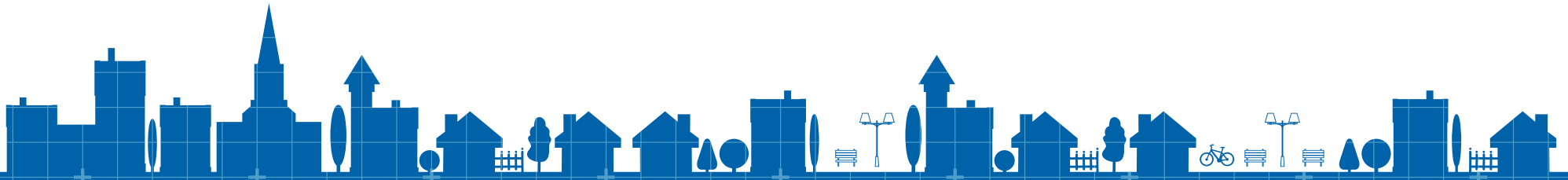


# VILONIA 2030

## Planning for a More Resilient City

A Report of the Rebuild Vilonia Committee  
to the Vilonia City Council and Mayor James Firestone



***REBUILD VILONIA***



LETTER FROM...  
**MARTY KNIGHT**



**RebuildVilonia.Org**

**OFFICE OF COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN**

To the Members of the Vilonia City Council:

Vilonia is a very different community than it was prior to the spring of 2011. The tornadoes of April 25, 2011 and April 27, 2014 left an indelible mark on the community we call home.

What has not changed is the indomitable spirit of our city. That spirit existed prior to 2011 and is stronger than ever today. We've witnessed neighbors helping neighbors; strangers becoming friends; and those from outside our community lifting our hearts in countless ways.

The severity of the 2014 tornado altered our landscape forever and challenged us to look ahead and move forward unlike any event in our 136-year history. The voices we heard during the recovery planning process are united by the belief that this tragedy offers us an unprecedented opportunity to become greater than we were before. We owe it to those who lost their lives to build a safer and more vibrant city.

This plan was developed by a broad cross-section of city residents and represents a summary of what they envision for Vilonia. We are grateful for their time and hard work. We are thankful for the assistance that we have received from those outside our community during the development of these concepts and plans.

This report concludes with a list of projects that we believe can serve as a catalyst for development and recovery. We submit these for your consideration and stand ready to assist you in making them a reality.

We are deeply appreciative of the opportunity to serve Vilonia.

With warm regards on behalf of the Rebuild Vilonia Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marty Knight". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Marty Knight

RebuildVilonia.org

LETTER FROM...

# CONGRESSMAN FRENCH HILL



**FRENCH HILL**  
2ND DISTRICT, ARKANSAS  
**COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES**  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL MARKETS AND  
GOVERNMENT SPONSORED ENTERPRISES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND  
INVESTIGATIONS



## Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

April 7, 2015

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
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1501 NORTH UNIVERSITY AVENUE, SUITE 150  
LITTLE ROCK, AR 72207  
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The Honorable James Firestone  
Mayor  
City of Vilonia  
PO Box 188  
Vilonia, AR 72173-0188

Dear Mayor Firestone:

I applaud the city's leaders and residents on the creation of a tornado recovery plan for Vilonia, "Vilonia 2030: Planning for a More Resilient City." I know that this plan is a result of countless hours of hard work and thoughtful planning that began at the first Rebuild Vilonia Committee meeting in July 2014.

Vilonia has my unwavering support and respect as the city works to overcome the ravages of the EF-4 tornado in 2014. I admire the strength and determination of the citizens of Vilonia in their recovery and rebuilding efforts. Arkansas's Second Congressional District is fortunate to have an abundance of citizens who are committed to their city and their state, and I will continue to provide any assistance needed to ensure the continuation of these efforts.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I may ever be of assistance to you. I may be contacted at my Little Rock office at (501) 324-5941, my Conway office at (501) 358-3481, or my Washington, D.C. office at (202) 225-2506.

Sincerely,

French Hill  
Member of Congress

[HILL.HOUSE.GOV](http://HILL.HOUSE.GOV)

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# SECTION 1

# BACKGROUND

## Vision Statement

The City of Vilonia balances a rich heritage with thoughtful planning towards a sense of place, progress, and beauty. Vilonia embodies resilience through individuals empowering one another to restore our community – spiritually, socially, and economically.

*The preceding Vision Statement was developed on August 8, 2014 by a cross-section of Vilonia citizens with assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Economic Development Administration. This Vision Statement is used broadly to communicate our vision and mission as a community.*

## Executive Summary

This plan is the product of many hours of volunteer work by Vilonia citizens and was completed with assistance of partners at the local, county, state, and federal levels of government. We are also profoundly grateful to several of our institutions of higher learning who continue to provide support and to those individuals from similarly stricken communities who graciously shared their experience and advice.

Since our goal was to provide the city a list of specific projects based on input from city residents, every effort was made to ensure that the recommendations reflect the voice of the community as a whole. A systematic approach was used to confirm that this plan is reflective of the strength and diversity of our community. This document provides background on the organizations involved in planning, as well as a timeline of events extending from April 27, 2014 to the present.

The projects outlined in the report have been developed and ranked in order of priority.

## History of the Rebuild Vilonia Committee

The Rebuild Vilonia Committee was formed in July 2014 as a grass-roots response to the need for recovery. Over 200 attended the first meeting at the Vilonia Seniors Citizens Center on July 17, 2014 and the organization of the Committee took place over the next several weeks. Regular meetings were held between and July and November 2014 with a total of sixty-two citizens participating.

The following community members serve on the Steering Committee for Rebuild Vilonia:

