THE EVOLUTION OF PLACE

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
CITY OF WILSON, ARKANSAS

SEPTEMBER 2016
Established a generation after the Civil War in the heart of the Mid-South along the Mississippi River, Wilson, Arkansas, today is a small town with great ambition.

From the Wilson family founding and company-town roots, to its artisanal traditions, Wilson occupies a place of singular authenticity in the landscape of the American South. Agriculture converges with the culinary arts, small town life, a sense of community, history, and the geography of eastern Arkansas’ alluvial plain.

Wilson today is a revitalized, charming, and beloved community with a Tudor-inspired town square, historic cotton gins, the Hampson Archeological Museum (which houses a rare collection of Nodena artifacts), and a progressive attitude set among the vast expanse of the Delta.

Wilson is also

It is moving forward towards a new future defined by a new relationship with the land and a new economy that interconnects creativity, agriculture, commerce, environmental sustainability, craftsmanship, the arts, history, and place-making.

The first steps have been taken, and the future is emergent. High quality and high standards throughout. World class educational opportunities. Friendly rural living where the beauty and history of the Delta are woven into contemporary life. Where lifelong residents and newcomers alike are both building on Wilson’s past and creating a new interpretation of small town life in the Delta.
in transition.

4 WILSON’S ORIGINS
6 PLAN USE & PURPOSE
12 CONTEXT FOR PLANNING
18 PLANNING PRINCIPLES
22 DISTRICTS OF WILSON - A VISION
24 PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES
44 ACTION PLAN
49 APPENDICES
WILSON’S ORIGINS

Robert E. Lee Wilson was born to Josiah and Martha Wilson on March 5, 1865. Thirty years later, he and his father-in-law, Socrates Beall, began harvesting and selling timber out of the densely wooded swamplands of Northeast Arkansas. The company town that grew up around their sawmill became known as Wilson and was established in 1886.

His father managed to carve a 2,300-acre plantation out of the bottomland swamps, but died in 1870 when Robert E. Lee Wilson was five years old. While his older siblings remained in the area, young Wilson moved to Memphis for a time with his mother. After her death during the yellow fever epidemic in 1878, however, the 13-year-old Wilson returned to Mississippi County, Arkansas, to claim his 400-acre inheritance from his father. By the time he was 18, Wilson had traded his land for more than 2,000 acres of timber, which the Wilson and Beall Timber Company harvested and sold to northern markets. The business was incorporated as Lee Wilson & Company in 1904.

Unlike most lumbering operations in the region, where cut-over swamps were abandoned once cleared of the lucrative timber, Wilson began a process of removing the stumps, draining the swamps, and converting the land to agricultural production, ultimately amassing a 65,000-acre plantation. By the 1930s, Wilson had the largest cotton plantation in the South and was able to survive the Depression with his land intact by taking advantage of many of the New Deal policies, including a major Reconstruction Finance Corporation loan.

As a company town, Wilson was fortunate to enjoy a higher standard of living than many Delta towns during the Depression, including access to health care from company doctors and low rental rates for homes. Architecture also differentiated Wilson from many other Delta towns.

After the Depression, buildings in the town were constructed in a Tudor Revival style. Later, existing buildings on the town square were retrofitted with Tudor Revival-style facades. The town was enhanced further by the addition of cottonwood trees lining the streets. These beautification efforts all have given Wilson a strong physical foundation going forward, and a distinct competitive advantage if properly leveraged.
A comprehensive plan encapsulates the community's vision for the foreseeable future, describes the core values of the community's residents and business owners, and articulates the planning principles that future land use, public spending, infrastructure, and real estate development must abide by.

Wilson is a small town of 300 households, business interests, traditions and cultural history set in an agricultural region along the Mississippi River. There’s a Walmart Supercenter 12 miles away near Osceola, a similar distance from Wilson as Johnny Cash's boyhood home in Dyess. The business of Wilson has historically been cotton farming, but technology and other influences have forced many Delta communities to adapt. A comprehensive plan is a community's guide for the work of adapting when necessary, and when change is not required, to help shape day to day decision-making. The constructive adaptions that Wilson has been undergoing for the last several years - creative shifts in how the community thinks about farming and land use and the environment, the potential for tourism slowly being realized, and the communication of Wilson's history - have begun to achieve a critical mass.

Today, Wilson is becoming a notable destination in the region. It is beginning a new chapter, one informed by and connected to the past, while also being forward-looking, with a new set of ambitions. The community is leveraging its assets and the wider market is taking notice. These shifts are occurring at the same time that Memphis residents are exploring the wider region, that Big River Steel is expanding its operations, that current residents in Wilson are aging, and that investors are taking an increasingly active interest in the area. Amid factors such as these over which Wilson has no clear control, and considering other factors over which Wilson can directly shape, a comprehensive plan guides decision-making. It helps determine “what goes where”, and which infrastructure elements get attention when.

A comprehensive plan helps direct residential settlement and business investment in ways that can lead to the realization of the Wilson community’s ambitions for itself. Whether Wilson becomes more a community with regional serving big box retail and suburban homes, or remains a small Mid South town of traditional form is an example of the options that are shaped by the comprehensive plan, the regulatory framework that obtains its power from the plan, and the consensus of the community from which the plan itself derives ultimate authority. This comprehensive plan discusses several drivers that can shape Wilson’s future and provides a framework for the community’s response to these drivers. What follows is a statement of community values, market and demographic data, planning principles, resulting priorities, short and long term goals, and a future land use map.
HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

There are 3 parts to establishing a framework for validly setting priorities in a town or city in 2016 in America.

1. **Community Input**
   - Residents and business owners and other stakeholders articulate the direction they want their community to go in.
   - Tap into the wisdom of a community to determine its hopes and willingness to do the work needed to achieve the community’s goals. This creates the parameters that shape a comprehensive plan.

2. **Comprehensive Plan**
   - Sets General Direction for:
     - What Goes Where
     - Spending Priorities
     - Emphases
   - The resulting strategy level document guides a town or city - the comprehensive plan. It is the one place, the one document, where citizens and other stakeholders can quickly determine what a community’s priorities are, and how those priorities will be manifest in terms of land use and real estate development and infrastructure.

3. **Zoning Regulations & Design Guidelines**
   - Activates the direction outlined in the comprehensive plan and applies it to property.
   - The regulatory framework (zoning as well as design and other guidelines) that spells out with specificity and precision uses and form by location.
Prioritizes Wilson’s town square, which must be the focal point for the community in physical as well as civic terms.

Prioritizes the existence of a healthy housing market that supports the Wilson economy.

Prioritizes the importance of Wilson’s vernacular architecture and cultural history, so that future development will occur in ways that are consistent with existing form and high standards.

Prioritizes Wilson’s identity, and so provides a framework for strengthening Wilson’s edges and entry corridors.
Because this comprehensive plan is deliberately general in this way, a subsequent set of regulations that govern the specific use and form (such as siting, massing, architectural detail, density, height, and compaction) must be created and adopted soon after the adoption of this plan.

Still, this plan is meant to be actively used, which means referring to it continually to determine whether development proposals would be consistent with the general guidelines contained here. (If a developer wants to build housing, as just an example, in a part of Wilson that this plan does not foresee being suitable for such development, the community will have to refer to this plan to get guidance on whether to approve the proposal or not.) It will mean referring to it when determining where to invest public dollars.

Of course, comprehensive plans are non-binding, and, by law, the community can always proceed with projects or proposals regardless of whether or not they conform with the plan’s general guidelines.

However, if the Wilson community begins to regularly consent to developments that are inconsistent with the comprehensive plan, or regularly rejects proposals the plan suggests would be wise, then the plan should either be amended or replaced with a new one that is more consistent with where the community is on such matters.

EXAMPLE
Developer Wants to Build Housing in Wilson

**IS THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT GOING TO BE WHERE THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ARTICULATES SUCH HOUSING TO BE?**

- **YES**
  - Check zoning to determine if allowable.

- **NO**
  - Reject and send back to developer to choose a site consistent with the plan.

**IS THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT CONSISTENT WITH THE ZONING REQUIREMENTS REGARDING QUALITY, DENSITY, HEIGHT, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS?**

- **YES**
  - Approved

- **NO**
  - Reject and send back to developer to modify designs.
WILSON’S VISION

Today, Wilson is in transition.

It is moving forward towards a new future defined by a new relationship with the land and an economy designed to interconnect creativity, agriculture, commerce, environmental sustainability, craftsmanship, the arts, history, and place-making.

Important initial steps have been taken. Wilson’s future is emergent: High quality and high standards throughout. World class educational opportunities. Friendly rural living where the beauty and history of the Delta are woven into contemporary life. Where lifelong residents and newcomers alike are both building on Wilson’s past and creating a new interpretation of small town life in the Delta.
COMMUNITY VIEWS

In the creation of this plan, residents were surveyed and community meetings were held to gather feedback and ideas about how to move Wilson forward. A total of 65 community members responded to the survey. Through those responses the Wilson community made it clear that the town’s history, its setting, the people themselves, and its form all matter and all are a tremendous source of pride. The community made it clear that future development must hew to the preservation of culture and history and insisted that change occur wisely. For the Wilson community this means that change occur in ways that give continuity to Delta history, to small town values, to civic life in the town’s historic square, and to how the town and surrounding lands connect to one another in durable ways.

HISTORY
Residents are proud of their community history and heritage as a Delta town. There is a lot of pride about Wilson’s company town past, and there’s a great amount of energy for being sure to include proper recognition of town history going forward.

ENVIRONMENT
With almost three of every four survey takers stating they routinely take advantage of Wilson’s natural resources, it is clear the community values the environment and Wilson’s plentiful outdoor assets. Residents mentioned their pride in Wilson’s majestic trees, the river and, of course, the region’s agricultural features. This is particularly true of cotton.

