

Bossier Plan Chapter 12

Policies & Strategies

The Policies and Strategies chapter marks a transition in the Bossier Comprehensive Land Use and Development Master Plan. To this point, the community has been broken down into economic, land use, parks, transportation, utilities, housing, image, and facilities – the various components that establish local quality of life and community success – and carefully analyzed. Major issues have surfaced and, after much research and discussion, each of those issues has been addressed through goals, objectives and actions.

This chapter sets the foundation for implementation and the effort needed to turn the vision and goals established in previous chapters into reality. Here, the various components of the community are brought back together, complete with their individual issues and solutions, and examined as a whole. The effort in this instance, however, is not to establish goals, objectives and actions. Instead, this chapter seeks to establish policies for Bossier that will allow for new development to occur in a way that successfully addresses the solutions of previous chapters. In doing so, it paves the way for implementation and enhanced local quality of life.

Specifically, the Policies and Strategies chapter addresses growth and how it should occur. After the analysis of the previous chapters it is clear that a significant amount of land remains available for development. At the same time, it is also clear that current development practices do not maximize the physical, social and fiscal efficiency of the community. Resources that could be used for better marketing to local residents, potential new business and visitors are considered barriers instead of opportunities.

Business practices that could lead to improved infrastructure, better utilized facilities, more active parks, safer streets, and more affordable housing are available. Good growth can benefit each and every resident of Bossier City and Bossier Parish.

Physically, the community must focus on wise choices for land use. Certain areas within Bossier Parish are not appropriate for urban residential, commercial or industrial

development. That does not imply they are without value, but simply that their value to the community may rest in their existence as amenities or through managed development practices.

Other locations may not be appropriate for development, *at this time*. The developer that creates a subdivision in the “far reaches” of the Parish does so to meet a demand in the market. But without the additional necessary support services that establish a sense of community, neither Bossier nor residents of the new subdivision will be satisfied with the product over the long term.

Socially, development should occur in a manner that enhances the area’s “social capital.” Community represents more than creating desirable homes. It also means establishing opportunities for gathering, communication, celebration, and diversification. Development, both private and public, impacts the social fabric of the community. It fortifies or erodes specific values by simple design issues such as connecting neighborhoods, establishing appropriate gateways, creating walkable neighborhoods, and respecting the local environment. While several of these items run counter to modern development, they are proven to be amenities that residents appreciate and that have a lasting, positive impact upon area quality of life.

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Implementation



Economically, development policies create a major impact upon developers, property owners, and area government. The economic vitality of the community is directly dependent upon making best use of the limited resources available. In many cases, this can mean a focus on redevelopment, as well as development. Existing neighborhoods, parks, commercial areas, streets, and infrastructure are physically present and functioning. The dynamics of existing areas establish the perceived condition of the community. Established, attractive and inviting areas will certainly provide more economic benefit than decaying, “passed over” locations and will also leave residents and potential investors with a more positive impression of the community’s economic well being. Additionally, active and stable existing neighborhoods and business districts contribute positively to local taxes. Without the burden of maintaining portions of the community through “economic life support”, local taxing entities can better utilize resources or even consider reducing the overall burden on taxpayers.

Economics are also a matter of simple practicality and common sense as a community. This is a long-term view designed to maximize and ensure the overall economic health of the community as a whole and it may not always meet the short-term needs of a select few individuals. Extensive development in the floodplain may permit a developer and the initial property owner to make a profit, but the overall cost to improving flood control, storm drainage and the potential hazard to personal and public property often outweigh the benefits. Likewise, a community whose sole means of travel is by automobile does not match the economic potential available in a more diversified environment or the reduced taxes required for infrastructure maintenance.

Many of the most successful communities are those with a marketable “theme.” In Bossier, the opportunity exists to establish the City and Parish as one which thrives on leisure and recreation opportunities. The surroundings create the optimum setting for enjoying and taking advantage of nature. On the other hand, the gaming and sports industries provide other, more dynamic, recreation opportunities. By filling in the gaps, Bossier can easily become known as a “great place to live and play.”

The Policies and Strategies chapter addresses the physical, social and economic opportunities available to Bossier. It

does so by combining the issues and solutions related to development and then detailing specific policies to be utilized privately and publicly on the path to implementation.

Issues and Solutions

Prior to development of this chapter, significant analysis has been conducted to ensure that all issues facing Bossier City and Bossier Parish have been carefully examined. Extensive research combined with discussion involving members of the community and local leaders raised a substantial number of concerns that have individually been addressed through a series of goals, objectives and actions.

Interestingly, when the issues for each of the major topics are brought together, a few distinct themes form that set the stage for the preferred development pattern in Bossier. More, the themes that have been raised coordinate well to create an overall impression of a community seeking development that is responsive to the community’s needs and makes the best use of area resources.

The summarized issues for Bossier are as follows:

- ◆ Natural resources are important to Bossier’s appeal and overall quality of life. To the extent possible, these amenities should not only be protected, but utilized as a development and marketing tool.
- ◆ Development in Bossier City and Bossier Parish should occur logically and in a manner that benefits the community over the long term physically, socially and economically.
- ◆ Some of the greatest opportunities for responsible development in Bossier exist for redevelopment and infill within the urbanized areas. Aggressive and innovative public and private partnership in these areas could result in a much more dynamic and economically substantial Bossier.
- ◆ Locations within Bossier Parish, but outside of Bossier City that offer tremendous development opportunity should be permitted to grow as surrounding urban villages that are primarily self-sufficient, but also closely related to the existing urbanized area. Utilizing the urban village concept will allow for development

in a manner that promotes logical, responsible growth.

