

CHAPTER NINE

In developing this Comprehensive Plan, goals for land use in Mercer County and the City of Harrodsburg were established and recommendations made for their attainment. The recommendations are of little value, however, unless steps are taken to implement them. Planning is a continuous process, needing constant updating and refinement as conditions change. This plan is intended to cover a five to ten year period, while looking further ahead where possible. During the next five years the plan is intended to serve as a guide for public and private decisions, after which time a thorough re-evaluation should be made to determine its applicability for the next five years.

The existence of this plan, however, does not preclude a thorough examination of each recommended project or regulatory approach as it is developed to consider whether it continues to be in accordance with the planning program. Nor does the existence of the plan preclude changes to the goals, objectives, or standards in the document itself, through the public review process set out in KRS Chapter 100, where changed conditions warrant. A number of means are available to assist in the implementation of the plan.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP

The public officials of Mercer County and the City of Harrodsburg bear the primary responsibility for the implementation of this plan. It is important that the public officials understand, support, and adopt the development policies. In addition, it is important that public and private agencies form partnerships to implement the plan. As the decision makers, the Mercer County Fiscal Court and Harrodsburg City Council have the power that is necessary to adopt policies and fulfill the goals of the city. These bodies should maintain a close relationship with the Greater Harrodsburg-Mercer County Planning Commission so that the planning process is properly coordinated. Because of their statutory role in planning and development review, the Planning Commission and its staff possess special expertise as well as an overview of development issues and needs within the county and city. If properly utilized by local elected officials, the Planning Commission is very well positioned to act both as policy advisor and enforcer of local development policies. In addition, the public should be kept informed of community development plans to solicit input



and support for the program. As development policies are changed, it is recommended that public charrettes and workshops are held in order to obtain meaningful input into the planning process.

SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

The subdivision of land is the initial step in the process of building a community. Subdivision regulations are locally adopted regulations that serve to govern the conversion of raw land into building sites. The design and quality of the subdivisions determine the form and character of a community. Once land has been divided into blocks and lots, streets built, and utilities are installed, a development pattern is permanently established and unlikely to be changed. For generations the entire community and the individuals who live in the subdivision will be influenced by the quality and character of subdivision design. Therefore, subdivision regulations applied in advance of development provide a community with its only opportunity to ensure that its new neighborhoods are properly designed.

Subdivision regulations play a crucial role in establishing development standards for new development. Appropriate standards help assure effective traffic patterns, adequate streets, adequate water pressure for domestic use and fire fighting capacity, adequate provision for sewerage, storm water drainage, appropriate spacing between buildings and between streets and buildings, adequate recreational facilities, and an aesthetically pleasing environment.

It is recommended that the subdivision regulations be reviewed and updated as necessary after final adoption of the comprehensive plan. In addition, it is important that these regulations be uniformly and regularly enforced by the planning commission. Without enforcement, the regulations have no merit and begin to lose meaning as precedents of non-conformance are established. In addition to regular enforcement, it is also recommended that all subdivisions and sites be inspected regularly in order to ensure that improvements are being installed in accordance with the subdivision regulations and approved plans.

Specific areas that should be addressed in the Harrodsburg-Mercer County Subdivision Regulations are the implementation of better access management techniques, landscaping, tree planting, and performance standards to ensure that all new developments are aesthetically pleasing. Furthermore, the subdivision regulations

should be revised to address minimum standards for the creation of open space, greenway corridors, and the inclusion of bike and pedestrian ways in order to provide linkages with local parks, especially in areas shown on Exhibit III. In addition, the planning commission may want to consider implementing density bonuses (in the city and county zoning ordinances) for conservation/clustered subdivisions in order to make this type of development more attractive to developers.

ZONING

The zoning ordinance is considered to be one of the principal tools for implementing the land use plan. Zoning generally divides the community into exclusive use districts - agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial - specifying the particular uses that will be allowed in each district. Standards are then set for each district which regulate permitted uses, density of structures, lot sizes, percent coverage of lots by buildings, building setbacks and off-street parking. The theory behind separation of uses through zoning is that of protecting property values by preventing incompatible uses from locating next to one another. Zoning implements the land use plan because the use districts are based upon the land development policies established in Chapter 8 of the plan.