COMMUNITY
Wilson is a close knit, family friendly, safe small town where people know and support each other. The community values its status as a safe, quiet, attractive, accessible small-town.

CHARACTER
People recognize the unique aspects of Wilson’s Tudor Revival interpretations and Delta vernacular architecture and want to preserve Wilson’s unique character.

There was energy in survey responses for infrastructure improvements, especially running and bike trails and sidewalks. The majority of the community regularly walks to and participates in the civic and commercial life of the town square, clearly one of the physical and social building blocks of future vitality. The Wilson community has prioritized residential life, as well, with housing quality and affordability noted as especially critical.

Overall, the community has been clear: history matters; being authentic matters; and the land matters. Tying it all together in a beautiful way matters. Development in Wilson going forward, therefore, must achieve a number of goals.
Even in 1960 at its largest, Wilson had less than 1,200 residents. Today there are 841 people living in 294 households in Wilson. The median annual household income is a strong $48,068. This reflects the economic strength of 69 households in Wilson with annual incomes greater than $75,000 a year.

But this same upper tier prosperity somewhat masks the poverty that 81 families struggle with in Wilson, and 68 households rely on food stamps (one in every five in Wilson). In sum, Wilson today has a profile where 27.6 percent of households have annual incomes less than $25,000, 28.2 percent of households have annual incomes between $25,000 and $50,000, and an impressive 44.2 percent have incomes above $50,000 a year.

Wilson has always been a small town.
When evaluating a community’s capacity to purchase and rent housing, support retail, and, through taxes, ensure a town or city has fiscal stability, a rule of thirds can sometimes be helpful. Roughly one third of gross annual household income goes to housing, inclusive of interest on loans, insurance, and taxes for owners, and rents for tenants. Roughly one third goes towards federal, state, and local taxes. And one third is available for discretionary spending on everything from groceries to clothing to boats and shoes and gifts and cell phones. This is not a hard and fast rule, only a thumbnail, but it is useful to establish a baseline sense of supportable retail in the vacuum of no visitors and no leakage.

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<th>Income (avg)</th>
<th>Taxes (est)</th>
<th>Housing (est)</th>
<th>Discretionary (est)</th>
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The above table is a crude instrument and should only be used as a heuristic for arriving at a generalized sense of a market. Nevertheless it provides an invaluable access point to understanding a small market.

If everyone in Wilson in 2016 shopped only in Wilson, the community could theoretically spend about $6M a year on everything from car repair and home furnishings to dinner out, sporting equipment, birthday gifts, and so on. Home Depot, Walmart, and Lowes all generate between $270-$370 in gross sales per square foot on an annual basis. A local Ace or True Value hardware will be in the same range, though at the lower end of the spectrum. A small successful locally-owned and operated coffee shop may average between $275 and $325 per square foot in annual sales, in small communities. The $300 per square foot in gross sales is a good rule of thumb for conservatively estimating supportable retail. At $6M a year in retail purchasing power, the Wilson community can support about 20,000 square foot of retail space by itself. This would mean a small hardware of 4,000 square feet, a small grocer of 10,000 square feet, and half a dozen to a dozen other businesses of 500 to 1,500 square feet each.

Every dollar that Wilson residents spend outside Wilson - internet shopping, traveling - reduces what is supportable locally by Wilson residents alone.
Regions and markets do not work exactly this way, of course. Wilson is a part of an active economic region. Residents of Wilson sometimes buy goods (groceries, shoes, ice cream cones) in Wilson, and sometimes buy them (cars, furniture, groceries, pet supplies) elsewhere (in Osceola at the Walmart Supercenter, in Memphis, from Amazon). At the same time, residents of West Memphis, Jonesboro, Osceola, Memphis, Forrest City, Helena, and elsewhere come to Wilson sometimes to make purchases. As the population of Wilson has declined, local capacity to keep local retail afloat has diminished, and any local retail that has survived and is likely to thrive going forward increasingly has come - and will continue - to need customers both from Wilson and the surrounding area.

Within a 20 mile radius of Wilson, it is estimated that the population in the roughly 1,200 square mile area has an annual demand for just over $95M in “food service and drinking places,” yet this area only supplies about $65M of this type of product (ESRI). This means entrepreneurs eyeing Wilson could certainly find customers in what is an excess of $30M in annual demand.

Within 40 miles of Wilson, there’s $1.6B of “food service and drinking place” supply (square footage of establishments in operation) amid annual sales of $1.53B, a glut which means that customers closer to Wilson migrate away from Wilson towards Memphis for purchases more than the other way around. In other words, while within a 20 mile radius of Wilson there’s a shortage of retail space, consumers in that 20 mile radius are spending outside. This is known as leakage; leakage can be harmful because when sales are “leaked”, jobs go as well, as does tax revenue. Wilson has a unique opportunity to re-capture this leaked economic activity. This Comprehensive Plan is a part of that work.
THE TASK IS CLEAR AND TOWFOLD

On one hand, create an environment conducive to as much retention of local and regional spending as possible while leveraging the probability that the non-local consumer will come to Wilson to spend; on the other, create an environment conducive to profitability on the part of retail entrepreneurs, home builders, and others. Marrying these two is essential and constitutes the required knitting for repositioning Wilson to succeed in the long run. It will mean that both must be treated as vital, neither coming at the expense of the other.

The task is to continue to strengthen Wilson as a unique, authentic, vibrant, beautiful place, worthy of affection and investment by residents and so worthy of attention, spending, and a second look from visitors.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Wilson has several advantages that need to be considered and leveraged.

Chief among them is the combination of the low cost of real estate for developers and business tenants along with Wilson’s inherent and distinctive charm. In other words, Wilson is both more beautiful than any of the surrounding communities and also offers a compelling potential future quality of life characterized by walkability, quiet, and beauty. These are not attributes found everywhere and they are in great demand today. These are also the attributes that make the goal of protecting and enhancing the historic character and charm of Wilson so important. This is one of Wilson’s major advantages.

Mississippi County, for example, has significantly lower home values than the MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area), a clear advantage for the home builder in the region wanting to leverage low land acquisition costs and construct a dozen homes in a new subdivision. Such activity is possible with the region’s economy changing as it is, and Wilson’s proximity to adjoining markets that are creating jobs.

That Wilson’s land and housing values are comparably less expensive means that developer risk is likely to be rewarded by a cautious, step by step introduction of new, high quality, well-priced homes where quality is not solely a function of interior finishes but tightly tied to Wilson’s vernacular.

A new home built in Wilson to attract a buyer from the region who may be employed in Osceola, just 15 minutes away, should not, in other words, depart in any way from Wilson’s characteristic 1920s residential architecture except within a structured framework of regulated interpretation parameters. Too often, communities kill their Golden Goose by relaxing on design standards so as to permit builder activity, the result being the introduction of substandard aesthetics or a finished product that may sell but which detracts from the charm that made the town or city worthy of investment in the first place. This isn’t to say that contemporary suburban home design and site planning is bad, only that it doesn’t contribute to making Wilson the unique place it is and should be. Deciding what should be built in Wilson or not is not just a question of what is good or bad, as that is often a question of individual taste. The more important question is how new structures enhance or detract from the historical character and charm that is and should continue to be Wilson’s calling card.

Part of the work of transforming Wilson into a true and unique place in the region is to ensure existing strengths permeate everything that is built. Another example would be gated communities. While perhaps appropriate in some places, a gated community would not be consistent with the Delta character of Wilson.

Wilson’s capacity to compete for a share of the
Wilson benefits from a compact, contained, and manageable geography, as well as rapid access to regional ground and air transportation systems.

The Tudor-Revival Town Square is the distinctive cornerstone of today’s Wilson and must continue in that role by remaining central to civic life and setting the tone for future development.
region’s buyers cannot be boiled down to a price and left to swing in the wind of builder disposition alone, which will be governed more by short term price, the path of least resistance, and consumer demand that can be fickle, unrefined, and problematic. It must be driven instead by what is in the best interest of Wilson. This plan aims to find the balance between profit and beauty, the basis on which Wilson’s long term economic viability will ultimately rest, and the central ingredient in Wilson’s brand.

Wilson’s Golden Goose is her charm, the lion’s share of which is form and location-based. This charm is grounded in aesthetics and cultural history, and is predominantly manifest in pre-World War II urban design, architectural style mainly in the form of prevailing Delta vernacular, and civic life in Wilson’s town square. While it may be financially advantageous to the builder to tap into regional demand for suburban style homes common to Memphis, the development of such housing would work against Wilson’s brand. Likewise, while it may become similarly profitable to develop fast food or regional serving retail on the town’s outskirts, to permit such development would work against the Wilson brand, work against the economic potential for the town square, and should be avoided. Policies in Wilson should create an environment conducive to profitability in balance with brand strength, and that reinforce the community’s authenticity.

Expanding housing options is a key priority for Wilson. Making sure the design of that housing is appropriate is critical. The sweet spot for Wilson will be a housing product priced for the middle class, built in an architectural style that complements what was built in Wilson between 1890 and 1930, and built on streets that continue the underlying pattern of Delta towns established in the last decades of the 19th century. The resulting residential development and redevelopment pattern in Wilson should strengthen and build upon elegant wood-framed clapboard homes with front porches whose owners can walk into town and to shops and to public amenities when desired, finding there commercial and public architecture similarly evocative of what it means to be in the Delta. The parallel sweet spot commercially is similarly sized, serving not a region but designed at a neighborhood-serving scale.

Authenticity is the one element of life in Wilson more important than all others. It is therefore imperative to create an environment conducive not only to profit, but profit via brand preservation.

