

*This Comprehensive Plan is designed to serve as a blueprint to guide the individual and joint future planning decisions of Paducah and McCracken County. It is both purposeful in its direction and deliberate in its recommendations to forge a future that is well-planned, highly coordinated, and responsibly managed. Its focus is on the resolution of issues relating to the physical and economic development of the area, while establishing an overall vision and the policies to achieve it. The eye of this plan is fixed on implementation for, without it, the value of this mutual planning effort is lost.*

# Plan Context

## **1.1 OUR INTENT AND PURPOSE**

It is the intent of this plan to cast a vision for an economically healthy and physically sustainable future for Paducah and McCracken County. Together, we are undertaking this planning process in clear recognition of our mutual concerns and long-term interests, which overshadows our individual histories and agendas. We are committed, in light of our responsibility to the people of this City and County, to making joint decisions for the benefit of all. Our decisions must be well-studied, given suitable thought and consideration, and made in a fiscally responsible manner. We are prepared to establish policy, prepare realistic goals and objectives, and abide by the recommendations of this plan as a means to ensure its effective implementation.

The purpose of this planning effort is to address the question of how best to plan for the future of our community. While we have had and continue to experience great success, we are now confronted by a new era and a unique set of circumstances. These circumstances present both opportunity and a certain amount of uncertainty. Therefore, it was the foresight and preparedness of our leaders that led us to the decision to prepare a comprehensive plan. This plan will allow us to decide on a course of action that offers the greatest likelihood of continued success. As the City and County, we acknowledge that a shared vision of the preferred future is necessary to effectively guide us over the next two decades and beyond. This plan recognizes that cooperation and consensus-building among City and County jurisdictions, agencies, and stakeholders is essential to realize our envisioned future in the Year 2025.

The process of preparing this plan is designed to offer a unique opportunity for residents and leaders to come together and engage in a dialogue about the

### **CHOICES2025**

The theme of this plan is entitled **CHOICES2025** in recognition that we have a choice as to the methods and means by which our future will be determined. It is wholly in our hands as the City of Paducah and McCracken County to collectively seize our opportunities and act jointly according to the vision and recommendations of this plan. While some CHOICES may counter our ordinary views and challenge our leadership, they must, nonetheless, be made in the interest of achieving our broader vision. We must remain focused and be steadfast in guarding the principles and values that we, as a community, uphold as foundations of our identity and cherished way of life. Above all, we must be committed to implementing the plan and continuing to invest in our future.

“Community” is defined as a group of people living in general proximity of one another, people who have similarity and common interests. In this case, we use the term *community* to represent Paducah and McCracken County. We indeed share interests and a common goal of further enhancing our life styles and improving the livability of this place we call home.

future of our “community.” Again, our purpose is to create a vision for the future that reflects the hopes and aspirations of our residents and is based on a realistic understanding of the existing conditions and opportunities facing us. A clear mission of what we aspire to achieve is a first step to chart a path that addresses the complex set of issues facing this community in both the near and distant futures. Rather than simply reacting to events as they unfold, a shared vision will enable us to develop a proactive plan for approaching the ideal future imagined through this comprehensive planning process.

**1.2 IMPORTANCE OF THIS PLAN**

Developing the Paducah and McCracken County Comprehensive Plan (herein referred to as the plan) is a valuable undertaking because it means that City and County staff, elected and appointed officials, and citizens have agreed to collectively commit resources to reflect on, and ultimately plan for, the short- and long-term future of the community. Furthermore, it is significant because these individuals, who act on their own behalf or on the behalf of their respective organization, will form a constituency of the whole, meaning that these are the persons who will have a stake not only in the process but also, more importantly, in the outcomes of this process. It is these individuals who are the guardians of this plan and who will share in the responsibility to uphold its value and integrity.

The vision and mission statements contained within this plan describe the preferred and intended future of the City and County. In effect, these statements offer direction for the goals, objectives, and policies that provide an integrated framework for the future planning, development, and programmatic decisions over the 20-year horizon of this plan. Collectively, the vision and mission statements, together with the goals, objectives, and recommendations, provide the short-term and long-range strategic directions for Paducah and McCracken County. Joint planning allows for a coordinated approach to growth and development and, in turn, mutual gains and efficiencies.

The value of the plan is made clear by identifying what it accomplishes as an end product. In summary, the plan is intended to:

- ◆ Establish the policy directions for the future physical and economic development of the City and County, providing decision-making guidance to members of staff and the Fiscal Court, County Planning Commission, City Commission, and City Planning Commission;

- ◆ Identify both programmatic and capital improvement recommendations that will contribute to a phased, multi-year comprehensive program of work tasks for City and County departments and divisions;
- ◆ Identify and quantify needs and priorities, which may be used to guide annual budgeting and capital programming decisions;
- ◆ State the intentions of the City and County as to the coordination of ongoing and future development and the sequencing and timing of infrastructure investments, thereby managing the direction and pattern of development;
- ◆ Convey to citizens the type, pattern, and character of future development, thereby giving improved certainty as to the future adjacent and surrounding development and a means for mitigating its likely impacts;
- ◆ Coordinate infrastructure improvements with the sequencing of land development to ensure a fiscally responsible pattern of growth;
- ◆ Establish strategic directions to capitalize on the assets of the area and seek to maximize the economic potential of the City and County; and
- ◆ Provide a reliable source of information and a committed plan of action enabling our partners and other local, State, and Federal agencies to effectively plan for their provision of programs, services, and facilities.

