

Chapter 9: Future Land Use

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Goal: Make all future land use decisions based on the compatibility of adjacent existing land uses.

The Future Land Use element of the Comprehensive Plan incorporates all of the goals and recommendations of the previous elements to try and determine suitable locations for future developments.

The Future Land Use map is based on an inventory of existing land uses depicting current development trends within the county. Future population demands are considered along with the physical infrastructures required to sustain those populations. An extensive public review process was used to conceptualize all of the aforementioned variables to try and determine the most suitable locations for future land uses.

The map is a conceptual figure that depicts proposed land use patterns for the county and its municipalities. The residential areas of the county were delineated using definable boundaries, such as roads and streams, and will be discussed further in the chapter.

9.1 Future Land Use

County residents expressed the desire to define density parameters for subdivision developments. The previous plan used medium (less than 5 acres per dwelling unit) and low density (greater than 5 acres per dwelling unit) categories to describe subdivision developments. This plan recommends that a high-density zone be created along with medium and low-density designations to define allowable densities for subdivision development. The density parameters relate specifically to subdivision developments and do not apply to single parcel splits within rural residential areas.

The high-density area is located in the expected growth corridor surrounding the Town of Hull. The density is defined as 1.5 acres per dwelling unit, without access to public water and sewer. The high-density zone incorporates a 3-mile radius from the intersection of Highway 72 and the Clarke County border, using Hellican Springs Road from the Clarke County line north to Highway 106. Cross Highway 106 and follow Biger Creek east to McClellan Road. Follow McClellan Road south to Highway 72, and follow Hardman-Morris Road to the county line.

The medium-density zone is a 2-mile radius surrounding the high-density zone and is defined as 2 acres per dwelling unit, without access to public water and sewer. This area is bounded by Nowhere Road from the Clarke County line north to Martin Griffeth Road. Follow Martin Griffeth Road east to the Neese - Commerce Road and south to Highway 106. Follow Adams-Duncan Road east to the Brush Creek Bridge, then follow Brush Creek to the Old Kincaid Road. Follow the Old Kincaid Road to the Danielsville Road and head south to the county line.

Any subdivision development occurring outside of these designated zones must be developed at low-density, defined as 5 acres per dwelling unit. The Agricultural land use designation, on the Future Land Use Map, implies that all subdivision development within agricultural areas be developed as low-density residential. Committee members recommended that developers be allowed the option of increasing the density to 2 acres per dwelling unit provided they utilize a conservation subdivision-style development and set aside a portion of the development as permanently protected green space. This would require that the county develop a conservation subdivision ordinance to allow developers this option. Committee members recommended that the ordinance be simplified to help facilitate the development process. The ordinance should require a minimum set aside of 50% of developable land as green space. This requires further definition of what green space is to ensure that significant natural resources are preserved. All land within a development that is not considered developable, such as floodplains and wetlands, cannot be included in the acreage set aside as green space. The conservation

subdivision ordinance is intended to regulate the expansion of rural subdivisions to avoid sprawling developments within agricultural areas of the county.

The Parks, Recreation and Conservation (PRC) area has been left the same as in the previous plan, however this plan recommends that the designation carry with it strict regulations to limit the amount of development allowed in this environmentally sensitive area. It has been recommended that conservation subdivisions be required for all residential development within the area and that the amount of land set aside be increased above 50% to ensure the preservation of the area's natural resources.

Surrounding the PRC land is a transitional greenbelt that limits the type of developments within one-half mile of the PRC designated land. Within the transitional greenbelt, conservation subdivision development is mandatory. This will further minimize the impacts on the identified resources by regulating development in the area.

Commercial areas have been kept the same as in the previous plan, concentrating developments along major highways, and surrounding the cities. Light Industrial/Commercial land uses will remain along the Highway 72 corridor to take full advantage of the transportation infrastructure available. The existence of rail and the widening of Highway 72 to 4 lanes makes it fully accessible for light industry and commercial land uses.