- ◆ Development within sensitive areas should be allowed to continue, but in a manner that both creates marketable communities and protects the natural environment. Conservation subdivision techniques not only protect the natural environment, but also utilize protected spaces as a marketable amenity with subdivision development.
- ◆ Coordination among government entities is crucial to maximizing limited resources. Requirements can be streamlined and coordinated to appear seamless. Facilities can be designed to provide multiple services in an economical and physically desirable manner.

Policies

Natural Resource Conservation

Policy: Natural resources should be strategically protected and utilized through public acquisition, private dedication, conservation easements and sound development practices.

In a number of communities throughout the country, farmers and other individuals that privately own the natural landscape are facing pressure to preserve or conserve the area to “serve the common good.” A significant amount of that pressure comes from nearby property owners that purchased property in the area because of surrounding visual character.

While property owners have the option to voluntarily conserve natural areas, the general public should neither have the expectation that the owner must conserve property or the concern that such character will be destroyed. Instead, effort should be undertaken to ensure that the natural assets of Bossier Parish are protected and preserved through joint public and private protection or acquisition of land or development rights. In this manner, all parties share the responsibility of preservation and all, including the property owner, are rewarded.

There are an abundance of natural resources that contribute to the Parish’s uniqueness that are indirectly instrumental to the well being of the local economy. Bossier Parish’s natural resources include its many lakes, rivers, bayous, wetlands, forested lands, and farmland. All coordinate to create a pastoral, natural character that is both important to area quality of life and very marketable.

Natural Resource Conservation Case Study City of Boulder, Colorado

Boulder, Colorado is among the key communities across the country that are considered a model for aggressive protection of open space and visual character. In fact, the City of Boulder took its first step toward natural resource conservation as early as 1898 with the purchase of land now known as Chatauqua Park. Since that time, the city has remained aggressive in its efforts to protect what is considered its key asset: the surrounding natural amenities.

In 1967, the City of Boulder once again made history in open space protection by enacting the first tax aimed specifically at acquiring and conserving open spaces. In 1989, area residents not only continued to support the efforts of open space preservation, but voted for an additional sales tax to escalate the program and offset the rising cost associated with acquiring and maintaining land.

As a result of strong public support, the program that began in an effort to save a mountain backdrop to Boulder has now become a much larger mechanism to preserve open spaces throughout the community. By 2001, the City of Boulder had acquired approximately 30,000 acres of open spaces and visual scenery. An Open Space Department has been developed to replace the original Open Space/Real Estate Department and the revised public entity is guided by the recommendations of the Open Space Board of Trustees.

Selecting and acquiring land for protection has become more than an issue for the public sector. In fact, the numerous organizations involved include the Board of Trustees, for-profit entities, nonprofit organizations, general citizens, and others as needed.



Much like Bossier, the scenic and environmental character near Boulder, Colorado contributes to its attractiveness, desirability and overall quality of life.

The public sector can play several roles in the conservation and proper utilization of open space, beginning by planning for future needs and determining the type, amount and location of land to be targeted for conservation. Lands selected for conservation may meet one of several criteria established by the public sector, including park space, ecotourism, visual character, wetland preservation, and floodplain management.

The most obvious means by which government can impact conservation and utilization of land is to simply acquire it. This may be achieved through a number of mechanisms depending upon the purpose of the space. Park space can be purchased through taxes and actively maintained by the government entity. Strategic coordination among governments can ensure that park space is available to the maximum number of residents. Likewise, land available for flood control can be effectively managed by government authorities.

Wetlands and open spaces, on the other hand, are generally held by an outside entity, although they too can be acquired through government funds. Nationally, numerous communities are now utilizing public funds to purchase property to preserve the natural or rural character. Property is often deeded to a trust, such as the Trust for Public Lands, to be managed.

The expense of purchasing significant amounts of property can often be a barrier. To combat this while still protecting important areas, many communities have turned to the use of conservation easements. Like other easements, a conservation easement must be acquired from the current property owner. The easement places significant limitations on the ability to develop such land. Therefore, while the property owner may continue to own the land, it becomes protected or utilized only for those purposes specified by the easement. This approach has proven very effective in preserving farmland, wetlands and wooded areas. For many farmers that wish to take advantage of increased property value, but also protect the rural character of an area, conservation easements are a perfect fit. By selling development rights beyond agricultural use, a farmer may acquire capital while also continuing to farm the site.

Private development also stands to gain from preservation of open space. Studies have found that visual amenities such as parks, open spaces, trails and waterways are not only

appealing, but also profitable. The publication entitled *The Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Space*, as developed by the Trust for Public Lands, indicates that in Salem, Oregon, land nearby a greenspace was, on average, valued at \$1,200 per acre more than those units beyond the green space. Similarly, in Oakland, California, one greenspace was credited with increasing the property value of adjacent parcels by \$41 million compared to nearby homes.

Add to this the value of ecotourism, a trend that is becoming more popular and to which Bossier is well suited. Ecotourism is becoming an important form of tourism as more people travel to destinations to seek out nature-related recreational opportunities. Ecotourism provides environmental, recreational, educational and economic benefits to a region. Natural resources and ecotourism projects provide recreation opportunities and attract visitors to a region contributing to the local economy. At the same time, such opportunities further provide for the protection of unique natural areas and interpretive and educational options for both residents and visitors.

