

Bossier Plan

Chapter 9

Housing

Housing, in and of itself, should be safe and decent. But as a cornerstone of quality of life in the Bossier City-Parish MPC Planning Area, issues associated with housing stretch well beyond the basics.

Available and affordable housing are key factors in the attractiveness of a community to new residents and businesses and to the quality of life of existing residents. The presence of an adequate, available housing stock is imperative to meet the needs of low, moderate, middle and upper income households. Market conditions will determine the quantity and price of new residential units as well as resale and rental housing. It is sometimes necessary for public agencies and non-profit organizations to take steps to encourage housing construction or rehabilitation or to assist lower-income buyers or tenants to find adequate, affordable shelter in the community.

Beyond livability and economic development concerns, local government also has an interest in the sustainability of new residential construction and the condition of the existing housing stock since market and assessed values directly impact the tax base and resulting revenue potential. Areas that are in need of revitalization and redevelopment should be the target of public and private funding and assistance efforts to preserve existing neighborhoods and prevent future decay and deterioration.

The purpose of the Housing element of the Bossier Comprehensive Land Use and Development Master Plan is to assess the existing housing inventory in the MPC Planning Area and identify anticipated housing needs and priorities. Each will be applied to both homeownership and rental opportunities. Based on this assessment, the Housing element identifies actions that are needed to advance more affordable housing, improve the condition of substandard housing, and ensure sound neighborhood environments where quality of life is preserved and property values are enhanced. The Housing element meshes well with other elements of the Plan as housing needs and neighborhood quality are

a function of future land use and infrastructure planning, parks and recreation improvements, natural resource conservation, and transportation patterns.

Key Housing and Neighborhood Issues

Residents in Bossier wish to enjoy the privileges of quality housing and the positive impact that well designed neighborhoods can have on the image and attitude of the community. Issues voiced by citizens, organizations and officials indicate that addressing housing needs and demands is a primary component to a successful future. Stakeholder input resulted in the assembly of eight key issues relative to housing in the MPC Planning Area.

Quality, Affordable Housing

Construction of new homes is well underway in the Bossier area; however, many are not affordable to the majority of Bossier residents. Residents have raised concerns that housing at a price below \$150,000 is not available nor being constructed.

While affordability is a relative term, it is an increasingly common issue for households at all levels of income. But it is an issue that is dependent upon a number of variables that go beyond the desire of a builder to make a profit.

Manufactured Housing

Manufactured housing continues to be one of the most affordable means

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of entering into homeownership. It is particularly appealing when other new homes under construction appear out of reach, as is the case in Bossier.

Unfortunately, manufactured housing has always carried a negative stigma for a variety of reasons. As in many communities nationwide, Bossier officials and residents are concerned about their area and housing market being overwhelmed by the proliferation of manufactured homes. A particular concern is the need to locate individual homes and larger manufactured home developments appropriately to avoid incompatibility with existing residential areas and potential effects on neighborhood integrity and property value. However, manufactured housing parks and subdivisions can be well-designed, positive assets of a community. Their counterpart, modular housing, when placed and designed appropriately, can maintain local character and blend discreetly into the community.

Neighborhood Revitalization

Established neighborhoods often lack the luster, size, design and amenities of new housing. However, many communities are beginning to understand that, in return, older neighborhoods offer intangibles such as history, culture, proximity, and a stronger sense of community.

In Bossier, some older communities have been well maintained while others require infill development, infrastructure improvements and further revitalization efforts. While the impacts of history, neglect and surrounding land uses may make recovery difficult for some neighborhoods, most offer an opportunity for renewal and long-term sustainability.

Appearance

Mark Twain once stated, “We take stock of a city like we take stock of a man. The clothes or appearance are the externals by which we judge.” Housing impacts neighborhood appearance and creates an impression. Therefore, housing

that appears to need upkeep can be an indication of a community in a state of disrepair and decline. On the other hand, freshly painted and well-maintained homes are indicative of a positive community with a promising future. Appearance is also correlated to community pride and ownership, perception, area property value, maintenance costs, and quality of life, where each of these factors can be influenced positively or negatively.

Comments by Bossier residents at public meetings indicated concerns about the appearance of the housing stock and area neighborhoods. Some suggested the need for additional ordinances or better enforcement of existing requirements. Others emphasized the need to improve basic cleanliness and property maintenance.

Efficient Growth

The manner in which an urban area grows impacts construction cost, maintenance cost, and ability to provide public amenities, access to services, transportation options, overall quality of life and sense of community. The automobile has enabled people to live farther from the urbanized area, in suburbs and beyond into rural areas. While many argue that this has resulted in

increased personal quality of life, it has come with significant individual and community expense.

Newer development throughout the Bossier MPC Planning Area is characterized by the “leap frog” pattern that has become indicative of modern subdivision development. While sprawl was noted as an issue, more telling were issues raised that are

symptomatic of sprawl. Examples include high housing cost, lack of accessible parks, lack of sidewalks, lack of destinations, inadequate water and sewer infrastructure, lack of different housing types, and risks associated with surrounding, conflicting development.

Affordable housing ... is available, but somewhat scarce. ... The cost of buying a house is fairly expensive. Prices for a modest two-bedroom home with 1,500 square feet usually begin around \$85,000. There are high water tables in the area; hence, no basements are found in any of these homes. Houses in most locales require flood insurance, so be prepared financially for the added expense.

One-, two- and three-bedroom apartments are available, and most require six- to 12-month leases. Only a few are equipped with washer and dryer hookups. They range in price from \$350 to \$700 per month, plus utilities. Three-bedroom apartments are scarce, and four-bedroom apartments and houses are extremely rare.

- Barksdale Air Force Base Website concerning off-base housing issues

Building New Neighborhoods

A distinct difference exists between subdivisions and neighborhoods. While one is focused upon the provision of quality housing and infrastructure, the other additionally focuses on the provision of an appealing, interconnected community. Good neighborhoods share a number of key traits, including a pedestrian friendly environment, community focal points, access to services without the need to travel by automobile (although the option is certainly available), mixed housing, distinguishable community character, narrow residential streets, and community-oriented architecture.

Several comments by Bossier residents indicate a desire to improve their quality of life through better neighborhood design. Such design often corresponds to efficient growth and improved safety.

Life Cycle Housing

As time passes, household needs change. For example, a single person may get married, have children, and then watch children leave the nest to begin life on their own. Each major shift in lifestyle may impact housing need. A household with two children certainly requires more and different space than a home for empty nesters. Life-cycle housing anticipates the differing needs of households in transition by offering varied choices of housing within the same neighborhood. In this manner, a person can age in the same neighborhood or community without the need to move away to meet revised housing needs.

Bossier residents have indicated the need to improve life-cycle housing opportunities, particularly by including elderly housing and addressing their special needs.

Urban or Rural Character

The Bossier planning area encompasses Bossier City and surrounding areas of Bossier Parish. It is a broad mix that offers the opportunity to live within an urban area and enjoy the urban character or the chance to live in a more rural setting. Housing and neighborhood development generally reflect the surrounding character so that urban housing areas typically include sidewalks, streetlights, curbs, and an underground storm drainage system. Rural housing areas have fewer, if any, of these amenities.

New development that occurs in Bossier Parish outside of the incorporated city poses a dilemma for those attempting to

accommodate area character but also prepare for future growth. New development may want to respect and take advantage of the surrounding rural character. At the same time, this area will only remain rural for a limited time before it becomes part of the urban fabric. Installation of appropriate urban features "up front" would mean less cost for "retrofitting" improvements in the future.

Flooding and Drainage

The Bossier MPC Planning Area offers limited potential for development without construction in an area at risk of flooding. As new construction continues, additional houses are at risk of flooding, yet the alternatives available when utilizing standard subdivision design are limited.

Numerous residents have indicated that flooding is a perpetual concern in Bossier. Recent flooding has avoided homes, but only slightly. Others indicate that drainage even outside of instances of flooding is a problem. In several subdivisions, streets act as secondary detention areas and are intentionally designed to flood when heavy rains create temporary flood events. While it may prove to be an inconvenience, it is often a viable alternative to structural flooding.

Despite potential for flooding, people remain attracted to homes within or near the floodplain that are adjacent to bayous and streams. Waterways and the associated floodplain offer a natural amenity that, when protected, can be utilized as greenspace to enhance visual character and increase neighborhood value.

Utilizing techniques such as cluster development and alternative site design can minimize the risk of flooding while maximizing conservation and quality of life.

Housing can be assessed on a number of levels, but most important, it must meet four "A's" within the community: Affordability, Adequacy, Availability, and Accessibility.

Housing Goals, Objectives and Action Statements

The summary of goals below and subsequent presentation of objectives and action statements for housing correspond directly to the key issues developed through the planning process. This process included stakeholder



Townhomes and small-lot patio home developments provide additional lifestyle and affordability options in a balanced housing market.

input at public meetings, data collection and analysis, interviews with community leaders who play a major role in housing and community development, and input by the MPAC. The goals are also designed to complement the goals and objectives of previous plans and studies and continuing housing policies for Bossier.

- ◆ Ensure that a **variety of housing options** are available to new and current residents of Bossier that are **affordable** at all income levels.
- ◆ Recognize **manufactured housing and modular housing as viable and affordable housing options** that are acceptable upon meeting requirements regarding appropriate location, appearance, function and quality.
- ◆ Maintain a **high standard for existing neighborhoods**, including ongoing maintenance, neighborhood revitalization, community leadership and development of amenities.
- ◆ Maintain an **attractive, quality housing stock** that promotes Bossier as a community with pride.
- ◆ Promote **sensible growth** that takes advantage of proximity to services and amenities and minimizes the strain on tax revenue.
- ◆ Create new residential development that offers the **appearance, amenities, comfort and resources** of a neighborhood or urban village.

- ◆ Design rural subdivisions as **urban villages** that respect the rural character of Bossier Parish yet meet future needs as the urban area grows.
- ◆ **Preserve flood prone areas and other natural resources to the extent practicable** through use of alternative development techniques, and design residential areas to minimize flooding problems and create amenities.

Quality, Affordable Housing

The community challenge to provide quality affordable housing is not unique to the Bossier MPC Planning Area. In fact, it permeates the entire Ark-La-Tex region. Therefore, the provision of quality affordable housing must be undertaken and evaluated as a process. Economic cycles will also impact the community's ability to achieve success. Housing must be a community effort with the partnership of all levels of government and private and non-profit resources.