*"The general plan is the official statement of a legislative body which sets forth its major policies concerning desirable future physical development; the published general plan document must include a single, unified general physical design for the community, and it must attempt to clarify the relationships between physical development policies and social and economic goals."*

- T.J. Kent, The Urban General Plan

### 1.3 VALUED CONSIDERATIONS

The decision to engage in a comprehensive planning process was done principally to exact control over the destiny of the area, rather than reacting to change. This plan is a deliberate stance taken to proactively manage future growth and development as opposed to responding to development proposals on a case-by-case basis without a balanced consideration of City and County issues and objectives. The Paducah Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 1988, although it has been readopted in compliance with State statutes. The McCracken County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1998, and its goals have also been readopted. It is now timely to prepare a joint Comprehensive Plan for the City and County.

As part of the plan development process, a series of stakeholder interviews was conducted to solicit the input of residents, which was invaluable toward understanding the underlying issues and needs of the area and, specifically, the values and priorities of those who know best – citizens, advisory board/commission members, neighborhood and civic organizations, community service organizations, business and industry leaders, major landowners and developers, and other leaders. There were several reasons identified by these persons as to why this plan is necessary, including to:

- ◆ better plan and coordinate the provision of services and improve their cost efficiency through mutual agreement and joint management and purchasing;
- ◆ streamline the development review and approval processes, expedite compliant applications, and reconcile the codes, standards, and technical criteria of the City and County;
- ◆ plan, well in advance of ensuing development, the timing of providing adequate facilities and services to serve development;
- ◆ empower residents to be involved in the decision-making process through their participation in crafting the vision and goals of this plan;
- ◆ capitalize on the value of the waterfront as a means for attracting visitors, new residents, and businesses;
- ◆ enhance the quality of development and improve the character and appearance of community entry ways, corridors, neighborhoods, and special districts, such as the mall area;
- ◆ seek redevelopment and compatible infill development within the “tired” areas of the community as a means to stabilize and increase the tax base, as well as enhance neighborhood integrity;
- ◆ provide suitable and affordable housing opportunities for all persons, including a variety of living options and homes in all price ranges;
- ◆ preserve sensitive lands and protect natural resources from irresponsible development practices;
- ◆ secure well-paying and stable employment for our residents, with opportunities for career development and advancement;
- ◆ efficiently transport people and goods via a good network of collector streets, arterial roads and highways, multi-modal terminals, and air services;
- ◆ preserve prime agricultural lands from premature, encroaching, incompatible development so as to sustain the surrounding rural character and protect this sector of our economy;
- ◆ make wise and fiscally-responsible decisions relating to the management of future development; and
- ◆ reach consensus on behalf of private and public interests as to the future vision of the City and County and the proactive steps necessary to achieve success.

**1.4 ABOUT THIS PROCESS**

The process required to develop this plan was as valuable to the City and County as is the plan itself, since this plan is only a snapshot in time. The planning process involves major decisions about how much and where

growth will occur, the nature of future growth, and whether we can afford to provide the necessary public services and facilities to support this growth. This led to pivotal discussions about what is "best" for the area and how everything from taxes to our livability will be affected.

This plan provides an opportunity for our elected and appointed officials to step back from the day-to-day issues and to clarify their ideas on the kind of community they are trying to create. The plan development process provides a chance to look broadly at programs for neighborhood revitalization and reinvestment; quality and affordable housing, economic development programs, directions, and incentives; provision and timing of adequate public infrastructure and services; open space, resource protection and environmental preservation; community character and appearance; and how these concerns relate to one another. This plan represents a "big picture" of the entire County, which can be related to the trends and interests of the broader region, as well as the State of Kentucky.

Local planning is often the most direct and efficient way to involve members of the public in describing the environment they desire as a place to live, work, and recreate. The process of plan preparation provides a rare opportunity for two-way communication between citizens and government officials as to their vision and the details of how it is to be achieved. This plan includes a series of goals, objectives, and actions that will guide the City and County Planning Commissions, the City Commission, and the Fiscal Court in administering development regulations; the location, financing, and sequencing of public improvements; and guidance for reinvestment and redevelopment efforts. This plan also provides a means of coordinating the actions of many different departments, divisions, and agencies.

## **1.5 PARTICIPATION IN PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

A public participation program was launched over the duration of the plan development process to garner valuable input and support of the citizenry. The program was specifically designed to include a range of participation approaches to allow broad and targeted input to ensure that the plan truly reflects the vision of the community, as well as the issues, concerns, interests, and insights of the County and the City.