Although tourists provide an economic benefit to the community, it is imperative that the impact of tourists be minimized and nature based programs exercise stewardship towards the natural environment. Stewardship also entails ensuring that local people benefit from the economic activity associated with ecotourism, including protecting existing aspects of the economy that also depend upon natural resources and a healthy ecosystem. Careful planning and management of tourism is instrumental to ensure that natural resources are preserved for their continued use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

Sensible Development

Policy: Growth should occur in a logical fashion that will most positively impact the physical, social and economic character of Bossier.

Many of today's traditional development patterns are based upon the simple notion of creating development that is marketable and profitable. Little real thought is generally given to the impact of development upon a community unless instigated by local leaders or residents.

Sprawl may be marketable to both the general public and the financial institutions that fund development projects, but it is short-sighted and the long-term consequences to both residents of the community and the development are significant.

More recently, communities are searching for development practices that still allow for marketability and profit, but also aid the community in achieving efficiency and improving local quality of life. Some have adopted this under the recent mantra of “Smart Growth.” In reality, such activity is nothing more than common sense applied in the interest of the community. The concepts include balancing economic development and environmental protection, focusing new development where public services and utilities are already available, actively supporting redevelopment of older areas and vacant buildings, creating focal points and destinations for the community, reinventing and reinvigorating “downtown”, supporting mixed-use areas, maintaining an efficient street network and infrastructure systems, providing attractive parks and pedestrian-friendly connections between neighborhoods, activity centers, the public campus, parks and schools.

In Bossier, the goal is certainly not to end, or even reduce, development activity. Rather, the objective is to actually manage the location and pattern of growth and reward those developers that place an emphasis on the community’s values.

The following general benchmarks allow the community to realize when it is promoting and succeeding in Smart Growth activities.

- ◆ Development is economically viable and preserves open space and natural resources.
- ◆ Existing infrastructure is maintained and enhanced but expanded when appropriate to serve existing and new residents.
- ◆ Existing infrastructure is used efficiently by encouraging infill development rather than peripheral development that requires added infrastructure.
- ◆ Compact development is focused on existing community centers, new urban villages, and existing and planned transportation facilities.

- ◆ Land planning and urban design create a sense of community and ensure the ease of movement and safety of residents.
- ◆ “Downtown” and older, established neighborhoods are recognized as being important.
- ◆ Land development patterns are concentrated within or immediately adjacent to urban areas where public facilities and services are convenient and can be efficiently utilized.
- ◆ Rural areas and other natural amenities are conserved and preserved as agricultural lands or open spaces and are protected from premature encroaching urban development.

Many of the issues of sensible development are addressed through other policy discussion; however, one key element includes the concept of developing only as adequate public facilities are available. One means of ensuring that growth occurs in areas where infrastructure is either present or desired includes the creation of an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO). Through such an ordinance, development occurs *prior to or concurrent with development*.

APFOs require all applicants for new development to demonstrate that facilities and services will be available to serve the project at the time the development is available for occupancy. Utilizing this system, the community could adopt a level-of-service standard, which can then be used as a criterion for approving or denying applications depending on conformance to the standards. Issuance of building permits is based upon the proven existence of public improvements or capital facilities. Alternatively, developers could opt to pay impact fees to provide the facilities necessitated by new development.

In addition to its simplicity, this approach is extremely practical and defensible. The key to effectively employing this system, however, is being rational in making determinations of adequacy or inadequacy of public facilities. The strength of this approach is in its ability to allow Bossier to establish a direct, causal link to the public health, safety and welfare issues related to the provision of additional public services.

Key features of an adequate public facilities ordinance include:

- ◆ *Level of Service (LOS)* – Key to concurrency is the understanding of a service threshold – the point at which demand exceeds the desired capacity of public facilities. To best determine this threshold, many jurisdictions rely on an established level of service, such as the Highway Capacity Manual developed by the Transportation Research Board to address transportation issues. The difference between the jurisdiction’s established threshold LOS and the existing LOS (including the impact of projects existing, underway and previously approved) is generally the amount available to the developer. If the project can be completed and still allow the thoroughfare to operate at or below the threshold LOS, the project meets the APFO. If the project causes operation of the thoroughfare to exceed the threshold LOS, additional steps must be taken prior to approval.
- ◆ *Determination of Eligibility* – Projects that will be exempted or receive flexibility in meeting the threshold LOS should be indicated. Those projects are generally exempted or are granted flexibility in meeting the threshold LOS as a result of issues of size, type, location, or as an incentive for their development. For example, Howard County, Maryland exempts one-acre lots in the agricultural district that are available through intrafamily transfer. San Diego, California, on the other hand, provides an exemption to housing projects designed for low-income residents or farm workers. In most cases, exemptions occur because the project offers no significant impact upon the threshold LOS of impacted public facilities. Flexibility may be granted to enhance development opportunities, such as infill housing in urban areas.
- ◆ *Timing of Concurrency Tests* - Determination of the existing LOS is predominantly discovered through development of an impact study. The timing within the development approval process of that study and, ultimately, agreement that the project in question can proceed, can play a significant role in the expectations of residents and the accountability of developers.
- ◆ *Establish Review Process* – In order to manage APFOs, a body must be created or given the authority to review,

oversee and enforce the language of the ordinance. Likewise, a process must be established for application for approval, project review, approval or denial, and appeal. Jurisdictions across the country that utilize concurrency requirements vary in the assigned body and in the required review process. For example, in Monroe County, Florida, the Planning Director is granted the authority of review and approval.