Goal 9.1: Ensure that a variety of housing options are available to new and current residents of Bossier that are affordable at all income levels.

Objective A: Implement and promote a variety of forms of affordable housing throughout the Bossier planning area.

Objective B: Establish strategic partnerships with existing housing related organizations and promote development of new entities as necessary to further create affordable housing opportunities.



New developments inside the City have curb and gutter streets, sidewalks, and streetlights.

Objective C: Seek a variety of funding sources to promote affordable housing.

Objective D: Utilize new and existing programs to make housing affordable to households earning less than the median area household income.

Objective E: Reduce any local barriers to development of affordable housing.

Action 9.1.1: Increase the presence of quality apartment units in Bossier City and the portion of Bossier Parish within the planning area.

Action 9.1.2: Consider incorporating townhomes, duplexes, modular housing and garden homes as part of various residential development projects to diversify the housing stock and inject added affordable units into the market.

Action 9.1.3: Promote alternative site design to achieve affordable housing, including zero-lot line development, reduced setbacks, reduced street widths, reduced lot size, mixed use development, cluster housing, and increased density.

Action 9.1.4: Coordinate with the Community Development Department to determine organizations capable of becoming involved in development of affordable housing, including church organizations, Habitat for Humanity and other nonprofit institutions.

Action 9.1.5: Establish and maintain relationships with area builders and financial institutions to determine interest in assisting in development of affordable housing through programs that allow builders to share responsibility for creation of affordable housing and financial institutions to establish a revolving loan fund for pre-construction loans to area builders in development of affordable housing.

Action 9.1.6: Consider development of a HOME Investment Partnership Consortium with areas surrounding Bossier City, including Bossier Parish.

Action 9.1.7: Review the possibility of application for a Homeownership Zone from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Action 9.1.8: Aid in application for other funding sources for housing from the Department of Housing and Urban

Development that serve specific households that historically require affordable housing, such as the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Action 9.1.9: Coordinate with local financial institutions to establish a down payment and closing cost assistance program for those households in need. Upon resolution of lead based paint requirements, Community Development Block Grant funds should be incorporated into this program for Bossier City.

Action 9.1.10: Develop a grant program for “self-help” rehabilitation of substandard housing utilizing private resources such as financial institutions and foundation funds. Upon resolution of lead based paint requirements, Community Development Block Grant funds should be used to supplement this program for Bossier City.

Action 9.1.11: Closely examine local regulations and the approval process to determine if either contributes substantial cost to housing projects.

Action 9.1.12: Establish an education and awareness program designed to inform persons with limited income about the various affordable housing options available throughout Bossier City.

Manufactured Housing

Given the current economics of new housing development and infill development, manufactured housing must be considered as an affordable alternative to traditional site-built construction. In the past, housing of this nature has been viewed by many as sub par and not up to standard building code regulations. However, changes in the manufactured housing industry and overall housing industry issues have dictated the necessity of this viable housing choice for many Bossier area residents.

Nonetheless, concerns about maintaining a balanced housing mix and ensuring residential compatibility and neighborhood integrity should be reflected in Bossier’s long-term planning. The challenge is to capture the sentiment that manufactured housing is obviously needed and should be encouraged in appropriate locations while safeguarding established neighborhoods from adverse effects. Concerns about property devaluation and other impacts are sometimes more perception than reality, particularly when adequate zoning and development

standards are in place and enforced. But it is understandable that local residents are basing such concerns on the development quality they have previously witnessed in Bossier.

Goal 9.2: Recognize manufactured housing and modular housing as viable and affordable housing options that are acceptable upon meeting requirements regarding appropriate location, appearance, function and quality.

Objective A: Maintain standards for manufactured housing that are similar to those for other housing types, including site standards and design guidelines.

Objective B: Promote additional affordable housing options to ensure that manufactured housing is not the only quality affordable homeownership opportunity in the Bossier planning area.

Objective C: Encourage strategic placement of manufactured housing communities throughout the Bossier planning area based on appropriate zoning, location criteria, and development standards.



Manufactured home developments with limited site design standards currently exist within the MPC Planning Area, indicating opportunities to achieve even better quality.

Objective D: Encourage revitalization and increase standards for existing manufactured housing and mobile home communities.

Objective E: Educate the general public regarding the need for manufactured housing and dispel myths that create a negative image of manufactured housing communities.

Action 9.2.1: Require manufactured housing considered for placement in residential areas to meet design requirements standard for infill development regarding roof pitch, exterior materials, setbacks, proportion of structure (length, width and height), composition and location of front entry, site standards and other variables as a means of providing continuity in the neighborhood.

Action 9.2.2: Develop site design standards for manufactured housing communities that are similar in nature to subdivision requirements, including street and sidewalk requirements, setbacks, "lot" configuration, minimum yards, landscaping, parking, and other variables.

Action 9.2.3: Encourage development of manufactured housing communities as Planned Unit Developments with the option to encourage innovation in affordability and good site design that does not impede quality development.

Action 9.2.4: Require amenities for manufactured housing communities similar to those required of standard subdivisions, including parks, recreation areas, open spaces, and trails/sidewalks, community centers, and possibly schools, fire service and other variables.

Action 9.2.5: Encourage development of additional affordable housing options to provide alternatives outside of manufactured housing.

Action 9.2.6: Promote modular housing as a quality option that is more cost effective than Single Family Detached development, but does not necessarily suffer quality.

Action 9.2.7: Discourage aggregation and placement of all manufactured housing communities in a few limited locations.

Action 9.2.8: Permit development of manufactured housing communities throughout the Bossier planning area through development of specific zones or by PUD, if community requirements are met.

Action 9.2.9: Consider limiting proliferation of manufactured housing communities through an

annual cap on the number of units approved annually or the number of permits to be issued.

Action 9.2.10: Develop a manufactured housing-to-standard program that offers incentives to community owners for improvement of existing communities including reduced rate financing, public provision of infrastructure and a streamlined approval process.

Action 9.2.11: Coordinate with local lenders and manufactured housing builders/retailers to develop a home “upgrade” option that allows for purchase/trade-in of new manufactured housing to replace an existing mobile home or otherwise substandard manufactured home.

Action 9.2.12: Coordinate with manufactured housing associations to create materials dispelling myths and perceptions regarding this housing option.

Neighborhood Revitalization

As a whole, cities are composed of multiple neighborhood units of various sizes and complexity. Each has its own set of characteristics. Neighborhoods often have distinguishable boundaries, but some do not. As such, neighborhood revitalization is paramount to the progress of the entire Bossier MPC Planning Area. Efforts to improve neighborhoods through revitalization will result in stabilized/improved property values, pride, increased property investment and enhanced aesthetics. Each neighborhood revitalization effort, however, must be mindful not to “price out” existing residents.

Goal 9.3: Maintain a high standard for existing neighborhoods, including ongoing maintenance, neighborhood revitalization, community leadership and development of amenities.

Objective A: Ensure that quality neighborhoods are free of vacant lots, unsafe structures, and other potential health and safety risks.

Objective B: Promote strong and active neighborhood associations as a resource and an instrument for neighborhood revitalization.

Objective C: Encourage a variety of neighborhood revitalization programs managed by neighborhood organizations, private organizations or local government.

Objective D: Protect neighborhood character and condition through enforcement and improvement of related codes.

Objective E: Ensure that existing infrastructure and amenities for use within neighborhoods represents the quality that Bossier residents should expect and that they need.

Objective F: Maintain interconnection paths and visual corridors between neighborhoods and other destinations.



The rehabilitation efforts of one owner can spark a wave of reinvestment in a neighborhood.

Action 9.3.1: Examine and revise local health and building codes, as needed, to ensure that a streamlined process is in place to address unsafe or dilapidated structures and other potential health and safety risks, such as weeds, tires and heavy trash.

Action 9.3.2: Streamline the permit approval processes for builders and organizations that utilize existing vacant lots in a manner that compliments and improves the neighborhood.

Action 9.3.3: Consider the use of incentives to entice development to established neighborhoods, including tax deferral, fee waivers, and a variety of other methods.

Action 9.3.4: Consider alternative uses for area vacant lots, such as creation of a neighborhood park or a neighborhood commercial establishment in strategically appropriate areas.

Action 9.3.5: Utilize Community Development Block Grant funds to leverage other funds and to implement

projects and programs aiming to improve neighborhood conditions in areas of low or moderate income and in efforts to eliminate “slum and blight.” Projects and programs may include infrastructure repair, park and recreational opportunity development/improvement, removal of unsafe structures, or a variety of client-specific programs.

Action 9.3.6: Assist in creation of various Community Development Corporations (CDCs) that, as nonprofit organizations, can implement neighborhood revitalization projects and programs. Consider the necessity of developing specialized CDCs such as a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) to best address housing issues.

Action 9.3.7: Engage participation in neighborhood improvement and revitalization efforts from entities such as churches, civic organizations, schools, and businesses through programs such as neighborhood clean-up, home improvement, and beautification.

Action 9.3.8: Seek out resources from community revitalization organizations and foundations such as the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC).

Action 9.3.9: Enhance zoning, subdivision and/or building regulations to ensure respond to the special site design needs of infill housing and rehabilitation.

Action 9.3.10: Initiate neighborhood plans for the various existing residential areas throughout the Bossier planning area with priority to go to those neighborhoods that are most at risk of decline. In low and moderate income areas within Bossier City, these plans should be incorporated into the City’s Consolidated Plan as Neighborhood Revitalization Strategies. In low and moderate income areas outside of Bossier City, Neighborhood Revitalization Strategies should be incorporated into the State’s Consolidated Plan.

Action 9.3.11: Establish programs that local organizations can assist with that will improve the quality of life in neighborhoods, such as Crime Watch, neighborhood clean-up, assistance with code enforcement, programs for seniors and youth, and maintenance of public spaces and recreation areas.

Action 9.3.12: Examine code enforcement processes and regulations to ensure that enforcement is fair, expedient and utilized.

Action 9.3.13: Develop a neighborhood based Capital Improvements Plan that corresponds to area needs, the community-wide CIP, ability to obtain funding through the budget or other resources, and, if available, neighborhood plans.

Action 9.3.14: Incorporate sidewalks into all urban neighborhoods and repair those that impede pedestrian access.

Action 9.3.15: When possible, utilize natural areas, such as flood prone areas, abandoned railways or other means to establish a system of trails, streets and sidewalks that prevent neighborhoods from becoming isolated.



