

CHAPTER 7 –COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Stephenville’s citizens expect highly professional delivery of public services in cost-effective, consistent, and friendly ways. They take pride in civic buildings and facilities that reflect well on their community and provide activities and services that contribute to their well being and quality of life. Long term, these facilities and services support economic development and community growth in a safe environment.

The purpose of this chapter of the Plan is to foster the provision of appropriate municipal buildings and facilities and support the adequate provision of primary public services of police, fire and emergency medical services. Looking ahead to 2030, the City must be prepared to continue meeting the service and facility expectations of a growing population in a timely, orderly and economical manner, in coordination with other public and private entities when mutually beneficial. This chapter includes reviews of existing conditions, and identifies needs and desires then recommends actions related to public facilities and services in Stephenville.

Key Issues

The first Community Forum for the comprehensive Plan gave the citizens of Stephenville opportunities to express their issues and concerns about community facilities and public services. In breakout groups focused specifically on community facilities, public services, and public utilities, they identified specific desires and needs for the community. Key person interviews provided additional information on what is necessary in the future of Stephenville, as well as confirmed the responses from the Community Forum. These issues are the basis for the formation of goals, objectives and actions.

- ◆ New larger library facility
- ◆ Conference or convention facility
- ◆ New Senior Center
- ◆ Improvements to Rec Hall in City Park
- ◆ Event center/entertainment venue, place to host large scale events

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- ◆ Community center for sports and other activities
- ◆ Airport improvements to attract commercial users
- ◆ New swimming pool/aquatic center
- ◆ Expanding Fire/EMS services to meet growth demands
- ◆ Increased awareness and cooperation between Tarleton State University and the City of Stephenville

During the key person interviews many of the interviewees voiced their opinion that there is a need to recognize the important role that the University plays in Stephenville. Some said that the University keeps the City young, that it keeps the energy of the City alive, therefore needs to be nurtured. The University provides many opportunities to the community by providing resources that can be shared, and by keeping a constant young population in the City. This younger population may provide a customer base and workforce that contributes to the local economy, but adds traffic concerns and demands on facilities and services. Even though the students are sometimes considered temporary, they are constant, and their needs should be considered as well.

Existing Public Facilities

Public buildings and facilities are necessary components of every community. They provide routine, expected facilities to meet, receive services, or pursue recreational activities. It is important to assure that adequate and desired public facilities are available to current and future residents of Stephenville. **Figure 7-1 - Community Facilities** shows the locations of existing buildings and facilities in the City. Those facilities are as follows.

Stephenville City Hall

Stephenville's current City Hall is located at 298 West Washington Street. Current functions in City Hall include administration (offices of the Mayor, City Administrator, City Secretary, etc.) finance, personnel, utilities customer service, parks and recreation, community services, community development and building inspection. This adaptive reuse of a commercial building is currently serving very well and should continue to for the foreseeable future.

Public Safety Building

Fire and Police are headquartered in the Public Safety Building on North Belknap. This 1954 building was remodeled in 1997 and currently meets most of the service needs. With the City continuing to develop to the west, there is a need for a third fire station. This facility should be generally located in the West Washington/Northwest loop area with area provided for an eventual police substation.

Stephenville Public Library

The Twentieth Century Club, a local women's club, started the Stephenville Public Library in 1903. Volunteers ran the library from their homes and later at various locations in the City. By 1919, funds were raised to buy a lot at the corner of Green Street and Erath Street. The library was completed in 1924. The site is where Major Erath lived when he laid out the City of Stephenville. In 1968, the 1935 Post Office building at 174 Columbia Street became available and was remodeled as a library. An agreement was made with the Twentieth Century Club to take over the library books and other items in 1969. On September 1, 1998, the City and the library received the deed from the United States Government.

At the initial public meeting for the Comprehensive Plan and through follow up correspondence, the desire and the need for new and larger library facilities was widely expressed. A central location, accessible building and expanded services are considered necessities for the citizens of Stephenville.

Stephenville Museum and Grounds

The Stephenville Museum and Grounds is located at 525 East Washington Street. The invitation to a ladies' tea in 1932, instructed guests to "wear a shawl and bring a relic." Thus began the first organized collection of history for Stephenville and Erath County. For many years the items collected were displayed in the public library. The Stephenville Study Club arranged for the purchase of the Berry property and signed the Articles of Incorporation for the Stephenville Historical House Museum in 1966. The newly selected board of directors agreed to open a museum for "collecting, preserving, interpreting and maintaining educational exhibits

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for instruction to the public in our cultural heritage and history. The "relics" which had been collected over the years were the first donations to the new museum.