- ◆ *Mitigation* – Several remedies are generally in place if a developer exceeds the threshold LOS. Most obvious, the reviewing entity can deny the developer until such time as the project no longer exceeds the threshold LOS. Second, the project, and therefore the project’s impact, can be reduced to the point that it meets requirements. Finally, the developer may choose to mitigate the impact of the project by upgrading public facilities or infrastructure as necessary. The result of the latter is that improvements come at a faster rate and at the cost of the market, as opposed to the general public. Terms of mitigation, such as cost incurred by the developer and timeframe for completion of mitigation efforts should be defined in the ordinance.
- ◆ *Reservation of Demand* – During the time between approval of a project in accordance with the APFO and the time of project completion, the amount of capacity projected by the developer is “reserved” exclusively for the project and counts against the total capacity of public facilities in future applications for development. To ensure that a project is completed in a timely manner, however, an expiration date can be placed upon approved projects. In this manner, other projects are not unnecessarily burdened or denied and the conditions under which approval was granted are still applicable.

Redevelopment and Infill

Policy: Existing underdeveloped, underutilized and vacant urbanized areas should be aggressively promoted as viable candidates for redevelopment and infill that enhances community value.

As noted in Chapter 4, Market Assessment, proximity pays. As is most often the case, the sites that have the most built in proximity and potential are those currently within the urbanized core of Bossier City. Investing in vacant and underutilized sites benefits the developer because of the proximity to surrounding goods and services. In the case of housing, infill activity generally places individuals within walking distance of daily amenities. For commercial activity, the opposite is true: a built in customer base is already established. More, redevelopment strengthens the urban core and as more redevelopment and infill occurs, the area becomes socially and financially more competitive. When accomplished appropriately, redevelopment and infill activity offer a “win-win” scenario for all parties.

Unfortunately, redevelopment and infill activity face a number of obstacles that have historically proven to make such activity seem less desirable than development along the sprawling outskirts. Following are barriers faced in redevelopment of the urban core.

- ◆ *Perception.* The most menacing struggle in redevelopment efforts is often the need to overcome many of the negative connotations that have been attached to infill activity. The common view is that it is too difficult and too risky to develop in the urban core. Before any market studies are conducted, it is often quickly assumed that profit on infill activity will be less than within the suburbs.
- ◆ *Land value.* Most often, the direct cost of an acre of farmland is cheaper than the cost of an acre of urban soil, particularly in areas of high demand and activity. However, this cost does not include other direct costs, such as extension of existing services. More, raw land value, even when adding infrastructure, does not account for the indirect expenses such as ongoing maintenance of the extended infrastructure and personal costs of time and money that residents pay to travel farther.

- ◆ *Condition.* Horror stories abound about the developer that purchased land within the urban core, acquired financing, gained building permits, began construction and promptly discovered an environmental hazard remaining from a prior property owner. In fact, brownfields exist and their existence can sometimes substantially elevate the cost of development. More, land in the urban area is rarely completely vacant. Existing facilities that cannot be utilized or have fallen into significant disrepair must be removed.

Site preparation is a standard cost of construction. Demolition simply increases that cost. Unfortunately, the inclusion of environmental hazards such as asbestos, lead based paint or other contaminants add both time and money to a project.

- ◆ *Land assembly.* Farmland is commonly available in one or a few large parcels that are easy to assemble and consolidate. In the urban core, the parcels are much smaller, the owners more numerous and the process of clearing and consolidating titles more cumbersome.
- ◆ *Clientele.* Fresh, new and rural are commonly considered the prime development characteristics to capture the resources of upper and upper-middle income households. Redevelopment may provide a needed service, but profit is expected to be slimmer because the individuals living in the urban core are not expected to be the “optimal clientele.”
- ◆ *Financing.* Simply put, it is easier to obtain financing for new development on previously undeveloped land in the suburbs. The perception among many financial institutions is that the risk of redevelopment is too high. In many communities, the major obstacle to urban revitalization is not finding an appropriate developer; rather, it is obtaining financial support.

Redevelopment is possible in almost any location and can be proven to be more efficient and profitable than suburban investment when barriers are eliminated. Some barriers to redevelopment are very real and must be addressed before a site becomes a viable candidate for development. Others can simply be proven invalid. When redevelopment does occur,

it can transform a struggling community into a thriving, competitive location for residents and visitors. The keys to successful redevelopment include careful and thorough planning, strong community and public commitment, availability of resources and tools needed to remove or overcome development barriers, and selection of appropriate developers.

Since the urban core represents the heart and focus of Bossier City and Bossier Parish, great care and planning should be taken in redevelopment and infill activity. Not all potential redevelopment is desirable or beneficial to the surrounding area. Appropriateness should be determined based upon community needs, the overall vision for the area, the relationship between the site and the surrounding area, and the capacity of the local market.

Quality developers are enticed by a site that offers profit and the opportunity to create “legacy projects” – those model projects that are truly satisfying and successful to both the community and the developer. Legacy projects add to the reputation and marketability of the developer while also providing the community with notoriety and an enhanced quality of life. In both cases, the result of legacy projects is additional interest.

