

PLAN FOUNDATION

ISSUES & GOALS

It is important for a county to assess its future from time to time. The Official Master Plan guides development within the county and must also be assessed periodically. A county must look at and learn from its past to guide future development. The issues and goals in Jefferson County constitute one part of that assessment process and define the foundation on which the Official Master Plan will be constructed, and they are defined herein.

These issues and goals, identified through the Official Master Plan's public participation process, will guide citizens, developers, county staff and elected and appointed officials in making decisions regarding growth and development within Jefferson County. The goals should not be considered as independent from each other, but rather they are a collection of goals to achieve the vision of quality planned growth and development that will produce a desirable environment for the residents of Jefferson County.

Issues:

The issues have been organized into five categories to better manage and address each goal within the Official Master Plan. Those categories are, *Quality Growth and Development*, *Economic Development*, *Infrastructure and Transportation*, *Environment and Open Space* and *Education and Communication*.

Quality Growth and Development

In discussion with members of the community, many people recognized the need for some level of land regulation and development review to provide the county with organized, high-quality growth and development. This recognition was also evidenced by the responses received from a planning questionnaire, in which 69% of those responding disagreed with the statement that "property values are better preserved by fewer restrictions on property." It is evident, however, that some citizens of Jefferson County are strong property right advocates, as indicated from some of the comments received in the public participation process, and as such, they are skeptical of government regulation of land. Within the issues discussed below, this skepticism is evident.

Several issues were identified that relate to the future development patterns of Jefferson County. The issues included comments against high density developments, comments in favor of a 5 acre minimum lot size, and general issues related to the provision of housing in the county. Many of the comments received regarding the county's development patterns revolved

around the notion of the level of infrastructure required at the time of development. Many people in the current, as well as a past, planning effort felt that a complete package of infrastructure, including sewer, water, streets, emergency services and schools, was necessary to support any level of new development. At the opposite end of the spectrum, some people felt that minimal infrastructure should be provided to coincide with the amount and type of development. An example that was given is the need for only a gravel street to support a pole barn that housed horses, as opposed to a street that met County standards. Others felt that there was an appropriate general level of infrastructure that should be provided in conjunction with any development. There was a general consensus that some level of infrastructure, particularly water, sewer and streets needed to be provided concurrent with development. This point was reiterated in the questionnaire when 90% of the respondents agreed that “development should not occur unless adequate service infrastructure (sewer, water, streets and storm drainage) is present to support the development.”

Issues such as lot sizes and preservation of “rural character” were also dominant in many of these discussions. Much of this discussion centered on a need for larger lot sizes to preserve the rural character of the county, and there was confirmation of this point in the responses to the questionnaire. As an alternative to mandating larger lots, citizens discussed permitting more density in specific areas as a trade-off for a developer preserving or protecting rural areas and natural resources such as vistas and woodlands. Many residents of the county expressed a desire against dense development and believe that the previously developed portions of the county (the northern portions), as well as the municipalities, should accommodate any higher density development. Consistent with this thought, many people felt that the remainder of the county should be developed with single family five-acre tracts of land. Others thought that scattered locations of more dense development would best serve the county, not only from a housing standpoint, but also from the provision of services to county residents. The need for large lots and the need for targeted density each received support from the majority of the respondents.

Some residents of Jefferson County cite the rural pastoral setting as the reason for the current demand for development in the county. They also recognize that the rugged topography, as well as the difficulty of developing in those conditions, as a reason for the county developing later than other counties in the metropolitan area. Other people expressed the opinion that, in

the past, developers were not inhibited by rugged topography. Topographic constraints were viewed as physical obstacles to be overcome, rather than indications of resources to be protected. When questioned further, many participants recognized the importance of being sensitive to topographic considerations because they relate to the health of the watersheds and watercourses in the region.