The museum area currently has ten (10), nineteenth century structures furnished with period furniture and artifacts. Some of the buildings located on the grounds are: Berry Cottage, Blacksmith Shop, Buck Cabin, Carmack Cabin, Carriage House, Center Grove Schoolhouse, Chapel on the Bosque, Cowan Cabin, and the John Tarleton Ranch House (founder of Tarleton State University).

Rec Hall

Rec Hall in City Park has long been used for recreational and social events, including ones that bring in people from outside of Stephenville. Built as a Works Projects Administration (WPA) project as recreation facility, it has served the City well for many years. Now, as heard at the Community Forum, the Rec Hall is disrepair and increasingly difficult to host events there due to the condition and size limitations. As the City has grown so has the need for larger and newer gathering places, however the Rec Center is and should continue to be an important asset at City Park.

Senior Citizens Center

The Stephenville Senior Citizens Center is located at 164 E. College Street. The center offers a place for seniors to gather with their friends, enjoy lunch, games, crafts, dancing, exercise, seminars, and social events. The center is also a resource center for area seniors to find out what services are offered from local, state, and national governments, along with local services offered from area business. Most services offered at the center are for people 55 years and older.

The building is deteriorating and needs many repairs. A new center, perhaps in conjunction with other city facilities will be needed in the near future.

Cowboy Capital Walk of Fame

The "Cowboy Capital Walk of Fame" is designed to recognize the significance of the Western heritage that is an integral part of Stephenville

and the surrounding area. By honoring those outstanding individuals, both local and national, who have achieved worldwide acclaim, the "Walk of Fame" seeks to promote tourism by establishing a permanent tourist attraction. The goal of the "Walk of Fame" is to serve as a catalyst for tourism events and activities that promote the Western Heritage theme.

Cemeteries

The City of Stephenville owns three cemeteries within the city limits: West End Memorial Cemetery and East End Memorial Cemetery. City staff is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the grounds and selling of plots. The City has a designated area as an Urn Garden located at the West End Cemetery.

West End Memorial Cemetery. Located at the intersection of Washington Street and Lillian Street across from Tarleton State University.

East End Memorial Cemetery. Located on Hwy 281, approximately a ½ mile north of Washington Street next to Tejas Golf Course.

Mount Olivette Cemetery. Located on College Farm Road, approximately a ¼ mile south of Farm-To-Market Road 8 (Lingleville Highway).

Clark Field Municipal Airport

Clark Field Municipal Airport is located approximately one mile east of downtown Stephenville on the east side of U.S. Highway 281. Clark Field has one active runway, a public aircraft apron and stub and parallel taxiways that connect the apron to the runways. The airport terminal building has a small waiting area, office and rest rooms. There are two large hangars and three T-hangars on the airport. Twenty-one (21) aircrafts are based at the airport at this time. Sixteen new T hangers are planned. Hangars may be rented through airport management. The Fixed Base Operator (FBO) is acting as the Airport Manager.

The City of Stephenville has implemented the first stages of the Airport Improvement Project jointly funded with a Texas Department of Transportation grant. The purpose of this project is to improve current

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conditions of the runways and lighting systems. The project includes extending runway protection zones and object free areas; reconstruction of runway and taxiway; widening of the runway; striping and marking of the runway; rehabilitation of the apron access, cross taxiway, apron areas and the west T-hangar access taxiway; relocation of runway lights; and relocation of fencing.

For the future development of the airport there will be a need to lengthen the NE/SW runway from the current 4,200 feet to 5,000 feet and eventually to 6,200 feet. Land will need to be acquired for the extensions. The longer runway positions the airport to attract more commercial users. The additional land and industrial and business park land uses around the airport will protect the flight zones from encroachment by residential and incompatible land uses.

Since 2001, there are new security measures being required for general aviation airports. Stephenville needs to be prepared to meet the measures, as they are required.

Other Community Facilities

Tarleton State University

Located in the heart of Stephenville is Tarleton State University, a part of the Texas A&M University System. Founded in 1899 as John Tarleton College, in 1917, the college, gained official status as a university in 1973. Tarleton State University has experienced considerable growth over the past decade, with a current enrollment exceeding 8,000. Students come from over 200 Texas counties, as well as 30 states and ten foreign nations. Tarleton provides the Clyde H. Wells Fine Arts Center as well as the TSU Planetarium for use by the community.

Erath County Courthouse

Although not a City of Stephenville facility, the Erath County Courthouse is one of the area's most prominent structures from its central position the town square. In that it is one of Stephenville's most notable and valued structures, the City should continue to work with the County on issues related to Courthouse use and preservation. Originally built in 1892, Erath County recently completed an extension renovation of the Courthouse.