Redevelopment is only possible when barriers are either removed or proven invalid. To aid the developer in overcoming barriers and to make a quality project feasible, Bossier City and Bossier Parish should coordinate to do the following:

- ◆ *Establish marketing materials for both developers and financial institutions.* Since perception is commonly the first and foremost barrier to redevelopment it should also be the first (and easiest) to address. Information should be assembled that successfully dispels any perceptions that are brought out during planning and preparation for aggressive redevelopment.
- ◆ *Assemble land.* Many communities often shy from the prospect of becoming actively involved in redevelopment efforts. Land assembly is one of those activities that can be conducted by the public sector that can significantly ease the burden of redevelopment or infill activity. Both time and money are necessary to clear and consolidate titles. Utilizing this as a “carrot”,

Bossier City and Bossier Parish can be in a better position to be selective in the type and quality of redevelopment activity on a site.

- ◆ *Determine and address site constraints.* Some constraints are physical while others are financial. Liens and unpaid taxes are as much disincentives to reinvestment as crumbling infrastructure or unneeded structures. To the extent possible, Bossier City and Bossier Parish should aggressively address these issues. A program can be established that utilizes local or federal funds to demolish structures. The parish, School Board and other taxing entities can agree to waive unpaid taxes. Liens can be negotiated and forgiven. Infrastructure can be replaced.
- ◆ *Streamline permitting process.* Time is money to a developer. The development community is appreciative and respectful of a municipality or parish that designs the permitting process to improve efficiency and reduce time needed for review and approval.
- ◆ *Garner support.* Development becomes more enticing in those communities that are excited and supportive of a project. A community that is ideologically or politically opposed to a project can cause tremendous frustration for a developer and could potentially create problems, including lengthy court proceedings. More, the negativity tarnishes the developer’s reputation both within and outside of the community. Through the planning and preparation process, Bossier City and Bossier Parish can set the stage for building community support.
- ◆ *Utilize financial incentives.* Some barriers simply cannot be removed. For example, the public sector cannot reduce the value of property. In those cases, the availability of financial incentives not only can add balance in the competition against other sites, but can also make an urban site more attractive.
- ◆ *Improve appearance.* Physical appearance plays a major role in the impression of an area. When streets and sidewalks are in disrepair, street lights are worn and outdated, or public facilities are of poor quality they create the impression of a community that either can’t afford to maintain a healthy quality of life or,

worse, isn't interested. Capital improvements, landscaping, and dedication to the construction of quality public structures can make a positive impression and potentially aid in attracting premier developers to Bossier.

Urban Villages

Policy: Large areas of Bossier Parish that are located outside of Bossier City and offer few barriers to development should be established as urban villages designed to be largely self-sufficient, diversified, pedestrian friendly, and mixed use.

Bossier Parish offers three areas that are ripe and appropriate for development. Ironically, each area falls at the end of an extensive linear development that has generally followed the roadway network, the AICUZ for Barksdale Air Force Base, and the railroad system while avoiding wetlands and flood prone sites. Development in any of these three areas could likely occur according to common development practices and be successful. However, in doing so, it would exacerbate the current pattern of sprawl and inefficiency and continue to sap strength from the urban core of Bossier City.

An alternative approach is establishment of three urban villages that function as smaller, satellite communities with strong ties to Bossier City.

The concept of urban villages is not new, except in its use to slow suburban sprawl. Even then, the strength of urban villages rests within village design and a focus upon historic development patterns. An urban village recognizes the benefits of community design with a traditional focus on issues such as density, open space, street width, pedestrian-friendliness, amenities, mixed-use development, design, scale, and compatibility with surrounding areas. Transit oriented design often adds to the concepts of the urban village by providing an additional focus on connection of the satellite communities to the urban core and other "nodes" via transit. Ironically, even in urban villages featuring transit oriented design, the primary means of transportation is pedestrian traffic, with transit available for trips outside of the neighborhood.

Characteristics of an urban village typically include:

- ◆ Focus on the neighborhood as a single, functioning unit that is part of a larger organization that is the urban village. As a single unit, each neighborhood should have

Urban Village Case Study

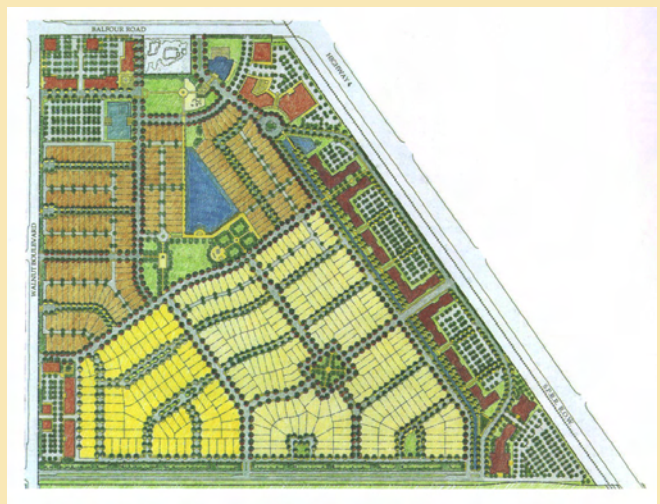
South Brentwood Village, Brentwood, California

The concept behind South Brentwood Village was simple: to prove that subdivision development can be successfully designed as an urban village. South Brentwood Village is comprised of only 140 acres, yet despite its small size, the village has been designed with all of the features that are expected in an urban village. Designed around a village green, the development is comprised of more than 500 homes and includes a wide variety of housing. The homes in the village are primarily designed to meet the needs of middle class residents. When appropriate zero-lot line development has been incorporated and to further add to the character of the area all housing units have front porches.