Another issue that was raised multiple times was the need for a variety of housing options within the county. Variety was defined by the participants as single family large lot, single family low density, single family - small lot - maintenance free, multi-family and elder care facilities. A concern about the increasing amount of mobile homes within the county was also voiced. Some people felt that the county had enough mobile homes, and that they should be banned from this point forward. In general, people agreed that having a variety of housing options would be best for the future development of Jefferson County. There were, however, varying opinions on where that housing should be provided. The majority of those completing the questionnaire rejected the concept that a variety of housing should be provided within each new neighborhood.

Economic Development

The most discussed issue regarding economic development was the attraction of jobs and services to the county. Most people felt that job attraction, particularly industrial and office jobs, would be beneficial to the tax base. The participants in the questionnaire confirmed this point when they overwhelmingly, 84% and 80% respectively, agreed that efforts should be made to attract commercial/retail development and job development to expand the tax base and promote economic growth. They also generally agreed that those uses that create jobs had their place within the county, specifically adjacent to the existing industry and jobs. In particular, respondents did not want competition for development with St. Louis and St. Charles counties to dictate the development pattern of Jefferson County.

One of the most vocalized issues was the use of incentives to attract commercial (retail/office) development to Jefferson County. In the public meeting, participants were split on this issue, with some seeing the advantages of using such tools, while others thought that the loss of tax revenue did not justify the benefits of the development. The general feeling was that economic growth, through the provision of new retail, business and general development was good for the

future of the county. However, the growth needs to be planned and financially responsible for the county and its citizens. Many felt that the county had not properly used the incentives that were at their disposal. In particular, many people voiced their opposition to the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to assist developers. *It should be noted that, to date, Tax Increment Financing has not been used by the County.*

A related issue was the use of incentives to pay for infrastructure associated with development. Most people agreed that some level of infrastructure was necessary to support new development. Many people, however, felt that developers should pay their own way with respect to infrastructure and the cost of development. The respondents to the questionnaire overwhelmingly echoed the sentiments of the public meeting with 90% agreeing that development and developers should pay for infrastructure costs. As previously stated, it was evident that many of the residents of the county felt that there was the potential for developers in Jefferson County to abuse development incentives, and that benefits promised would not be delivered.

Infrastructure and Transportation

As with the other issues, the comments and opinions regarding transportation were varied and sometimes conflicting. Generally, the transportation issues centered on connectivity. One issue that was raised was the use of “private streets for public use.” Some residents raised the question about the public traffic that is allowed on “private streets,” maintained by homeowners through the neighborhood and homeowner’s associations. Additionally, citizens voiced the desire to place gates at the entrance roads to their subdivision to control access to their neighborhood and create safer streets within. These two issues are at the heart of the argument against connectivity for neighborhoods. However, these issues seem to be localized because, when questioned, 58 % of the respondents agreed that neighborhood streets should provide connections to adjacent neighborhoods and local commercial services.

The connectivity of the county, for local and through traffic, was an issue. Many people felt that the current traffic in the county was manageable, but that better connectivity between developed areas was needed. However, most people did not desire connectivity if it compromised safe neighborhoods. People wanted a better connected and quality road network that delineated a hierarchy of streets. It is apparent that connectivity among commercial developments is also an

issue. An issue that surfaced several times was the poor condition of many of the roads in the county, particularly the local roads that serve the remote areas.

The topic of transit was raised as an issue. Many people felt that rail transit connecting the county to St. Louis would lessen the traffic congestion within the county during morning and evening rush hour times. People also voiced a desire for transit connections to St. Louis to take advantage of the amenities that the City has to offer, without having to drive and park in the city. Some citizens felt that the county lacks the population, specifically density of population, needed to make rail service financially feasible. It was pointed out that bus service had been tried in Jefferson County, with service to St. Louis, and that the ridership was minimal. Ultimately service was stopped. There was some discussion regarding the opportunities to use alternative modes of transportation, such as public transit, bicycles and walking. Some residents disagreed that these forms of transportation should be incorporated into the transportation network, but 78% of the respondents to the questionnaire agreed that they should be a part of an integrated movement system.