The public participation program involved meetings with an Advisory Council, a County-wide Citizens' Congress, stakeholder interviews, presentations to groups and organizations, a variety of public outreach

activities, City Commission and Fiscal Court briefings, a “first-and-next-steps” implementation workshop, and public hearings. The following details each component of the involvement program.

Advisory Council

Key to the success of a truly participatory planning process was the establishment of an Advisory Council. The Council was made up of 24 members that represented different interests across the City and County, such as representatives of local business, tourism and economic development, downtown and the riverfront, property owners and developers, neighborhoods, and government officials. The role of the Advisory Council is to provide input into the development of the plan to ensure that it accurately reflects the values and priorities of Paducah and McCracken County. The vision, strengths, and weaknesses have had an initial discussion and will receive further work and prioritization. This input is valuable toward understanding the values and priorities of the citizenry and provides direction as to the emphasis of this plan. Each element of the plan was thoroughly reviewed by the Council, with specific input delivered to staff and the consultant regarding suggested additions, modifications, and changes. This collaborative and iterative process ensures that members of the Advisory Council – residents of Paducah and McCracken County – are involved and vested in planning for the future.

Citizens’ Congress

A County-wide Citizens’ Congress was held early in the planning process to engage citizens, business owners, and community leaders in dialogue about the community and its envisioned future. The objective of this public forum was to raise awareness about the development of the plan, identify its purpose, and explain the intentions as to how the plan will move toward adoption and eventual implementation. The primary objective, though, was to hear the public’s perception about what they consider to be the most significant issues and problems and to encourage identification of possible options and priorities for addressing them. The information obtained from the Citizens’ Congress was used to craft the vision and mission statements, which, in turn, led to the development of the plan’s goals, objectives, and recommended actions. Further to serving as a mechanism to raise awareness and gather information, the Citizens’ Congress is designed to build momentum and interest in the future of Paducah and McCracken County and, ultimately, to build a constituency of persons interested in partnering to ensure successful implementation of the adopted plan.

### Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews were conducted to solicit input regarding economic development, the riverfront, land use, and other areas of interest related to the plan. This input is invaluable toward understanding the underlying issues and needs of the area and, specifically, the values and priorities of citizens, neighborhood and civic organizations, community service organizations, business and industry leaders, major landowners and developers, and others living and working in Paducah and McCracken County. The input gained through these small group meetings is used to supplement that solicited through the Citizens' Congress and other public input mechanisms toward development of a vision statement that truly reflects the community and its preferences for the future.

### Public Outreach Activities

A series of public outreach activities also took place to raise awareness about the plan and to encourage participation in the planning process. The City hosted information about the plan on a project website, detailing the project schedule, opportunities for public participation, and each of the draft and final elements of the plan as they became available. Articles in the local newspaper and coverage by the local television station were also helpful to broadcast information about the planning process. These efforts ensured that citizens were given multiple opportunities to become informed and participate in the plan development process. Speaking opportunities, such as a presentation to the Chamber of Commerce, were also integral to the citizen engagement process. These events provided opportunities to share information about the plan and, ultimately, to set the stage for long-term participation in the plan's implementation.

### "First-and-Next-Steps" Implementation Workshop

An implementation workshop was held in the latter stage of the planning process to engage the Fiscal Court and City Commission in an exercise to identify short- and long-term priorities for implementation. The workshop was designed to identify how these priorities could be actualized by assigning roles, responsibilities, and timelines for implementation. The identified priorities are outlined in the implementation chapter.

### Public Hearings

The final stage of the planning process included public hearings before the Planning Commissions, which provided yet another opportunity for community input into the final draft plan document. Comments received were considered and incorporated into the final adopted plan.

### **Kentucky Revised Statutes**

*According to **KRS 100.183***

### **Comprehensive plan required.**

*"The planning commission of each unit shall prepare a comprehensive plan, which shall serve as a guide for public and private actions and decisions to assure the development of public and private property in the most appropriate relationships.*

*Furthermore, in accordance with*

### **KRS 100.187, Contents of**

### **Comprehensive Plan, the**

*comprehensive plan shall contain, as a minimum, the following elements: goals and*

*objectives, land use,*

*transportation, and community facilities, which may include any*

*additional elements such as,*

*without being limited to,*

*community renewal, housing,*

*flood control, pollution,*

*conservation, natural resources,*

*regional impact, historic*

*preservation, and other programs*

*which in the judgment of the*

*planning commission will further*

*serve the purposes of the*

*comprehensive plan."*

**1.6 WHAT WE ENVISION**

1.6.1 Our Vision

A vision statement identifies what a community strives to achieve in the future to meet the needs of its residents. It incorporates a shared understanding of the nature and purpose of the community and uses this understanding to move it toward a greater purpose.