Timely and steady attention to identification, mitigation and/or removal of unsafe and dilapidated structures is needed to avoid general decline in neighborhoods at risk of losing their stability.

Appearance

Although not one of the “four A’s” of affordable housing (affordability, adequacy, availability, and accessibility), appearance is no less an important factor for the entire housing stock. Appearance is correlated to community perception, property value, and attractiveness to potential buyers. Appearance of many new subdivisions is reinforced through the development and implementation of deed restrictions. Such community improvement or homeowners associations seek to maintain or improve the

“appearance” of their neighborhood. In older sections of Bossier City, the City’s property standards and zoning ordinances enforce community appearance. Effective administration of these tools is critical to the sustainability of Bossier’s housing stock.

Goal 9.4: Maintain an attractive, quality housing stock that promotes Bossier as a community with pride.

Objective A: Ensure design consistency in neighborhood development to maintain a sense of continuity.

Objective B: Enforce restrictions and regulations that protect property values, local quality of life as well as general health, welfare and safety.

Objective C: Develop policies that promote rehabilitation of existing structures and infill development in a manner that complements and enhances the surrounding residential area.

Action 9.4.1: Promote quality, infill housing that compliments the character of the surrounding neighborhood by working with local architects to provide context-related designs to be utilized by builders as well as nonprofit organizations such as Habitat for Humanity for construction and rehabilitation.

Action 9.4.2: Establish design guidelines that address issues such as materials, roof pitch, façade treatment, porches (if applicable), proportional dimensions, garage, and other elements necessary to ensure that new development and rehabilitation is consistent with the character of the area.

Action 9.4.3: Assist neighborhood organizations in development of deed restrictions and provide the training and support necessary for private enforcement.

Action 9.4.4: Educate homeowners, apartment owners and other interested parties in the importance of home maintenance and its impact upon community quality of life, as well as property value.

Efficient Growth

In general, growth is good for the Bossier MPC Planning Area. In some situations, growth may adversely impact other goals for the community. Inefficient growth patterns, often referred to as sprawl, actually cost more by contributing to an

overextended infrastructure. Efficient growth policies call for infill development where streets and other necessary infrastructure are already in place. Efficient growth also recognizes that some land uses should be reserved for the long term, such as agriculture, open space and forest land.

Goal 9.5: Promote sensible growth that takes advantage of proximity to services and amenities, minimizes the strain on tax revenue, and promotes interconnection.

Objective A: Locate neighborhoods within proximity to other residential areas and non-residential uses with ample opportunity for interconnection and interaction.

Objective B: Encourage residential development to be located within proximity to existing services and resources as a means of reducing construction and development costs, as well as long-term cost to the community.

Action 9.5.1: Avoid separation of residential areas through gated developments. Adjacent residential developments should be adequately linked with transportation arteries and pedestrian connections to encourage interaction and neighborhood mobility.

Action 9.5.2: Provide incentives to developers willing to develop adjacent to existing urban areas and to create points of interconnectivity, including streets, sidewalks, green spaces and paths.

Action 9.5.3: Determine acceptable levels of service for all public services and facilities and make them a consideration in approval of new development to ensure that water, wastewater, law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical service, trash disposal, and recreational opportunities are adequately available.

Neighborhood Building

The “neighborhood building” concept recognizes that when new development occurs it should be multidimensional. That is, housing developments are often one dimensional in nature, offering little opportunity for the inclusion of complementary commercial development or other amenities. This is one way in which a “subdivision” is different from a “neighborhood.” Neighborhoods are

more often associated with urban areas, but their characteristics can be readily duplicated in suburban settings.

Goal 9.6: Create new residential development that offers the appearance, amenities, comfort and resources of a neighborhood or urban village.

Objective A: New and existing residential development should be diverse and “walkable” including a variety of experiences that are accessible within ten minutes of home without an automobile.

Objective B: Incorporate a mix of uses into neighborhood design to provide a series of destinations and to add dynamic content to residential development.

Objective C: Ensure that adequate, affordable, quality housing is available for all ages and types of households, and promote the inclusion of a variety of housing types within new and existing residential development.

Objective D: Ensure that neighborhoods are identifiable through a strong focus and well defined edges and adequately protected from negative impacts.

Action 9.6.1: Strategically mix uses, including limited neighborhood commercial development as well as major focal points such as schools, churches, parks, open spaces, day care, post office, emergency service, and allow for each to be interconnected by pedestrian friendly corridors.

Action 9.6.2: Consider increasing residential density, particularly in parts of the neighborhood that are near gathering points (e.g. neighborhood commercial activity centers, major parks and schools) and near primary entry points into the area.

Action 9.6.3: Consider increasing residential density as a means to preserve unique physical or cultural characteristics of an area, create green space, improve infrastructure efficiency, and increase housing affordability.

Action 9.6.4: Utilize planned unit development provisions to encourage innovative and imaginative site design that minimizes adverse impacts on adjacent properties.

Action 9.6.5: Permit secondary dwellings with appropriate restrictions such as above-garage apartments and

“granny flats” in all residential zoning districts by right to improve diversity, affordability and efficiency of area neighborhoods.

Action 9.6.6: Consider the pedestrian experience at the same level or higher than that provided to automobile traffic.

Action 9.6.7: Incorporate bus service into each neighborhood as a resource for travel between major destinations throughout the Bossier planning area.

Action 9.6.8: Encourage gateways into the various residential areas and edges that are obvious, but do not inhibit interaction.



Central green spaces and tracts reserved for recreation and informal gatherings provide a clear focal point in an effectively designed neighborhood, such as this example in Greenacres Place in north Bossier.

Action 9.6.9: Require parks, schools, churches, neighborhood centers, or other options as means of creating a community focal point. Consider appropriate zoning for these public and institutional uses.

Action 9.6.10: Residential areas should be appropriately buffered and screened from primary streets and adjacent commercial, office and community facility uses. Residential areas should not be next to industrial areas.

Action 9.6.11: Neighborhood retail and service uses should be located at intersections of arterial or collector streets or at the edge of logical

neighborhood areas unless appropriately placed within a planned development.

Urban or Rural Character

Areas of rapid suburban development, particularly beyond the corporate limits of Bossier City, represent challenges for the entire MPC Planning Area. Urbanization is generally an unending process. While all new development occurring outside the incorporated city should not necessarily be required to meet the entire gamut of urban-style standards for subdivision regulation, provisions should be in place to ensure infrastructure up to reasonable urban standards through private mechanisms.

Goal 9.7: Design rural subdivisions to respect the rural character of Bossier Parish yet meet future needs as the urban area grows.

Objective A: Encourage development that maintains the rural character of Bossier Parish through design and development guidelines.

Objective B: Ensure that rural development meets standards for urban development, including curbs, gutters, sidewalks, street lights, street width, and covered storm drainage or provides the resources necessary to cover costs of bringing the development to standard at a later date.

Action 9.7.1: Discourage “strip” residential development to promote quality design and maintain rural character.

Action 9.7.2: Encourage rural development to include open space to maintain and enhance the theme of rural character.

Action 9.7.3: Provide incentives to encourage development contiguous with existing urban development in order to minimize disturbance of rural character and to maximize efficiency of existing services.

Action 9.7.4: Minimize the amount of space required for rural development by utilizing village or cluster site design.

Flooding and Drainage

Flooding is a natural occurrence that is often cyclical in nature. Drainage improvements become necessary to mitigate the impact of ongoing development in a watershed. Historically, most development recognized flooding potential and located dwellings at a safe proximity to the hazard. However, as the community continues to expand, much of



Rapid development of new homes in the Stockwell Place area, set apart from retail shopping or services, is placing a strain on narrow two-lane roads such as this stretch of Stockwell Road in which houses front directly on the main access route to the area, resulting in a series of driveways along this increasingly busy road.

the desirable land is no longer available. New development patterns must take into account the ramifications of creating too much impervious surface and allocate additional open space, utilize stormwater retention/detention techniques, and minimize the amount of fill and contouring during construction.

Goal 9.8: Preserve flood prone areas and other natural resources to the extent practicable through use of alternative development techniques, and design residential areas to minimize flooding problems and create amenities.

Objective A: Protect the relationship between Bossier and its many waterways and utilize it as a marketing amenity for development.

Objective B: Discourage development in flood prone areas, to the extent practical, for purposes of safety and property value.

Objective C: Incorporate alternative design techniques into residential areas where flood prone areas can be protected and marketed.

Action 9.8.1: Establish a land trust that can be charged with acquiring and managing sensitive lands throughout Bossier City and Bossier Parish with particular emphasis on rural and flood prone areas.

Action 9.8.2: Encourage acquisition of development rights within the regulatory floodway and floodplain or the use of a nonprofit trust to preserve and enhance these sensitive areas of Bossier.

Action 9.8.3: Create an option to utilize cluster residential development as a means of reducing lot size, increasing open space and preserving flood prone areas.

Action 9.8.4: Establish an areawide map that indicates primary conservation areas to be protected during subdivision design.

Action 9.8.5: Determine criteria for secondary conservation areas, conservation easements and concept plan approval.

Action 9.8.6: Revise ordinances as needed to allow for uncommon lot design in appropriate circumstances, including "flag" lots.



Much of developed Bossier is within or near flood plain areas, but development immediately adjacent to drainage ways is particularly at risk as areawide urbanization continues.

Previous Plans and Policies

Previous available plans and studies that took a more focused approach toward housing and neighborhood quality for the planning area were reviewed and considered in the development of this Master Plan. Ordinances relevant to housing development and neighborhood protection also were considered. The relevant plans and ordinances included:

- ◆ *Bossier City Consolidated Plan, 2000-2004, and Annual Action Plan* – With regard to housing issues, the Bossier City Consolidated Plan is the guiding document. The effective plan covers the period for 2000-2004. As a prerequisite for receiving funding allocations from the US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD), the Consolidated Plan must be updated every five years. The major topics addressed include housing, homelessness, special populations, lead-based paint, barriers to affordable housing, fair housing, anti-poverty efforts, and community development. An annual Action Plan also accompanies the plan. Bossier City’s current Action Plan utilizes nearly \$750,000 toward housing rehabilitation, public works, public service, and administration and planning objectives.
- ◆ *Subdivision Regulations* – The Subdivision Regulations, adopted in 1975, govern the division of property, primarily for residential purposes within the MPC Planning Area.
- ◆ *Zoning Ordinance* – Both the City and Parish adopted the effective Bossier City-Parish MPC Zoning Ordinance in 1978. Significant revisions to both the Subdivision Regulations and Zoning Ordinance will accompany this comprehensive planning effort through the drafting of a new Unified Development Ordinance.

