vision 2030 Sub-Committees in identifying and designating planning area geographies and their boundaries. Specifically, we tasked the committee with reaching a consensus as to the historical naming and boundaries of the planning area geographies. The map on page 13 of the Community Engagement section represents 40 planning areas by geographical boundaries and names assigned during that exercise. Our Comprehensive Housing and Neighborhood Plan

recommendations and data analyses have been presented using the defined planning areas as a basis.

KEY ISSUES, STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Key Issues, Strategies and Recommendations Section present specific alternatives to address housing and neighborhood Issues in Jonesboro. These issues were derived from focus group sessions, community forums, priority needs survey, Steering Committee input, and an examination of data and analyses performed by the consultants. Recommendations and Strategies are intended to address systemic issues citywide, or provide prototypical application of concepts to specific planning areas or sub-markets. Recommendations are presented as options in the creation of an overall housing policy.

KEY ISSUES

1. **Restoring the "Basic . Attributes" of the Communities**
2. **Concentrations of Poverty**
3. **Zoning and Development Regulations and Incentives**
4. **Land Use Compatibility**
5. **Housing and Neighborhood Conditions**
6. **Regulatory Reform**
7. **Location of New Construction**
8. **Downtown Housing**
9. **Multifamily Housing Affordability, Condition, and Location**
10. **Senior Housing and Special Needs Housing**
11. **Alternative Housing Products**
12. **Increase Resources for Housing and Redevelopment**
13. **Economic Development and Community Projects**
14. **Collaboration with the Arkansas State University on Revitalization**

HOUSING POLICIES

The following are recommended Housing Policies for the City of Jonesboro.

- Define Affordable Housing designating the appropriate agency – program – resource to respond to each segment of the population.
- Establish Numerical Production Goals for affordable housing and market rate housing based on the housing market analysis.
- Implement Regulatory Changes in Code Enforcement, CPTED Standards for new Multifamily, Rental Registration Regulations and Implement RR Inspection Program.
- Utilize Local Incentives for Affordable Housing -Tax and Fee Abatement, Tax Increment Finance, Public Improvement Districts.
- Elimination of Non-Tax Lien Encumbrances, Subsidies, Land Acquisitions, and Regulatory Incentives/Inclusionary Zoning.
- Create a Local Trust Fund and support the State Housing Trust Fund as a resource that supports production of Affordable Housing.
- Seek increases in local allocations of Federal Section 8 Rental Assistance Vouchers from U.S. Department of HUD.
- Seek Local allocation of federal funding for Homeless Facilities and Domestic Violence Shelters.
- Promote the availability of housing for persons with disabilities and adopt “visitable housing standards” as part of the local building codes.
- Promote “green building” and energy efficiency standards in new construction and substantial rehabilitation of housing units.
- Pursue funding for development of new small scattered site developments in non minority non poverty concentrated census tracts, replacing concentrations of obsolete/deteriorated Public and HUD Assisted Housing Units.
- Enact public policies removing barriers and encouraging scattered small site developments being constructed where ever MF is permitted.
- Build upon the emergence of Jonesboro as a regional leader in the healthcare industry and as a provider of housing for the elderly and those with special needs.