Committee members recommended that the county allow for the construction of business/commercial parks along this corridor to concentrate development in clustered nodes to help reduce the amount of strip development along the Highway. Tree buffers should be maintained along the roadway to maintain the existing viewshed and minimal access routes should be incorporated into development to minimize the amount of impervious surface along the corridor.

Citizen advisory committee members have firmly expressed the desire to maintain the existing rural qualities associated with living in Madison County. It is felt that growth should be confined to the designated zones and that development should be limited in the agricultural areas. Conservation design techniques, such as conservation subdivision development, should be promoted to developers as a viable option. It is important that the county amend the zoning ordinance not only to allow this type of development but also to facilitate its implementation.

Committee members have identified the need for residential and commercial development within, and surrounding the cities. Increased growth should occur in those areas that are best equipped with the infrastructure necessary to handle growth.

Large-lot zoning in the unincorporated areas has contributed to the sprawling development presented on the existing land use map. Compact, open space developments should be promoted throughout the county in all density districts and within the cities, where applicable.

The underlying theme throughout the entire planning process is to preserve the existing rural qualities of the county. All land use decisions should reflect this goal and ensure that future development does not occur at the expense of the quality of life for Madison County residents.

9.2 Needs/Policies/Implementation

Needs

- Designate areas suitable for higher density development.
- Clearly define the allowable minimum lot sizes for each density district.
- Develop a conservation subdivision ordinance that maintains a percentage of developable land as green space and reduces sprawling development in agricultural areas. Clearly define green space within the ordinance to avoid the classification of unwanted land types as green space.
- Encourage developers to utilize conservation subdivisions in agricultural areas to preserve the rural character of the county.
- Create a more restrictive set of regulations for the Parks/Recreation/Conservation areas to limit development adjacent to key natural resources. Enforce conservation subdivision regulations in these areas to ensure that adequate green space is preserved.
- Maintain commercial corridors along major transportation routes and surrounding cities. Focus commercial expansion in the high growth areas to minimize vehicular traffic on residential roads.
- The designation of Highway 72 as a light industrial/commercial corridor is an attempt to take advantage of the existing transportation infrastructure (future four-lane highway and existing rail corridor). Business/commercial parks should be constructed along this corridor to cluster commercial nodes. This will help to avoid strip development along the highway and decrease the amount of roadway construction required.
- Strictly enforce existing ordinances to ensure that all development regulations are adhered to. Enforce the existing sign ordinance and add tree and lighting ordinances for all jurisdictions.
- In order to allow farmers to continue agricultural practices, land must be assessed and taxed at its lowest use to maintain an affordable property tax rate for local farmers.

Policies

- Utilize clearly defined density boundaries to direct future growth.
- All new development must be compatible with surrounding land uses.
- Promote residential growth in the designated high and medium density districts, and in the cities to take advantage of existing infrastructure.
- Create, and clearly define, a conservation subdivision ordinance and promote its use to developers.
- Allow developers the opportunity to construct medium density subdivisions in low density areas provided they utilize a conservation subdivision.
- Regulate rural residential growth.

- Limit development occurring within the PRC zone. Enforce conservation subdivisions within Transitional Greenbelt and further restrict development within the PRC areas.
- Allow for the provision of business/commercial parks along the Light Industrial/Commercial corridor to limit strip developments.
- Utilize a tree buffer zone along Highway 72 to maintain the existing viewshed.
- Continue using zoning ordinance to ensure compatible development.
- Assess agricultural land at its productive agricultural use not at its potential development use.
- Promote the use of restrictive covenants to agricultural land owners to allow the taxation of their land at its productive agricultural use.

Implementation

- Develop a conservation subdivision ordinance. (Madison County Planning and Zoning Commission; initiate in 2001; estimated cost \$3,500; potential funding - local, DCA, DNR)
- Identify suitable location for business/commercial park along Highway 72, between Comer and Colbert. (Madison County; initiate in 2004; estimated cost unknown; potential funding - local)
- Update existing zoning ordinance to include density definitions and tree, sign and lighting regulations. (Madison County and the cities of Carlton, Comer, Danielsville, and Hull; Initiate 2001; estimated cost 2,000 per jurisdiction; potential funding - local)