Environment and Open Space

The protection and preservation of the natural environment was a key issue for discussion for many citizens of the county. In general, most people felt that the protection of the environment, including air quality, water quality, stream courses and topography, was important for the protection of the “rural character” and the future livability of Jefferson County. This issue was particularly evident in the results of the questionnaire, in which 88% of the respondents thought that the county should protect environmentally sensitive, topographically constrained, or significant natural areas from development. Many citizens felt that developers in Jefferson County had already begun to destroy the county’s natural environment, and that future development should be more respectful.

A topic regarding the environment that received much discussion was storm water runoff and land erosion. Most of the discussion centered on land development policies and regulations to address erosion during the land development and construction process. The county staff and citizens within the county thought this was a significant issue.

Education and Communication

Related to the issue of economic development and providing jobs in the county, several participants voiced the need to provide county residents with a quality education. Education provides the means for people to compete for jobs at all levels. Education can also be significant because it increases the opportunity for people to work in the county in which they live. An educated workforce may enhance that county's future economic development. The physical development of education facilities was also an issue. The participants were divided on the provision of educational facilities as they relate to new development. Many people felt that new schools, as well as other community infrastructure (fire and police stations), should be built prior to the development that would be served. Others felt that it should be planned for the future and constructed as needed.

One issue that was evident throughout the planning process was the lack of communication among the different jurisdictions within and surrounding the county, including municipalities, other counties, infrastructure districts (sewer and water), and community service providers (police, fire and ambulance). The county itself is seeing an increase in its own departmental communication, specifically in the development processes. However, there is a low level of communication or coordination among the County and the municipalities, sewer districts, water districts and others regarding the development of the county.

Summary

Through the various participatory techniques and research, the five main issues detailed above were identified as priorities for the future growth and development in Jefferson County. Based on these issues, planning goals for Jefferson County have been established. The goals, while general in nature, are intended to assist the county in providing: quality growth and development, positive economic development, adequate and timely provision of infrastructure, protection of environmentally sensitive areas and enhanced education and communication within the county.

While this is not intended to be a complete list of the issues prevalent in Jefferson County, it does represent the major issues that evoked discussion among participants. For a complete list of the issues and goals raised from the public meeting, see the Issues and Goals Report and the Questionnaire that were completed as a part of this planning effort. All the comments and statements received have been included, unedited. Copies of the Issues and Goals Report and

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the Questionnaire can be obtained from the Planning Division of the Department of Land Use, Development and Code Enforcement of Jefferson County.

Goals and Objectives:

Based on the issues identified, the following goal categories (1,2,3...), goals (A,B,C...) and objectives for the county have been developed. The goals and objectives presented in this document serve as a guide to the future physical growth and development of the county, particularly with respect to the decision-making and implementation processes. The goals for the county are:

- 1. Quality Growth and Development – to promote growth and development that creates a quality-oriented environment, conserving natural resources and providing community amenities.**
 - A. Plan for phased growth in an orderly manner.**
 - Ensure that sewer, water, and roads are existing or planned in conjunction with infrastructure levels necessary to serve new development.
 - Establish clear and continuous communication with local jurisdictions and entities whose actions most affect growth in the county – i.e. municipalities, sewer and water districts, school districts, and state transportation officials.
 - Establish development priorities that encourage development in areas with existing capacity for both service infrastructure (water, sewer and roads) and community infrastructure (fire and police protection and schools).
 - B. Promote more compact settlement patterns that maintain overall low densities and preserve the rural character of the county.**
 - Implement higher density, more compact development, particularly in areas of the county where environmental conditions and topographical constraints warrant protection and assembly of connected open spaces.
 - Establish design standards that allow a diverse mix of employment, retail and residential uses of all types to occur in a compact manner.
 - Require distinct and discrete centers for all new, compact, higher density developments, capable of expansion and growth in intensity over time, to maximize infrastructure efficiency and reduce disturbance of open land and rural areas.
 - C. Promote application of site designs that are efficient and sensitive to the environment.**
 - Implement higher density, more compact development methods in environmentally sensitive areas of the county.
 - Develop watershed management plans that identify specific application of differing development methods, location and mix of associated land uses.
 - Provide mechanisms and criteria for public acquisition or dedication of voluntary conservation easements.
 - D. Support existing neighborhoods and develop new neighborhoods that provide quality residential environments.**