**Marty Knight**, CHAIRMAN  
**James Firestone**, MAYOR  
**Melanie Gentry**

**Stanley Gordon Jr.**  
**Jill Bonnema**  
**Jim King**, CITY COUNCIL



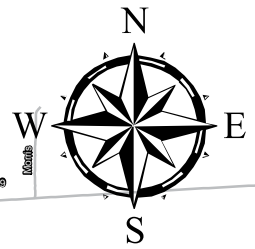
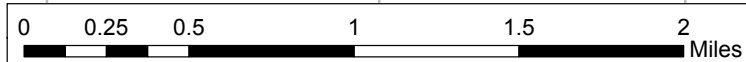
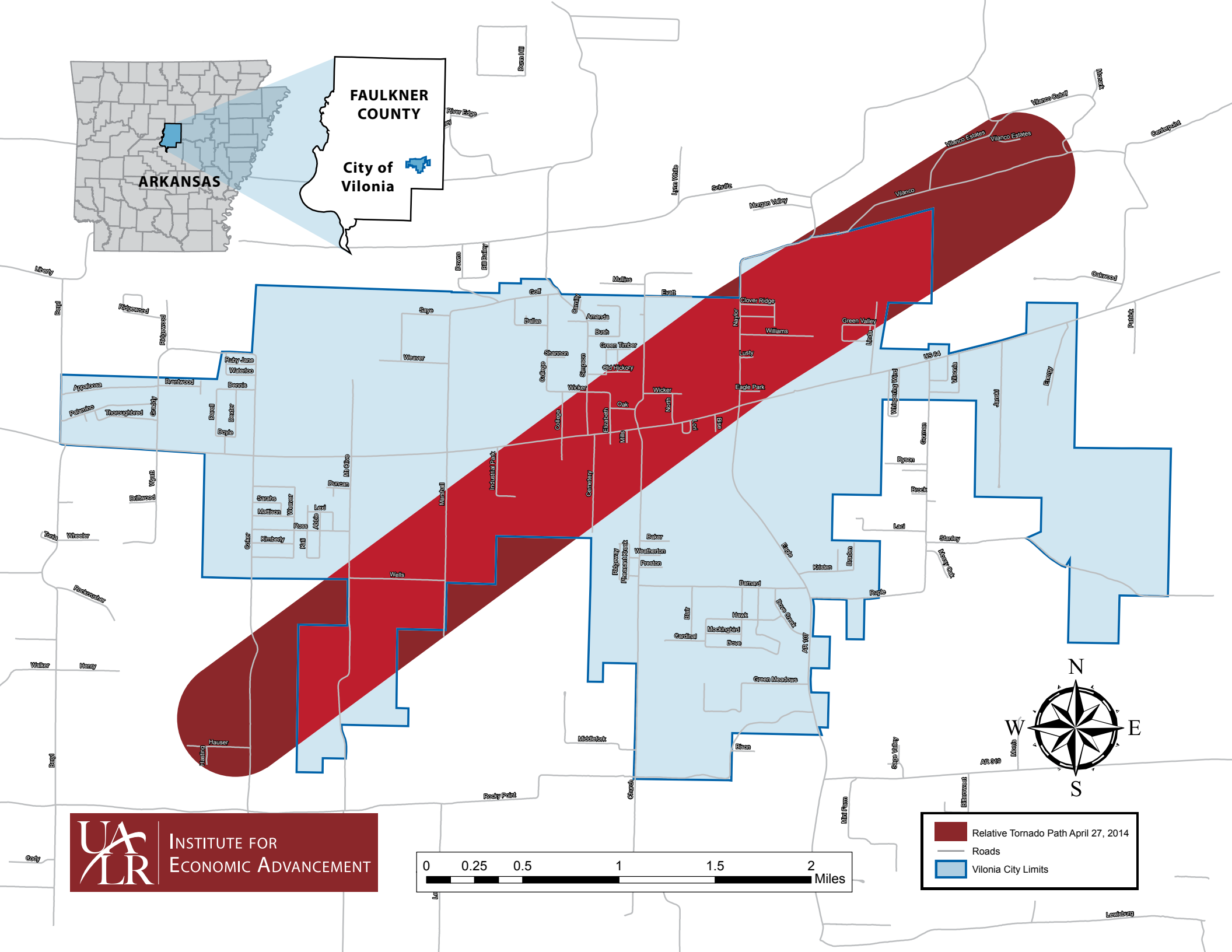


ARKANSAS



FAULKNER COUNTY

City of Vilonia



- Relative Tornado Path April 27, 2014
- Roads
- Vilonia City Limits

# From Impact to Plan: The Process and Timeline

On the evening of April 27, 2014, a tornado touched down in Pulaski County, west of the city of Little Rock. The tornado continued through Faulkner County before ending a 41-mile track in eastern White County. It struck Vilonia at approximately 7:50 PM, producing 166-200 mph winds (EF-4 strength) as it proceeded through the city.

The tornado resulted in 91 injuries and 16 fatalities, making it one of the deadliest tornados in Arkansas history. Nine of the sixteen lives lost were residents of the Vilonia community.

The city's commercial business district (Photo 1 on the morning of April 28, 2014) was devastated. Fifty-five of the 78 businesses operating in Vilonia were either destroyed or damaged.

The Vilonia School District's new \$13 million Intermediate School facility (Photo 2), scheduled to open in August 2014, had to be razed and rebuilt.

Hundreds of homes in Vilonia were damaged or destroyed. A small neighborhood along Cemetery Street was demolished and several residents killed. Four fatalities occurred in Parkwood Meadows (Photo 3) and 50 of the subdivisions' 57-homes were obliterated. Only one home remains today.

Formal recovery began with a Presidential Disaster Declaration on April 29, 2014. In the following weeks a number of support functions from the National Disaster Recovery Framework were activated including the Community Planning and Capacity Building (CPCB) of FEMA. The Economic Recovery Support Function (RSF) was triggered under declaration DR-4174-AR and mobilized on June 30, 2014.

On a concurrent timeline, the Rebuild Vilonia Committee was formed in July 2014 as a grass-roots response to the need for recovery (see section titled History of the Rebuild Vilonia Committee.) Regular meetings of the committee have continued to the present day.



Photo 1 Courtesy of Marty Knight



Photo 2 Courtesy of National Weather Service



Photo 3 Courtesy of National Weather Service





Photo 4 Courtesy of WER Architects + Planners



Photo 5 Courtesy of WER Architects + Planners



Photo 6 Courtesy of WER Architects + Planners



## ARCHITECTS/PLANNERS

The Little Rock firm of WER Architects + Planners was engaged by Rebuild Vilonia in late July 2014 to provide initial concepts for rebuilding. These initial concepts (see Photos 4– 6) were presented at public meetings held during the months of August and September 2014.



WER Architects + Planners

David Sargent



# Organizations Providing Support During this Phase of the Planning Process Include:

## Local and County Government:

City of Vilonia  
Faulkner County

## State Government:

Arkansas Department of Emergency Management  
Arkansas Economic Development Commission  
Department of Arkansas Heritage/ Main Street Arkansas  
Department of Rural Services

## Higher Education / Outreach:

UALR Institute for Economic Advancement  
UA Community Design Center  
UCA Center for Community and Economic Development  
Small Business and Technology Development Center

## Regional Planning Organizations:

Central Arkansas Planning and Development District  
Metroplan

## Non-Profits and Associations:

Arkansas Capital Corporation Group  
National Association of Development Organizations  
Arkansas Municipal League  
Arkansas Community Foundation  
Association of Arkansas Counties  
Conway Chamber of Commerce  
Little Rock Chamber of Commerce  
New York Says Thank You Foundation  
Kaboom

## Local Organizations:

Rebuild Vilonia Committee  
Vilonia Area Chamber of Commerce  
Vilonia Disaster Recovery Alliance

## Private Enterprise:

WER Architects + Planners  
Knight Business Solutions  
Gateway Planning  
Horsley Witten Group  
ICF International

## Federal Government:

Federal Emergency Management Agency  
Economic Development Administration  
Small Business Administration  
Housing and Urban Development

## Peer Cities and Groups:

City of Joplin, Missouri  
Joplin Area CART  
City of Arkadelphia, Arkansas

**Representatives** from the city of Joplin, Missouri and the Joplin Area Citizens Advisory Recovery Team (CART) met with a broad group of representatives from across Faulkner County on August 13–14, 2014 in Conway, Arkansas. With assistance from the UCA Center for Community and Economic Development, representatives from the city of Vilonia and Rebuild Vilonia also met with city and community leaders from Arkadelphia, Arkansas on January 9, 2015.