The vision statement was developed through input from McCracken County and Paducah citizens. Input was obtained by way of the public participation program. The vision for McCracken County and Paducah is as follows:

The joint vision for Paducah and McCracken County has five major elements. These represent the collective vision for the future of the community.

- ◆ City and County have adhered to the Future Land Use Plan and followed the policies and principles set forth in the Plan. We have greatly enhanced the City’s riverfront, making it a destination for both City and County residents, as well as tourists. The appearance of the commercial areas, in particular, has been improved by better landscaping and strengthened sign regulations. Clustering is now the preferred mode of development in City and County, greatly enhancing the region as a place to live and work. This has had an impact on regional visitors who are now more likely to come downtown and visit the waterfront and other regional attractions, as well as for shopping. The rural areas of the County still have a strong, rural character.
- ◆ Paducah continues to develop plans for the revitalization of older neighborhoods. That has spired reinvestment by the private sector, restoring the attractive character these neighborhoods had in the past, and raised tax revenues that, in turn, increases tax revenues. Following the cluster and planned development options has created a variety of housing choices through innovative subdivision design. Our children and growing families are able to add on to their homes or construct new houses to meet their changing needs, and seniors have a variety of living options made easier by flexible regulations. For the first time, Paducah has residential neighborhoods that take advantage of the riverfront, which has added a new element to the housing market. Downtown is more vibrant, and residents and tourists alike find a variety of recreational, shopping, and cultural opportunities that enrich the quality of life.

- ◆ Transportation and access to the region have been greatly enhanced by interstate access, which has made Paducah a strong regional center. The rural farm-to-market roads are being improved, and better access is possible in the County. Sidewalks and an expanded trail system are greatly increasing the walkability of the community. An expanded port has provided new jobs for the area.
- ◆ Our infrastructure system was adequately sized to accommodate all our growth for the past 20 years. The growth strategy has succeeded in containing sprawl, and the City and County are only now starting the plan for limited extensions and a small expansion of the growth area. This has provided revenues that can be spent on amenities for the entire community. Rural communities that preserve farmland are now ensuring that, long into the future, the rural character of the surrounding area will be maintained, providing adequate facilities and services for new development. The extension of infrastructure has been timed and sequenced to ensure that we grow in a fiscally responsible manner, thereby leading, rather than following, development. Increased private investment, new jobs, and improved east-west access strengthens air service and increases ridership and numbers of flights.
- ◆ Economically, the effort has been to encourage existing businesses to expand and new small businesses to establish themselves. The stronger economy has provided plentiful employment opportunities so that many children are returning to the community and working in good jobs. The arts and tourism have continued to expand and flourish, making the City and County more competitive in seeking to attract new employers.

### 1.6.2 Our Mission

A mission statement is a more detailed statement of the vision. It states the role, or purpose, by which the community intends to serve its residents. The mission statement describes what the community does, who it serves, and what makes it unique. The mission statement for McCracken County and Paducah is as follows:

The City of Paducah and McCracken County will improve regulations controlling landscaping and signs and improve the zoning to better promote quality of life and a unique identity. Both will continue to invest in infrastructure, including long-term adequate provision of public facilities and services. Sprawl will be contained, making the investments more effective. The integrity of neighborhoods will be sustained through replacement of aging infrastructure, rehabilitation of “tired” structures, and empowerment of residents. There will be investment in historic neighborhoods, downtown,

and the riverfront. With new industries and business, plus expanded tourism, the community will maintain and strengthen its role as a regional center and improve its tax base. The City and County will increase investment in a first-class park and recreation system.

**1.7 FOCUS OF THIS PLAN**

**1.7.1 Discovery and Reconnaissance**

The first step in the planning process was to conduct a discovery and reconnaissance phase, which was intended to bring the most significant issues and concerns of the City and County – individually and collectively – into clear focus. This provides a basis for necessary refinement and revision of the plan’s scope and content, thereby ensuring that the most important issues are identified and thoroughly addressed, with adequate attention and direction to resolve them. Too often, the causes that are at the heart of the issues are not sufficiently discovered and, hence, not adequately dealt with in the plan. Unfortunately, such occurrence handicaps the ultimate implementation and success of the plan.

The discovery and reconnaissance phase of the process solicited the concerns of public officials and residents to gather relevant input and assemble an in-depth understanding of the key – and often underlying – issues. The result of this effort sharpened the focus of this plan, allowing attention to be directed toward the aspects that will most significantly affect the outcomes of the plan. While principal attention will be focused on the resolution of these issues, there are other issues that are also important and necessitate attention. These, too, will be addressed with guidance and recommendations, albeit not as comprehensively as those considered to be the primary issues.