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- Encourage amenities, such as parks, public or common areas and community or civic uses, easily accessible to all residents of a neighborhood.
 - Plan for and seek opportunities to link neighborhoods to the overall county park system through greenways and trails.
 - Separate non-compatible uses with appropriate buffers, transitions and open spaces.
 - Provide incentives for appropriate maintenance of private property.
- E.** Provide convenient locations for goods and services oriented to the local community.
- Promote a mixture of regional scale commercial, as well as service and employment centers, in common locations with integrated and compatible site design standards.
 - Encourage the location of neighborhood scaled mixed commercial and service-oriented businesses near neighborhoods to facilitate “one stop” access to daily service needs.
 - Encourage mixed-use centers as a part of every large compact, higher density development to accommodate all routine service needs of the surrounding residents.
 - Work with school districts to plan and locate new facilities in coordination with new development – accessible by walking or bicycle for as many students as possible.
 - Plan for housing and retail service centers in convenient proximity to each other.
- F.** Provide an economic and physical diversity of housing options, including affordable housing.
- Provide a wide range of housing options that allow a diversity of housing formats and price levels within new developments.
 - Work with residential developers, in conjunction with economic development efforts, to provide a jobs-to-housing balance appropriate for all income levels.
- G.** Ensure maintenance of public safety and protection of public and private property.
- Reduce the threat of fire damage by discouraging lower densities of development in areas not efficiently served by existing fire protection resources.
 - Phase implementation of community infrastructure (i.e. fire protection, health and emergency care, and police) into development plans for more compact settlements.
 - Limit development in floodplains in order to protect property and lives.
- H.** Support the retention of businesses that provide goods and services to the local community.
- Work with residential developers to design developments compatible with existing businesses.
 - Consider expansion of businesses in their present locations.

2. Economic Development – to attract quality development and jobs to the county.

- A.** New development, of all scales, shall adhere to the goals and recommendations of the Official Master Plan.
- Promote awareness, discussion, and understanding of the Official Master Plan among various economic development groups in Jefferson County and among industry organizations.
 - Establish criteria for site plan review to ensure that commercial and industrial development are compatible with different uses, either within the development site or on sites adjacent to the development site.
 - Locate new employment and commercial centers based on projected population and the availability of or plans for service infrastructure.
 - Plan for housing and employment centers in convenient proximity to each.
- B.** Develop policies for the use of development incentives (financial and non-financial) throughout Jefferson County.
- Create a strategy for non-financial development incentives, such as procedural streamlining, community familiarization assistance and networking assistance, with respect to business attraction and existing business retention.
 - Adopt policies regarding the appropriate use of tax incentives by the County, as well as support of municipalities using tax incentives.
- C.** Develop a diversity of job opportunities for residents of Jefferson County.
- Develop a strategic economic development plan for job growth in Jefferson County.
 - Facilitate partnerships between businesses and educational institutions to share resources and provide skills training.
 - Expand existing large and small businesses to provide a broad range of employment for Jefferson County.

3. Infrastructure and Transportation – to provide infrastructure that adequately serves the existing community, as well as new development.

- A.** Ensure the provision of required utilities and facilities (sewer, water, streets and storm drainage) in a timely manner to support land use and development plans.
- Formulate a strategy to allocate public expenditures to best further the goals of the Official Master Plan.
 - Long-range plans for community facilities, such as fire, police, parks, libraries and schools, should support long-range growth and development of the county as advocated in the Official Master Plan.