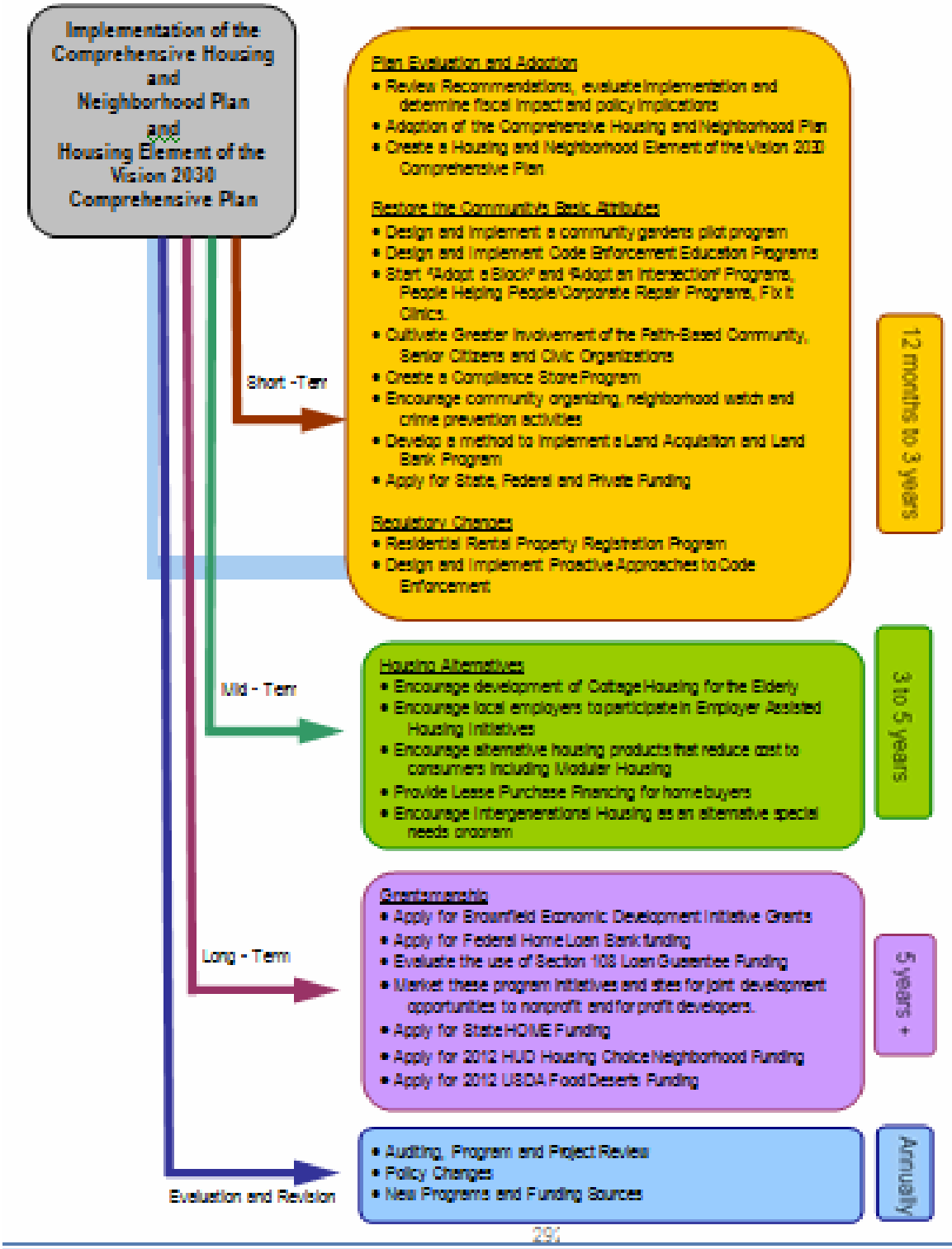
IMPLEMENTATION

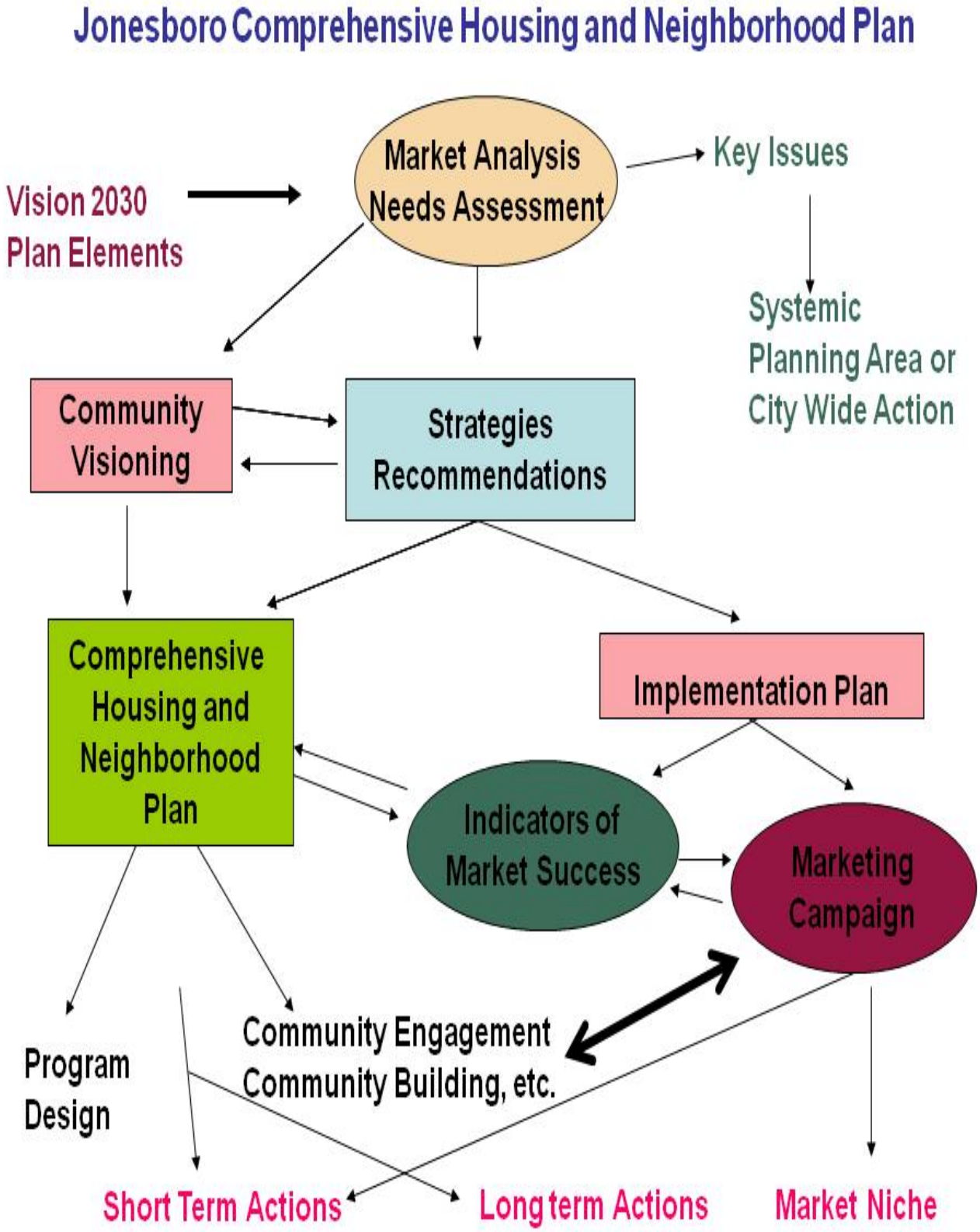
Implementation of the City of Jonesboro Comprehensive Housing and Neighborhood Plan will require a partnership between the City, private sector and nonprofit community along with an energized community in order to be successful. The City Community Development Office, Planning Department and Jonesboro Urban Renewal and Housing Authority will provide leadership in implementing the strategies and recommendations in the plan. This will include direct financial support with HUD Entitlement Grant and Public and Assisted Housing funding and by enacting public policy and regulatory changes in support of the various initiatives. The City will have to champion new development concepts and leverage private sector participation in these efforts

The recommendations have been divided into categories of short term, mid term and long term for purposes of estimating the timeframes that might be necessary to carry out the implementation program. These categories and timeframes are intended as a guide and actual timeframes may vary depending upon resources required or public policy and regulatory changes that have to be enacted.