**1.7.2 Issue Focus**

While meeting the requirements of KRS 100, the plan focuses on resolution of the key issues, providing more thorough research and recommendations in these areas, with less emphasis on the areas that have already been addressed or are not as relevant to this community and its plan. The primary issues are as follows:

**1**

Community Character and Land Use

*Protecting and Enhancing Community Character*

Paducah developed as an urban commercial community focused on the river. It was shaped by its location and the industries spawned as a result of its location. As the City grew, residential areas took on a suburban character of

Land Use

tree shaded streets and yards, which nested the home in greenery. In the 20th century, a new form of commercial use developed with a much different character, described best as auto-urban, where roads and parking occupy far more land than the building and there is little landscaping. Agriculture was traditionally a dominant land use in McCracken County, which established its rural character. Residential and increasingly more commercial development is spreading into the County. While the McCracken County zoning has a district entitled agriculture, it permits one-acre residential lots which encourages the loss of agricultural land. All the modern office and industrial uses have an auto-urban character. If land use planning is to be successful, it must be redirected to address community character first, then the use of land.

Land use is conventionally distinguished with general categories for residential, commercial, and industrial, which fails to address character. The most important element in commercial and residential development is to determine the character it is to have, whether it is urban, auto-urban, suburban, estate, or rural in nature. The juxtaposition of auto-urban and suburban character commonly creates land use conflicts. Therefore, this plan must address and help to resolve these issues.

The older residential areas of the City are highly attractive as a result of their large mature trees. This character, whether urban or suburban in nature, should be maintained. Many of the more recent subdivisions have fully cleared the land, contributing to a much different neighborhood character. Paducah's downtown area has an urban character that ends abruptly along the edges up and down river. This quality, urban center is the focus of tourism, a major industry in the City and County. How is the visitor greeted, be they tourist or a business seeking a new location? The entries to the City do not presently alert the visitor to the character of the City center or the community's residential neighborhoods. Instead of announcing a community of unique qualities, the entries lack character and identity. There are different approaches to land use that will form a character that may better express the unique image that the City promotes for tourism. The same holds true for the attraction of new businesses and industry. While nice industrial parks are important, the initial appearance of the City needs to set it apart from its competitors.

The basic planning needs of the City and County is to map out a long-term vision of the region's future. It must accommodate the most optimistic growth projections, while ensuring a quality lifestyle and encouraging people to visit and work in the area.

Infill and Redevelopment

The City has had great success in redevelopment with the artist relocation program in lower town and is planning to expand its redevelopment efforts into other neighborhoods. In a community with a modest overall growth rate, redevelopment and infill are essential. Each neighborhood will need to have its own redevelopment strategy; the artist relocation program cannot be expanded indefinitely. A critical issue is to maintain a program of upgrading existing neighborhoods and making them desirable places to live. It is important that people feel they can move up to better housing in the City, rather than escaping to greenfield development on the rural fringes. The comprehensive plan must identify target neighborhoods (Uppertown, Fountain Avenue, Northside, Rolandtown) and establish priorities. An economic reality is that not all areas can be redeveloped simultaneously. There may need to be individual neighborhood plans developed with specific public improvements and programs arranged with the residents, financial institutions, and government agencies to ensure that a viable strategy is developed to address the unique conditions in each neighborhood.

A second infill and redevelopment issue is the downtown area. Ultimately, there needs to be a much larger population within walking distance to foster continued economic health and promote improved business activity in this area. The plan for this will have to be developed to take advantage of the river without blocking access and remaining sensitive to the surrounding areas.

*Waterfront*

This area is predominantly a working environment. This was the economic engine that created Paducah and is an essential element in determining the area's future. The industrial waterfront remains vital; tourism - a significant portion of the area's economy - needs assistance from the waterfront. There is logic to the working waterfront being separated from the public waterfront where City residents and tourists come to enjoy the water. At the same time, the major question is how to relate tourism to the working waterfront, enhancing the tourist experience without hindering the waterfront businesses. While there are many good things happening with regard to the waterfront, there is too little exposure to the water and too limiting of an experience.

The public waterfront needs to be expanded. Currently, there is insufficient land to do much more than view the area, then return to the City. For area residents, opening up the waterfront for recreation is an important objective.

The opportunity for expansion is primarily down river as the land immediately up river from downtown is heavily used by water-related industries.

The current hotel and conference center are isolated from the rest of downtown and represent a significant barrier to waterfront access. The hotel is also unable to successfully compete for tourists due to its deteriorated condition and need for refurbishment, which will hopefully be accomplished by the new management. The City faces competition from Metropolis, Illinois, so quality is very important. The planned investment in the waterfront and hotel must be directed at making Paducah a far better choice with water taxi to the casino, while retaining the clear lead in experiencing the waterfront, downtown shopping, and cultural and heritage experiences. The timing of the waterfront plan and this plan did not match, but when completed this plan should be amended to include it.

Normal planning strategy is to envision a grand plan and work towards a goal. In this approach, a grand vision is considered essential to success. However, such visions have the highest costs and can be subject to perpetual debate, as illustrated by the number of previous riverfront studies. A different strategy operates on two separate tacks. First, a short-term strategy seeks a series of incremental improvements to enhance the experience at minimal cost and risk, while building the economy to finance a grander vision. In this approach, the funding of a docking and fueling area that enhances boating access and tourism is a good first step. The short-term planning should look for a series of small improvements that can be implemented quickly without creating roadblocks for future implementation.

