

CITY OF VAN BUREN LAND USE PLANNING

1. BACKGROUND

Municipal planning in Van Buren was formalized with the creation of the Planning Commission in December, 1959 (Ord. No. 12-1959). The Planning Commission functioned as an advisory panel for the Mayor and City Council until October of 1963 when a zoning ordinance and associated Zoning District Map was adopted by the City Council (Ord. No. 7-1963). In 1965 more effort began to be devoted to comprehensive planning issues. The Planning Commission in concert with the City Planning Division of the University of Arkansas developed a “Comprehensive Development Plan” for Van Buren which was adopted by the City Council in 1967 (Res. No. 13-1967). In October, 1978 a Land Use Plan was adopted (Res. No. 1-10-78) to guide future development of the community.

This document continues to build on the efforts of earlier Planning Commissions by adding a set of guiding policies for development in accordance with anticipated land use trends.

2. GENERAL LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS

In order to create and maintain a sense of community and connectivity within neighborhoods, the City of Van Buren has adopted these guiding for making land use decisions within the City. Particularly, the Land Use Plan is the most important document in achieving long range planning and implementing land use management through zoning and subdivision regulations. Guiding land use policies to achieve these goals are grouped into 7 categories as listed below:

- Section 3. Residential
- Section 4. Commercial
- Section 5. Industrial
- Section 6. Open Space/ Recreation
- Section 7. Environmental Resources
- Section 8. National Registered Historic Districts
- Section 9. Community Character

Each land use classification is defined below, and land areas for each classification are designated on the Land Use Plan Map. Future land use designations are based on existing land use patterns and needs for these land uses as based on future population projections and policies which the City wishes to implement. The Land Use Plan Map and the policies upon which it is based are the official guide to be used when the Planning Commission and City Council consider rezonings, conditional uses, and annexation requests.

3. RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Residential land use represents the largest area designated on the Land Use Plan Map. Maintaining and enhancing the residential environment of neighborhoods is an important community goal. Existing zoning districts separate housing types by density, housing type, lot size, and frontage requirements. The single family residential areas promote low density

neighborhoods with greater amounts of open space. Multi-family residential areas allow higher density single family neighborhoods and multifamily developments. Areas of the community that allow higher residential land use density provide economic incentive for lower cost housing. Multifamily land use areas often provide transitional zones between higher and low development density.

Guiding Policies:

- 3.a Utilize principles of traditional residential urban design to create compatible, livable, and accessible neighborhoods.
- 3.b Protect and restore Van Buren's outstanding residential architecture of all periods and styles.
- 3.c Minimize through traffic on minor residential streets.
- 3.d Manage non-residential development adjoining residential neighborhoods to minimize nuisances.
- 3.e Site new residential areas accessible to roadways, alternative transportation modes, community amenities, infrastructure, and retail and commercial goods and services.
- 3.f Adopt regulations which establish a development scale to maintain compatibility and proportionality between nonresidential development and adjacent residential areas.
- 3.g Adopt a City policy of "connectivity", meaning that commercial areas and residential areas are easily accessible by vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists.

4. COMMERCIAL AREAS

Van Buren functions as the retail and professional services provider for Crawford County. Van Buren's commercial areas include grocery stores, dry cleaners, restaurants, day care, video stores, banks, cafes, gas stations, and other similar types of commercial services that are convenient and serve residents on a daily basis. It is vital to Van Buren's economy that commercial businesses are accessible to their customers, and it is equally vital to manage commercial development to minimize negative impacts on neighborhoods and the City's transportation network. Appropriate sites for existing and future regional commercial attractions are shown on the Land Use Plan Map.

Guiding Policies:

- 4.a Provide enough retail business and service space to enable Van Buren to realize its full potential as a regional market.
- 4.b Encourage improvement and expansion of regional shopping and entertainment attractions.

- 4.c Ensure that the surface transportation network serving commercial areas meet acceptable levels of service.
- 4.d Ensure that large commercial sites are designed and landscaped in a manner that minimize negative impacts to the character of their surroundings. Protect adjoining properties from the potential adverse impacts associated with commercial uses adjacent to and within residential areas with proper mitigation measures that address traffic, noise, appearance, lighting, drainage, and effects on property values.
- 4.e Encourage developers to designate and plan for “neighborhood” commercial areas at the time of subdivision approval to properly plan for accessibility to these areas.

