

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The city of Newton has established and maintained public improvements that support a full service community. Passage of local sales tax elections and the maintenance of urban infrastructure have helped build Newton and North Newton as a regional urban center. The cities face the opportunity to build on those strengths as they plan for expansion southeast, southwest and northwest of the cities. Strengthening downtown while accommodating commercial development within established business districts is a major challenge for Newton. Stabilization of residential districts is important while serving new subdivisions south on Old U.S. Highway 81

Critical to development in Newton and North Newton is the timing and phasing of growth so that limited financial resources can support the various infrastructure demands and opportunities. A key recommendation of the plan is to establish a capital improvements program CIP that ranks projects in phases. Which sanitary sewer extension gets built first--for example, to the west along First Street, versus south along the Sand Creek basin and in which year--can be ranked and funded most effectively in a CIP process.

In a similar way, the cities must update and utilize land use regulations to ensure compatible and appropriate infill development within long-standing commercial corridors, such as in the downtown, and in the North Main Street and East First Street districts. Development design guidelines are provided for evaluating proposals along the commercial corridors as a critical aspect of public partnership with the private sector.

Finally, the plan presents a model for cooperation between the cities and Harvey County in extraterritorial land use regulation. A joint planning approach is recommended so that one set of regulations governs growth in the urban fringe of the cities. Also, the approach will allow for extension of building codes into unincorporated growth areas. Jurisdiction over final decisions should remain with the county for land use regulation in the unincorporated county; with the City of Newton Commission inside Newton; and with the City of North Newton Council inside North Newton. Recommendations on planning and zoning would be from a newly formed *Regional Planning Commission* jointly appointed by the three governing bodies.