Current Housing Outlook

Status of Housing Data

This element of the Bossier Comprehensive Land Use and Development Master Plan was prepared as various Census 2000 data was being released. Like any other planning effort, the best available data was gathered and utilized. At this point, only Summary Files 1 and 2 have been released by the Census Bureau. Data that reflects more specific issues associated with housing characteristics is due for release later in 2002 in Summary File 3. Issues of interest in SF3 are the number of housing units by type, and median values and rents. Analysis of this data would determine more definitively the sufficiency or deficiency of housing by type and affordability.

Existing Conditions and Trends

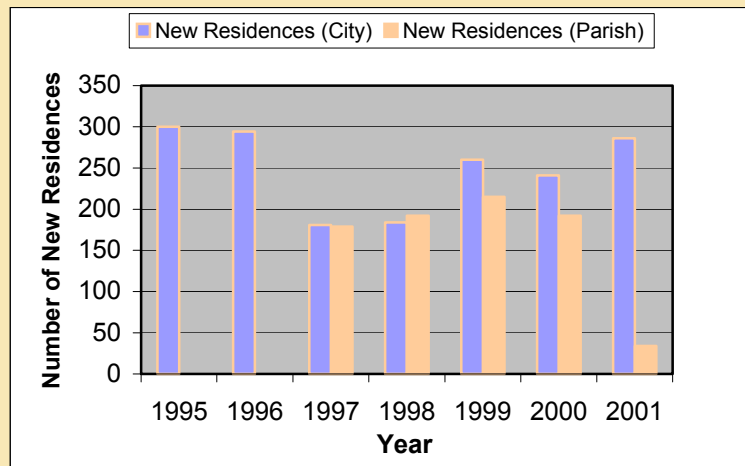
While economic activity in the late 1980s and early 1990s was at a near standstill, subsequent years have seen strong growth trends and consequently, an explosion in new house construction. Some of the activity has occurred in central Bossier City, however, most has occurred in suburban areas in Bossier City and the unincorporated areas of the MPC Planning Area.

In 2000, Bossier City had a total of 23,026 housing units compared to 21,815 housing units in 1990. This represents an increase of 1,211 units. Bossier Parish, as a whole, had a total of 40,286 units in 2000 and 34,994 in 1990, adding 5,292 units during the decade. **Figure 9.1 - Total Housing Units Per Census Block** illustrates the distribution of residential dwellings across the MPC Planning Area.

Significant subdivision development was undertaken throughout the 1990s. There are 19 active subdivisions in Bossier City and another 22 in the unincorporated portion of the MPC Planning Area. The size of subdivisions inside the corporate limits varies widely. Windsor Place has 22 possible units, and there are 887 possible units in Golden Meadows. The average number of units per subdivision is 254. Moreover, based on records maintained through 2000 by the MPC, these subdivisions are 85.9 percent built out. Many of the subdivisions developed outside the city are much smaller, with an average of 111 units per subdivision. The number of units ranges from 13 in Bayou Point to 698 in Dogwood Park. Building activity very similar however, with subdivisions outside the city being 84.3 percent built out.

Figure 9.2 - New Housing Starts illustrates the number of new residences in Bossier City since 1995. For the period shown, the peak was in 1995 with 300 new homes. Much of this boom is likely attributed to the surge of employment generated by

**Figure 9.2
New Housing Starts**



Source: Bossier City and Bossier Parish permitting data

the arrival of gaming activities along the Red River. Home construction slowed significantly in 1997, but rebounded in 1999. Statistics just for unincorporated areas of the MPC Planning Area are unavailable; however, analysis of data back to 1997 for all of Bossier Parish reveals similar trends (with incomplete information for 2001).

Table 9.1 - Comparison of Occupancy Status and Tenure, based on data reported by the US Bureau of the Census, shows the percent of occupied housing units and percent

of owner occupied housing units respectively relative to comparable communities in Louisiana. Occupied housing increased in Bossier City from 87.2 percent of all available units in 1990 to 92.1 percent in 2000.

Figure 9.3 - Percent of Vacant Housing illustrates concentrations of unoccupied housing within the MPC Planning Area. The strong economy and expansion at Barksdale AFB have contributed to the decrease in vacant housing in the area. The extent of owner occupied housing also increased from 57.4 percent of all housing units in 1990 to 60.0 percent in 2000.

**Table 9.1
Comparison of Occupancy Status and Tenure**

Area	Percent Occupancy	Percent Owner Occupied
Louisiana	89.7%	67.9%
Alexandria	90.0%	57.4%
Bossier City	92.1%	60.0%
Bossier Parish	90.9%	69.5%
Lake Charles	89.0%	57.6%
Monroe	91.3%	49.6%
Shreveport	90.6%	59.0%

Source: US Bureau of the Census

Figure 9.4 - Owner-Occupied Housing displays the geographic variation in owner-occupancy rates across the MPC Planning Area by census block group. The higher rates are associated with the suburban and rural areas of the Planning Area, while the lowest rates are concentrated in central Bossier City. This pattern is also reflected in **Figure 9.5 - Percent of Renter Occupied Housing**, with rent-paying households most prevalent in central Bossier City.

Bossier Parish as a whole has seen similar trends. Occupied housing units in the Parish increased from 87.8 percent in 1990 to 90.9 percent in 2000. Owner occupancy increased from 66.7 percent to 69.5 percent in 2000.

Cost and Affordability

Affordability is a constant issue of debate. For many, the question is, "Affordable to whom?" The household earning \$30,000 will define "affordable" quite differently from the household that earns \$120,000 in a year. Nevertheless, each is looking for housing that is affordable.

When determining affordability, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) suggests that the home be one in which the homeowner or renter pays no more than 30 percent of gross household income toward housing costs. To be a true measure of affordability, housing cost must be based upon more than the simple cost of a home mortgage or rent. Housing costs must include all anticipated payments related to the home, such as taxes, insurance, utilities, phone service, and association dues. While these items may not be considered raw cost, they are necessities that are directly associated to housing.

In the Shreveport-Bossier Metropolitan Statistical Area, the median household income in 2000 was \$32,153. For housing to be considered affordable to a family earning the median household income, housing costs could not exceed \$804 in a month. As noted in **Table 9.2 - Housing Affordability by Income, 2000**, a family earning 180 percent of the median could pay slightly more than \$1,400 per month and still consider housing costs to be affordable. On the other hand, families earning only 30 percent of the median household

income can afford only \$241 in monthly housing-related expenses.

A number of factors impact housing affordability:

The Cost of Construction or Renovation. Housing price is largely based upon the cost of labor and materials necessary to construct or renovate a housing unit. People are seeking larger homes that require more space, more time to build and more materials. The price of materials and labor also impacts cost. If lumber prices increase, the cost is passed on to the potential buyer.

Likewise, the cost of housing increases as the number of amenities increases. Many of today's homes include items that were either not available or options only decades ago. Units that once included only two bedrooms are now expected to include three or four bedrooms and at least one additional bathroom. Kitchens often include a walk-in pantry. Garage size has increased to accommodate two (or even more) vehicles, instead of one.

The Market. Standard procedure for homebuilders is to construct homes in a price range that can produce a balance between highest margin for profit and volume of homes that can be sold.

Housing units can be built for more or less than the general area of balance but the builder

increases risk. A homebuilder may choose to construct custom homes for high-income residents. The margin for profit will increase, but the number of units requested will also decrease. Additionally, if the economy sours, high-end housing is generally the first to slow. On the other hand, housing constructed below the balance provides reduced profit and does not always guarantee a high volume as compensation. Thus, the builder that chooses to construct housing below the balance will likely earn less profit without added incentives.

Land. Realtors and real estate investors often say that the value of land is primarily based upon three items - location, location and location. The same applies in consideration of housing affordability. Land in some areas

**Table 9.2
Housing Affordability by Income, 2000
For Shreveport-Bossier MSA**

Percent of Median*	Household Income	Affordable Home Payment
180%	\$57,875	\$1,447
150%	\$48,230	\$1,206
120%	\$38,584	\$965
100%	\$32,153	\$804
80%	\$25,722	\$643
50%	\$16,077	\$402
30%	\$9,646	\$241

* Median income available through Greater Shreveport Chamber of Commerce
Source: Wilbur Smith Associates

will be more cost prohibitive than in others. For example, land in urban areas tends to be more expensive than rural areas. Land in declining areas may be cheaper to acquire but costly to assemble.

Many newer subdivisions are constructed outside of the urban area because the cost of land is more reasonable. A portion of that reduction in cost is generally passed on to the buyer. On the other hand, a common complaint of residents that live outside the urban area is lack of amenities such as parks, open space, community facilities, day care facilities, or schools within walking distance. Once additional land is acquired to provide for these elements, the costs of development may well meet or exceed the cost associated with urban development.

What People Want

Recently, the National Home Builders Association (NHBA) conducted an extensive survey and published "Housing: Facts, Figures and Trends." The report focused on the housing characteristics that today's potential homeowners desire. Analysis of the survey results enables comparisons to the locally available and anticipated housing stock. Among the features listed:

- ◆ Larger homes with "lots of space"
- ◆ "Upscale" amenities, such as higher ceilings or an island kitchen
- ◆ Outdoor amenities such as "a front porch, deck or patio"
- ◆ Laundry room and dining room
- ◆ Approximately 2,000 square feet of space
- ◆ Three or four bedrooms
- ◆ Two car garage
- ◆ Kitchen amenities such as a walk-in pantry
- ◆ Bathroom amenities such as a linen closet
- ◆ More storage space
- ◆ Neighborhood amenities such as parks and trails

The features described by the NHBA seem to revolve around the single family-housing archetype. This housing option is certainly not the only one available to Bossier residents, but it remains the most demanded form of housing.

Financing. Development of housing requires significant investment. Like most investment ventures, capital is most accessible when the product proposed follows conventional market practices. Because affordable housing projects have a tendency to provide less profit and fewer margins for error, they are sometimes considered to be "risky" by lenders. While this may not keep a project from being funded, it may result in increased rates of interest, shorter loan life or added requirements. In each case, the cost is passed on to the buyer.