Commercial retail and office space are readily available in South Brentwood Village. In fact, approximately 30 percent of the village is comprised of office and retail activity. In addition, institutional uses such as daycare, a church and ample park space are incorporated into the project.

The development is very pedestrian friendly. The entire site is within a single quarter-mile distance – the maximum distance most individuals are willing to travel before deciding to take an automobile. Sidewalks are separated from the roadway system by street trees. Parks are strategically placed to allow for natural relief and recreation. Both retail and office space are within walking distance and space for a transit station is available.

The street system is also designed to function as a village. Unlike most subdivisions, the project can be accessed from multiple entry points. The layout features a mock-grid system that includes alleys, a traffic circle and a neighborhood boulevard system.



definition. The boundaries or edges of the neighborhood unit should be recognizable, but not impassible. An edge need not indicate that every neighborhood in the village act as a fortress, but as a clearly recognizable entity. Likewise, the village should also offer a distinct edge, particularly in the transition to the urban area.

- ◆ An urban village should have a focus. A focus can be a gathering point, such as a park or community center. It may also be a destination such as an elementary school or commercial center. In any case, the focus, like the boundary, should be obvious and should include the character necessary to make it unique or important as a location.
- ◆ Pedestrian and vehicular movement are equally important. Many of the newest developments constructed in Bossier are designed as monuments to the automobile with wide streets and incidental sidewalks. While it is not possible or desirable to eliminate automobile traffic, it is possible to make opportunities for pedestrian or bike travel more enticing. Streets should be narrow and easy to cross, sidewalks should be adequate and inviting, trails should be integrated into the system, and the pedestrian network should be capable of delivering the resident along a relatively uninterrupted, direct path.
- ◆ Uses within the urban village are mixed to allow for nonresidential activities such as commercial establishments, schools and open spaces. Housing is also mixed to support a wide variety of housing needs. As a rule, higher density housing may wish to be closer or incorporated into commercial opportunities. Most common among urban villages is the use of a traditional village green as the focal point surrounded by first floor commercial and second story apartments.
- ◆ Development is compact with a variety of green spaces as relief. Generally, lot sizes are small and setbacks are also reduced.

When including transit, the station is often integrated into the town center with a focus on ease of access. Smaller stations should be located within ten minutes walking distance of every home and convenient to reach. The system should be designed to carry residents to areas within and outside of the urban village.

Ordinance changes will be necessary to incorporate an urban village concept into Bossier Parish and the MPC planning area. Regulations regarding such items as setbacks and lot sizes may have to be adjusted to allow for more dense and creative development. Mixed-use opportunities such as incorporation of neighborhood commercial establishments or low impact home businesses should be permissible. Design guidelines should dictate the foundation for good design, but not restrict freedom of design beyond the desires of the community. Monuments and a variety of open spaces should be a requirement.

Benefits of incorporating urban villages into the MPC planning area include:

- ◆ Maximization of areas that are ripe and appropriate for development.
- ◆ Condensed development that allows for a stronger sense of community and delays or eliminates development of rural spaces and natural areas.
- ◆ Creation of additional parks and open spaces throughout the community.
- ◆ Increased density and proximity to services reduces the cost of infrastructure or provision of public services.
- ◆ Development containing characteristics of historic small town America is considered aesthetically pleasing.
- ◆ Preservation of natural or agricultural areas that would otherwise be consumed for residential sprawl.
- ◆ More efficient utilization of space and added cohesion to the surrounding environment.
- ◆ Introduction of an added housing opportunity for persons with needs or desires such as affordability, accessibility, housing size, or location.
- ◆ Mixed use development allows for opportunities such as home businesses or residential units above commercial establishments.
- ◆ Pedestrian-friendly environment designed to decrease dependence on the automobile, including integrated transit opportunities for travel outside of the neighborhood.

- ◆ Strong edges that better define the separation between urban and rural areas.

Conservation Subdivisions

Policy: Sensitive development areas throughout Bossier should be allowed to develop by utilizing specific sensitive locations for amenities incorporated into residential development.

Development has occurred along and within the floodplains throughout Bossier for many years. During the majority of time the floodplain offers a wonderful setting for large lot development. However, when flooding does occur, houses that are below the floodline become inundated while those that are above become frail islands. In either case, the damage to personal belongings and potentially life can be staggering.

Many of the sensitive development areas are located within rural Bossier Parish or in areas that include natural resources with environmental and visual value. Yet traditional subdivision design does not offer a flexible means of permitting development while protecting sensitive areas.

Conservation subdivision techniques offer a means to protect sensitive areas from development while still allowing limited development to occur. To do so, however, requires a significant change in the design process and the reintegration of creativity into the development pattern.

As discussed in *Chapter Nine, Housing*, the concept behind conservation subdivision techniques is simply to achieve the appropriate number of units allowed on a site, but to do so in a way that permits sensitive areas to be preserved. In this case, lot size becomes less of a factor, except to provide a minimum size permitted for development. That minimum is commonly as low as practical to permit added flexibility to the developer. However, the concept is not designed to add lots to the site. Rather, the reduction in lot size is offset by the amount of open space that is required for conservation.