5. INDUSTRIAL AREAS

The Van Buren Industrial Park has attracted some relatively "clean" industries and should be fully developed to maximize use of the City's investment in infrastructure for the park. Other industries are located along the Union Pacific railroad and associated spur tracks. Future construction of an intermodal port facility will increase industrial development pressure in the southern portion of the community.

Guiding Policies:

- 5.a Encourage and recruit new industry to locate within the existing industrial areas.
- 5.b Minimize noise, visual, air and water pollution through performance standards.
- 5.c Identify and rezone inappropriately zoned industrial areas to more appropriate uses.
- 5.d Support development of the proposed intermodal port facility.
- 5.e Limit industrial rezoning requests until such time as all current available industrial land is fully utilized.

6. RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

One of Van Buren's greatest assets is its diverse, open character. As more people move into the area, it is important that ample land be provided for both active and passive recreation. Land dedications can be used to provide park facilities and open space in the areas where the new development occurs.

Guiding Policies:

- 6.a Encourage and provide recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities, both active and passive.
- 6.b Provide recreational opportunities within the area that meet standards for size, location and use, and will adequately serve existing and future population.

- 6.c Encourage the development of park lands which are visually and aesthetically pleasing.
- 6.d Encourage the protection of open space and natural resources so that a high quality of living can be retained for future generations.
- 6.e Encourage utilization of open space for park and recreation needs.
- 6.f Strive to achieve public involvement to produce the most current and up-to-date park system possible.
- 6.g Seek a wide variety of funding sources for enhancement of a parks system.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

The citizens of Van Buren place a high priority on environmental protection and the natural beauty. Scenic vistas in and around the City are a point of pride to most residents. Environmental issues are addressed in other areas of the Land Use Plan, from land use policies intended to create a more compact community to transportation policies intended to reduce air pollution and energy use. Environmental resources shall be defined as all physical and vegetative features of the community's landscape which are necessary to maintain the functioning integrity and health of the natural systems within the bounds of that community.

Guiding Policies:

- 7.a Identify areas of environmental concern and protect and preserve environmental resources.
- 7.b Minimize intense forms of urban development on steep slopes.
- 7.c Maintain and improve the City status in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).
- 7.d Maintain a cooperative working relationship with FEMA so that adequate public records are available to describe areas subject to flooding.
- 7.e Minimize flood hazards to citizens through land use planning and regulation.
- 7.f Implement regulations that control erosion and soil loss in developing areas.

8. NATIONAL REGISTERED HISTORIC DISTRICTS

The City supports the Historic District Commission and believes that a dynamic perspective of history is fundamental to our community's continued evolution and growth. The present community must actively affirm the significance of its past for future generations. The historic downtown core of Van Buren is an important commercial and tourist attraction. The area designated as the Historic District includes Main Street commercial area and the surrounding residential neighborhood. The overriding goal for this area is to encourage commercial

development which retains the area's historic character and to encourage a mixed residential and commercial character for the area. Businesses on Main Street are predominantly day businesses, with a few restaurants open for evening business. A mix of both kinds of development would allow shared parking, and the presence of people during the day and night would increase the vitality of the area and discourage crime.

Guiding Policies:

- 8.a Protect and preserve historically significant structures and landmarks within the City.
- 8.b Integrate Van Buren's historic past with the social and economic dynamics of the present through revitalization, restoration and renovation efforts. Historically significant structures may be integrated into functionally viable residential and commercial business uses.
- 8.c Foster public education about the Historic District Commission and Van Buren's Historic District.
- 8.d Enhance revitalization through the strategic use of public planning and funding, and working in concert with private sector investment.
- 8.e Continue revitalization of the historic downtown commercial area, and enhance it with evening businesses.
- 8.f Encourage retail use of ground floor space and office and residential uses on higher floors.

9. COMMUNITY CHARACTER

This chapter identifies the man made and natural features that add character to the City of Van Buren and establishes guiding policies and implementation strategies to protect, enhance, and preserve these features.

Guiding Policies:

- 9.a Protect and enhance Van Buren's appearance, identity and sense of place.
- 9.b Retain the small town character of Van Buren.
- 9.c Protect the historical and environmental resources of Van Buren.
- 9.d Discourage perimeter walls and guard houses around the perimeter of new residential developments and promote "open" character of neighborhoods.
- 9.e Allow compatible commercial development within and adjacent to residential development.
- 9.f Define and enhance the entryways into the City.