**The planning** done by Rebuild Vilonia reflects and will continue to reflect the powerful lessons learned from these two cities that have undergone similarly devastating events.

**A grant** by Economic Development Administration, awarded in September 2014, provided the following assistance to the recovery effort:

- Funding for a Long-Term Disaster Recovery Manager for the city.
- A contract with the Community Design Center (UA CDC), an outreach program of the Fay Jones School of Architecture at the University of Arkansas, to provide detailed design concepts and architectural renderings for the development of Vilonia.
- Money for the construction of an extension of Industrial Drive.



**Requirements** for the design concepts were provided to UA CDC during November and December 2014 and a full-day planning session was held on November 6, 2014. Design requirements were derived from feedback received from:

- Visioning sessions conducted by FEMA during July and August 2014.
- Public reaction during presentations of the WER concepts in August and September 2014.

**An extension of the Jump Start Initiative** was granted to Vilonia in January 2015. This initiative, led by Metroplan with contract assistance from Gateway Planning, provides recommendations for the form-based code needed to support the designs being considered.

**Town hall meetings** were held on February 19 and February 21 to:

- Present the design concepts developed by the UA Community Design Center to the public.
- Review economic data supporting the recovery and development of Vilonia.
- Examine successful examples of economic development presented by Gateway Planning.

**On Tuesday, February 17, 2015**, two days prior to the town hall meetings, the Vilonia City Council passed a resolution authorizing the Rebuild Vilonia Committee to:

- Facilitate the February town hall meetings.
- Gather input from the public regarding the four FEMA sectors:
  1. Infrastructure and Environment;
  2. Schools and Community Facilities;
  3. Housing; and
  4. Economic Development.
- Facilitate a meeting in March to gather additional public reaction regarding the response to the information disseminated at the February town halls.
- Develop and prioritize a list of specific projects based on all of the above.

**A total of over 90 citizens** participated in the February town halls. Eighty-six attended the February 19 meeting at Vilonia High School and six went to the February 21 forum at Vilonia City Hall. Information was also gathered using online surveys and written forms distributed at both meetings.

**On Thursday, March 12** at Vilonia City Hall, the public was asked to provide a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis of the four specific components of the UACDC design:

1. Vilonia as Future-Oriented
2. Vilonia as a Place of Commerce
3. Vilonia as a Safe Town
4. Vilonia as a Place of Residence for All

The balance of this document is based on the feedback received from this succession of public meetings.

## SECTION 2

# RE-IMAGINING VILONIA

## Re-Imagining Vilonia: FEMA Visioning Sessions

The Visioning Process applied by FEMA involved interviews with numerous individuals and groups within the city of Vilonia. These interviews took place during late July and early August 2014, culminating in a half-day meeting on Friday, August 8 organized around breakout sessions designed to collect public feedback on the four FEMA sectors.

### Infrastructure and Environment

#### Key Issues and Challenges

*Numbers in parentheses indicate multiple responses*

Downtown initiative to revitalize area (2)

Beautification (8)

Water Fountain Memorial

Green space and medians

Replanting of trees, tree-gifting and planting celebration (3)

Road connectivity / improved ingress-egress (6)

Street paving

Sewer and water infrastructure (2)

Improved business infrastructure (5)

Sidewalks (6)

Decorative street lighting and lampposts (3)

Establish a Business Square

Metal life station that needs to be moved

Underground utility lines (2)

Opportunity to do something unique now

### Housing and Neighborhoods

#### Key Issues and Challenges

*Numbers in parentheses indicate multiple responses*

Clean up neighborhoods

Timely rebuilding of neighborhoods (2)

Neighborhood safe room (2)

Required safe rooms in future-built homes

Affordable rental space

Emergency housing





Proposed multiway boulevard that accommodates through traffic as well as local or slow traffic for shopping.

## Schools and Community Facilities

### Key Issues and Challenges

*Numbers in parentheses indicate multiple responses*

- High-end park (5)
- Reconstruction of baseball fields (7)
- Community Center (11)
- Community Festival
- Community Pool
- Community Safe Rooms (13)
- Community Wise Program/  
Preparedness Program (3)
- Debris cleanup (2)

- Emergency Operations Facility (3)
- Farmers Market
- New Fire Substation
- School Safe Room (Intermediate School)
- Town Center (3)
- Town clock
- CDL Loan for Schools to assist  
in keeping staff in place

## Economic Development

### Key Issues and Challenges

*Numbers in parentheses indicate multiple responses*

- Reconstruction of Veterans Museum
- Rebuild shopping center with rent control  
to help businesses come back or start
- More engaged Chamber – active in  
bringing new businesses and engage  
existing business owners (2)
- Private Investments encourage  
businesses to move to Vilonia
- Increasing mitigation standards
- Manufacturing business
- Businesses that provide employment  
opportunity to youth
- Attract and rebuild businesses

- Industrial Development Area
- Encourage local shopping and  
support of local businesses (4)
- Variety of businesses
- 501(C)3 status for Rebuild Vilonia
- New restaurants, retail shops, and businesses
- Safe rooms – Bathrooms should be built  
as safe rooms on future developments
- Town Center
- Economic Development Center
- Keep businesses in town instead  
out on the bypass
- Tax incentives to draw business (3)

# Re-Imagining Vilonia: Feedback On Initial Concepts

The initial design concepts, developed by WER Architects + Planners, were presented to the public at a meeting held on September 2, 2014 at the cafeteria of Vilonia High School. A total of forty-eight citizens participated in the meeting. Attendees were asked to provide suggestions for projects based upon the designs presented.

## Infrastructure and Environment

*Numbers in parentheses indicate multiple responses*

Better roads, wider streets, and road improvements (3)

Elevated bridge for students to walk over at Main Street/107 intersection

Sidewalks (3)

City of Vilonia signs and nice landscaping

Decorative lighting in downtown (3)

Fewer metal buildings

Secondary streets parallel to and south of Main Street

Clean up the remaining debris

Better planning for growth

More support between all city groups

Parking at facilities, such as ball fields

Improved drainage

## Schools and Community Facilities

*Numbers in parentheses indicate multiple responses*

Community Center (7)

Farmers Market (2)

Community Pool

Events Center

Public gym, basketball courts, swimming pool

Attractive and functional ballparks and playgrounds

Get rid of the trailer houses used for Vilonia Schools

New drop off/pick up plan for Junior High and Senior High Schools

Basketball courts for tournaments and volleyball

Safe rooms to house all children and family

Fine Arts Building

Modern technology

Wider roads on 107

Continue to subdivide school buildings into 2-3 grades

When building new, build for the future not something that is already too small

Consider a small school for people who are deaf/blind or both



# Housing and Neighborhoods

*Numbers in parentheses indicate multiple responses*

- No housing subdivisions near schools, parks, or daycares
- More established zoning and ordinances, with stricter application
- Organization of multi-family housing
- Senior housing area in downtown
- Multi-income housing
- Varied housing types

- More available housing, such as apartments and duplexes (3)
- Growth of housing opportunities for low/moderate and upper income residents
- Different price ranges
- Neighborhood parks in larger subdivisions (2)
- Better planning

# Economic Development

*Numbers in parentheses indicate multiple responses*

- Rebuild of businesses destroyed by storm and new businesses to bring in more people
- Restaurants (7)
- More businesses to help sustain the city
- Bigger businesses
- Small business
- Dry Cleaners
- Truck stop and motel on bypass

- More support and outreach to big companies and factories
- Affordable gyms
- Strip malls
- Auto part store
- Movie theater
- Bowling alley



# Re-Imagining Vilonia: Survey Data

Concurrent to the town hall meetings held during February 2015, surveys of residents were conducted in a variety of formats (paper responses and online). A total of nineteen Questions were asked, categorized by the four FEMA sectors.