Preparing for use of conservation subdivision techniques involves significant analysis of the MPC planning area and a determination by the MPC, Bossier City and Bossier Parish of those areas and elements that are to be classified as primary and secondary conservation areas. The process begins in development of a community resources map that, according to Randall Arendt, one of the world's leading experts in conservation oriented development, should include wetlands

Conservation Subdivisions Case Study Prairie Crossing, Lake County, Illinois

Generally, design for a subdivision featuring 317 single family homes on 667 acres would include a mix of standard and large lot development that would encompass an entire project site. However, the developer of Prairie Crossing located outside of Chicago, Illinois had a different idea. Rather than replace the farmland, woodlot and wetland with a typical subdivision, the developer recognized that all three characteristics represented the type of scenery that the potential resident would be looking for. The developer also realized that there was no guarantee that the surrounding area would be able to supply that scenery permanently.

Utilizing conservation subdivision techniques, Prairie Holdings Corporation, was able to successfully preserve more than 70 percent of the site. Lot sizes were smaller than typical rural subdivision design, ranging from 6,000 square feet to 20,000 square feet. However, in return for a reduction in lot size, all homes front upon open space that is preserved to give the appearance of an agriculture-era hamlet nestled in the various rural characteristics of Illinois. To better accommodate the needs of the potential resident, homes were divided into 60 village lots, 131 meadow lots, 54 field lots, and 72 prairie lots.

Open space in the community is preserved through a management plan specifically designed to address the natural amenities of the area. Cost of maintenance of the open space is shared by all homeowners. The wetland is given specific attention and a great deal of effort has gone into establishing a stormwater management system based upon narrow streets and extensive use of native plants for filtration. As a result, the runoff that reaches the wetland is only one-third of the original amount while water-borne pollutants are reduced by 85-100 percent.



and buffers, floodways and floodplains, woodlands, productive farmland, significant wildlife habitats, cultural features, and scenic viewsheds along corridors. Once these items are located, the MPC, City and Parish must make a determination of those elements that will be classified for primary conservation and others that will be considered for secondary conservation. Primary conservation areas will include those areas that are “sacrosanct” and unbuildable. In this case, those features are likely to be floodplains, wetlands, significant wildlife habitats, and specifically designated areas of the Barksdale AICUZ. Secondary conservation areas will include elements that add to the character of the area or are not recommended for construction. Unlike primary conservation areas, however, secondary conservation areas are available for development if no other alternative is available. Secondary conservation areas may include woodlots, productive farmland, scenic viewsheds, and those areas of the AICUZ in which very limited development is acceptable.

The capability of conservation subdivision techniques to conserve natural resources not only depends on designation of conservation areas, but also upon the subdivision standards that will be applied to development. Together, minimum lot size and the percent open space required will determine the number and size of lots that will be available for development. Both are important to determining the density and character of the subdivision. Density is calculated based upon the amount of buildable land - once unbuildable, primary conservation areas have been removed from the equation. Because secondary conservation areas are buildable, they are considered in calculation of total permitted dwelling units.

In an interesting variation on the concept of subdivision design, Randall Arendt proposes a sliding scale development scenario in which a developer may opt for few units in return for reduced open space requirements. On the other hand, a developer may likewise opt for additional lots, but must add to the percentage of available open space. In this manner, the developer has flexibility to design to the needs of the local market.

Open space available in a conservation subdivision is often owned by the subdivision, protected by a private conservation easement and maintained through the annual fees of the homeowners’ association. On the other hand, a

developer or subdivision can opt to dedicate the property as public park space.

One concern regarding the open space preserved in conservation subdivisions is the question of upkeep. A conservation area that is not appropriately maintained will prove noxious and useless as an enjoyable natural area. Options for upkeep include placing property under the protection of a trust or management by a homeowners’ association. It is recommended that maintenance of the open space be addressed through subdivision covenants or development of a management plan.

Intergovernmental Coordination

Policy: Aggressively promote dialogue and joint activity among various government entities to maximize efficiency and quality of public facilities and services.

The mantra throughout the development of policies and strategies for the MPC planning area has been the efficient use of physical, social and financial resources. At no point is this clearer than in the need for coordination between government entities. As a regional entity, the Bossier City-Parish Metropolitan Planning Commission coordinates with Bossier City and Bossier Parish. However, additional government entities in the MPC planning area include three volunteer fire departments, the Bossier Parish School Board, Bossier Parish Community College, the U.S. Air Force at Barksdale AFB, various agencies associated with the State of Louisiana, Northwest Louisiana Council of Governments, Red River Waterway Commission, the Port of Shreveport-Bossier and other entities. Each is charged with specific duties, establishes regulations or assesses taxes, and requires staffing and facilities.

Efficiency in utilizing the resources of the MPC planning area begins with the government entities that comprise the public sector. Careful analysis of the various government functions and needs would likely result in numerous opportunities to streamline services, share facilities, coordinate efforts, and generally follow a common vision.

Following are opportunities to coordinate among government entities for the purpose of improving development, preserving resources, and enhancing overall quality of life.