Marketing will be an important role for the City of Jonesboro. The City will need to market the plan's vision, policies, strategies and recommendations to the community as a primary means of improving and stabilizing existing neighborhoods and creating and maintain sustainable neighborhoods for the future. This will involve identifying systemic planning area and citywide opportunities for implementation that best demonstrate to the community visual examples of the policies needed to guide future growth and development.

The City and the Chamber of Commerce must provide leadership in creating a **"Market Niche"** that serves to retain businesses and residents to to live and invest in their community, and attracts new persons to make Jonesboro their choice as a place to live, work and conduct business. The Illustrations on the following pages provides an overview of the process, moving from plan creation, to implementation, to marketing and building a market niche for the future.


Implementation of the Comprehensive Housing and Neighborhood Plan and Housing Element of the Vision 2030 Comprehensive Plan
Short -Term
Mid - Term
Long - Term
Evaluation and Revision
Plan Evaluation and Adoption
• Review Recommendations, evaluate implementation and determine fiscal impact and policy implications
• Adoption of the Comprehensive Housing and Neighborhood Plan
• Create a Housing and Neighborhood Element of the Vision 2030 Comprehensive Plan
Restore the Community's Basic Attributes
• Design and implement a community gardens pilot program
• Design and implement Code Enforcement Education Programs
• Start "Adopt a Block" and "Adopt an Intersection" Programs, People Helping People/Corporate Repair Programs, Fix It Clinics.
• Cultivate Greater Involvement of the Faith-Based Community, Senior Citizens and Civic Organizations
• Create a Compliance Store Program
• Encourage community organizing, neighborhood watch and crime prevention activities
• Develop a method to implement a Land Acquisition and Land Bank Program
• Apply for State, Federal and Private Funding
Regulatory Changes
• Residential Rental Property Registration Program
• Design and Implement Proactive Approaches to Code Enforcement
12 months to 3 years
Housing Alternatives
• Encourage development of College Housing for the Elderly
• Encourage local employers to participate in Employer Assisted Housing Initiatives
• Encourage alternative housing products that reduce cost to consumers including Modular Housing
• Provide Lease Purchase Financing for home buyers
• Encourage Intergenerational Housing as an alternative special needs program
3 to 5 years
Grantsmanship
• Apply for Brownfield Economic Development Initiative Grants
• Apply for Federal Home Loan Bank funding
• Evaluate the use of Section 108 Loan Guarantee Funding
• Market these program initiatives and sites for joint development opportunities to nonprofit and for profit developers.
• Apply for State HOME Funding
• Apply for 2012 HUD Housing Choice Neighborhood Funding
• Apply for 2012 USDA Food Deserts Funding
5 years +
• Auditing, Program and Project Review
• Policy Changes
• New Programs and Funding Sources
Annually


Jonesboro Comprehensive Housing and Neighborhood Plan
Vision 2030
Plan Elements
Market Analysis
Needs Assessment
Key Issues
Systemic
Planning Area or
City Wide Action
Community
Visioning
Strategies
Recommendations
Comprehensive
Housing and
Neighborhood
Plan
Implementation Plan
Indicators of
Market Success
Marketing
Campaign
Program
Design
Community Engagement
Community Building, etc.
Short Term Actions
Long term Actions
Market Niche

FINDING THE MARKET NICHE

- **WHO LIVES THERE NOW,**
  - AND WHO ARE WE LOSING....
- **WHO WORKS THERE,OPERATES A BUSINESS, IS AN INVESTOR**
  - AND COULD LIVE THERE IF.... ...
- **WHO TRAVELS THROUGH, VISITS, OR IS A TEMPORARY RESIDENT OR STUDENT,**
  - AND COULD LIVE THERE IF.....
- **WHO COULD BE ATTRACTED BY THE FEATURES OF OUR NEIGHBORHOODS**
  - UNIQUE AND INVITING NEIGHBORHOODS ... ...