Incentives. Market forces can often add to the cost of housing. In those cases, government and nonprofit organizations can introduce incentives that make development of affordable housing a more viable option. Incentives come in a number of forms and are truly limited only by regulation and innovation of local organizations. Typical incentives can include acquisition and assembly of land, streamlined development review processes, reduced fee or bond requirements, provision of infrastructure, "buy-down" programs that utilize local funds to cover an amount of construction costs, loan guarantee, rental assistance, and down payment assistance for homebuyers.

Amenities. As previously discussed, housing demands today are substantially different than in past decades. Residents have come to realize that amenities play a very large role in the quality of life they can expect to experience in a community. Parks, recreation areas, open spaces, community centers, swimming pools, tennis courts and connecting sidewalks are features that should be common.

Each of these, plus other amenities, comes with a price tag and diminishes affordability. Ironically, individuals that live in manufactured housing communities, apartment complexes and other types of affordable housing tend to have fewer amenities, but these are the areas with the most need.

Regulations. Regulation is designed to increase safety or ensure that other objectives of the community are met. However, added regulation often equates to added cost of construction, either through direct costs or delays ("time is money").

Fees and Dues. Fees are commonplace in housing. Utility service generally requires a service fee. Financial institutions often add processing fees to the mortgage preparation process. Homeowners associations assess dues to cover expenses of managing the neighborhood. While many of these fees are fairly minimal compared to other housing costs, each detracts from affordability.

A Special Concern in Older Housing

Since 1978, lead based paint has been restricted from residential use. Its hazards and risks to children and women of childbearing age have become well documented in recent years. However, significant risks still remain in a large portion of the existing housing stock. Moreover, the hazard is concentrated in older, inner-city homes that tend to be owned/occupied by a lower income demographic. Gaps exist in education and the ability to properly mitigate the lead hazard.

According to the Bossier City Consolidated Plan, over 10,000 houses were built in the community prior to 1978 and may contain hazardous levels of lead-based paint. Stricter regulation of lead abatement in housing rehabilitation projects has detracted from local efforts to mitigate lead through Community Development programs. Most communities have found these regulations to be cost prohibitive and are awaiting further guidance from HUD.

Housing Programs

Federal Programs

Housing has been an issue with the Federal government since the 1920s. Today a significant number of homes are purchased with assistance from the Federal Housing Administration. While public housing has often been criticized, it has provided a service to those that might otherwise be homeless. While these are two of the more recognizable programs, HUD sponsors numerous others that may prove beneficial to both Bossier City and Bossier Parish.

- ◆ *HOME Investment Partnership.* HOME represents the single most significant housing related grant available through the federal government. The grant is based upon a formula and allocated in a fashion similar to the Community Development Block Grant currently received by Bossier City. While neither the City nor Parish are currently eligible for funds, discussion among parties has

included an eligible “consortium” of communities that could share funds. HOME funds are available for to provide a variety of housing measures to those in need, including downpayment and closing cost assistance, homebuyer education (under specific circumstances), pre-construction loans, rental assistance, and rehabilitation funds.

- ◆ *Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly.* Designed to assist very low income persons that are 62 years or over, Section 202 provides rental assistance that can be applied to multifamily construction. In addition to rental assistance, Section 202 funds can be used for initial project funds that do not require repayment as long as the structure continues to provide reduced rent for the elderly (at minimum 40 years).
- ◆ *Section 811 Supportive Housing for the Disabled.* Similar to Section 202, Section 811 meets the special needs of the disabled by allowing rental assistance for multifamily structures. Capital advances are permitted in the same fashion as Section 202.
- ◆ *Youthbuild.* This program is designed to be multifunctional. While the primary goal is to provide at-risk youth with professional and social skills, it also results in development/rehabilitation of affordable housing. Through youthbuild, young adults are trained in marketable construction and repair skills that are then used to spur community revitalization.
- ◆ *Weed and Seed.* Developed by the Department of Justice as a means of eradicating drug abuse, gang activity and other criminal elements within a neighborhood, this program has proven to be equally effective in assisting in community empowerment and revitalization efforts. While the amount of funds available for assistance is generally small, it can be used for demolition of dilapidated or drug/gang infested housing as part of “weeding out” opportunities for criminal mischief.

State of Louisiana Programs

The Louisiana Housing Finance Agency (www.lhfa.state.la.us) serves as a conduit for all the various Federal and State housing initiatives, such as

Assisted Program Loans, Low Rate Program loans, and HOME Assisted Program loans.

- ◆ *Assisted Program Loans.* Available for first-time homebuyers whose annual income does not exceed 115 percent of the median income, adjusted for family size, in Bossier Parish. The program will grant up to four percent of the mortgage amount to the borrower to assist in down payment and closing cost requirements. The effective interest rate for this program is 7.09 percent.
- ◆ *Low Rate Program Loans.* Available for first-time homebuyers who meet the same criteria as for the Assisted Program Loans. The effective interest rate for this program is 6.09 percent.
- ◆ *HOME Assisted Program Loans.* Provides assistance to homebuyers whose annual income does not exceed 80 percent of the median income, adjusted for family size, in Bossier Parish. A borrower match is required not to exceed \$1,500.
- ◆ *Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program.* This program is the primary means of directing private capital towards the creation of affordable rental housing. Developers of low-income rental housing use the tax credit to offset a portion of their federal tax liability in exchange for the production of affordable rental units. To qualify for the tax credit, either 20 percent or more of the project's units must be rent-restricted and occupied by individuals whose income is 50 percent or less of the median family income; or, 40 percent or more of the units must be rent-restricted and occupied by individuals whose income is 60 percent or less of the median family income.

Potential Local Housing and Community Development Programs

The Bossier City Community Development Department utilizes Community Development Block Grant funds annually received from the Department of Housing and Community Development as a means to assist in various housing programs. While these programs are only available within the municipal limits of Bossier City, similar programs can be developed utilizing private funds or by competing for statewide CDBG funds for the remainder of the MPC planning area. Recently, funds for housing related programs have slowed as Bossier City, like all entitlement communities across

the country, attempts to grapple with expansive and costly changes in Lead Based Paint regulations.

CDBG Fix It Program. This program provides a forgivable loan that allows residents to repair items that will improve the energy efficiency of the home or maintain an adequate roof system. Bossier City sets a maximum amount of funds available for each home (\$7,500 in 2000)

Owner Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program. Also provided in the form of a forgivable loan, assistance through this program allows for rehabilitation of homes of individuals with limited incomes or special needs. Homes that are rehabilitated through this program are required to meet Housing Quality Standards, as well as local building codes. Bossier City sets a maximum amount of funds available for each home (\$22,500 in 2000).

Code Enforcement. While not providing new housing, the Code Enforcement program funds a position for the purpose of ensuring that "slum/blighted areas" of the city are maintained in accordance with local codes.

Paint Your Heart Out. This program aids in minor rehabilitation of homes for the elderly and persons with disabilities. The focus is to paint homes and therefore improve the living condition of the recipient, as well as the visual character and property value of the surrounding area.

Bossier City Public Housing

The Housing Authority of Bossier City (HABC) owns and/or manages a total of 921 public housing units in the community, including:

- ◆ 437 low-income units;
- ◆ 180 Section 8 housing units; and,
- ◆ 304 low- to moderate-income housing units.

Of the total, 130 units are for elderly and handicapped persons. The HABC has cited "high" priority need levels for public housing modernization, safety / crime prevention / drug elimination, and resident services / family self-sufficiency.

Homeownership Assistance

Various forms of homeowner counseling is available to prospective homebuyers and existing homeowners seeking advice. Although each of the agencies is

located in Shreveport, their services are available to Bossier Parish residents as well. They include:

- ◆ New Shreveport Community Housing Development Organization, Inc.
- ◆ Consumer Credit Counseling Agency - Shreveport
- ◆ Caddo Community Action Agency

Each of the aforementioned agencies provides prepurchase counseling, default/foreclosure counseling, and rental counseling.

Building Quality Communities

Neighborhoods Instead of Subdivisions

The Costs of Sprawl

Expansion has always been an integral part of the American consciousness. Land is abundant in the United States, and part of the reward for hard work has always been the ability to acquire land, preferably within the “wide open spaces”. As a result, our communities have consistently expanded as those with the means have sought the perceived freedom, pride in ownership and superior quality of life that comes with a new home built on previously “unoccupied” land. It is an experience that connects us with our adventurous, frontier-driven forefathers.

The advent of the automobile, mass-produced housing, interstate highways, and an increase in per capita affluence have all worked together to make this part of the American Dream available to the middle class. Proximity to services slowly became less of an issue as people discovered the comfort of traveling by automobile to destinations remote from the living environment. It is not unusual to travel several miles to work, shop or play. As a result, residential development occurs in subdivisions that have little relationship to the surrounding environment. The result is known as “sprawl,” and it has allowed communities to grow, consuming both the surrounding rural areas and smaller communities.

This is the trend that is faced by Bossier as subdivisions continue to blossom to the north, south and east of the community. Areas such as Airline Drive and Swan Lake Road to the north, Sligo Road to the south, and the U.S. 80 “Haughton” growth corridor to the east are indicative of the predominant, low-density development pattern in which

agricultural or vacant land is transitioning to urban uses. It is a trend that has the potential to consume, overwhelm and outgrow the community.

Sprawl has not come without costs, and today people are beginning to realize that, in many ways, those costs supercede the benefits. Consider that while people have moved from older areas of the community, such as North Bossier or Shady Grove, they have effectively altered and blurred traditional patterns of growth. As a result, sprawl occurs with little regard for the cost of services and infrastructure necessary to maintain an expected quality of life.

Prior to sprawl, expansion occurred in a dense pattern adjacent to other development, thus ensuring that infrastructure such as streets, water, and wastewater occurred in a systematic and cost-effective fashion. Likewise, government services such as law enforcement, fire protection, schools, libraries, parks and general administration remained concentrated.

Throughout Bossier, subdivisions have leapfrogged vacant and developable parcels, yet infrastructure and services are still expected to stretch past these parcels without a decrease in quality. Because developers generally must provide much of the infrastructure that they require beyond the existing system, the added costs of development are simply added on to the cost of purchasing a home.

In *From Sprawl to Smart Growth*, Robert Freilich provides examples of the substantial costs associated with sprawl. He notes that the Urban Land Institute, in a study comparing sprawl conditions to those of traditional development, concluded that the combined costs of sprawl added as much as \$48,000 to the cost of a home. In another instance a community indicated that their ability to collect approximately \$2,100 in taxes per household was roughly \$1,600 less than necessary to adequately cover services.