Alternate approaches to strict use separation are also available. Performance standards may be developed to regulate permissible impacts of each land use on neighboring uses and on community services. In theory this would allow any mix of land uses within an area as long as negative impacts on neighboring uses could be controlled. Some of the methods that could be required to control potentially negative impacts could include buffering along property boundaries, special sound proofing of structures and altering traffic patterns on site.

A combination of the above approaches is also possible. Such an approach could include a separation of uses into broad categories, such as residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural. Within these broad categories, standards could be provided to determine the appropriate type or density of development based on site factors (for example, soils, slope, and drainage characteristics), compatibility with neighboring uses, and availability of needed services (for example, road capacity, availability of central water or sewer, and school capacity).



Implementation

Upon final adoption of the comprehensive plan, the zoning regulations should be reviewed and updated as necessary to implement the comprehensive plan. Prior to the revision of the city and county ordinances, additional studies should be undertaken by the planning commission for the city's Renaissance Kentucky Area, historic districts, and U.S. 127 by-pass area so that modifications to the zoning ordinances reflect the stated goals for these programs and areas. In addition, the planning commission should consider the expansion of Historic Zoning and jurisdiction of the Harrodsburg Architectural Review Board to all National Register Historic Districts in the city in order to further protect these properties from demolition and inappropriate rehabilitation and infill development. The zoning ordinance should then be modified to create an overlay district along the U.S 68 corridor to Shakertown as a mechanism to preserve this historic resource with additional setbacks, landscaping, signage and design requirements. In addition to increasing lot sizes in the Agricultural Districts, it is recommended that both zoning ordinances be modified to create density bonuses for conservation/clustered subdivisions in order to encourage this type of residential development in rural areas. Requirements to provide linkages to recreational areas, bikeway and pedestrian paths in areas identified in Exhibit III should also be considered as a prerequisite for development and integrated into the ordinances and subdivision regulations. Finally, more specific landscaping and buffering requirements should be incorporated into both ordinances for existing districts.

SITE PLAN REVIEW

An important element of any zoning or development regulation ordinance is site plan review. While zoning specifies permitted uses of land, site plan review is the means by which the quality of new development is protected through evaluation of the proposed layout and design. It is also the means by which potentially negative impacts on neighboring uses are controlled. Where more intense uses abut less intense uses, for example a neighborhood shopping center next to a residential area, site plan review is the appropriate tool to evaluate potential noise and traffic impacts. The importance of a professional review of site plans should therefore not be underestimated. It is recommended that the Planning Commission review their current site plan review procedures to determine if additional coordination with other agencies is warranted. At this time, it is also recommended that the planning commission consider contracting with an engineering firm to review plats, improvement and site plans.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Codes are governmental requirements placed on private uses of land to protect the occupants from the hazards of living and working in unsound, unhealthy, or otherwise dangerous structures or conditions. Building, plumbing, electrical and fire codes provide minimum standards for the construction of both new buildings and alteration of existing structures. The housing code provides that existing dwellings must be maintained in a safe and sanitary manner. Structures that are considered unfit for human habitation may be condemned and removed. Other regulations, such as health department regulations, provide minimum standards for on site septic installations.

These codes apply to the community as a whole and are uniform in nature. In some cases the local government may establish its own standards, or the state may dictate a uniform or minimum set of standards for the commonwealth. In order for these codes to be useful an inspection system must be maintained with qualified inspectors enforcing the regulations in the code. Inspectors may be employed by the state to staff district offices or may be locally hired to enforce local codes. At the present time, code enforcement for new construction seems adequate. However, it is recommended that the planning commission review procedures and specifications for subdivision improvement inspection to insure uniform compliance with requirements. In addition, the fiscal court and city council may want to consider the adoption of a property maintenance code to address dilapidated structures and littered lots.

ROAD MANAGEMENT PLAN

The development of many of the recommended highway improvements in Mercer County is dependent primarily on the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, Department of Highways. However, much responsibility rests on the local units of government. Local agencies must work among themselves and with the Department of Highways to resolve differences with respect to location and features of particular road improvements. Local groups must actively support highway improvements in their areas. They must also be prepared, when required, to provide rights-of-way, for example. The planning commission has the responsibility of helping to maintain the traffic-carrying capacity of major streets and roads by developing good local land use planning practices, subdivision regulations, and zoning ordinances.