The courthouse annex is across the square from the original building and houses a number of County departments

Future Public Facilities

Community Event Center/ Community Complex

There is an expressed desire for a community facility, one that could perhaps combine several facilities in a central location. For economic reasons, a multi purpose facility may be more feasible since only one facility would need to be built rather than building several separate facilities. It could also support (and not compete with) private sector facilities by providing meeting space for conferences and conventions.

Possible sites for a Community Complex were identified during the Community Forum and Key Person interviews. One proposed site, adjacent to City Park, would, because of its proximity to the Park, provide opportunities to combine Park and Complex resources. This property is not currently served by utilities; therefore, those costs would have to be considered in development costs.

A second possible Community Complex site is downtown at the current site of the Senior Center. This location could provide ample space for a library, conference/meeting center, senior facility, and parking while improving the economy in the downtown area by bring people into the area. The City already owns property in the area, including the Senior Center and parking areas. It would be necessary to partner with other property owners in the area, particularly the corner building, a focal point that could achieve a distinctive visual historical link to the square. Also nearby are State buildings occupying a portion of the proposed site. As in several other Texas communities, relocation of the State offices to the old hotel might be feasible, thereby expanding the potential site.

Close to Downtown is the third site to be considered. Located north of East Washington and east of Vine adjacent to the Bosque River, this largely undeveloped area in the oldest part of Stephenville has adequate space for all the facilities being considered.

Library

The desire for a new library facility was brought up many times during the Community Forum as well as the key person interviews. In fact, in almost every group, this was a topic of discussion, and one that everyone shared the same views on. The current library is small and would benefit in having more up to date facilities to address the needs of the existing and growing population. This facility could be a stand-alone facility or included in the Community Complex.

Rec Hall

Renovations to and possible expansion of the Rec Hall can extend its viability. It is in a good location at City Park, but lacks large meeting spaces. The proposed Community Complex could take some of the burden off of Rec Hall as an event center and allow this building to function primarily as a location for recreation programs and smaller meetings

Swimming Pool/Aquatic Center

As recommended in the *Parks Master Plan*, a new facility for swimming is high on the list of needed facilities for Stephenville citizens. The new facility would not only serve local requirements, but also provide a venue for regional competitions.

Senior Center

The Senior Center was also a point of discussion during the Community Forum and the key person interviews. Like the library, people were all of the same opinion that there needed to be a new, improved center for the City's elderly. The current facility is too old, and is not equipped to adequately meet the needs of its clients. A combined facility including senior center and library would be an ideal combination that would make it simple for the City's seniors to have easy access to the library, to provide them with activities to do during the day, and increase their interactions with the rest of the Stephenville community. As well, a combined senior center/library complex would provide opportunities for the City's youth and elderly populations to interact. This was brought up in many of the

discussions during the Community Forum. Citizens felt it important that the youth interact and learn from the senior population.

Clark Field Municipal Airport

Extension of the runway, land acquisition and new terminal facilities will be necessary to move the airport to a level that can attract commercial users. Given Stephenville's regional setting, an improved airport could possibly attract freight and industry users in coordination with Industrial and business Parks.

Possible locations of future Community Facilities is shown in **Figure 7-1-Community Facilities**.

Public Services

Primary public services include police, fire and emergency medical services. This section also addresses Stephenville's animal protection services and recycling program. The adequate provision of these services impacts the actual and perceived quality of life in a community. Services provisions will be impacted by Stephenville's future growth and development.

Police

The Police Department is headquartered in Stephenville's Public Safety Building, on North Belknap Street. The City does not maintain a jail and uses the Erath County detention facility. The Department currently has eight (8) patrol units and 40 police personnel and officers. As the City grows, additional personnel and equipment will be needed to maintain the community policing that Stephenville now provides. With an anticipated population of over 25,000 by 2030, police personnel requirements will be increased and based on standards developed by the Department with additional personnel added gradually as the population increases. Like a number of the cities in Texas, cross training of police, fire and emergency medical technicians could be of benefit to Stephenville. Office space, updated dispatch equipment and holding facilities will need to be considered in any expansion plans. New and additional equipment are capital expenditures and will require inclusion in long-range budgeting and financial considerations.

Fire and Emergency Medical Service

The Stephenville Fire Department provides a multitude of services, such as: Fire Protection, Fire Prevention Education, Arson Investigation, Fire Inspections, Code Enforcement, Hazardous Materials Response, Fire Suppression and Rescue, and Emergency Medical Service. Since 1993 the Fire Department has averaged in excess of 2,100 calls per year. Approximately 80% of those calls were for ambulance service, or as it is known today, the EMS. (Emergency Medical Service).