The market in the region will come to Wilson if and as long as Wilson aims to shape that demand in ways that protect the brand.
PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Important Elements Shaping Future Decisions

Based on the quantitative and qualitative data assembled, the following principles represent the guiding planning principles for Wilson to protect its brand. These principles can serve to help guide and direct decision making about the future of the town.

For Wilson, protecting the brand means building upon existing physical characteristics. It means engaging in activities that steward Wilson for long range success. It also means never forgetting that you cannot put a price on the quality of life that can only be found in a small town. Keeping an eye on these aims - form, the long term, and small town values - will require attention to quality, and to specific town elements like the town square, housing, the environment, and education.

PHYSICAL CHARACTER
Maintain small town charm
Respect Delta building design
Celebrate Wilson’s unique Tudor town square and architecture
Create a firm boundary and clear, legible edges for Wilson
Connect neighborhoods and communities

LONG TERM ECONOMIC STEWARDSHIP
Create and improve housing opportunities for residents, workers and visitors
Strengthen the local economy in job-creating ways
Become a regional economic center
Embrace natural resources

SENSE OF COMMUNITY IMBUED WITH SMALL TOWN VALUES
Embody family-friendliness
Promote recreation and healthy living
Support and build community pride
QUALITY STANDARDS

The idea of being in a place where quality is evident at every turn infuses all of the work going on in Wilson today. A high aesthetic bar has been set. The aspirations are powerful. This is an attractive notion and can help attract new families to the town, as well as visitors. An emphasis on quality can help bolster the town’s economic and property values and can help people reimagine the role that a Delta town can play today. The concept of quality needs to become a part of all of the designs and plans for the town and become a part of the economic forecasting of the town and all other aspects of Wilson’s work. But quality does not mean just creating a market for exclusive residential enclaves and customers for high-end patisseries. Quality has democratic elements and means laying out the design and material standards that will shape new middle-market restaurants and multifamily rentals that will contribute to a high standard of living for all Wilson families. Quality means enhancing safety and quality of life for everybody in the town. Just as how rice is grown is more important to the Wilson brand than that it is grown, how Wilson achieves future prosperity matters. Long term durable prosperity in Wilson derived from how land is used, and how civic space is imagined is more important than short term gain obtained through lower levels of care and lower standards.

HOUSING

From almost every angle, housing is and should be the first priority for all work in Wilson. Activities and projects that distract from a focus on housing production could harm Wilson’s ability to move forward. Therefore, the most pressing issue facing Wilson in 2016 is ensuring that there is enough housing to meet the demands of its growing school and its current and emerging workforce, and doing so in a way that positions Wilson to obtain a share of the existing and future regional demand for housing. Wilson needs housing for young professionals who want to see what quality Delta living is all about. It needs housing for weekend visitors. It needs housing for seniors who want to age in place. It needs housing for the workforce that staffs its government and corporate offices, its public and private services, its schools, and its retail outlets.

Central to the discussion of housing is the realization that keeping Wilson’s rural and green character means that new housing opportunities need to be contained within the town limits. To do this, most new housing will – intentionally - be sited near the town square, and contain single and multifamily living opportunities. Outside the square’s immediate vicinity, infill lots and some new, targeted housing opportunities will allow Wilson to connect communities, meet its housing needs and maintain its character. In addition to new housing, Wilson can benefit from efforts to help current homeowners repair and maintain their homes. Doing so will benefit all residents, new and old alike, by helping to increase property values as well as attract more residents and visitors to Wilson.

In the work of defining Wilson and strengthening the Wilson brand, it is important to also evaluate opportunities to annex or otherwise protect nearby distinctive properties, the Delta School and other areas that play a role in defining Wilson as a place.
PRESERVING THE TOWN SQUARE

The Town Square is the heart of Wilson, and therefore deserves its own place in this Comprehensive Plan. Wilson’s vision is for an active Town Square with seating and entertainment space that is vibrant each and every day and night. The Town Square is the centerpiece of Wilson’s ability to become a true regional economic power.

This will be accomplished by adding seating and entertainment space to the Town Square; by building housing around the Town Square to add more vibrancy and activity to the area; by expanding and focusing retail near the square; and by programming the square with festivals and events. In sum, the Town Square must be protected in its current physical form but better programmed and activated. And with significantly increased retail opportunities.

NATURAL RESOURCES & AGRICULTURE

Wilson’s character is likewise embedded in its natural, rural, Delta setting. It is essential that all new development be influenced by this important aspect of the community. This setting also provides a jumping-off point for creative thinking about what “rural” looks like and functions like in the 21st Century. For example, Wilson can be a place to reimagine, relearn and reintroduce food production and healthy living to people. This type of effort is key to residents and to the future vision for Wilson, and also has far-reaching potential along socio-economic, scientific, capital, political and agricultural fronts.

From attracting universities and research groups to work on this subject, to bringing in new technology companies interested in creating new ways of working in agriculture, the potential for Wilson to be at the center of agricultural innovation in the Mid South is compelling. This will also be hard work, not least because the main engines for innovation will be imported, at least initially, and this is a reality that will require tenderness and creativity to manage. Making the space and attracting the investments, researchers, academics and businesses to pull this off will take a focused and directed economic development strategy. Wilson is blessed with potential facilities like the old high school, areas around the Lake House, and The Grange to create gathering and meeting places. Wilson’s planning and economic development work should prioritize the steps that can make this happen.
EDUCATION & ARTS

The Delta School is a central component of Wilson’s vision as a learning and growing community, and is an integral part of Wilson’s image. Over time, it is expected that the school will build collaboration opportunities with Wilson Gardens, with the public schools and with any future arts organization in Wilson. Strong schools are an essential tool of attracting more families to Wilson and therefore expanding educational opportunities is one of the top priorities of this Comprehensive Plan. This includes not only helping foster and support the collaborations the Delta School has in mind, but also supporting similar creativity and excellence in local public schools. This plan also calls for the creation of a new arts organization that can begin to program and take advantage of Wilson’s unique and character-rich structures.

FILTERS TO PRESERVE CONSISTENCY

There are 3 main areas where the community can throttle back activity and channel demand in ways that protect Wilson’s brand and character.

PROTECT THE CENTER AND EDGES OF WILSON

Discourage development that fritters away at the centrality of the square, civically or physically.

WILSON’S SEPARATE PARTS NEED TO CONNECT AND TRANSITION TO EACH OTHER SMOOTHLY

Avoid development that chips away at district identity and connectedness.

QUALITY MUST BE PROTECTED AT ALL COSTS, AND BE REFINED TO BE INCLUSIVE

Discourage development that does not meet high standards of quality and aesthetics, as well as development that lacks evidence of a commitment to social equity.
THE DISTRICTS OF WILSON—A VISION
LAKE DISTRICT
The Lake District is a designation for an estate style single-family neighborhood that is rural in nature amongst a conference and education hub that will serve local businesses and short-term visitors. The Building Types are geared toward estate homes, farmhouses, agricultural buildings, and educational buildings which are centered on greenways and existing vegetative corridors. This district will also contain specialized amenities relevant to the educational, institutional, and residential uses existing within it.

COTTON DISTRICT
The Cotton District is a designation for a single family neighborhood that reaches from the edge of the residential Historic District to the agricultural boundaries of the city limits. The building types in this district will cater to residents of various household income levels and contribute to extending the existing urban form and character of Wilson while tying together the existing infrastructure.

HISTORIC DISTRICT
The Historic District is a primarily single family designation directly adjacent to the City Square. The layout of this district will prioritize pedestrian circulation and accentuate prominent architectural elements and vistas. This district will pay special attention to creating an architectural character that is regionally appropriate and complementary to the City Square in detail and urban form.

THE CITY SQUARE
The City Square is intended to provide a wide array of uses for the City of Wilson with high standards of building development that are tailored to the ‘tutor revival’ style of architecture currently present. This district will balance pedestrian, motorist, and alternative modes of transportation with urban form, frontage requirements, and roadside design that create a sense of place characteristic of a traditional city square. This district will provide room for future growth of commercial uses and accommodate a variety of other uses such as mixed residential, live-work, etc.

GRANARY DISTRICT
The Granary District is intended to provide a diverse range of uses and functional market place for the City of Wilson with high standards of building development unique to Wilson. Implementing adaptive reuse strategies alongside new infrastructure and integrating urban plazas and pocket parks into the urban form will create sense of scale and security lending this area to a higher degree of pedestrian circulation perfect for a mix of land uses. Tight street networks and effective roadside design will serve to connect this district to the City Square in a way that creates a functional ‘city core’.

ARTS DISTRICT
The Arts District acts a primary gateway into Wilson and has the potential to add multiple value nodes through the adaptive reuse of existing infrastructure. This majority of the Arts District will consist of an array of residential housing products meant to cater to a diverse range of residents. With the Arkansas Regional Innovation Hub and City Square providing close proximity to a mix of land uses, pedestrian circulation through the Arts District will be vital in providing mobility between the two value nodes. Open space and pedestrian amenities integrated into the urban form will activate pedestrian space and contribute to the creative and unique neighborhood identity of the Arts District.

RAILROAD DISTRICT
The Railroad District is designated to be primarily single-family residential with close proximity and accessibility to services and goods in adjacent districts. This district will provide space for planned future growth and act as the southern corridor of the western gateway into Wilson along Cortez Kennedy Avenue.

GARDEN DISTRICT
The integration of the agricultural landscape of Wilson with community based planning and design strategies creates the sense of place and character of the Garden District. With a range of housing products to serve different household income levels the garden district will balance the extension of the existing urban form and pocket neighborhoods with the agricultural land surrounding it. Pedestrian circulation and shared open spaces will connect adjacent districts and offer opportunity for social interaction within the district. This Garden District will also play a key role in efficiently connecting people from the Granary District and City Square to the River District and levee at the southern end of Wilson.