- Ensure that service infrastructure, including sewer, water and roads, are existing or planned in conjunction with community infrastructure levels necessary to serve new development.
 - Locate new employment and commercial centers based on projected populations, as well as the availability of or plans for service infrastructure.
- B. Expand the county’s parks, recreation and open space system.**
- Pursue local opportunities to link with and support the Mississippi River Trail with bikeway connections to the trail or park developments along the trail’s route, the Meramec Greenway Recreational Corridor through participation in the Meramec River Recreation Association, and other recreational trail efforts.¹
 - Consider public acquisition as a strategy for conserving priority natural, archeological or historic resources.
 - Maintain an interconnected park and open space system to acquire, consolidate and preserve important open spaces.
- C. Improve the transportation system throughout the county for vehicular circulation, but also maintain opportunities to enhance or expand alternative transportation choices.**
- Require connectivity in road and pedestrian networks to allow multiple and more direct connections to destinations, particularly in more compact, higher density development areas.
 - Establish transportation network standards that are appropriate for different development densities (i.e. high density, low density and rural).
 - Improve coordination with other transportation infrastructure entities such as the State Department of Transportation and incorporated municipalities.
 - Site more compact, higher density developments in areas with the greatest opportunities to expand transportation alternatives and choices, including potential transit, para-transit, bicycling and pedestrian circulation.
- 4. Environment and Open Space – to ensure environmentally sensitive development, particularly large-scale development, to promote the conservation of air, water, and other natural resources and maintain the unique character of Jefferson County.**
- A. Protect watersheds and water resources from pollution runoff, erosion and flooding.**
- Integrate natural elements into development sites and overall development plans, as well as promote site design techniques that minimize total amounts of impervious surface.

¹ The Mississippi River Trail is a 10-state cycling route under development that currently has over 2000 continuous miles between the headwaters of the Mississippi River and its mouth in New Orleans, including portions in Jefferson County, Missouri. See www.mississippirivertrail.org.

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- Manage County land assets, such as community open space or parks, rights-of-way or other public grounds, to reduce impacts on watersheds and water resources.
 - Avoid the placement of potential pollution sources in important groundwater recharge areas, and protect watersheds from potential pollution sources.
 - Increase public awareness of stormwater issues.
- B. Maintain the rural character of Jefferson County through application of differing growth and development techniques as advocated in the Official Master Plan.**
- Incorporate significant natural and environmental assets or topographic characteristics into the overall growth and development of the county.
 - Develop mechanisms and criteria for open space preservation, including public acquisition and voluntary conservation easements.
 - Protect ridgelines and view corridors by adopting rural development design standards.
 - Ensure that protected or preserved open space and significant environmental corridors are linked to provide a continuous network.
 - Foster an understanding of the value of historic and archeological resources, and improve techniques to preserve significant county assets.
- C. Maintain air quality for the health, environment and economic prosperity of the county.**
- Implement development standards that promote the greatest opportunities to reduce vehicle miles traveled within Jefferson County and the metropolitan region.
 - Recruit clean industries to Jefferson County.
 - Support air quality initiatives of local jurisdictions within Jefferson County, as well as metro-wide regional initiatives.
- 5. Education and Communications – to provide quality public awareness and a high level of communication regarding planning and development issues.**
- A. Increase the public’s understanding of planning and development regulations, documents and procedures adopted by the County.**
- Make all planning, zoning and development documents available in public venues, public book depositories and on the Internet, when possible.
 - Use the media and county resources to increase awareness of countywide planning issues, goals and on-going efforts.
 - Establish and maintain an ongoing communication mechanism with developers, builders and citizens regarding development standards, procedures and Official Master Plan goals.

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- B.** Improve and maintain an on-going communication mechanism between County government and other governing entities (i.e. municipalities and other local jurisdictions, surrounding counties, the state and federal government and administrative agencies).
- Encourage municipalities to develop plans and regulations consistent with the Jefferson County Official Master Plan.
 - Establish clear and on-going communication with local jurisdictions and entities responsible for “community infrastructure” – fire protection, schools, health care, and police – so that long-range planning for these facilities can support the goals of the Official Master Plan.
 - Promote awareness, discussion and understanding of the Official Master Plan among various economic development groups in Jefferson County and with industry organizations.