The need to provide real public water access (a marina, fueling, and tour boat docking) is understood. Additional historic tourism opportunities warrant greater attention. Are there small tow boats that could become an attraction tied to the museum? Across the river in Illinois there is a fort; what about replicas of oar-powered riverboats before the age of steam? Can the training center have a tourist element? These are simply thoughts that have occurred up to this early point in the process, requiring further research and consideration of a wide range of other opportunities that could be added to the riverfront.

A potential that has not been exploited is whether it is possible to make the working waterfront a part of the tourist attractions of the City and blend this with historic aspects of the river. Can partnerships be developed between

existing, one-dimensional water-oriented businesses and the tourism industry?

Transportation **2**

Transportation Thoroughfare Planning

The City's transportation network is good, with excellent access to the interstate via a variety of radial roads. The interstate also serves to move circumferential traffic on the city's outer edge, but there is no similar road further out in the County. Many of the McCracken County roads are narrow and often have poor alignment, as shown in **Figure 1.1, Difficult Vertical Alignment**. While this has a certain charm, it represents a significant safety and long-term capacity problem as the area continues to develop. As rural roads with little traffic, these alignment problems pose less of a problem because traffic volumes are very low. To bridge the difference, a thoroughfare plan is needed to identify, in advance, the roads that will function as arterials or collectors, rather than as local roads. When this is done, it becomes possible to have proper right-of-way dedications and require improvements from large developments to upgrade these roads to handle larger volumes of traffic.

There needs to be an assessment of the long-term capacity of the rural roads. The residents of rural areas are use to level of service (LOS) A or B. Suburban residents seek no worse than LOS C. The narrow roads with obstructions on both sides and poor alignments mean limited capacities to handle growth. It also means that frequent driveways are both dangerous and a disruption in the flow of traffic. Once the capacity assessment is done, it must be determined whether this represents a desirable limiting factor or whether there needs to be a plan for improvements to radial roads.

Roadway cross sections are a problem; they are often too narrow to provide for a road and drainage, a problem that is worse when a stream parallels the road as shown in **Figure 1.2, Deep Ditch At Road Edge**. There is no room for sidewalks or bicycle lanes. Where the road is a radial road that provides access into the City, controlling access by limiting curb cuts to streets, not

Figure 1.1, Difficult Vertical Alignment



Figure 1.2, Deep Ditch at Road Edge



**Level of Service (LOS)** is a qualitative rating of the effectiveness of a roadway in serving traffic, in terms of operating conditions such as traffic flow, using an alphabetical scale from A to F with A being the best (free flow) and F being the worst (stopped traffic).

private drives, is a problem. A thoughtful plan is an appropriate vehicle to resolve these issues and guide road improvements.

The current plans call for an outer loop; the interstate serves as an inner loop. The need for generally east-west travel south of the interstate is valid. Land use and transportation are intimately linked. A circumferential road improvement will result in economic pressures to alter land use. To avoid the problems that other communities have faced from new circumferential roads a combination of access controls, zoning, and subdivision regulations will be needed to forstall undesirable commercial sprawl.

Other transportation problems identified are a lack of sidewalks and discontinuous sidewalks. This is a problem in both the City and County. It is most critical in the County; however, a combination of trails, road improvement, and sidewalks that provide a network for pedestrians and bicyclists is needed.

### Community Appearance

#### *Development Quality*

As indicated above, a significant portion of the community’s appearance has to do with planning for community character. If people desire a particular character and it is not delivered via ordinances and standards, there is an innate dissatisfaction. However, character only addresses an aspect of appearance. In any character type, it is possible to have good or poor appearance. The auto-urban areas of the City and County are most susceptible to a low-quality appearance. Currently, these areas are visually confusing and chaotic due to a past lack of sign control, landscaping, and corporate architecture that makes no pretense to providing an image of harmony. This is in contrast to the City’s urban area and some residential areas where efforts to create a visually pleasing environment are quite obvious – and successful.

A lack of vegetation, in particular, is a significant detraction to the appearance of areas and corridors, as displayed in **Figure 1.3, Auto-Urban (Strip) Commercial**. This view could be from almost any city in the nation, which does not express the uniqueness of Paducah or the impression desired. In contrast, the street view in front of Bob Noble Park that is shown in **Figure 1.4, Trees at the Road Edge**, illustrates the

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Community Appearance

Figure 1.3, Auto-urban (Strip) Commercial



Figure 1.4, Trees at the Road Edge



impact of preserving the tree canopy. If canopy trees along the road can be preserved or restored, it would result in a very different visual character. Surveys of community preferences consistently show a preference for tree-sheltered streets in both commercial and residential areas.

Sign control is another area where community appearance could be improved. As Figure 1.3 illustrates, the number of signs clutters the visual environment. There is a wide range of sign heights, sizes and placements, leading to confusion; fewer signs in predictable locations would be better.