Bringing the Old into the New:

Traditional Neighborhood Development

North Bossier has a distinctive character that sets it apart from many other areas of Bossier. It is one of the few places locally that follows the traditional grid pattern, and its design is not based upon a relationship with one of the

major thoroughfares that now exist in Bossier. The houses in North Bossier boast a front porch as entry into bungalow structures. Occasionally, the traditional landscape is dotted by old infill development placed in the neighborhood without a sense of continuity. The neighborhood is limited in size and offers schools as a focal point.

While North Bossier is certainly not everyone's image of appropriate design and a model neighborhood, it carries many of the same characteristics that communities across the country are realizing have been lost through modern subdivision design.

Designing to incorporate the various characteristics of *traditional neighborhood development* does not imply that homes must all be smaller than 1,200 square feet or that development should abandon many of the important lessons learned regarding good design. On the contrary, the desire to utilize traditional development techniques is from recognition that many important traits are missing that help to create a sense of community.

Traditional neighborhood development recognizes the benefits of a time-honored approach to issues such as density, open space, street width, pedestrian-friendliness, amenities, mixed-use development, design, scale, and compatibility with surrounding areas. The primary focus, however, is upon the ability to walk from one destination to another, usually in less than 10 minutes.

Other characteristics of traditional neighborhood development include:

- ◆ *Focus on the neighborhood as a single, functioning unit that is part of a larger organization – in this case, the Bossier planning area.* As a single unit, each neighborhood should have definition. The boundaries or edges of the neighborhood unit should be recognizable, but not impossible. An edge need not indicate that every neighborhood in Bossier act as a fortress, but rather as a clearly recognizable entity.
- ◆ *Each neighborhood 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 to the particular neighborhood.

- ◆ *Pedestrian and vehicular movements are equally important.* Many of the subdivisions constructed in Bossier have been created since the automobile became popular. They have become monuments to the automobile with wider streets, incidental sidewalks and the garage replacing the front porch as the primary feature of a home. While it is not possible or desirable to eliminate automobile traffic, it is possible to make opportunities for pedestrian or bike travel more enticing. Narrower streets that reduce the scale and increase safety are options. Enhanced sidewalks and trails are instrumental to the success of the plan.
- ◆ *Uses within a traditional neighborhood development are mixed to allow for nonresidential activities such as commercial establishments, schools and open spaces.* Housing is particularly mixed to support a wide variety of housing needs. As a rule, those living in higher density housing may wish to be closer or incorporated into commercial opportunities.
- ◆ *Traditional neighborhood development is compact with a variety of green spaces as relief.* Generally, lot sizes are smaller than the standard in a modern subdivision ordinance as are setbacks.
- ◆ *Traditional neighborhood development can include an integral connection with the transit system.* Traditional neighborhood development is more self-sustaining and dynamic because it incorporates a number of elements that encourage walking, particularly features such as neighborhood commercial uses and parks that would require driving in conventional subdivisions. However, shopping beyond daily needs, major recreation activities and most employment will continue to require travel outside of the neighborhood. Transit is a means to carry people from one significant destination to another without a personal automobile. While it is doubtful that the combination of walking, bicycling and transit will entirely replace use of the automobile, traditional neighborhood development provides these as equally viable alternatives.

Incidentally, traditional neighborhood development is equally applicable to both urban and residential areas, which makes it particularly suitable for Bossier. Within

Bossier City, this format can be used to create (or re-create) traditional neighborhoods that are interconnected through the street and sidewalk system as well as trails and other linkages. Each neighborhood functions as a node that is ultimately connected to larger destinations for work, shopping or recreation.

In the more rural areas, traditional neighborhood development creates a village, similar to many rural villages that simply grow up around the connection between two country roads. In this case, the neighborhood commercial uses may be somewhat larger scale in order to provide additional services and reduce the need to travel outside of the village. Development of a more urban setting may incorporate limited work opportunities and a “village green” concept. For more rural character, commercial activity may be limited and more natural open space may be incorporated into the design.

Use of traditional neighborhood development techniques will require changes to existing ordinances. The current comprehensive planning process includes a component to consider and recommend Development Policies, Strategies and Incentives. In addition, the new Master Plan will lead to drafting and adoption of a Unified Development Code for the Bossier MPC Planning Area. This ordinance diagnosis and enhancement process, building upon the long-range planning recommendations of the Land Use and Development Master Plan, could include the creation of one or more new residential districts or amendment of existing districts.

While the processes may remain the same, 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 Traditional Neighborhood Development and Transit Oriented Design include:

- ◆ Creation of additional parks and preservation of open spaces throughout the community.

- ◆ Increased density and proximity to services, which reduces the cost of infrastructure and provision of public services.
- ◆ Development containing characteristics of historic “small town America” that are considered aesthetically pleasing.
- ◆ More efficient utilization of space and greater compatibility with the surrounding environment.
- ◆ The inclusion of life-cycle housing that provides a variety of housing options in a single location to more closely suit a range of specialized needs involving affordability, accessibility, housing size, and location.
- ◆ Mixed-use development that offers opportunities for home businesses or residential units above commercial establishments.
- ◆ Pedestrian-friendly environments designed to decrease dependence on the automobile, including integrated transit opportunities for travel outside of the neighborhood.
- ◆ Increased “social capital” as more opportunities for interaction between households begins to build the genuine feeling of “neighborhood” often missing in conventional subdivisions.

Creating a Sense of Security

The physical design of neighborhoods, including their layout and the built orientation, can affect the levels of crime and fear in neighborhoods. Researchers have identified basic design principles that reduce fear and prevent crime in neighborhood communities. The basic principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) include natural surveillance, natural access control, and territorial/defensible spaces.

Natural Surveillance. Humans feel safer in places where they can see what is going on around them. Law-abiding citizens also feel safer in settings where they are visible to other law-abiding people who they believe would help in situations of danger. Perpetrators of crime, in contrast, prefer settings that are not visible to law-abiding people who might assist their victims. Therefore, the more the physical environment of a neighborhood enables people to survey their surroundings and to be visible to other

people, the safer a neighborhood will feel and be. A few examples of design features that promote natural surveillance include:

- ◆ Good lighting of streets, alleys, and parking areas;
- ◆ Landscaping that does not provide hiding places for perpetrators. Hedges and shrubs should be no higher than three feet and tree canopies no lower than eight feet;
- ◆ See-through types of fences;
- ◆ Windows that look out upon streets and alleys, particularly bay windows; and,
- ◆ Non-recessed doorways.

Natural Access Control. Perpetrators desire settings that allow them to enter and exit without being noticed, and they do not prefer places with limited points of entry and exit. Multiple access points allow more options for escape following a crime. Therefore, by limiting the number of entrances and exits to a community it reduces the attractiveness of the neighborhood as a place for crime. Many communities that are planned on the grid system are beginning to close streets to limit access to their community and create identifiable neighborhood boundaries and points of entrance and exit. Contemporary neighborhoods that are planned with a curvilinear street system have generally applied this principle in the subdivision layout and design.

Territoriality/Defensible Spaces. A basic principle of CPTED is for citizens to show that they own their territory, which helps to deter crime from a neighborhood. A neighborhood that portrays a strong physical image is less likely to attract perpetrators than those that appear less defensible. Subdivision perimeter fencing commonly used in contemporary subdivision design and master planned communities, is a method utilized to establish identifiable boundaries. Also, simple property enhancements such as flowers in planters on balconies and in business districts, vegetable and flower gardens, seasonal decorations, and outdoor holiday displays contribute to the portrayal of strong community images, which symbolize a sense of togetherness as a community. These design principles help to minimize crime incidents in neighborhoods. Many communities throughout the United States have incorporated the CPTED design principles into their zoning ordinances, subdivision

regulations, design standards, and neighborhood planning programs. Generally, the incidence of crime in neighborhoods can be significantly reduced through development and implementation of environmental design principles. The MPC may want to consider utilization of these techniques in a neighborhood planning program or consider their incorporation in neighborhood development standards.



The River Bend subdivision in south Bossier City, while built in a typical suburban style, includes a greenbelt and walking trail network that enables residents to access the entire small neighborhood on foot, including a central playlot for kids.

Taking Advantage of Natural Assets

Preserving Floodplains and Open Spaces

Much of the new residential development in the MPC Planning Area is occurring in areas that are in or adjacent to areas at risk of flooding. Subdivision design that simply seeks to maximize the number of lots per acre will only increase the risk of flooding. To a certain extent, new problems could be created by the alteration of the natural drainage pattern.

Across the country, new subdivision design concepts are being implemented to alleviate this and other pressures on the environment resulting from urban encroachment into the rural fringe. One such technique is the use of *cluster zoning*. The concept behind cluster zoning is simply to achieve the same number of units allowed on a site, but reduce the lot sizes and cluster the houses in order to achieve efficiencies and creativity in design. By allowing the developer to place units closer together, cost is saved in terms of the amount of road and infrastructure to be constructed, land to be cleared, and storm drainage capacity to be installed. Further, open space is preserved,

which could be used for parks, natural areas, wetlands, or agricultural areas.

Cluster techniques tend to create compact neighborhoods with a strong sense of identity and character. Additionally, the homeowner is able to reap the benefits of surrounding open space without the demands and liability of ownership.

Unlike standard zoning, cluster zoning tends to take advantage of the strengths and weaknesses of an individual building site. Contours and views can be accentuated to add aesthetic character to the development and profit to the developer. Meanwhile areas such as floodplains, wetlands, and areas of historic significance can be utilized for open space.

More recently, a descendent of cluster zoning known as *Conservation Subdivision Techniques*, has been successfully utilized to replace large lot development, particularly in rural areas. Conservation subdivision techniques take the creativity and flexibility of cluster zoning an additional step by requiring conceptual designs and reducing standard site requirements.

Conservation Subdivision Techniques generally follow a four-step process:

- ◆ Step One: Identify primary conservation areas within the site. Primary conservation areas represent areas unsuitable for development such as floodways/floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, or other areas of significance that are deemed inappropriate for development by the local jurisdiction, such as prime farmland or forestland. These areas are not considered a part of the buildable area of the site when calculating the number of units that may be developed.
- ◆ Step Two: Identify secondary conservation areas within the site. Secondary conservation areas represent areas that are buildable but contain special features that the developer or the community would like to see preserved. These may include forestland, prime farmland, and special viewsheds that add character to the development or even areas that the developer wishes to avoid for the benefit and marketability of the project. Secondary conservation areas are included in determination of the allowable number of units because conservation areas are a “wish list” of items that the developer or the community would like to have remain, but are not required to keep. Both primary and

secondary conservation areas should be drawn on a concept plan for consideration in placement of units. In accord with the clustering concept, Conservation Subdivision Techniques generally require that a percentage of the site be set aside for open space. If so, the sum total of the primary and secondary conservation areas should be equal to or greater than the amount of open space required.