## Infrastructure and Environment

**Question 1:** What would you most like to see improved in the city of Vilonia as it relates to infrastructure and environment?

Better roads and drainage of water	More sidewalks	Clean streets with a sidewalk
Better roads into elementary and middle school	Improve traffic patterns	Wider roads and sidewalks
Wider streets (Church, 107, Barnard, etc.)	More sidewalks, walking areas, dog parks	Infrastructure for new businesses
Sidewalks on main streets in front of businesses and lighting along Main Street	Community Center for families; sidewalks; and bike lanes	Paved Streets, curbed and guttered, grass mowed and neat
Roads repaved, more sidewalks all the way through town	Street Types: cobblestone brick, pedestrian friendly	Maintain existing infrastructure and environment – this seems to be a continued problem
Lights on streets and sidewalks, recycling point, and better drainage	Environment – clean up remaining debris, encourage commercial development	More sidewalks and a park with a pond or a natural trail
More main roads; more cruising area for teens; and better access from bypass	Trail system on one side of the highway with a memorial	Sidewalks and streetlights along the shopping area
Wider streets, more lighting, pedestrian friendly lanes/walks	Continue to provide a safe atmosphere for our children	Information signs around town with tornado safety tips
Flood plains landscaped, more streets to relieve traffic	Green Spaces / Places for picnics, benches/ Movies on the lawn	Bring in small town feel onto Main Street – manicured curb appeal with special lighting
Widened roads, consistent internet service, and more lighting on streets	Parks with pavilion for picnics and playground / walking trails	More family-oriented activities – places to enjoy with several ages
More neighborhood play areas, landscaping, and jogging/bike paths	Pavilions and green spaces that are easily accessible (plenty of parking)	One-mile walking trail with memorial at each tenth-mile marker honoring a person that passed – the tenth marker would be dedicated to how the town came together
Better routing of school traffic	Trail system in floodplain	Clean up activities need to be restarted
Connecting streets to Main Street	Walking trail	
More activities for families – places for families	One, big family-friendly park with picnic tables	
Pretty street with lights and planters	More green space and family friendly options	



**Question 2:** What do you like most about Vilonia as it relates to infrastructure and environment?

It is a beautiful area with a small town feel – I want the trees back

That Vilonia now has potential for a downtown area since the bypass was opened

Beautiful landscape – love the land

Friendly people and a close community

Family-oriented community with high median income, but we travel out of the city to spend our money

I think the city is laid out well – just needs wider, better streets

I like the small town atmosphere and basic retail facilities

Simplicity

Still somewhat compact - not too spread out

Vilonia has a lot of green space and although it is much opened, you can easily still locate parks, businesses, and housing

Having a green space for community events and a walkable downtown

That Vilonia now has potential for a downtown area since the bypass was opened

I love that it's so open

Spirit of volunteerism and forward thinking (finally

**Question 3:** What would make Vilonia a more vibrant, enjoyable and successful community as it relates to infrastructure and environment?

Parks, walking trails, track, basketball courts, and a better grocery store.

A place to meet in the evenings to socialize, exercise or both

Being able to walk and bike around town

More professional, permanent looking businesses

Cleaner, neater environment; more family-friendly

A community pool or waterpark to help keep our people here instead of going other places for entertainment

City park that can accommodate baseball and basketball tournaments

More connectedness through sidewalks and trails, better quality community park and ball fields

A space for kids (older teens) to hang out

More businesses with more variety

Keep it cleaner

Utilities poles to be pushed behind Main Street with decorative lighting poles, sidewalks and greenery lining the streets in town

More things to do in town and not have to go another city

Community Center, Farmers Market, something to attract others to our town to spend money

Improved internet services

More lighting, better drainage, and trees.

More landscaping, trash and debris clean up

**Question 4:** Optional comments on Infrastructure and Environment

I think we are making one man in Vilonia rich – why not move and share with other land owners?

We will need to expand the school as people move in

Elevated walkway for children at the school crossing (Main and Eagle)

# Housing and Neighborhoods

**Question 5:** What would you most like to see improved in the Vilonia area as it relates to housing and neighborhoods?

Would like to see neighborhoods more structurally laid-out and more restrictions to streets, buildings, and yard maintenance (more uniform)

Mixed income housing with safe rooms and shelters

More options for young couples, college age, and seniors

Safe homes in each neighborhood

More housing options, varied housing types

Multi housing options, with price point conducive to the desired environment

Houses not so close together

Loft apartments in downtown

A lot of neighborhoods are multi-zoned meaning a neighborhood has mobile home, duplexes, and houses

Affordable housing for college aged and young couples

Loft apartments / find those who are displaced / walking trails / more safe buildings

More parks and more affordable housing

We need moderate- to low-income elderly housing

Smaller pockets of housing with quaint feel, parks, walking trails, and safe room for neighborhoods

More sidewalks, lighting for streets.

Better drainage of water run off

Multi-dwelling properties and single family homes in more uniform settings; some areas in town have absolutely no forethought

Patio homes with minimal upkeep for seniors who want to retire to Vilonia

More affordable housing available; more apartments

Gated communities

Garden homes

Neighborhoods that still have trees; more diversity (townhomes/apartments)

Sidewalks

Safe rooms

**Question 6:** What do you like most about Vilonia as it relates to housing and neighborhoods?

Variety of sites and locations

Like the mix of subdivisions with houses that have land

Not a lot of restrictions

Nice homes / clean / doesn't look generic

Hometown feel

Most homes are occupied and the majority are in average to good condition

Small neighborhoods

Very family-oriented

Homes are spread out and quiet neighborhoods

Private contractors and builders have done a good job – they need more reasons to keep building

**Question 7:** What would make Vilonia a more vibrant, enjoyable and successful community as it relates to housing and neighborhoods?

More rentals

Offer gated housing communities, especially for housing around schools

Safe rooms, parks, and walking trail

Emergency phones in parks and walking trails

Sidewalks, parks

Having more landscaping, trees, and sidewalk paths

Walking paths, sidewalks, landscaping, and trees

Centralized parks and activity center

More lawns, less yards

Parks in neighborhoods, but don't crowd the neighborhoods

Keeping families in town

**Question 8:** Optional comments regarding housing and neighborhoods

I want something nice and I like part of the plan, but we are putting too much in such a small space





## Schools and Community Facilities

**Question 9:** What would you most like to see improved in the Vilonia area as it relates to schools and community facilities?