Along Route 60 East, riverfront industrial areas dominate, and there is a generally poor visual environment. Given the nature of the industries, there seems little reason to seek better architecture. Therefore, the use of camouflage with extensive street tree planting is a means to provide a pleasing corridor in a largely developed area.

Older areas of the City pose an appearance challenge. This is particularly relevant along the older commercial corridors where the buildings are not well adapted for modern commercial uses or where there is limited parking, thereby constraining reuse. In these areas, the problem is two-fold: finding appropriate users and upgrading the appearance through maintenance and rehabilitation. The City has made great strides in historical areas; however, as with any older area, this effort needs to continue.

Figure 1.5, Vegetated Neighborhoods



*Residential Development and Trees*

One of the most attractive aspects of Paducah's residential areas is the tree-lined streets and yards, as displayed in **Figure 1.5, Vegetated Neighborhoods**. Even in neighborhoods with modest 1950s housing, the neighborhood appearance is very desirable, due in large part to the attractiveness of the tree-shaded area. In new developments, street trees and landscaping are not required. The neighborhoods that lack trees are much less attractive than those where this amenity is present. While it takes time for trees to mature to the point of providing an improved character, the attractiveness of new development can be greatly improved.

### *Conflicting Uses*

In McCracken County, commercial uses are sprawling outward along the major highways, causing unsightly appearances and lessening the attractiveness of the pleasant rural setting. Additional development should not be permitted unless it is designed to greatly improve the visual character of these areas and serve a market requiring this location.

Buildings should respect their neighbors. Before zoning in the rural parts of the County, inappropriate juxtapositions of uses occurred that degraded the overall appearance of the area, in addition to being a potential nuisance. Even in zoned areas, the uses along zoning boundaries can create unappealing areas. Buffers of landscaping are an important means of mitigating such conflicts between incompatible uses.

### Growth Management

The issue in growth management is to provide land for reasonable business growth and population expansion, while maintaining the health of current commercial areas and the attractiveness of the City and County. Adopting a plan does little without effective growth management mechanisms – such as zoning or other controls – that direct growth to occur in desired areas. Development served by sewers needs to be concentrated in areas where the extension of services and improvement of roads can be afforded.

County roads have a limited capacity due to a number of factors, which will eventually limit the ability of the road to handle traffic. Major radial roads in the County may appear to be local access rural roads today because of the low traffic volumes; however, as growth continues, those roads must become arterials. Controlling access early, **Figure 1.6, Access to County Roads**, makes it easier to improve roads later and can avoid the residents on arterials demanding stop signs and speed bumps when traffic volumes exceed that needed for a pleasant residential street. There will need to be areas for large-lot residential served by septic and well, but there also needs to be areas for retaining the agricultural base so that planned extension of services to these low-density areas can be done. Permitting this development to go anywhere simply means that most will either not get service or road improvements or the improvements will

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Growth Management

Figure 1.6, Access to County Roads



lag for years or even decades. McCracken County still can take action before it encounters the problems of other growing rural counties where resources are grossly inadequate to meet the needs.

The tools to manage growth have been used for decades. They are often controversial due to a fear of their potential limitations. Commonly, there is fear that growth controls will lower property values when, in fact, experience indicates this is not a valid concern.

The City and County face competition from Metropolis. In this competition, the allocation of resources is vital. Resources for government are scarce, and it will be important to focus on the focusing actions that enhance the character and competitiveness of the City and County. Having to use resources to respond to sprawling growth is counter productive. It is essential that the County determine where it can best serve the growth, rather than have to react to scattered development.

Competition is particularly relevant with respect to tourism, where the casino in Metropolis has the potential to shift the balance that is now in favor of Paducah. It is important that adequate resources be available to develop the waterfront and improve the City’s hotel/convention center complex and waterfront. Continued investment in the cultural, historic, and educational assets is, likewise, important.

A major growth management issue relates back to the infill issue discussed earlier. With limited growth, the revitalization of existing areas that are in decline is very important. Cities all across the nation face revitalization of older neighborhoods. Failure to address this has led to the decline of some cities, and such declines ultimately impact the counties of which they are a part.

Economic  
Development

**5**

Economic Development

For Paducah and McCracken County, the first decade of the 21st century is emerging as a time of great transition and opportunity as the community chooses the investments it will make to secure its economic health. As in Paducah, investing in life style amenities and encouraging diversity has become a centerpiece of economic development initiatives in communities throughout the U.S., in part because its place-making tenets appeal to people with a wide array of motivations. At the same time, however, the region also recognizes that it’s critical to tend to its traditional economic base.