RIVER DISTRICT
The geographic boundaries of the levee and nearby Mississippi River create the unique character of the River District. The existing urban form of this district lends itself to primarily residential products with a tight street grid and high degree connectivity to the adjacent Garden District. This district provides room for planned future development and has the potential to accommodate a mix of uses.
PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

To realize the Wilson community’s vision, leverage its strengths, and seize its opportunities, it will be necessary to prioritize and focus – to channel limited resources in ways that are likely to yield results by having a positive influence on community confidence and on public and private investment behaviors. Five priorities – all of which relate to each other in significant ways – have been identified through the comprehensive planning process, along with specific strategies that Wilson can pursue to make progress on each priority.

These priorities and recommended strategies align with existing conditions and opportunities, as well as the community’s values and planning principles. They are not, however, an inviolable “to do” list. As conditions change and new opportunities present themselves, the community should feel empowered and obligated to revise these priorities and recommendations through a steadfast application of its values and principles.

Promote high-quality development based on local traditions

Establish clear edges, a protective green buffer, and a farmland-to-town transect

Enhance existing districts and establish new district-based identities

Invest in durable infrastructure

Connect Wilson with beautiful corridors and pathways
Promote high-quality development based on local traditions

The shortage of housing opportunities in Wilson has been well documented. As implementation gets underway, energy at the outset should be committed to expanding housing options. In the short term, this means refurbishing second floor housing opportunities around the town square and developing zoning strategies that protect the quality of housing. This will encourage private investment in new housing construction. Wilson should move quickly to authorize a set of designs for the construction of historically-appropriate Delta vernacular single family homes on the numerous infill lots around Wilson. Pre-approving a handful of appropriate designs can help inform future development and can also simplify and speed up the process of creating the new housing. With approved designs, property owners can work with developers to build “spec” (speculative) housing or to follow other strategies to encourage good development to happen quickly. As part of a new housing development effort, priority focus should be given to opportunities near the town square. Bringing energy and vitality to the square will help it perform as the economic engine for Wilson. Over the longer term, utilizing a neighborhood district strategy as discussed later in this plan, is an important part of continuing to expand housing options.

As part of defining Wilson, it is important to also evaluate opportunities to annex or otherwise protect nearby distinctive properties, the Delta School and other areas that play a role in defining Wilson as a place.

As Wilson grows and develops, it is essential that clear and enforceable design guidelines and requirements, which aims to ensure that new development enhance, rather than harm, the town’s unique character, architecture and community vitality, must be in place.
Develop Deed Restrictions for Lawrence Group Owned Property

The Lawrence Group, in partnership with the town, should first develop design-quality oriented deed restrictions for all land it owns and plans to transfer. These restrictions would ensure a specific architectural character and design for new construction on these parcels. In the short term, the Lawrence Group could monitor these guidelines. As soon as the town has guidelines in place, they should take over. Such guidelines would also help ensure the buildings that go up on this land are maintained properly.

The Town should create a Wilson Planning Commission (see appendix) to develop and update design guidelines for these Lawrence Group-owned properties, as well as other developable sites throughout the town.

Create Citywide Design Guidelines

Deed restrictions for Lawrence Group-owned properties should be combined with Citywide Design Guidelines (for all other properties) that would be adopted by the Town Council to address all new development in Wilson. To implement and monitor these guidelines, the Town should establish a 5- or 7-person Planning Commission. Because Wilson currently lacks a full time planning staff, it would be important that the Planning Commission work with a professional on retainer who has a background in architecture, landscape design, and/or real estate development. This professional can advise the Planning Commission and help the town implement design guidelines and standards. These guidelines should be easy to implement and should not burden Wilson with the need to hire more professional staff. The guidelines should facilitate a “free-market” approach to development but one that is guided by clear expectations for development, allowing new development to happen with limited public interventions so long as it meets those expectations. Guidelines should include instruction for all types of development in Wilson, including residential, commercial, and agricultural.
Establish clear edges, a protective green buffer, and a farmland-to-town transect

A Green Buffer around the town of about 600 acres is recommended. This configuration is based upon a assessment of existing property lines that cross jurisdictional boundaries; within and beyond the border of Wilson. The Green Buffer directly coincides with these property boundaries and frames the town. A central component of Wilson’s natural resource vision is the creation and enhancement of organic gardens, orchards and livestock opportunities around the town. Instead of envisioning a town that keeps growing and sprawling out, consuming more land, our vision for Wilson is to be a town with a clear, green boundary surrounding and integrated into the town where growth and activity take place within that green boundary. To implement the green boundary for Wilson, the community will work with Wilson Gardens, agricultural interests and other relevant parties to enshrine a green edge around the town beyond which no physical structures should be built. Implemented in its ideal, the Green Buffer would encircle the entire town, providing a growth boundary, a “green growth boundary” of sorts, for the town as well as giving residents a direct connection to nature and green agriculture. The Green Buffer can and should be a mix of active and passive uses. Gardens, trees, orchards, and farm lands all have a place. The most important thing is that there is an intention to the way each connects to the other and surrounds and embraces the town. The Green Buffer should be noticeable to people that look at Wilson on a map or that drive into or through Wilson - it should serve as a gateway of sorts. One way to think about it is to aim for a goal of having 40% of the buffer - 240 acres - converted to beautifying, direct income-generating agricultural use, similar to Wilson Gardens. The remaining 360 acres (60%) would be converted to long-term orchard, forest and/or pasture, each of which will immediately raise the value of the land in Wilson by creating a fixed boundary around Wilson and ensuring that property within Wilson’s boundary remains finite and special. Current value based on cotton, rice, wheat, sorghum and soybean yields would be between $2.8-$3.4M at the high end, assuming a high percentage is readily tillable, or about $5,300 per acre. Whether by income (capitalization rate) or rental rate approach, orchards per acre are worth a fraction of current crop deployment. But current agricultural practices do not enhance the beauty - and thus value - of Wilson. Indeed current uses are unsightly, if profitable, and thus inconsistent with the exigent requirements of the rebranding effort in place. As part of building this buffer, consideration should be given to how the Delta School and the Lake District fit into this vision. Quintessential towns typical of the Mississippi Delta vernacular are relatively small in terms of developed land area. Wilson is no different and the Green Buffer surrounding town is one step toward ensuring that this small town fabric never sprawls outward in a way that would diminish the very essence of the community. But there is another step that should be considered: the annexation of surrounding land to ensure that these adjacent property owners are held to the vision that the residents of Wilson have established. If not incorporated within the legal jurisdiction of Wilson, future successes in town will lead to significant development pressures on the outskirts that, if left unchecked, would compromise the experience of Wilson’s residents and visitors alike.
The Green Buffer serves as a growth boundary of sorts and illustrates opportunities for the creation of gateways that define the extents of the community.
Enhance existing districts and establish new district-based identities

Neighborhood Districts

For the purpose of organizing this plan, setting priorities and focusing on the needs of every corner of Wilson, this comprehensive plan divides the community into distinct districts, each with its own priorities, needs and time-lines. The goal of this division is not to separate the community. On the contrary, one of the overarching goals of this plan is to better integrate the community. The districts are a tool to focus on different architectural, design, commerce, park, trail, and related needs in each area.
1. CITY SQUARE, HISTORIC AND GRANARY DISTRICTS

The goal of these districts is to create a regional destination, one that supports the dining and commerce needs of the region. These districts are and should remain Wilson’s central business district (the key location for working, shopping, dining and entertainment), and also where short term visitor housing, second-home housing, and permanent housing for workers and empty nesters is located.

**Priorities:** Increase retail and restaurant opportunities (focusing on a general store, a hardware store and a diner-like food option); Increase housing opportunities; Develop amenities to bolster commerce and entertainment (such as reinforcing and expanding the town square infrastructure); and, in the longer term, create more entertainment options, starting with the theater. The short term priority should be to create more housing and ground floor retail opportunities. If non-retail ground floor uses can be moved to other locations, that should be encouraged, so as to open up more street-level energizing uses in the City Square.

**PHASE 1**

- Buildings built within the yellow boundary should be constructed in the Tudor Revival architectural style.

- Creation of a walkway across the rail line (aligned with Park Street)

- Infill buildings to “complete” the town square

- Buildings noted for rehabilitation

Phase 1 of the City Square and Granary District focuses on the rehabilitation of existing buildings, the construction of new architecturally compatible infill buildings, and improved connectivity across the rail line to further activate the Granary District (note: buildings must be set back 50’ from either side of the rail line to maintain the required right-of-way).
1. CITY SQUARE, HISTORIC AND GRANARY DISTRICTS

PHASE 2

Buildings proposed to expand the experience as pedestrians begin to move south across the rail line and into the Granary District.

The proposed buildings frame existing Jefferson Street/Wilson Gin Company Road and the proposed walkway to cross the rail line to the northeast.

Retail is recommended on the first floor with housing opportunities on the second floors.

Maintain brick and metal character of structures.

Phase 2 of the City Square and Granary District includes new one- and two-story buildings that create the link between the existing town center/park area and the opportunities south of the rail line. Cortez Kennedy Avenue serves as the primary through corridor for Wilson and is a state road. Wilson should work closely with the State Highway and Transportation Department and their “context sensitive design” program that encourages the protection of natural resources and may lend itself to a collaborative effort to ensure the highway through Wilson is framed in street trees with the possible allowance of a different pavement to ensure a unique sense of place when one drives into town as well as slowing traffic for safety concerns as residents and visitors begin to cross the street more frequently as they move from the City Square to the Granary District.
1. CITY SQUARE, HISTORIC AND GRANARY DISTRICTS

PHASE 3

Buildings in pink note the expanded City Square along Cortez Kennedy Ave.

Similar to Phase 1 & 2, all proposed parking is located to the rear of the structures.