Community center	Community room for people of all ages	Better traffic flow
Community center – a place for kids to go and have activities without having to go elsewhere	Community center, things to keep our students spending time and money in our town	Community center, small to start and expand as we grow
Community center; better traffic flow through the schools	School and city working together on plans for growth	Coming in and out of elementary school drive needs a light or something
New ball park and community center	Public event center with auditorium	More walkability to and from schools
More ways to get to schools	Annual local car show in downtown	Updated facilities
Safe rooms, technology, “satellite colleges,” “adult education” with GED program and computer classes	The parking lot at Jr High and High School has only one way in and out – parking too close together	City and schools should work more closely together to create programs and activities to engage youth
Park with movies	Bandstand for local concerts	I am very pleased with the facilities
Movies in the Park / Hendrix Village type development / Farmers Market	Baseball, softball and soccer fields to draw tournaments	I think the school leaders have a great vision and have this covered
Movies in the Park / Hendrix Village / Farmers Market / Shopping / Restaurants / Walking and biking path	We need a fine arts building	Large building with auditorium to host events
	School traffic could be better	Small theatre for movies and school plays

**Question 10:** What do you like most about Vilonia as it relates to schools and community facilities?

Ease of access, great school system, facilities are maintained well	Vilonia School District is one of the top schools in the state	Many teachers profess to be Christians and kids are a priority
Convenient locations, addition of safe rooms, great people	Small community feel	Best schools in Arkansas, friendly people
How closely most of the schools are located	Close in proximity	Best school ever
	Small town feel	Teachers, morality



**Question 11:** What would make Vilonia a more vibrant, enjoyable and successful community as it relates to schools and community facilities?

Community center with weekly or monthly activities or programs would be beneficial

Options for community event venues

To have more businesses in town that offer different things

Hold sports tournaments and charge entry fee at gate

Small hometown; pocket city to Conway, Cabot, and Little Rock

Events that appeal to different age groups

Community center is a must; charge fees or use volunteers to help some in running the place, such as kids that need community service hours and senior citizens

A community center and a main park with jogging trail

Enhanced support for the school

More community/school involvement to promote youth engagement

More eating options

More things to do as a family

**Question 12:** Optional comments regarding schools and community facilities

Need better driveway at High School for car riders

We need 107 to be wider between stop light and bypass; too much school traffic in a small space

# Economic Development

**Question 13:** What would you most like to see improved in the Vilonia area as it relates to economic development?

Clean up properties in town	Finish rebuilding	More viable for small businesses
Town square similar to Bentonville	Restaurants with outdoor seating	Photo shop
Grocery Store	More small stores	More eating options
More small town businesses, farmers market, and more retail shop space	A lot more business – we are big enough to attract many new business	Exposure to industries and a push to make it happen
Grocery store so people would not go elsewhere to shop	Retail for shopping, but also office space for supporting professionals (CPA's, lawyers, DHS, etc.)	Continued business growth: pediatrician, sandwich shop, coffee shop, dry cleaner
More places to eat, shop, and entertainment	Donut/Coffee Shop – for meeting and conversation	Wal-Mart store, bowling, restaurants, putt-putt golf

**Question 14:** What do you like most about Vilonia as it relates to economic development?

Strategically-located	Open to opportunities	Fast food options
Vilonia's prime location accessible for growth and we have opportunity that we have not had before for developers	A lot of open potential	Places for business
	Plenty of space to grow	Need more places to eat
	Increased number of restaurants	Nice restaurant that serves breakfast

**Question 15:** What would make Vilonia a more vibrant, enjoyable and successful community as it relates to economic development?

A lot more business. We are big enough to attract many new business	More accessibility, walkability, and greenery with the development of new businesses	Night time events, more things to do after work hours, restaurants and entertainment
More development would increase our tax base and would provide for more community amenities	More options for date night, teens, and family activities	A good mix of big and small businesses
		Infrastructure

**Question 16:** Optional comments regarding economic development

An event center could be put in the community center for public rental
--

# Resilience

## Question 17: What does resilience mean to you?

Rebounding and learning from disasters; grow smart, not fast	Getting knocked down and always having the fight and drive to get up stronger and better	Always come back from the damage, destruction, and support one another
Strength, faith	Perseverance; not quitting or backing down	Being able to adjust to change
Strong	Never give up or quit trying; always comes back	Can't keep us down
Staying here and putting in the work	Learning from past mistakes to help create a better future for tomorrow	Keith McCord and Family
Staying with the plan; community through good and bad	Hanging in there and not giving up	Building back bigger, better, and stronger than before
We remain strong		Keith McCord and Family

## Question 18: What ideas do you have to make Vilonia more resilient?

Better structures for homes and businesses, improving streets, improving greenery, creating more underground utilities, creating better and improved infrastructure than what we had prior to the storms in 2011 and 2014	Generations staying here	Training for public safety; safe rooms
	A chance to build something – seeing the new building go up is providing hope	Word of mouth promoting our city; positive press
	Bonded community; less division in our “unity”	

# Community Vision (Post-Disaster)

## Question 19: What do you want Vilonia to look like in 5 years? 10 years? 25 years?

25 years: a self-sustainable community where leakage is not a concern	Continued growth of pretty, tree-filled neighborhoods	Great baseball/softball/soccer/football fields and parks
Don't want to have to go anywhere else to shop	Multiple safe areas that are not eyesores	Trails for jogging/biking
More restaurants and businesses	Growing, family-friendly, safe place	5 years: have trees planted; roads widened; green space; sidewalks designed appropriately; having codes and ordinances updated, in-place, and enforced; make the flood plain an attraction instead of a negative
A close-knit community with options to shop and eat	Home – where there is a place for everyone – systematic growth	
10 years: more businesses; more established neighborhoods; parks; more community-engaged activities	The plan we looked at tonight (UACDC plan)	
	A vibrant, booming town that our kids love, a place where will want to raise their families	



# Re-Imagining Vilonia: SWOT Analysis on Developed Concepts

The advanced design concepts, developed by UA CDC and presented in February, underwent a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis by the public at a meeting on March 12 at Vilonia City Hall. A series of Questions were used to facilitate responses to the four core concepts presented by the UA CDC in February.

## Vilonia as Future-Oriented

### Question 1:

What are the strengths of this concept?

Centralized square where it is easy to walk there  
Not segregated by income  
Walkable

### Question 2:

How might this concept be improved?

Lots of lighting in the town square  
Elevated sidewalk/bridge for school crosswalk at Main Street/107  
Remove roundabout at the 107/Main intersection  
Wider side streets  
Emergency call phones throughout

Security cameras  
We want the town cleaned up and lots of trees and green space  
Drainage  
Pond or lake  
Place for seniors

### Question 3:

What opportunities are provided to Vilonia through this concept?

Small neighborhoods with playgrounds  
Sidewalks leading to ball fields  
Shopping areas

Sidewalks connecting neighborhoods for running and biking  
Retail growth=tax base  
Jobs

### Question 4:

What might keep this concept from becoming a reality?

Funding  
Traditional thinking and fear of change  
Lack of spreading the vision

More input needed from citizens  
Money

# Vilonia as a Place of Commerce

## Question 5:

What are the strengths of this concept?