- ◆ Step Three: Calculate and place the number of units that may be developed on site. This is calculated as developed within the Unified Development Code and may be based on a minimum lot size or on a number of dwelling units per acre. Once the appropriate number of units is determined, they are placed upon the site clustered according to appropriateness to the site. Lot lines and streets are not placed until the appropriate location of units has been determined. Decisions are made at this time regarding the need and the extent to which secondary conservation areas are to be encroached upon. Open space requirements may limit the amount of areas designated as secondary conservation areas that can be removed.
- ◆ Step Four: Lot lines and streets are added to the development and the final concept is developed. Lot lines are placed with little regard to concerns that are commonplace in most subdivision ordinances such as irregular lots or flag lots. Efficiency and desirability of design take primary precedence.

Both cluster zoning and Conservation Subdivision Techniques require changes to existing ordinances to build in needed flexibility and room for creativity.

Benefits of cluster zoning/Conservation Subdivision Techniques include:

- ◆ Preserving open space and rural character.
- ◆ Arranging development in clusters to reduce impact upon the environment.
- ◆ Encouraging condensed development that allows for overall added units per acre while delaying buildout.
- ◆ Targeting specific conservation sites of interest for preservation and for use as parklands, trails or natural areas.

- ◆ Reserving some open space as “holding areas” to allow for more dense development as the community continues to expand. In this manner, Conservation Subdivision Techniques act as a temporary compromise between traditional development patterns and typical sprawl.
- ◆ Producing quaint village or hamlet themes reminiscent of historic rural America.
- ◆ Offering opportunities to apply conservation easements to ensure that land preserved through cluster zoning also preserves open space and agricultural areas.
- ◆ Reducing the amount of added infrastructure created by the development.

The Role of Manufactured Housing

Perhaps no other form of housing in America is as vilified, ridiculed and misunderstood as manufactured housing. The stereotypical perception of persons living in manufactured homes follows along similar lines.

In some cases, manufactured housing has earned its reputation, but rarely have its inhabitants. Prior to mandated construction requirements enforced by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, “mobile homes” were cheap and, as the term implies, mobile. Mobile home parks were often poorly designed and created an immediate eyesore for the community.

Today, even in its most basic form, manufactured housing is a far cry from its predecessors. In fact, when developed in a manner appropriate to the expectations of the community, manufactured housing has the potential to provide quality, affordable housing, to blend in and to enhance the surrounding area.

While it is very unlikely that many of the households living in manufactured housing have been able to live down to their allotted stereotype, many have sought manufactured housing because of its affordability. In the current housing market, a number of people are seeking to become homeowners but are unable to find a “stick built” home that is in quality condition, is affordable and meets their needs. Manufactured housing provides the pride of homeownership to these households.

In 2000, more than one in five new homes purchased in the United States was a manufactured home. While the National Association of Home Builders may not anticipate manufactured housing becoming the residence of choice for the majority of homeowners, it does acknowledge that by the year 2010 more residences will incorporate prefabricated, pre-assembled materials.



The MPC Planning Area has many examples of manufactured home developments, ranging from established higher-density parks within Bossier City to individual homes placed on rural one-acre lots, which some see as another contributor to sprawl and overextended public services.

Bossier is home to a variety of manufactured housing communities, mobile home parks (as will be discussed, there is a difference) and single-lot sites with manufactured units. In some cases, such as Southern Living, the homes are older, more basic, and in a declining condition. Windsor Place represents a new trend in manufactured housing developments in Bossier. It includes a higher quality of housing unit and improved site

standards but remains basic compared to the possibilities that can be created through innovative use of new development techniques.

Manufactured Housing Defined

The general public classifies nearly all factory built housing as “mobile homes.” In fact, a mobile home has not been constructed since 1976, when Congress passed the Federal Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards. However, of the factory built housing alternatives, manufactured housing remains the closest cousin to the earlier generation “mobile home.”

Manufactured housing. Manufactured housing is constructed entirely within the confines of a factory, removed from the elements. Such housing is constructed to the requirements of the “HUD Code” that was developed to ensure that homes transported across one or more states were held to a single, specific construction standard. In some cases, area building codes are more stringent than those required by the HUD Code. On the other hand, the HUD Code is more restrictive in some jurisdictions.

Once transported to a site, a manufactured home may be placed on a permanent slab or on a more temporary foundation. Generally speaking, the wheels and hitch are removed. In the case of a multi-section home, the portions of the home are attached at the site. Any structural additions to a manufactured home must meet local or state building requirements.

Modular housing. Unlike manufactured housing, modular housing is not required to meet the HUD Code. Rather, such homes are required to meet the construction requirements of the location or state in which the home will be placed. Like manufactured housing, the large majority of a modular home is constructed within a factory, although major additions can be made once the home has reached its location.

Panelized housing. Also commonly known as “sectional housing”, panelized housing is constructed at the factory as a series of units that

include windows, doors, wiring, plumbing, and other elements of the structure. Like modular housing, panelized housing is assembled on the site, but as a series of linked panels. Also similar to modular housing, the panelized home must be constructed to the local or state building codes within the state and location in which the home will be constructed on site.

Pre-cut housing. The final, factory built alternative involves “pre-cut” housing that is only partially prepared at the factory. After all materials are cut in accordance with a specific construction schedule, they are packaged and delivered in a kit with all other components of the house to the location of the home. Beyond this, the pre-cut home is assembled in much the same manner as any other “stick built” home, but with much more efficiency. When completed, the home must meet all requirements of the appropriate local or state building code.

The Affordable Stepchild

As mentioned previously, mobile homes have gained a historic reputation as “cheap” housing. From the construction standpoint, uniform national standards have created a home that, while not assembled on site, is well built and structurally competitive with many “stick built” homes. Yet, from the affordability standpoint, manufactured housing remains cost effective.

Table 9.3 - Cost and Size of New Manufactured Homes

Table 9.3 Cost and Size of New Manufactured Homes Compared to Conventional Homes		
New Manufactured Homes	1994	1999
All Homes		
Average Sales Price	\$32,900	\$43,600
Average Square Footage	1,335	1,480
Cost Per Square Foot	\$24.64	\$29.46
Single Section		
Average Sales Price	\$23,900	\$31,800
Average Square Footage	1,105	1,245
Cost Per Square Foot	\$21.63	\$25.54
Multi-section		
Average Sales Price	\$41,800	\$50,200
Average Square Footage	1,555	1,605
Cost Per Square Foot	\$26.88	\$31.28
New Conventional Homes		
Average Sales Price	\$154,100	\$195,800
Less Land Price	\$38,525	\$42,375
Price of Structure	\$115,575	\$153,425
Average Square Footage	2,115	2,230
Cost Per Square Foot	\$54.65	\$68.80

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census as compiled by the Manufactured Housing Institute

Compared to Conventional Homes

indicates the overall difference in the cost of purchasing an average manufactured home compared to its “stick built” counterpart. In 1999, the price of an average 1,480 square foot manufactured home was approximately \$43,600 while the price of an average 2,230 square foot “stick built” home was \$153,425 (without land cost). Cost per square foot of the manufactured home was \$29.46 against \$68.80 for the “stick built” unit.

Contrary to popular opinion, manufactured housing is not

constructed to a far reduced standard in order to maintain affordability. On the contrary, the cost savings is actually spread across a number of variables.

Factory built housing resembles an assembly line approach that permits efficient construction under mass production conditions and without the concern for weather or vandalism. As indicated by the Manufactured Housing Institute, manufactured housing is also more cost effective because construction workers are trained specialists that are not required to travel from one job site to the next or coordinate with other specialists, such as plumbers or electricians.

Finally, because of the mass production, assembly line approach, the factory is able to assemble more units. As a result, materials are purchased at a reduced rate.

Manufactured Housing for both Quality Infill and Remote Site Development

Countless ordinances across the country prohibit the use of manufactured housing in existing neighborhoods and subdivisions as a source of infill development. Many neighborhoods would rather be faced with dilapidated housing or a vacant lot than see a standard manufactured home brought in.

Standard manufactured housing is more than simply perceived as “different” from surrounding housing. It generally, unquestionably *looks* different. Combined with its less than stalwart reputation, the common manufactured home is rarely designed to blend in with the rest of the community. Materials are inconsistent with those used in stable neighborhoods. The roof pitch is usually smaller, the front facade is very general, the home is proportioned much differently, the frame is protected from view by a metal or plastic “skirt”, and exterior amenities are lacking such as a chimney, porch or garage. In short, it appears cheap, and few neighbors would be willing to accept that “impact” upon their property.

Slowly, manufactured housing organizations have come to recognize the emphasis on maintaining and enhancing local quality of life. As a result, manufactured housing has the opportunity to become much more attractive and, in most places, even blend in with the surroundings. As an example, the roof of a manufactured home can now be “hinged” to allow it to be raised or lowered to meet roof pitch requirements. Some manufactured homes can be designed

to permit vaulted ceilings and nine-foot high walls, as well as appropriate length and width. Some are now also designed to span two stories.

Efforts by the manufactured housing industry to improve the quality and appearance of its product appear to be gaining the appropriate result. A study conducted in 1997 by the East Carolina University Department of Planning determined through significant research that the existence of manufactured housing does not negatively impact surrounding property value.

Manufactured housing developed to its full design potential remains rare. Bossier has a significant number of manufactured homes, many of which are located in manufactured home “parks” or “communities”, but no example exists to indicate the full potential of manufactured housing. But that is certainly no indication that such standards cannot be implemented or that such a level of quality yet affordable housing is not attainable.



A newer development off East Texas Street in east Bossier City includes basic design enhancements, including individually fenced back yards that set it apart from more typical developments nearby.

Setting Design Standards for Manufactured Housing

To ensure that quality manufactured housing is developed in Bossier, particularly relative to infill development that requires continuity with surrounding homes, the community will likely need to create specific design standards. Such standards are common throughout the country and are a clear indication that manufactured

housing is acceptable assuming that it can meet specific aesthetic requirements.