Upon completion of this final phase, the Wilson Town Center would be bolstered by infill development in the core, connectivity across the rail line and an activation of Main Street (Cortez Kennedy Ave).

In addition to housing units proposed for the second floor of existing and new buildings, seven units of SF housing are recommended along Westen Cortez Kennedy Ave.

Phase 3 of the City Square and Granary District completes the proposed cross-axis framework for the entire district, a framework that builds upon the existing building fabric and street pattern. Crude estimates indicate that approximately 50 units of MF housing and approximately 36 units of SF housing could be constructed within the City Square and Granary District.
2. COTTON DISTRICT

The goal of this district is to expand housing opportunities. This district is comprised of primarily middle class and executive-level housing with a limited amount of workforce housing.

Priorities:
Develop design guidelines for housing; Establish a legal framework to enforce those design guidelines; Address infill opportunities; Enhance walkability and connectivity to the Historic District and City Square; and Extend the street grid.

The Cotton District is comprised of SF residential units and a street network that ties into the existing streets (Jefferson Street and Jeb Stuart Drive). It would also link Madison Drive and Lake Drive.

This proposed neighborhood, as illustrated, would yield 123 new SF residential units within and just adjacent to the district that would cater to middle-class and executive-level housing needs.

Housing adjacent to the village core - small single-family lots contained within the existing fabric of the community.
3. **LAKE DISTRICT**

The goal of this district is to expand visitor events and housing opportunities. This district is primarily for private recreational use, meetings and short-term visitor housing with a limited number of estate housing opportunities. As Wilson’s conference and meeting center, this district will include meetings, conference and event facilities to support business retreats, meetings, academic programs, etc.

**Priorities:**

5-15 short-term, small footprint cottages for overnight visitors and be prepared to add more cottages over time as demand grows; Develop additional meeting and presentation space; Develop connections to the Delta School and to the Town Square; Develop design guidelines and a legal framework for enforcing guidelines for estates; and Establish approximately 25 estate sites for sale within and just adjacent to the district.

The Lake District addresses a two-fold community desire - to provide short-term visitor housing and opportunities for estate housing. As illustrated, the lake is expanded to the north to allow for increased lakefront lots.
4. RAILROAD AND GARDEN DISTRICT

The goal of these districts is to help establish Wilson as a center of locally produced arts, food and goods. While locally produced arts, food and goods should permeate all of life in Wilson, these districts are the central hub of Wilson’s maker-driven commerce and arts activities. They will include an active arts center, workforce housing and model organic agriculture. They will also be designed to support a range of mixed income housing options. Most importantly, these districts will be the starting point for Wilson’s “green buffer” that plays an integral part in the character of the entire town.

Priorities:
Develop an arts foundation to create and manage art/maker space; Identify the location and begin to develop an arts center; Focus on in-fill lots; Enhance workforce housing opportunities; Develop new, mixed-income housing designed to support expanded workforce needs of the community; and, in the longer term, seek out partners to help develop a combined hotel and brewery to attract visitors.

The Railroad and Garden District are unique in terms of their relationship to the land. Unlike the traditional framework of the Cotton and Arts District, the proposed housing in the westernmost portion of the Districts brings the agrarian landscape into the back yards of the proposed housing directly connecting these residents to opportunities for backyard farming/gardens. The proposed street grid is situated within the agricultural landscape and slightly separated from Golden Lake Road to allow the existing fields to remain in place right up to this road to maintain the rural experience as vehicles traverse this route.

Cottage housing around a slightly expanded organic farm area provides SF residential opportunities very near to The Grange and the proposed adaptive reuses of the Granary District. A new road connecting Golden Lake Road to Union Avenue creates a southern edge for this neighborhood and provides much needed east-west accessibility. The pink line indicates the proposed pedestrian/bicycle/equestrian path that connects Wilson to the Mississippi River (see full route in Section 5 (E) Connectivity to the Mississippi River). As illustrated, the Railroad and Garden Districts provide 339 units of mixed-income housing - traditional SF units and cottage housing.
5. ARTS DISTRICT

This district is designed to support the growth and development of workforce and mixed-income housing, retiree housing and related housing. It does not have any short term goals, but over time, is a target site for new housing.

**Priorities:**

Establish clear design guidelines for the town; develop a plan for the extension of the street grid; Integrate Wilson Gardens around the edge of the Arts District; and, over time, develop new housing opportunities to support a mix of income levels.
5. **RIVER DISTRICT**

The River District is an extension of the Granary and Railroad Districts. The opportunity to provide infill housing on the site where significant building demolition took place several years ago will not only provide workforce housing units but also reconnect this area that suffers from a “gap” in connectivity as a result of this large scale site that is currently a deteriorating concrete covered site with no structures remaining. Similar to the Garden District, this area will benefit greatly from the proposed path connecting Wilson to the Mississippi River.
Invest in durable infrastructure

Town services in Wilson today include water and sewer services, garbage pickup services, and a volunteer fire department. In 2016, Wilson gained two community police officers and patrol cars. That same year, Wilson community members voted to introduce a 1% sales tax in Wilson to help fund the new police department, support Wilson’s fire department, help pay for water and sewer repairs, and improve streets and walking paths in Wilson. As Wilson continues to develop, it will be important for the town to maintain up-to-date public infrastructure.

Fire/Police/Safety
In early 2016, Wilson swore in its first two police officers. The town also gained two patrol cars. Wilson currently has a volunteer fire department based at 17 Cortez Kennedy Avenue. Funds from Wilson’s 1% sales tax will help to support Wilson’s fire and police department.

Water/Sewer
The Wilson Water System uses two local wells to serve approximately 1,000 people on a daily basis. Wilson’s sources of water are two wells that pump from the Wilcox Group Aquifer. Both wells are located at 64 Union Street in Wilson, Arkansas. The town also provides sewer services to residents. Funds from Wilson’s 1% sales tax will help to support upgrades to Wilson’s water and sewer system. Wilson is also blessed with a very clean natural water supply which should be leveraged to create unique tourism and product development opportunities.

Hospitals/Health Care
Wilson’s closest hospital is the SMC-Regional Medical Center. The hospital is located at 611 West Lee Avenue in Osceola, approximately 11 miles north of Wilson. The hospital is a critical access hospital with 25 patient beds. The town is currently exploring options to bring a doctor’s office to downtown Wilson, in order to provide more direct healthcare options to residents. This should be a priority project for Wilson’s Town Square as it will attract new people to the square and also help ensure Wilson residents are able to do more of the things they need to do in town.

Parks
In addition to the Town Square, Wilson has a few parks that serve residents and visitors in various capacities. The most commonly noted of these is the state park adjacent to the Hampson Museum. Hudson Wren Memorial Park, on Madison Street north of town, has a ball field available to residents. This park is also home to the Show Barn, which houses local high school theatre groups and is currently being renovated for expanded performances. The local high school teams use the fields and running track at the vacated Rivercrest Junior High School on the west side of town. There is abundant green space in Wilson, which could be further developed. A new playground for children is a needed enhancement. More outdoor areas for farmers’ markets, arts events and similar activities could help enhance the activities around the Town Square. Given Wilson’s mosquito population, an outdoor music or entertainment venue seems like a lower priority to refurbishing the indoor theater. To continue to enhance the community’s green elements, whenever possible, new housing development should be clustered in such a way that it creates additional green space that can be integrated into the Green Buffer and the Wilson Gardens.
Schools

Wilson currently has two schools for students. The Rivercrest Public School system is a comprehensive public school system that serves students in the South Mississippi County School District. The school serves K-12 students in communities including Wilson, Osceola, Blytheville, and Manila. One of the important goals for the school system to is to build strong partnerships with the Delta School as well as with new Wilson arts and maker organizations to further enhance the unique character of the town and the culture for the community.

The Delta School, which opened in August 2015, currently operates a primary school for students ages 4-6, and two levels of elementary school programs for students ages 6-12. For the 2016-2017 school year, the Delta School will open a middle school that will serve students ages 12-14 and for the 2017-2018 school year, the Delta School will open an upper school that will serve students ages 15-18.

Town Broadband

Wilson already benefits from a town-wide wireless system. As the town grows and seeks out more partnerships, it should look for opportunities to create a community broadband strategy that will support current residents, visitors and business interests. The better Wilson can provide high speed internet access the better its chances of attracting world-class economic investments and events to the area. Wilson should look for opportunities to leverage private investments in broadband so it can “build once” the infrastructure needed to support expanded and faster broadband service.
Connect Wilson with beautiful corridors and pathways

While Wilson has its roots in the Mississippi Delta, the town is not readily connected to the river itself. The banks of the river are a short 5-6 mile walk, run or bike ride from the town center, but the route is not well defined and requires a detailed understanding of the local geography. Connecting the town to the river in some way would provide a recreational amenity for residents and a unique opportunity for visitors to experience the beauty and scale of the Mississippi River. Wilson should develop a strategy to work with regional and state partners to help it design and execute on a plan to connect Wilson to the Mississippi River by a series of biking/walking/running trails. Outside groups are already talking about a multi-state network of trails and bike paths. Wilson should aim to be a part of this discussion.

The river path proposed in the graphic on the following page would require a combination of negotiations with local property owners, possible acquisition or access easements along the route, and funding for the actual construction of the path. The marketing opportunity for this type of trail is significant and at 13.1 miles in length, it could be a national draw as a “half-marathon” route.

The charm and rural character of Wilson create numerous other pedestrian and cycling opportunities that utilize the existing roads and shoulders. This existing network is primarily comprised of roads without raised curbs; the exception is the town center. We recommend furthering the existing culture of sharing the roads - a simple form of what is commonly referred to as “complete streets,” or streets that serve all modes of transportation (the car, bicycle, and pedestrian). The roads without raised curbs connect a majority of the town and, with soft shoulders, lend themselves easily to this mode sharing.