Businesses to Vilonia equals more money  
 Apartments and townhomes bring new residents  
 We can drop kids off at new park and parents can shop  
 Farmers Market – opportunity to bring in revenue  
 Town Square provides space for town functions  
 Town Square concept – really like this idea; gives the town identity, opportunity for festivals, gatherings, place for people to visit, and community events

Central area to draw in people  
 Farmers Market – brings people out together  
 Community Center – music festivals and we can walk everywhere  
 Housing – mixed – “who wouldn’t want to live here?”  
 Community Events – enables us to stay forever  
 Community Center – place to keep kids involved  
 A good place to drop teens off to hang out  
 Main Street parking allows for movement

## Question 6:

How might this concept be improved?

Room to grow; community center and business  
 Business to draw community engagement  
 Street maintenance and beautification  
 Outdoor eating areas; bistro – European-style  
 Underground utilities  
 Bigger community center  
 Community pool  
 1-2 Screen movie theater or outdoor movies

Parking only in back  
 Bowling  
 Lighting  
 Playground  
 Urgent Care Clinic  
 Frisbee golf course  
 Old Style Brick fire station that is included, so it’s always open to the community and kids can be always be welcome

## Question 7:

What opportunities are provided to Vilonia through this concept?

Employment  
 Revenue  
 New residents  
 Curb appeal  
 Growth  
 Community involvement

More business opportunities  
 Opportunities for people to downsize once they don’t need as much room and can move to a condo in downtown Vilonia so they don’t have to leave their community of family  
 Economic growth

## Question 8:

What might keep this concept from becoming a reality?

Funding  
 Community Involvement  
 Community awareness; make the plan available  
 Marquees; better awareness

Resistance to change form residents  
 Utilities  
 Infrastructure



## Vilonia as a Safe Town

### Question 9:

What are the strengths of this concept?

Community safe rooms

Multiple entries (street ingress/egress) to ball fields

Retail stores

Restaurants

Thriving community

Parking

Love the walking trail

Playground beside ball fields (family-oriented)

Accessible safe rooms

Easily-identified safe rooms

Like the town square

Green space

### Question 10:

How might this concept be improved?

More safe rooms on the outer limits

Drive-in movie theater

Place for movies in the park

Drainage

### Question 11:

What opportunities are provided to Vilonia through this concept?

More business

More safety

Inviting to families

Things for families to do in town

Increase in revenue

Population increase

Bring outsiders into town

Keeping community active

Retirees drawn to area

### Question 12:

What might keep this concept from becoming a reality?

Flooding to existing property owners

Too many restrictions on home owners; apartments

Drainage

Water getting into safe rooms

Not enough safe rooms out of city limits or on the outskirts of town

People might not sell their house or land

# Vilonia as a Place of Commerce

## Question 13:

What are the strengths of this concept?

Sports complex can possibly generate enough tax revenue to pay for and maintain the community center

Safety – the Town Center is off Main Street

Community center will bring in housing developers

Safe rooms

Planned community will grow faster

Safe rooms are easy to spot and can hold plenty of people

Town center – not spread out

Walkability

Meeting center

Parks

## Question 14:

How might this concept be improved?

Indoor practice facility for baseball; batting cage and or field

Prefer the “visible safe rooms” to be located in the neighborhoods instead of the public open spaces

Ensure playground equipment in park areas

Ensure another outlet to connect to school

Paths for walking and biking

Don’t make safe room center stage; we are more than a “tornado town”

Some of the housing appears very modern; should still maintain old, small hometown feel

Change our name back – Vilonia

Parking space

## Question 15:

What opportunities are provided to Vilonia through this concept?

Main Street promotes traffic to local business

Community center will bring in houses

Family outings

Affordable housing

Growth due to planning

## Question 16:

What might keep this concept from becoming a reality?

Zoning

Funding

Negative people

Resistance to change by community

Citizens Participating in 3/12 Meeting: Jennifer Barnhill, Bill Burnham, Greig Craswell, Susan Bates, Julie Rothacher, Stacy Harrell, Martha Martin, Keith Hillman, Laura McCoy, Dustin Hicks, Wednesday Hoover, Althea Ferren, Melissa Filley, Johnny Pierce, Clay Heslep, Ashley Duff, Marshall Smith, Phyllis Burnham, David Stephens, Sandy Towles, Angie Rios, Tabitha Morris, Matt Morris, Julie Wray, John Wimberly, Frank Mitchell, Nannette Ramsey, Chad Roller, Jennifer Stacy, Linda Hicks, Kira Livingston, James Firestone, Kelly Lawrence and Amanda Norwood

Rebuild Vilonia and Partner Resources in 3/12 Meeting: Marty Knight, Stanley Gordon Jr., Melanie Gentry, David Sargent, Devin Howland, Matt Black, Charles Cook and Daniel Holland



## SECTION 3

# IDENTIFIED PROJECTS

## Identified Projects: Summary List

In compliance with the February 17, 2015 City Council resolution, Rebuild Vilonia recommends a list of specific projects that address the dreams, concerns, and priorities of community residents reflected in the public feedback outlined in the earlier sections of this report. The Rebuild Vilonia Steering Committee met with a number other citizen volunteers on March 24, 2015 to develop this list.

## Summary List of Recommended Projects in Order of Priority

*Details of each project are listed on the following pages*

1. Resiliency and Public Safety
2. Beautification and Green Spaces
3. Economic Development Program
4. Town Center Development – Phase 1
5. Town Center Development – Phase 2
6. Town Center Development – Community Center





## Project #1: Resiliency and Public Safety

The following is a general description of the project recommended as the highest priority: the construction of community safe rooms. Citizen feedback offered early in the process indicated much interest in a single, large “safe” facility that could be used for multiple purposes. Based on conversations with Arkadelphia officials, we believe that this approach has serious drawbacks including the time required to travel to the building and the potential for parking and traffic congestion.

### We recommend that the following steps be taken:

#### 1. Locations

Construct numerous safe rooms throughout the city and surrounding area. Safe room locations should take into account population density, travel time, and ease of ingress and egress. Locations near parking (churches, shopping centers, and public spaces) and within large subdivisions are preferable.

#### 2. Concept

The use of “underground shipping containers,” described by FEMA and included in the UA CDC plans, is recommended. This concept combines economic feasibility with ease and speed of construction. Initial construction estimates, provided by UA CDC, range around \$90 per square foot, far less than the \$450 per square foot for traditional concrete-reinforced shelters.

#### 3. Aesthetics

Requirements must be established to ensure that the facilities are aesthetically pleasing. We also recommend that the safe rooms be incorporated into green spaces (parks, walking trails, etc.) wherever possible.

#### 4. Operation and Maintenance

Resources and processes must be established for maintenance and upkeep of each location and should include the operation of safe rooms in the event of tornado watches and warnings.

#### 5. Requirements for Construction

Requirements for construction, essential to providing a budget and building schedule, must be established and include mandatory items such as FEMA-rated doors, rest room facilities, generators, and acquisition of property.

#### 6. Zoning Considerations

The Planning Commission and City Council should give consideration to how safe rooms will be incorporated into current zoning ordinances.

The New York Says Thank You Foundation, a large volunteer organization, is considering making large numbers of volunteers available in September 2015 to assist with construction of the proposed safe rooms. We encourage the city to follow up on this possible offer of assistance.