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Roads not maintained by the State Department of Highways are maintained by the fiscal court or the cities. The responsibility for making improvements to these roads also rests with local agencies. It is important that a systematic method of inventorying conditions on these roads and scheduling needed maintenance and improvements be established in the form of county and city road management plans. Scheduling should be based on established criteria, such as volume of traffic, severity of need, and the like. In addition, the plan should be integrated into a multi-year capital improvements program for the county and cities. At the present time, the City of Harrodsburg is in the process of developing a systematic road management plan. Once this is formulated, it is recommended that the city continue to conduct and maintain an inventory of all roads and their structural conditions and develop a specific long term maintenance and improvement plan. Finally, it is recommended that the Mercer County Fiscal Court also inventory existing roads and establish a long term maintenance and improvement plan for county maintained roadways.

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM AND CAPITAL BUDGET

The capital improvements budget is a method used by governmental units for scheduling the financing of a part of the public improvements program which can be realized during a definite period of time, normally five to six years, on a systematic basis. This budget contains detailed improvement proposals including cost estimates. It should also be carefully coordinated with the financial resources and debt service structures of the community.

The first year of a capital budget should be adopted by the governing body as a part of its annual budget. The capital budget should be reviewed annually and extended for one year with the first year being adopted as the current annual budget.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Community acceptance and cooperation is essential to the success of a comprehensive plan. The ideas and support of local civic clubs, neighborhoods groups and community clubs, private citizens, business and industrial leaders are needed to implement a successful community improvement project. A large part of achieving successful citizen participation is through a public education program designed to permit a two way flow of information between the citizens and the planning commission, county, and cities. Experience has shown that such a public information program provides a valuable sounding board from which valid suggestions and criticisms usually result.

As development policies, ordinances, regulations are revised it is recommended that various public workshops be held to obtain meaningful input into the planning process. In addition, it is recommended that the planning commission develop a website to facilitate public access to planning documents, applications, minutes, etc. Allowing the public access to forms and other documents also reduces the amount of time that planning staff spends answering general information questions. In addition, it is recommended that the planning commission consider participating in the Governor's Office of Technology (GOT) Kentucky Landscape Census Program as part of initiating a formal GIS mapping program for the county. This program, administered in conjunction with NASA, facilitates the satellite tracking of land cover and land use over time. Participating in this program would enable the planning commission to have access to property information on a site by site basis in order to determine site development feasibility and more accurately address storm water management issues which is of particular concern in karst areas. In addition, it would enable the planning commission to track changes in land cover and land use over time to better assess land use trends in Mercer County and the City of Har-



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rodsburg. The program also would assist the planning commission in providing e-government services to the general public as this information would be available via GOT's website.

LAND ACQUISITION

One means of implementing a comprehensive plan is the acquisition of rights in land. This may involve advance acquisition or options on land for use in the future, or acquisition of easements for use of certain features of land. Advance acquisition and options are presently most commonly used for industrial sites, but may also be used for future roads, school sites, and park lands. Easements are commonly used for utilities and roads, but can also be used to preserve scenic features, prevent use of floodways, and other purposes such as the development of interconnected bike and pedestrian ways.

STATE AND FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

State and federal grants and loans can be important sources of financing for public improvements projects, which can be difficult for a small town or county to undertake financially. A number of funding sources exist, although the trend is toward assembly of a financing package from multiple sources, including evidence of a substantial local commitment. It is important to be aware of possible funding sources and conditions of funding.

For these reasons, Harrodsburg should continually seek to maintain its Renaissance Kentucky status which will give the city priority funding in certain program areas such as CDBG, HOME, LIHTC, TE, ARC Downtown Planning Grants, and financial assistance from the Heritage Council. In addition, to continued participation in the Renaissance Kentucky Program, it is recommended that the city pursue funding to implement projects as recommended by the University of Kentucky *Legacy Plan* such as those for the redevelopment of Broadway/U.S. 127, Beaumont Center, and revitalization of the West Broadway Neighborhood.