Connections are also needed inside Wilson to ensure it is easy to walk between neighborhood districts and to cross major roadways. Sidewalks along the state highway, with clear cross walks and other pedestrian features can help improved the perceived safety of crossing the road. Establishing an ongoing dialogue with the state department of transportation will be an important part of this effort as well. As Wilson becomes more of a regional economic engine, there should be increased incentives for the State of Arkansas to help ensure the pedestrian, bike and trail experience in town is conducive to the town’s economic activities.

Two additional connections that are lacking in town are: 1) a pedestrian path that can connect the Delta School to the Retreat Center and to the Village Center. We recommend a separated path along Cortez Kennedy Avenue (on the north side) from the Delta School, passing by the Retreat Center, to the Town Center, covering a total distance of approximately one half mile. 2) a pedestrian path that extends west along Cortez Kennedy Avenue (north side) to approximately Monroe Street.
The path illustrated is a loop that is approximately 13.1 miles long - the length of a nationally recognized Half Marathon race.

- Pedestrian/bicycle/equestrian path from Town Center to Delta School to the east and Monroe Street to the west
- Proposed Pedestrian/bicycle/equestrian path to Mississippi River

The separated path for pedestrians and bikes from the Town Center to the Delta School is only a half mile, but would create an important connection for the Town. The path would also provide much needed connectivity from the Retreat Center, located in between the two, to the Town Center.
ACTION PLAN

To implement this Comprehensive Plan, Wilson will have to ensure it has the public, civic and private infrastructure it needs. An important part of that will be to enhance the capacity of the government to support the town’s growth, and to build new civic institutions to help as well. The following areas will require focus as this plan is implemented.

Wilson Town Governance
The public sector in Wilson is making great strides to become independent and it is clear Wilson is moving away from its roots as a company town. To implement this Comprehensive Plan, the Town Council should consider creating a new 5- or 7- person Planning Commission, overseen by an expert on retainer with expertise in design, construction and planning. This group can play an integral role in updating this Master Plan, and overseeing the development and implementation of design guidelines and possibly a new zoning code. To get started quickly, Wilson could appoint a part-time architect or planning professional to help provide guidance on implementation and zoning.

Civic Life
Civic participation in Wilson will be an important part of the success of this plan. Using the town gathering places like the grocery store and cafe and/or a town newsletter to help keep people informed could be places to start. In a town as small as Wilson, people should know that when they call the government or talk to a Councilperson, they can find out exactly what is going on with planned developments, services, and community events. While you cannot eliminate all rumors in any community, Wilson should make every effort to ensure that people understand what is happening and to prevent any surprises. It is too easy for insiders to think everybody already knows all the information they need to know.

Sustainability
It will be important to make sure this plan is implemented with a mind towards sustainability. The town can only grow and add commerce so fast and it is not reasonable to expect that the Lawrence Group or other outside funders will subsidize every aspect of Wilson’s evolution. Building a strong and reliable tax base, focusing on the core role of local government – responsibilities to build and maintain needed infrastructure and promote the general health, safety and welfare of residents – must be clear priorities for the town. Ultimately, the purpose of this plan is not only to unite the town of Wilson, its residents, and major business partners in a shared vision, but also to attract new partners to the town who can be key partners in Wilson’s future.
IMPLEMENTATION TASKS

YEAR 1

TASK #1  
Set up Governance Plan for Housing in Wilson: Agree to and create a Planning Commission, design review committee, or related governance structure to assist with planning needs. A local architect or planning firm on retainer can get this process started and ultimately stay on to serve as an advisor to any commission or committee.  
• Agree to a process to review these tasks and update them regularly as information evolves and changes. Consider quarterly review of this list at Town Council Meetings.

TASK #2  
Develop a Zoning Code for Wilson: Establish new zoning standards and design guidelines for Wilson that follows this Comprehensive Plan’s general outline.  
• Ensure design guidelines or deed restrictions are in place for LG property prior to disposition.

TASK #3  
Establish a development and financing strategy for the Town Square and Granary Districts for infrastructure needs/costs and housing needs/costs.

TASK #4  
Housing:  
Years 2016-2020 (citywide)  
• 150%+ Area Median Income* (AMI) - 20 Single Family Dwelling units (SWD) owner-occupied  
• 100-150% AMI - 10 SFD owner-occupied  
• 80-150% AMI - 12 2-BR Multi-Family units (MF) rentals  
• 30-50% AMI - 12 2-BR MF rentals  
* Wilson’s AMI = $52,813 in 2015

TASK #5  
Begin development of new rental housing opportunities within/around the Town Square:  
Years 2016-2020 (Town Square)  
• 80-150% AMI - 12 2-BR MF rentals (3+ units minimum per year for each of the next four years)

TASK #6  
Finish construction of the Hampson Museum.

TASK #7  
Develop local programs to encourage maintenance and preservation of homes such as a Beautification Commission and/or no-interest loan incentive programs for residents to upgrade/repair their homes.
**YEAR 2**

**TASK #8** Begin *redevelopment/rehabilitation* of existing housing in need:
- Years 2016-2020 (citywide)
- 80-150% AMI - 8 SFD owner-occupied (2+ units per year for each of the next four years)

**TASK #9** Identify *development and infrastructure needs* for each District and create a detailed plan for implementation (numbered in terms of priority):
1. Lake District (estate housing needs and cottage housing needs)
2. Near North Neighborhood
3. West Neighborhood

**TASK #10** Complete *Hudson Wren Memorial Park improvements* and renovation of the *Showbarn Theater* facility.

**TASK #11** *Green Buffer and Town Boundaries*: Create a plan and begin work on a Green Buffer surrounding Wilson, and integrate Wilson Gardens in and around the Town. Consider establishing a Green Buffer Town Boundary Committee to evaluate and review options:
- Determine how the Green Buffer comes into play with new residential development
- Determine an annexation or related strategy for the Green Buffer
- Consider annexing the land around the Delta School so it is within Wilson’s jurisdictional authority

**TASK #12** Begin development of *new rental housing opportunities* within/around the Town Square:
- *Years 2016-2020 (Town Square)*
  - Evaluate moving all commercial office space near the Town Square to second floor spaces so that more retail space can be opened up in first floor spaces
  - Enhance the Town Square with a bandstand
  - Develop a plan for chairs, tables and other elements to be added to the Town Square
  - Create an economic development position within local government that is responsible for attracting retail, commerce, and other appropriate entities to Wilson
  - Attract a second restaurant in Wilson; possibly a bakery and/or coffee shop
  - Attract a mercantile to Wilson
  - Attract a package store (e.g. UPS, FedEx, etc.) to support maker-economy shipping needs
  - Identify opportunities for community parking and begin work to implement.
  - Encourage new retail development near the Town Square and within the Granary District - connecting the two districts
  - Seek out Hotel and Brewery partners to explore a Town Square or Granary venue. Consider partnering with a company such as McMenamins that does hotel and brewery sites (http://www.mcmenamins.com/). Beer tourism is creating more beer/hotel combos http://www.bonappetit.com/drinks/beer/slideshow/beer-lovers-hotels#1)
**YEAR 3**

**TASK #13** Create a Trails Plan (including trail location and rights-of-way, paths, lighting, etc.) and begin work and fundraising opportunities to implement it. Build partnerships with property owners, the state, university, etc.

- Attract a bike/running store to Wilson that rents bikes for the bike trails
- Follow the plan to connect Wilson to the Mississippi River; secure rights-of-way via acquisition or easements; create a public/private partnership to begin fundraising for construction of the trail
- Identify short term improvements to roadways to make Wilson a safer place to walk and bike
- Identify longer term strategies that require state support and begin to build state relationships to help implement them

**TASK #14** Create a parks plan and begin work to implement it:

- Make sure the public spaces (and easements) around the lake are clearly identified and set aside
- Identify new areas for small community parks
- Consider opportunities for community swimming holes and trails to connect them

**TASK #15** Create a Wilson Arts Organization to be in charge of leasing out creative/makerspace. Visiting artists would come for a year or more, to live and work in Wilson. Some space should also be set aside for local makers (of candles, clothes, food, arts, etc.)

- Develop a detailed plan for maker-space
- Develop a detailed plan for the old theater - a performing arts opportunity: Consider visiting playwrights’/actors’ programs with the Wilson Arts Organization

**TASK #16** Thought Leadership - develop a program of events to make Wilson a thought leader on targeted concepts:

- Partner with a regional university on a Rural Architecture Design Studio that would let Wilson host design students in town or partner with other arts or music organizations to draw a creative influx of people and talent into Wilson. Agricultural internships, academic conferences sponsored by the Delta School, concert series, and other opportunities to showcase the makerspace movement and attract industry and creative leaders to Wilson are all ideas and programs that Wilson should continue to pursue.

**TASK #17** Develop a plan for the unused Rivercrest Junior High School - a possible community center or incubation space for business start-ups or recreation center or sustainability center or university extension locale.
YEAR 4

TASK #18  In partnership with the Wilson Arts Organization (Task #15), ensure the **redevelopment of the building next to The Grange site** for use as maker space, art space, gallery space all combined within a live/work context; look at the use of Low Income Housing Tax Credits, Historic Tax Credits, 501(C)3 partners, etc.

TASK #19  **Coordinate and program activities that draw visitors** to the community: biking and/or running events such as a levee run until the path is complete to the Mississippi River, baking or other food contests that showcase local southern dishes, music festivals, a corn maze for Halloween, etc.