Currently, the City has a class four (ISO) rating. Approximately 70% of the EMS calls are made for the senior citizens' population. The fire department staff includes 21 shift personnel who generally work 24 hours on duty and 48 hours off. A volunteer Fire Department (30+ members) provides much needed support, backup, and manpower. All shift personnel are cross-trained in fire and EMS as required by state law. The EMS provider license with the Texas Department of Health was recently upgraded from BLS with ALS capabilities to BLS with MICU capabilities. The department also participates in North Central Texas Trauma Regional Advisory Council (RAC).

There are two Fire Stations. Station One is located at 212 West Tarleton Street, and Fire Station Two is located at 895 Harbin Drive. The department has seven fire trucks, one rescue truck and three ambulances. An additional Fire Station will be necessary as the City continues to grow to the west.

Animal Control

Stephenville's Animal Control division is part of the Police Department. Animal Control employs two full-time employees. These personnel receive their calls and handle their paperwork and the Public Safety Building but also spend part of their time at the City's animal shelter. They respond to calls daily and perform their duties with a City-owned vehicles designed to handle animal transport.

New Public Services Facility and Program

Fire Station

A new fire station may be needed as the population continues to grow to the west. The exact location of the proposed new fire station will be determined, but the most likely and necessary location will be in the vicinity of West Washington and the Northwest Loop.

Recycling Program

A more intensive recycling program will be needed in the future as the City grows and the amount of solid waste increases. Many areas cities, especially in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, have recycling programs to help reduce the amount of solid waste in their landfills. The City could explore the possibilities of adding a recycling program to be more environmentally responsible. Materials could include grass, mulch materials, as well as the standard paper, glass, metal and plastic. To assure that recycling is a positive for the community, educational and promotional programs will be needed.

Goal, Objectives and Actions

The goals, objectives and action steps outlined in this chapter of the Stephenville Comprehensive Plan Update are based on traditional urban planning principles as well as input from community residents and leaders during the planning process. These goals, objectives and actions will be the foundation for which community facilities and public services will be built upon or enhanced to better meet the needs of Stephenville's population. The goals, objectives and actions do not appear in priority order.

Community Facilities Goal: A well-maintained, operational and up-to-date system of community facilities and services that are accessible and respond to the needs of all segments of the community.

Objective CF1: Provide a multi-use Community Complex to include library, senior center, and event center.

Action CF1.1: Identify a site for the Community Complex and which community facilities could/should be considered in one central location

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Action CF1.2: Decide whether a new library should be a stand-alone structure or be part of a multipurpose community facility.

ActionCF1.3: Support with funding for design and construction

Objective CF2: *Consider a new Senior Center.*

Action CF2.1: Decide on location and/or co-location of Senior Center

ActionCF2.2: Support with funding for design and construction

Objective CF3: *Consider a separate Events Center*

Action CF3.1: Identify the purpose and location or co-location within Community Complex

ActionCF3.2: Support with funding mechanisms for design and construction

Objective CF4: *Develop a new swimming pool/aquatic center (see Parks Master Plan.).*

Action CF4.1: Determine the best location for new swimming facilities.

Action CF4.2: Determine funding and apply for grant funds

Objective CF5: *Improve the Rec Hall*

Action CF5.1: Determine condition of existing structure usefulness

Action CF5.2: Design and construct needed improvement and possible expansion

ActionCF5.3: Support with funding mechanisms for design and construction

Objective CF6: *Identify and make Airport improvements.*

Action CF6.1: Acquire necessary land to extend the runway

Action CF6.2: Design and build new terminal

Action CF6.3: Market the facilities as a viable commercial and regional airport

Objective CF7: *Construct new Fire Station on west side*

Action CF7.1: Identify a site

Action CF7.2: Decide whether a new firestation should be a stand-alone structure or be part of a multipurpose community facility.

ActionCF7.3: Support with funding mechanisms

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Objective CF8: *Expand cooperation with Tarleton State University for shared facilities*

Action CF8.1: Discuss continued coordination opportunities with University for shared use of facilities. Determine possible shared facilities (particularly sports and recreation facilities), schedule of availability, and user fees.

Objective CF9: *Develop a recycling program*

Action CF9.1: Research, develop and implement recycling program

ActionCF9.2: Investigate and coordinate with solid waste contractor

ActionCF9.3: Support with funding mechanisms

It should be noted here that many of the above objectives are really capital improvements and will need to be considered in the City's Capital Improvements Program (CIP) on a yearly basis. Building upon the successful implementation of the previous Comprehensive Plan, in which most of the long-range improvements have been made, it is sincerely hoped that these projects will have similar successful implementation.

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