## Project #2: Beautification and Green Space

**Relative to the second priority, we recommend that the following steps be taken:**

1. Debris Removal and Storm Cleanup  
Establish and coordinate with identified property owners a systematic approach to cleaning up all areas of the city still littered with debris.
2. Memorial  
Design and construct a public memorial to those who lost their lives in the recent tornadoes.
3. Flood Plain Beautification  
Develop a comprehensive and sustained approach to removing all trash and debris from the flood plain and restoring these areas to a natural setting.
4. Walking Trails  
Identify walking trails, particularly in the flood plain, which can be incorporated into the city's long range planning.
5. Drainage And Flood Control  
Review current drainage and flood control capabilities and identify necessary improvement projects.
6. Trees  
Examine the feasibility of planting mature trees in strategic locations. Mature trees can help "heal" the landscape and resources are available at the national level to assist with this effort.
7. Common Signage  
Provide aesthetically-pleasing common signage at key intersections along Main Street. These signs will provide directions to businesses located on side streets and become a known part of the landscape.





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## Project #3: Economic Development

**As a third priority, we recommend that the following steps be taken:**

1. **Maturation of Chamber of Commerce**  
Make economic development the primary focus of the local Chamber of Commerce. Resources from the region (Conway and Little Rock) should be secured to conduct a gap analysis of the existing Chamber and a desired state. This should be done as soon as possible.
2. **Resources for Chamber of Commerce**  
Any additional staffing and resources for the Chamber of Commerce identified in the review mentioned above should be provided.
3. **Education**  
City and community leaders should be provided economic development training.
4. **Establish a Local Economic Development Organization**  
A local economic development organization that will work with the city and the Chamber of Commerce should be established.
5. **Marketing Campaign**  
An aggressive, sophisticated and well-funded marketing campaign that tells Vilonia's story of recovery and its prospects for future growth should be created. This campaign should incorporate branding, video and print materials, and outreach activities.
6. **Target for Recruiting of Businesses**  
Target industries should be identified for recruitment to the Vilonia area.
7. **Incentives**  
Incentives for industries and businesses should be researched, identified, and implemented as soon as feasible.
8. **Festivals and Community Events**  
An ongoing number of community events, such as regional festivals, should be identified and planned.

We also encourage the city to aggressively pursue the two outreach programs associated with higher learning institutions that have offered to assist with Vilonia's economic development.



# Projects #4-6: Development of the Town Center

The following is a summary list of the next three projects, all of which are part of the development of a “town center” or “town square” concept, as described by WER and UA CDC and included in the developed concepts by UA CDC and Gateway Planning. We strongly suggest that activities stay true to the spirit of the recommendations made by those organizations.

## The three phases of town center development are:

### Phase 1

Development of the Long Meadow and Farmers Market

### Phase 2

Street Grid and Infrastructure for Town Center

### Phase 3

Community Center

## Project #4: Phase 1 of Town Center Development

This phase, our fourth priority, is described in the UA CDC plan as the Long Meadow and Farmers Market. Located at the intersection of Main Street and South College, the property will include a boulevard entrance to the Town Center, an adjacent structure that can serve as an outdoor public event center, and adequate parking to support the area.

## We recommend that the following steps be taken:

1. Property Acquisition  
Since the two parcels of land that comprise this area are both available for purchase the city should begin negotiations with property owners to secure this land as soon as possible.
2. Identify Funding for Project  
Pursuit of funds for the project should begin immediately.
3. Preliminary Design of Infrastructure  
This design should include the location of streets, utilities, landscaping details, beautification, and parking.
4. Design of Outdoor Events Center  
A preliminary design for the Outdoor Events Center (previously referred to as the Farmers Market) is needed establish a budget for funding and should include multiple uses for the facility.
5. Operations, Management And Maintenance  
A set of policies and processes should be defined for the ongoing operations, maintenance and management of the Outdoor Events Center.

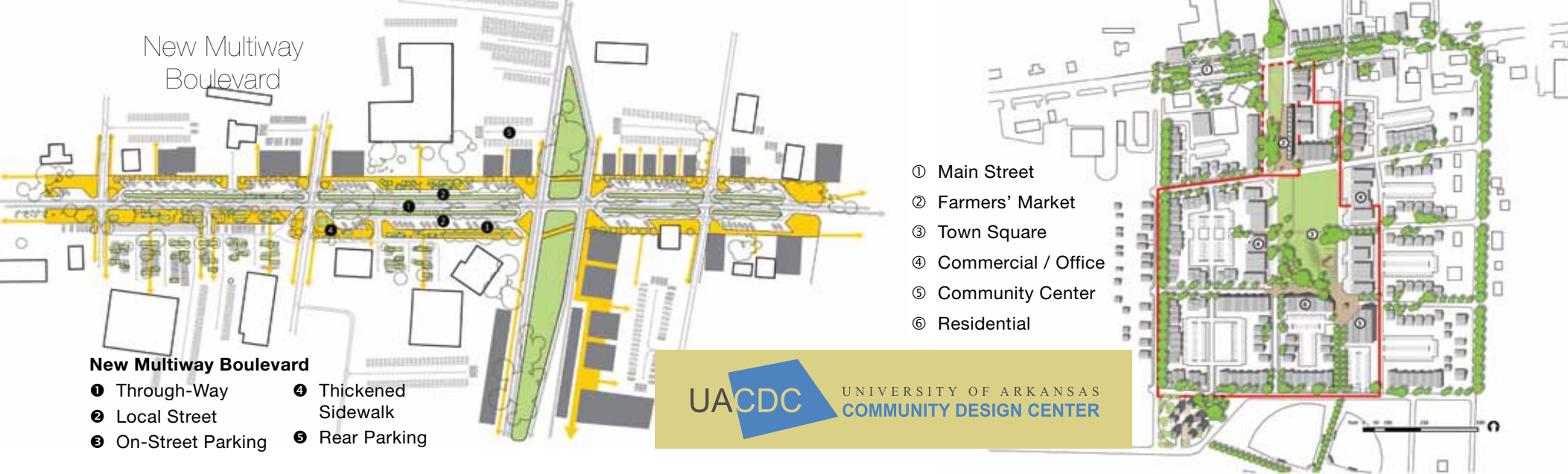


## Project #5: Phase 2 of Town Center Development

The fifth priority, this phase is described on the UA CDC plan as the Town Square. The location of this 20-acre parcel of property is between Main Street and the baseball complex. Ingress and egress to this parcel of land would be gained via the boulevard entrance described in Phase 1. Although the development will be conducted by private investors, the city will participate in the planned improvement of the area and provide streets and infrastructure. Rebuild Vilonia suggests that the city remain faithful to the spirit of the recommendations provided by UA CDC and Gateway Planning whenever possible, including mixed-use development, green spaces, safe rooms and types of housing.