YEAR 5

TASK #20  **Look back at the targets** set in Task #4 and ensure Wilson is on track to achieve those housing numbers by the end of year 5; new residential opportunities were the main focus of the Town’s Comprehensive Plan in 2016.
APPENDICES

50 FUTURE LAND USE MAP
51 GOVERNANCE
52 DATA NOTES
53 METRO COMPARISONS
56 WILSON COMMUNITY MASTER PLANNING SURVEY 2015
FUTURE LAND USE MAP
In reviewing the options of creating a private Home Owners Association or a public body to oversee the quality of construction and activity in Wilson, it has been found that a public body would provide the most flexibility and long-term quality control for Wilson. As discussed throughout this plan, Wilson will need to establish a governance structure to oversee the implementation of this plan as well as future design guidelines and zoning codes that Wilson may develop. To this end, a Planning Commission and/or a Design Advisor(s) will need to be established by the Town Council.

If a Planning Commission is desired, then the Commission would be responsible for actively reviewing, discussing and ultimately recommending the town Council approve or deny a particular development request. While the Planning Commission could be given responsibility as the final arbiter of certain types of projects, the initial role of the Commission should be as an active committee that would develop design guidelines and zoning codes as well as work with development proposals so that they adhere to these codes. Over time the Commission’s responsibilities and powers could be enhanced, but starting as an advisory body ensures that the Town Council will continue to play a key role in these important decisions. The Town Council should identify the types of notices and reports it expects from the Planning Commission. For example, the Commission could develop an annual report on the state of new development, on the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, on the need or implementation of new plans for Wilson (trails plan, parks plan, etc.).

According to Title 14 of the Arkansas Code, the Town Council may create a Planning Commission of not less than five (5) members, of whom at least two-thirds (2/3) shall not hold any other municipal office. All members of the Commission must live within the planning jurisdiction of the Town. Given Wilson’s small town stature and its lack of a sophisticated planning and zoning office, a five-member Commission with four designated seats, along with a designated seat for the Mayor, seems the most logical.

Appointments to the Planning Commission should have either 3 or 4 year terms. Terms should be staggered so that not all Commission members are up for re-appointment at the same time. The initial Commission, therefore, would have to provide a mechanism for new Commission Members to either “draw straws” to determine if they have a 1, 2, 3 or 4 year term or for the Town Council to make this determination. The Planning Commission should develop its own by laws to establish the management of its meetings, how the Chair and Vice-Chair are elected, who keeps records, how meetings are announced and what opportunities the public will have to participate. The primary purpose of the Planning Commission would be to make recommendations for the Wilson Town Council to either approve, deny or modify proposals. The Commission would act as both the primary planning and zoning body for Wilson and could also perform design review role for Wilson to help ensure the authenticity, charm and quality of Wilson.

The Town Council could also consider appointing a Town Planner, Architect or planning “Advisor” to act independently as the design advisor for Wilson or act as the part-time staff to help advise the Planning Commission on its work. Before a Planning Commission is established, this appointed role could serve as the design, planning and zoning review person for the Town Council in lieu of a Planning Commission. This person would handle the work of interpreting development proposals against the comprehensive plan and zoning and design guidelines. They would review development proposals, and then evaluate them against the comprehensive plan and within the regulations of the zoning and other design and quality codes.

The Mayor could nominate an Advisor for a period of three years, at which end continued service would be permitted with consent of Council. The nomination would be considered by Council, and if approved, the nominee would receive an appointment and an annual stipend of an amount to be determined.

The appointment would authorize the Advisor to review all proposed new construction and all proposed significant property rehabilitation and render a conclusion about the degree to which proposals meet Wilson’s zoning standards and design guidelines. The Advisor would submit in writing and in oral presentation a recommendation to approve or disapprove to the Town Council. Council would evaluate the proposal whether or not recommended for approval. If recommended for approval, Council need only a simple majority to ratify. If not recommended for approval, Council would need a super majority to overrule.

The Advisor would function like a paid, appointed one person Planning Commission, or the Advisor could oversee the work of the 5- to 7-person Planning Commission. The Advisor would need to possess a portfolio of credentials for consideration that should include, at a minimum, being a licensed and accredited planner with AICP certification or an architect in good standing with the AIA.
czb reviewed the Retail MarketPlace Profile, Retail Market Potential, and Restaurant Market Potential reports prepared by ESRI based on data for Wilson (a 1-mile radius around 55 Park Ave, Wilson, Arkansas, 72395), in the immediate vicinity of Wilson (a 20-mile radius around 55 Park Ave, Wilson, Arkansas, 72395), and for the Wilson region (a 40-mile radius around 55 Park Ave, Wilson, Arkansas, 72395). Together, these reports suggest a significant amount of untapped demand for restaurants in Wilson, and a ready pool of potential tourists from the region into Wilson.

According to ESRI’s reports, there is very little existing supply of “full-service restaurants” or “limited-service eating places” in Wilson. Because of this, the excess demand for such enterprises is just over $850,000 – just within the town (at the 1-mile radius level). Drawing a 20-mile circle around the town encompasses $95,150,808 in demand for “food service and drinking places,” yet this area only supplies roughly $65,000,000 in this type of sales. A new restaurant in town could certainly tap into what is an excess of $30,171,749 in demand for these establishments. One cautionary note, however, is that the region (the 40-mile circle around Wilson) has an excess of supply of such outlets: $1.61 billion in supply to meet just $1.53 billion in demand. This excess supply would compete with any new restaurant in Wilson should that restaurant be looking to tap into the same customer base (individuals living between 20 and 40 miles away from Wilson).

Yet families in the Wilson area (the 20-mile circle) and the Wilson region (the 40-mile circle) are slightly more likely than families nationwide to visit restaurants on a weekly basis (roughly 30% of adults at both geographic levels reported going to a restaurant at least four times per month). Fine dining, though, is less common, and local, area, and regional restaurant-goers are more likely than those nationwide to spend less on their meals. Interestingly, Wilson adults are actually more likely than adults nationwide to spend more ($51-$200 on a meal).

At all geographies, adults are more likely to dine out at dinner (about half did so in the last 6 months) than lunch (just about one-fifth did so in the last 6 months), and are slightly more likely to eat out on a weekend (approximately two-fifths did so) than on a week day (roughly one-third did so).

Much like with restaurants, the demand for retail within Wilson (1-mile radius) and in the Wilson area (20-mile radius) both exceed the supply of retail – by a substantial amount in town and a notable amount in the area. The region, however, has a surplus of retail establishments (supply is in excess of demand by just over $2 billion). Within the region, more than 400,000 adults (nearly half of all adults) reported traveling domestically within the last year. (Nearly 100,000 domestically traveled for pleasure three or more times in the last year.) Regional travelers were most likely to spend a smaller amount on their trip (under $1,000 or $1,500).

This would suggest that offering a destination site to the region’s residents – a low-cost day-trip or weekend excursion – could tap into a number of nearly individuals looking to travel.

The Wilson area should be able to attract a variety of overnight visitors in the following ways:

- Memphis Weekend Destination
- Business Retreat Destination
- Short-Term and Long-Term White House Cottage Rentals
- Air BnB Stays for Concert or Conference Attendees or Other Visitors
- Hotel/Motel Partners for Combined Hotel/Brewery Visits
The vast majority (73%) of homes in Wilson are valued below $100,000 (according to the 2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates). In contrast, just one-third (36%) of the metro area’s owner-occupied homes are valued below $100,000. Across the region, another third (36%) of owner-occupied units are valued between $100,000 and $199,999 (the case with just 15% in Wilson) and 16% are valued between $200,000 and $299,999 (the case with just 7% in Wilson). Regionally, just 3% of all owner-occupied units are valued between $500,000 and $999,999 and just 1% are valued over $1 million. There are currently no homes at these price points in Wilson.

**TABLE: HOUSE VALUES BY GEOGRAPHY, 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price Range</th>
<th>Wilson #</th>
<th>Wilson %</th>
<th>Memphis MSA #</th>
<th>Memphis MSA %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $100,000</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>109,148</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 - $149,999</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>62,031</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 - $199,999</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>47,817</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200,000 - $249,999</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>29,709</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$250,000 - $299,999</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>19,181</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$300,000 - $499,999</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>25,602</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500,000 - $999,999</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8,311</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,000,000+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1,836</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** 2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, czbLLC
Gross rents are also significantly lower in Wilson: over half (56%) of all rentals with cash rents have rents below $500; this is true of just 10% of rentals MSA-wide. In contrast, 41% of the metro’s rentals have rents of $900 or more; only 2% of Wilson’s rentals are priced at or above $900.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BREAKDOWN OF HOUSE VALUES (2014)</th>
<th>Wilson</th>
<th>Memphis MSA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL WITH CASH RENT</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>185,526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $500</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>17,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500 - $5999</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$600 - $749</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$750 - $899</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35,849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$900+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>75,809</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: 2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, czbLLC
Not surprisingly given gross rent breakdowns, Wilson’s renters tend to be lower income than those throughout the MSA as a whole: 40% of Wilson renters have incomes below $20,000 (versus 22% MSA-wide). Among owners, Wilson has a smaller percentage of owner households with incomes below $35,000 than the region as a whole, has a larger percentage of owners with incomes “in the middle” (49% of Wilson owners have incomes between $35,000 and $74,999 compared with just 33% of owners MSA-wide), and has a smaller percentage of owners at the highest income levels (20% have incomes at or above $100,000 in Wilson compared with 28% across the region).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BREAKDOWN OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2014)</th>
<th>OWNERS</th>
<th>RENTERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WILSON</td>
<td>MEMPHIS MSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>303,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $500</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500 - $5999</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$600 - $749</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$750 - $899</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$900+</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$900+</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY TENURE AND GEOGRAPHY, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% OF OWNERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WILSON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMPHIS MSA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% OF OWNERS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WILSON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMPHIS MSA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% OF RENTERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WILSON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMPHIS MSA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: 2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, czbLLC
1. Do you own your home or rent?