- ◆ Establish a common set of development standards that appropriately represent and maintain the character of both the City and Parish. Addressed to a limited extent as a component of housing, the concept of character has been a long-standing point of discussion in Bossier. The current development regulations apply a single standard to all subdivision development within the MPC planning area. As a result, subdivisions in the rural areas must provide the same product as found in the urban area, including sidewalks, street lights, and curbed streets. The benefit to this is that as the urban area grows to encompass rural subdivisions the urban features will already be in place and developed in a way that Bossier City can accept them into the municipal system. The deficit, however, is that the character of rural development is lost and the cost of development increased.

In truth, both arguments have merit. The cost of bringing a subdivision “up to acceptable city standards” can be significant. At the same time, community character is fragile and should be protected.

The Comprehensive Land Use and Development Master Plan indirectly proposes a solution in that new development outside of the existing urban core is to be developed in urban villages or following conservation subdivision techniques. The character of the two styles of development is distinctly different: urban and rural.

A more direct solution includes development of a series of overlays that divide the MPC planning area according to urban and rural development standards. Those areas designated for rural development can conform to a set of standards specifically created to maintain the rural atmosphere including extensive open space, limited development and minimized urban characteristics such as curbed streets and street lights. Other options include replacing some sidewalks with enhanced trails and required visual connectivity. Urban areas would meet improved standards for development, including reduced road width, pedestrian friendly design, and mixed use development.

While dividing the character of the MPC planning area into urban and rural components may reduce the standards for rural development, the reduced cost is offset by the smaller number of units available and the

Intergovernmental Coordination Case Study Chester County, Oregon

In 1996, County Commissioners in Chester County, Oregon adopted a new Comprehensive Plan. Appropriately entitled *Landscapes*, the primary focus of the plan was to address the increasing impacts of sprawl upon the visual, economic and social surroundings of Chester County and to particularly preserve the surrounding rural character. In doing so, planners divided Chester County into four distinct landscape types with specific objectives:

- ◆ *Urban Landscape Objective:* Strengthen urban centers to serve as mixed use centers of concentrated commercial activity, employment opportunities, institutions, and residential variety to increase diversity and provide a sense of community;
- ◆ *Suburban Landscape Objective:* Concentrate new residential development in Suburban Landscapes and concentrate industries and offices at locations adequately served by necessary infrastructure and accessible to employees;
- ◆ *Rural Landscape Objective:* Preserve the open, rural character of Chester County, supporting agriculture as the primary land use while enhancing villages to accommodate future development; and,
- ◆ *Natural Landscape Objective:* Restrict development in areas with significant natural resources including stream corridors, woodlands, wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, steep slopes, and ridge tops.

More, the County Commissioners are taking an aggressive intergovernmental approach to ensure that the plan is utilized by local municipalities. Chester County proposes that all governing bodies throughout the area become “Vision Partners” and adapt their plans and policies to coordinate with those established in *Landscapes*. The county has offered between \$50,000 and \$75,000 to each municipality to cover the expense of changes. In return, the county offers “carrots” to reward municipalities that agree to work together. Plan Implementation Grants are made available to aid in meeting the goals of the plan. Community Development funds are funneled to communities for projects that correspond to the plan. Further, the county actively coordinates with municipalities on common projects, such as corridor enhancement and well head protection.

increased percentage of open space that is required. Further, it is unlikely that rural character areas will be annexed because of the limited development potential established in the sensitive development areas. Urban villages, on the other hand, will be designed to appropriately meet the urban standards and will provide for increased density in the urban area.

- ◆ *Share facilities and services.* For a long period in the history of public sector development, government has become reliant on single use facilities outside of “city hall” or “the courthouse.” More, general opinion among government entities was that each entity should be entirely self supportive and separate. Now, governing bodies are once again beginning to realize that facilities can perform multiple functions and, as important, can serve several entities.

Government buildings have long been an important component to neighborhood and community development. Historically, such facilities have not only served to provide government services, but have also been gathering places for area residents. For decades, the neighborhood designed with the elementary school as the focal point was considered optimal because the school served numerous purposes. The open area and playground around the school functioned as a neighborhood park. The library served as a public library. The auditorium could be used for community functions and religious services. It also commonly served as an emergency shelter in a time of crisis.

Today, as each entity searches for ways to maximize the use of tax revenue, the concept of joint use takes on additional meaning. By combining resources, entities can once again consider building landmark local government structures. More, combined services can result in added services or benefits. Many communities have moved to “one-stop shops” at which a variety of related services are available.

At the forefront, once again, are local schools. Elementary schools have the opportunity to once again become the focal point of residential development, including the chance for children to safely walk to school. More, school playgrounds are being developed to a new standard and integrated into the public park system. Schools are also becoming the home of the local

library, further expanding the funds available to both the school system and the library system.

Community centers are also taking on new roles, including incorporation of additional uses outside of the public spectrum. Centers now function as recreation centers, health clinics, classrooms, emergency shelters, offices for nonprofit organizations, police/sheriff stations, job training facilities and business incubators.

Facilities are not the only item that entities can share to the benefit of the community and local development groups. Entities can establish complementary development processes and requirements.

Among the more difficult tasks for local developers is remembering the different development requirements for the various jurisdictions in a region. The Comprehensive Land Use and Development Master Plan offers Bossier City and Bossier Parish the opportunity to establish similar permitting requirements beyond those of the MPC. Complementary processes could include applications, timelines, fees, reporting, and overall requirements.