### **We recommend that the following steps be taken:**

1. Definition Of Street Grid / Update Of Master Street Plan  
The city, through the Planning Commission and City Council, should work with Metroplan to define a street grid and parking plan for the area. The Master Street Plan for the city should be updated accordingly.
2. Identify Interested Owners  
Property owners in the general area should be contacted to determine their support of the plan and gauge their interest in participating.
3. Tie To Industrial Drive Extension  
This street grid should tie into the planned extension of Industrial Drive funded by the September 2014 EDA grant.
4. Infrastructure  
Planning should include streets and the location of water, sewer, electric, and natural gas lines.
5. Identification Of Master Developer  
It is recommended that a master developer work on behalf of the city and facilitate discussions between the city and affected property owners to address any issues involving projects and improvements undertaken through private investment.
6. Green Spaces  
In accordance with the UA CDC plan, this area should include a large (2-3 acre) common green space to be owned by the city.
7. Operations, Management And Maintenance  
A set of policies and processes should be defined for the ongoing operations, maintenance and management of the public areas. This includes the large common green space and adjacent areas such as medians and sidewalks.



## Project #6: Phase 3 of Town Center Development

The sixth and final priority calls for the construction of a Community Center within the proposed Town Center. It should be located as closely as possible to the baseball complex so that parking can be shared.

### We recommend that the following steps be taken:

1. Location and Acquisition Of Property  
A specific location for the Community Center should be established in conjunction with the layout of streets as described in Project #4/Phase 2. Once the location is determined the property identified should be acquired.
2. Estimates for Cost of Operation  
The potential costs of operating, maintaining, and managing a facility of this type should be determined, followed by a feasibility assessment.
3. Identify Funding for Project  
The identification of possible funding sources should begin immediately.
4. Usage of Facility  
A public effort to establish possible uses for the new facility should be undertaken. This process, referred to by design professionals as “programming,” will establish suggested uses for the facility. Such uses could include sports (basketball, racquetball, and a walking track); meeting rooms and conference space; equipment storage; and an auditorium.
5. Revenue Generation from Facility  
Estimates for possible revenue streams (e.g. membership fees, rentals for specific events) generated by the facility should be calculated.
6. Design of Facility  
A preliminary design, sufficient to establish budget and schedule, should be developed. The design process should involve a broad cross-section of the public.
7. Operations, Management and Maintenance  
A set of policies and processes should be defined for the ongoing operations, event scheduling and planning, short and long-term maintenance and day-to-day management of the facility by the city.

## SECTION 4

# NEXT STEPS IN THE PROCESS

We hope that this plan serves as the foundation for two major activities critical to Vilonia's recovery process.

**FIRST**, it is our belief that the Vilonia 2030 Plan should serve as the blueprint for the future. The report tells the full story of how this plan was developed using the framework provided by FEMA, the involvement of hundreds of Vilonia residents, and assistance from our partners. It is respectfully submitted to the Vilonia City Council and Mayor James Firestone in that spirit.

**SECOND**, it is our intent that the Vilonia 2030 Plan will serve as the foundation for funding the projects described in the report.

**We recommend that the following steps be taken regarding this plan.**

1. Endorsement

We ask that the Vilonia 2030 Plan, or a revision of that plan, be endorsed by the City Council as soon as possible.

2. Public Distribution

Upon endorsement by the Council, the Vilonia 2030 Plan should be distributed broadly to the public.

3. Creation of Implementation Task Force

The City Council should then create an Implementation Task Force (ITF) authorized to proceed with planning for each endorsed project. Officers for the ITF should be named by the City Council as soon as possible.

4. Authorization of Projects

*Sub-groups within the ITF should be assigned to the following activities:*

**A. Funding**

Funding opportunities for all projects authorized by the Council should be explored. Each project should be funded independently, but within a coordinated program of activity.

**B. Project Planning and Estimation**

Separate project teams should be formed to assume implementation of each approved project. Specific roles should be defined for each project including a project chair, secretary, treasurer and project manager.

**C. Implementation Plan**

Each project should develop an Implementation Plan that includes include a budget, schedule, and scope of work. All Implementation Plans must be presented to the city before being carried out.



## SECTION 5

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*The Rebuild Vilonia Steering Committee thanks the following organizations and individuals for their contributions to the Vilonia 2030 Plan.*

Our most profound and sincere thanks to the  
***citizens of Vilonia.***

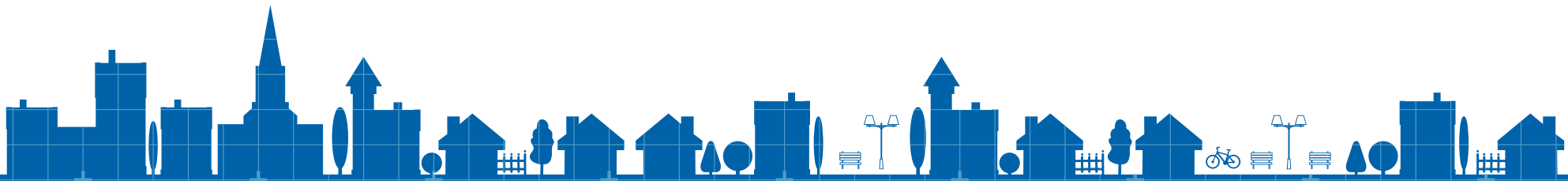
You continue to remain resolute and strong  
in the face of adversity.  
Your indomitable spirit is an example to all.

The Rebuild Vilonia Committee also acknowledges the outstanding work done by the **Vilonia Disaster Relief Alliance (VDRA)**. This organization, formed as a response to the 2011 tornado, has provided leadership in the area of Housing. During formation the Rebuild Vilonia Committee made a conscious decision to defer to VDRA relative to the Housing and Neighborhoods sector. We thank them for their ongoing efforts.



We also acknowledge and express our appreciation to the following organizations that have provided assistance in the development of this plan and our ongoing recovery efforts.

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<b>U.S. Small Business Administration</b>			<b>Faulkner County</b>		
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<b>Metroplan</b>			<b>Federal Emergency Management Agency</b>		
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<b>U.S. Department of Commerce / EDA</b>			<b>Arkansas Economic Development Commission</b>		
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<b>University of Arkansas Community Design Center</b>			<b>Gateway Planning / City of North Little Rock</b>		
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Amy Whitehead	Shelby Fiegel	Josh Markham	Brad Lacy	Jamie Gates	
<b>Arkansas Municipal League</b>			<b>Little Rock Chamber of Commerce</b>		
Don Zimmerman Neal Foreman	David Baxter	Ken Wasson	Jay Chessir	Emory Jacobs	Joey Dean
<b>National Association of Development Organizations</b>			<b>City of Joplin / Joplin Area Citizens Advisory Recovery Team</b>		
Brett Schwartz	Megan McConville	Sarah James	Jane Cage	Kirstie Smith	Tony Robyn
<b>City of Arkadelphia / Area Leaders</b>			<b>U.S. Housing and Urban Development</b>		
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<b>Central Arkansas Planning and Development</b>			<b>Bear State Financial</b>		
Rodney Larsen Kira Livingston	Devin Howland Amanda Adaire	Conya Spencer Josh Rogers	Tom Fritsche		



***Dedicated to  
those people  
who lost  
their lives in  
the storm.***

- Paula Blakemore
- Jamye Collins
- Jeffrey Hunter
- Dennis Lavergne
- Glenna Lavergne
- David Mallory
- Cameron Smith
- Tyler Smith
- Daniel Wassom



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