- Own: 80%
- Rent: 20%

2. Do you work in Wilson, or outside of town?

- In Wilson: 40%
- Outside of Wilson: 29%
- Retired: 19%
- Don't Work: 12%
- I Would Consider It: 8%

3. Name up to three things that are unique or special about the Delta:

**HISTORY**
- Mississippi River

**COMMUNITY**
- People Are Friendly
- Flat Land, Creative People, Care for the Land
- Community, Hospitality, Family
- Sense of Community, Small Town Feel
- Safe and Clean Neighborhood, Excellent School System, Low Crime
- The People, The History, The Potential
- The Food, The People, and Sunsets
- Southern Hospitality
- Recreational Activities
- Hunter, River, Friendly People
- Scenic, Peaceful, Friendly
- Sense of Community
- Museum, Historical Buildings, The Square
- Cotton Fields
- Rich Soil

**AGRICULTURE**

**LANDSCAPE**
- Topography, History
- Flat Delta Landscape
- Simple Lifestyles
- Agriculture
- Quiet, Safe, Clean
4. Describe the top things you like about living in Wilson:

COMMUNITY
CLEAN AND LANDSCAPED
SMALL BUT ACCESSIBLE
SAFE WITH A SMALL TOWN FEELING

Safety, Landscaping, Churches and Activities
Quietness, Hospitality, Home
Community, History of Town, Cafe
Very Clean, People are Great, Isolated but Close to Other Areas
Quiet, Small Town, Knowing Your Neighbor
Quiet, Close to the River, Scenic
Beauty and Charm, Community Spirit
Unique Tudor and Industrial Architecture
Majestic Cottonwood Trees
Local Businesses
Feeling of Safety

5. Describe the top things you want to improve or fix in Wilson?

MORE RETAIL OPTIONS
SEWER AND WATER
SIDEWALKS/RUNNING PATHS
CUTTING DOWN OLD COTTONWOOD TREES
AFFORDABLE HOUSING
POLICE SERVICE

Housing, More Kid Friendly Activities, Retail
People Keeping Up Yards/Homes
Sewer System
Streets, Cell Phone Service, Please to Eat
Unsafe Cottonwood Trees Should Be Cut Down
Affordable Local Dining
Commerce, Roads, Fishing at the Lake
More Jobs for People in Town, Stores/Gas Stations that Stay Open Longer, Affordable Housing
Full-Time Cop, Walking/Bike Path
Recreation Facilities
Drainage, Entertainment, Space for Concerts, More
Input from Citizens

Water System, Sidewalks/Running Area
Drainage
Animal Shelter
Physician or Nurse Practitioner
Expand Retail
Community Center
6. Would you be willing to help pay for [increased services] (with taxes, for example)?

- Yes: 51%
- I Would Consider It: 41%
- No: 8%

7. Name the one or two most important or unique things about Wilson’s history:

- HISTORY
- MISSISSIPPI RIVER
- COMMUNITY
- LANDSCAPE
- AGRICULTURE
- PEOPLE ARE FRIENDLY

- Flat Land, Creative People, Care for the Land
- Community, Hospitality, Family
- Sense of Community, Small Town Feel
- Safe and Clean Neighborhood, Excellent School System, Low Crime
- The People, The History, The Potential
- The Food, The People, and Sunsets
- Southern Hospitality
- Recreational Activities
- Hunter, River, Friendly People
- Scenic, Peaceful, Friendly
- Sense of Community
- Museum, Historical Buildings, The Square
- Cotton Fields
- Company Town
- Diverse Production Over the Years
- High Standard of Education
- Hampton Museum
- Town Square
- Strong Pioneering Spirit
8. Do you regularly hunt, fish, hike, boat, bike or do other similar activities?

- Yes: 63%
- No: 37%

9. How important are Wilson’s natural resources to you?
   from 1-5 (with 5 being highest)

- # of Responses
  - 1: 22
  - 2: 20
  - 3: 16
  - 4: 14
  - 5: 12
10. What is Wilson’s most unique natural asset?

COTTON
FERTILE LAND
MISSISSIPPI RIVER
THE PEOLPE OF WILSON

Cotton
The Mississippi River
The Blue Hole
The Soil
Cottonwood Trees
Abundance of Farmland
The Lake
The People
Fertile Farmland
Water

11. What are three businesses or services that you wish Wilson had?

HARDWARE STORE
URGENT CARE/HEALTHCARE
MORE RESTAURANT OPTIONS
MOVIE THEATER
CONVENIENCE STORE/DOLLAR STORE
24 HOUR SERVICE STATION
FITNESS CENTER

Coffee Shop
Theater
Flower Shop
Boutique Store
Auto and Farm Parts
Supply Store
General Store
Dry Cleaners
Hardware Store
Urgent Care
More Places to Eat

Pharmacy
Better Cell Towers
24 Hour Store
Fast Food
Full-Time Police Department
Gym
Dollar Store
Auto Repair Shop

12. If Wilson were to open a new restaurant, what kind would you like?

Asian
Mexican
Sandwich Shop
A Locally Owned Pizza Cafe
BBQ
Home Cooking
Steakhouse
Chilis
Regular Cafe Food or Pizza Place
Country Style
Taco Shop
Family Friendly
Coffeeshop/Bakery
Buffet-Style

Family Style Without Alcohol
Bistro Type Sandwich Shop
Casual, Moderately Priced
Ice Cream/Frozen Yogurt
Fast Food such as Sonics or Long John Silvers
Burgers and Fries
Soul Food

American
Italian
Japanese
Seafood
Chinese
Sushi

13. If Wilson were to open a new store, what kind of store would you like to shop at?

DOLLAR STORE/GENERAL STORE
HARDWARE STORE
CLOTHING STORE
NO NEED FOR ANOTHER STORE
GIFT SHOP/LOCALLY MADE STORE

General Store
Dollar Store
Lawn and Garden/Hardware Store
Clothing Store
Hunting Store
No Need for Another Store
Dollar General
Hardware Store
Sporting Goods Store

Book/Magazine Store
JC Penney’s
Flower Shop
Liquor Store
Home and Decor Shop
Hardware and Plumbing
Walmart
Gift Shop
14. When you leave Wilson to go shopping, where do you go?

- OSCEOLA
- JONESBORO
- MEMPHIS
- BLYTHEVILLE

15. Describe the design and character of buildings and homes in Wilson:

- UNIQUE
- TUDOR
- SHOTGUN
- CLASSIC
- SOUTHERN

Ranges from Derelict to Brand New
Different Designs and Levels of Pride
Vintage
True Southern Character
Front Porches
Tudor Style
Classic Colonial
Ranch-Style Homes

16. Do you walk or drive to the town square in Wilson?

- Walk Only 55%
- Drive Only 35%
- Both 8%
- Neither 2%

17. What could be done to make it easier to walk around Wilson?

- Better Lighting at Night 24%
- Sidewalks 21%
- Mosquito Control 21%
- Slow Down Traffic 13%
- More Walking Paths 24%
18. How important is Wilson’s unique architecture to you? from 1-5 (with 5 being highest)

19. Do you garden?

20. How important is gardening, farming and access to fresh food to the reason you live in Wilson? 1-5 (with 5 being highest)
21. How would you change the following description of Wilson?: Wilson, AR is a model of high quality rural living where the world meets the Delta.

With a focus on community & family & healthful living.
Unique high quality rural living in Wilson, AR showcases to the world the beauty of living in the Delta.
It is what it is… a small town in The Delta of people with great love for their community… it’s working people trying to do the best they can to support their families.
Wilson where the Delta changes people for the better and supports tradition.
With small town atmosphere of friendly folks.
High quality is good as long as the perception isn’t that we are high class and not for the working class people. The working class people are what made this town.
Wilson is a model of how opportunities in a rural area can turn dreams into a reality and allow the world to see the beauty of the Delta firsthand.
Wilson – where laid-back Delta living is your future.

21. Is there anything else about Wilson and its future that you’d like to share with us? Any questions or ideas?

Have more reasons for people to walk around town, walk across to the Grange, be invested in the food that’s grown & that they eat at home & in the cafe. Have some community outreach & education on eating well. Reasons to get out, exercise, be involved. Movie nights, music, invite other vendors over for the farmers market.
More housing!
An up to date police department.
Hire local people. Keep hometown people home. I believe this is how a town prospers and grows.
I would like to see the school building used for the community possibly a recreation center.
Wilson needs things for young people to do.
I love living in Wilson right now. It’s hard to want it to grow too much, at some point you sacrifice small town charm for convenience, and I don’t want it to do that. Wilson with a Target and a Burger King would be different, but not in a good way. I do think it’s important that our utilities are reliable, and that there are safe places to exercise and be outdoors.
It has been said that “a rising tide lifts all boats.” I think that must be true here if Wilson is to become the model of highquality rural living to which we aspire rather than another community of the haves and the have-nots existing in uneasy proximity… I would like to see Wilson, Arkansas, become a living laboratory for improving the quality of life for its citizens. I believe the former Wilson Elementary and Jr. High School facilities could be turned into a mall-like Community Center with spaces for adult education classes, a senior center, etc.
Most of the people I’ve talked to that have moved here for the power plant/steel mill could care less about the history of Wilson, the close knit community. This isn’t really their home, it’s just a job to them.
I think the planning effort to help Wilson grow should be involve the input of the residents in Wilson. Some people feel that their ideas are not and will not be heard or make a difference.
Improve water and sewer systems.
Use the Wilson Elementary school for town gatherings, entertainment.
Remove all of the Cottonwood trees along the roads.
Have a fishing lake, a weekly newspaper.
I want Wilson to stay rather small with unique shops for people to come shop at from surrounding areas.