Visual appearance requirements for manufactured housing may address:

- ◆ Installation upon a foundation that complies with state or local building codes;
- ◆ Length and location of the structure;
- ◆ Width of the structure (commonly at least 14-20 feet wide);
- ◆ Use of exterior materials that are consistent with surrounding residential structures, including color, texture and appearance;
- ◆ Roof construction with an acceptable pitch, overhang and materials (in some cases, the roof is required to be double pitched);
- ◆ Removal of transportation related items such as the wheels, axles and hitch;
- ◆ Landscaping that is consistent with the surrounding residential area; and,
- ◆ Construction of a garage, front porch or other feature that will add consistency with the surrounding area (and provide for enclosed storage of mowers, bicycles, etc.).

Building Better Communities

The MPC Planning Area includes a number of mobile home parks and manufactured home communities, in a variety of locations that range in quality from sound to declining. Development of new manufactured housing communities has received significant negative attention and pressure from area residents who feel that new manufactured housing will not maintain or enhance the quality of life in the area and will cause area services and value to deteriorate. The general attitude appears to be that manufactured housing communities are acceptable as long as they are not located in close proximity to established neighborhoods or where they will impose on existing services and facilities.

As with infill development, much of the reputation of manufactured housing communities has been earned through negative history and experiences. The large majority of sites for manufactured housing communities have been developed and operated under private ownership and

leased to the owners of manufactured housing. Because the land will be under private control, government has generally minimized regulation and oversight. As a result, most of the communities start out below the standards of conventional subdivision development. Some communities are also not well-maintained over the longer term, particularly among mobile home parks.

Like the individual manufactured home units within them, the quality of manufactured housing communities has steadily improved over time as demands and expectations of both residents and neighbors have increased. Still, a lack of strong standards places manufactured housing communities at a disadvantage and harms their reputation.

Resolving this issue is a dilemma for many communities. Requiring manufactured housing communities to meet the design standards of conventional subdivisions will increase the cost of housing. However, lack of strong but reasonable and consistent standards results in creation of substandard communities.

Manufactured housing communities require standards that are very similar to conventional subdivisions, including:

- ◆ Density, particularly if no minimum lot size is established;
- ◆ Lot size that is increasing over time to match similar requirements for conventional subdivisions;
- ◆ Lot width, frontage and depth;
- ◆ Setbacks and minimum yards;
- ◆ Lot coverage, as a means to prevent overcrowding of units within a community;
- ◆ Distance between units for fire safety reasons and limitation of density;
- ◆ Common open space and facilities, particularly with the understanding that residents of manufactured housing communities need the same level of services, if not higher, as residents of conventional subdivisions;
- ◆ Buffering and enhancement of boundaries and entrances, again in a manner similar to conventional subdivisions;

- ◆ Landscaping (including mature tree preservation, where appropriate);
- ◆ Streets and sidewalks that meet the standards of conventional subdivisions; and,
- ◆ Adequate parking spaces and location off of the internal circulation roads, equivalent to off-street parking requirements for conventional developments.

To allow for innovation in design, manufactured housing communities can be developed utilizing the same alternative design techniques offered to conventional subdivisions, such as cluster subdivisions and Planned Unit Development.

Neighborhood Planning

The MPC, in partnership with Bossier City and Bossier Parish, may consider establishing a neighborhood planning program to shape the way area neighborhoods will grow and change over the next 20 years. The neighborhood planning process should be community-driven, with the MPC, City and Parish providing support to neighborhoods that come together to craft a desired future for their area and create a plan to achieve it. The plans generated by the neighborhood groups, through assistance by municipal, Parish and metropolitan government, will help to guide support and service delivery to the neighborhoods. The benefits of a neighborhood planning program may include:

- ◆ Enhanced quality of life;
- ◆ Recognition as a desirable place to live;
- ◆ Creation of a livable and sustainable community;
- ◆ Development of an enhanced physical environment; and,
- ◆ Provision of a forum to inform and educate citizens on local development processes and other local issues.

The neighborhood planning program should have a clear objective to be accomplished before it is formally initiated. The basic concerns need to be clearly articulated so the success of the program can be based on the achievement or resolution of the stated concerns. Following a statement of objective, the neighborhood should acquire a thorough understanding of the character of its area by preparing an inventory of pertinent information. Completion of an inventory will allow the community to pinpoint more specifically what it wants to maintain or improve. The

inventory should include: (1) physical conditions, (2) visual and aesthetic conditions, (3) growth related factors, and (4) stakeholder input.

Physical Conditions

- ◆ *Existing land use* – The extent and variety of land uses are among the strongest determinants of neighborhood character. The inventory should document the type, scale, and density of development and also identify vacant or abandoned properties.
- ◆ *Historic or architectural resources* – Documentation of these resources identifies the heritage of the neighborhood, and these assets can enhance property values, increase neighborhood pride and enhance economic development.
- ◆ *Natural features* – These features will play a role in defining the potential growth constraints, patterns, and limits of the neighborhood. Natural features are often as important to the character of the neighborhood as is the built environment.
- ◆ *Special features* – Neighborhoods typically identify themselves by a special feature such as a landmark, park, or church, which contributes to its charm, uniqueness and neighborhood character.
- ◆ *Traffic characteristics* – The extent, type and flow of traffic through the neighborhood needs to be examined to address current traffic related problems.



Community organizations can help to maintain local pride and encourage beautification efforts, such as an award for this landscaped cul-de-sac in a south Bossier neighborhood.

- ◆ *Structural conditions* – Dilapidated buildings, streets, sidewalks and other physical deficiencies can significantly detract from the neighborhood’s overall image and should therefore be identified.

Visual and Aesthetic Considerations

- ◆ *Viewshed* – The “viewshed” of vistas that are visible from and within the neighborhood should be mapped and delineated so that the best approach to visually preserving or improving the neighborhood may be determined. Even in areas of limited topography, viewshed considerations should include communication towers, transmission lines, billboards, and conflicting land uses.
- ◆ *Entry images* – The images one sees upon arriving in the neighborhood are very important to the overall image of the neighborhood.
- ◆ *Special landscape features* – Street trees, open space, greenways, gardens or other landscaped areas are assets that add aesthetic charm to a neighborhood and are worthy of protection.

Growth Related Factors

- ◆ *Current policies and regulations* – The existing zoning adjacent to neighborhoods should be closely examined to determine the potential magnitude of future development. Also, the development standards should be evaluated and compared to the objectives of the neighborhood.
- ◆ *Sewer and water availability* – The availability of sewer and water infrastructure is a determinant of future growth regarding the capacity to support new development or redevelopment.
- ◆ *Apparent or potential growth pressures* – The development pressure around the neighborhood will have a significant impact on the character of the neighborhood. The primary concern is how to minimize the impact of expected or potential growth.

Stakeholder Input

- ◆ *Public meetings* – Information provided by residents and property owners is valuable in providing insight into the character of the neighborhood and a better understanding of the residents’ perspectives and

priorities. Public participation should include those who are directly involved with the neighborhood.

- ◆ *Individual interviews* – Personal interviews offer additional information that is often difficult to uncover through public meetings. Facts relating to neighborhood history, recent changes or trends and significant local issues are frequently identified through personal interviews.

Following completion of the inventory, the MPC, City or Parish, and neighborhood should analyze the outcome of the inventory and existing condition assessment and begin to prepare a neighborhood plan. The plan should formulate specific actions to protect the neighborhood’s essential features, respond to actual growth demands, and reflect the preferences of local residents. The plan may include:

- ◆ identification of physical improvements;
- ◆ redevelopment alternatives and strategies;
- ◆ beautification projects;
- ◆ economic development strategies;
- ◆ fundraising programs;
- ◆ neighborhood design standards;
- ◆ development/redevelopment guidelines; and,
- ◆ other citizen-initiated programs and improvements.

The plan may specifically address land use, zoning, lot area, lot width and depth requirements, building coverage and building height, buffer yard requirements, parking requirements and standards, sign regulations, open space preservation, landscaping, lighting, road pavement and details, vehicular circulation, speed limits, pedestrian circulation, design guidelines, building addition guidelines, architectural detail requirements, maintenance of structures and properties, and other applicable issues.

To enact the plan, a neighborhood organization should be organized as a citizen action committee. A neighborhood organization may accomplish the following:

- ◆ Conduct detailed inventories of existing conditions;

- ◆ Initiate beautification projects such as neighborhood entrances and vacant lots;
- ◆ Establish standards of neighborhood development through restrictive covenants;
- ◆ Provide local policing through neighborhood watch and other programs;
- ◆ Raise funds for local improvements such as neighborhood parks or centers;
- ◆ Establish a social network;
- ◆ Sponsor neighborhood events such as block parties, home tours, etc.;
- ◆ Provide self-enforcement of codes and restrictions;
- ◆ Distribute newsletters on items of neighborhood interest;
- ◆ Coordinate with the City and/or Parish on local improvement projects;
- ◆ Establish a volunteer network for neighborhood cleanup and beautification; and,
- ◆ Represent the neighborhood on local issues.

Preferably the neighborhood organization would be formed through creation of a neighborhood association, which adopts private deed restrictions for the defined neighborhood.

Neighborhood Implementation of Private Covenants

A restrictive covenant is an agreement between private individuals limiting the way in which property may be used. It is defined as follows:

The restrictive covenant is a device whereby certain uses of land can be outlawed for the benefit of the owners of land. Included in the deed whereby the land conveyed, such covenants bind the owner to refrain from the proscribed use. Where such covenants are a part of a general plan for the development of an area, exacted by a grantor who retains neighboring property, or mutually agreed upon by neighboring landowners, they run with the land.

Covenants are typically signed at the time of subdivision between a developer and the purchasers, although the residents of an established neighborhood may do the same.

Under accepted legal doctrine, a scheme of covenants creates reciprocal negative easements between all the property owners within the affected area, giving each of these the right to enforce the covenant, and conversely the duty to conform to its restrictions. A covenant is a private contractual agreement and may impose certain limitations on properties and property owners that are unenforceable by zoning or other city ordinances.

The provisions of the covenants usually state the permitted uses within the defined neighborhood, such as only single-family dwellings and accessory structures. Architectural control is quite common and the covenant may refer to an architectural committee responsible for reviewing and approving house plans. Limitations on the size and cost of the dwelling may be stipulated. Minimum side yards and setbacks may also be outlined. Minimum lot size and reservations for utility easements are also normally contained within the covenant. Other provisions may be included, and the number of limitations is at the discretion of the contracting parties, in this instance by the neighborhood.