Right now the regional system supporting economic development – public, private, and not-for-profit sectors with explicit community betterment agendas of all kinds – is engaging in a multi-pronged effort encompassing:

- ◆ An aggressive approach to economic development activities including business recruitment, which represents a significant commitment to ensuring ongoing replenishment of the region’s manufacturing employment base, even as the products become increasingly high-tech. Among other duties, the Greater Paducah Economic Development Commission (GPEDC) is charged with securing occupants for the region’s inventory of prepared industrial park sites, as shown in **Figure 1.7, Local Industry**. GPEDC is very clear about its mission, focusing exclusively on basic sector industrial, office, and distribution operations, while leaving retail, hotel, and tourism recruitment activities to other organizations. GPEDC represents a significant annual investment by both the City of Paducah and McCracken County; the recent decision to increase the payroll tax to help fund economic development demonstrates how seriously local leaders consider this priority.
- ◆ Renewed respect for historic fabric and the community character inherent in early commercial and residential built environment, as evidenced by the ongoing revitalization of downtown Paducah and the Lowertown neighborhood, the levee wall mural program, and other improvements. From an economic development standpoint, reinforcing character works as a means to:
  - generate economic activity through tourism;
  - increase its attractiveness for place-based investment decisions, and;
  - comport with the theories first advanced by Richard Florida, a Carnegie Mellon professor, whose popular book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, postulates that quality of life – as defined by young, creative entrepreneurs, rather than middle class families – represents a more efficient growth engine for a vibrant economy than traditional economic development measures. The logic holds that creative workers who launch innovative fast-growing companies seek communities providing cultural offerings, recreational amenities, architectural character, and other interesting people as evidenced by the rise of places like Austin and Seattle during the boom years of the 1990s.



Figure 1.7, Local Industry

- ◆ Expanding the role the river plays as an economic development driver, finding ways to capitalize on its recreational, scenic, and tourism value, while protecting the existing river industries’ abilities to do business.
- ◆ Higher education resources with a commitment to continuous improvement, including the community college (with its affiliated Challenger Center leadership facility) and the Murray State branch. These institutions are successfully adapting their educational offerings to support the region’s economic engines, e.g. by establishing the Center for Arts, Tourism, Culinary, and Hospitality (CATCH) and the U-KY sponsored engineering program. The ability for people to earn college credit, while increasing their skills in historic preservation (brick repointing, window restoration, etc.), improves the City’s ability to restore its older neighborhoods. The American Justice School of Law (recruited by the economic development team) represents another regional educational asset for economic development.
- ◆ A tourism promotion strategy that seeks to balance leisure and business-motivated visitation.
- ◆ Formal and informal means of coordinating the elements of the economic development system, including cross-fertilization between boards and shared facilities.

With such a broad array of activities, assets, and needs, philosophical and practical issues inevitably arise. Moreover, in an intimate community like greater Paducah, where everyone knows each other, it can be difficult to confront issues directly since usually the people involved are good-hearted and well-intentioned. Chief among the economic development issues faced by Paducah and McCracken County today are:

- ◆ **Under-employment** – how to ensure that the region’s youth find opportunities within the local economy.
- ◆ **Large projects straining the system** – how to stabilize the Four Rivers Center and enable it to operate on a break-even basis and how to resolve the host of issues surrounding the convention center and its hotel and then re-establish Paducah as a meeting, trade show, and convention destination.
- ◆ **Protection for the assets required for economic development** – how to ensure that the public understands the need to avoid land use conflicts, including the sites needed by the barge companies for their container operations, the existing industrial parks where adjacent lands would also be attractive for subdivisions, and the means of providing a full-service marina for transient recreational boaters.

- ◆ **Heroic expectations leading to community misunderstandings** – how to manage assumptions about economic development must be tempered with realism. The community should not seek a quick fix through a “drop in” (i.e. a very large rare industrial opportunity, car plants, and chip plants) that will solve the region’s problems rapidly. Most such local efforts fail. In addition, speedy successes, like the Lowertown initiative, as shown in **Figure 1.8, Lowertown Success**, cannot automatically be replicated throughout the region with the same results.
- ◆ **Identification of shared vision for the future** – how to reach community consensus on the type of economy it wants and needs to ensure prosperity and quality of life, so that key choices can be implemented. With so many activities in place, it’s easy to spread resources too thin and leave any individual initiative vulnerable to sniping.
- ◆ **Improved regional economic development relationships** – how to foster understanding that if regional economic forces affect business success and location selection and if the benefits of local economic development accrue regionally, then it makes sense to pursue these activities on a multi-jurisdictional basis that reflects how the economy actually functions.
- ◆ **Increased use of the airport** – how to attract additional commercial flights, work with COMAIR, NAW and other operators, and finance a new terminal.
- ◆ **Expanded role for the river in downtown life** – as shown in **Figure 1.9, Riverfront Opportunities**, how to animate both the water and land sides to increase community enjoyment, appeal, and vitality.
- ◆ **Stabilized not-for-profit attractions** – how to determine whether institutions could be made stronger through strategic mergers.
- ◆ **Offset tourism seasonality** – how to extend shoulder seasons and ease visitor flow for lodging accommodations and other tourism-dependent businesses.
- ◆ **Augment capacity of boards and commissions** – with so many boards and commissions, how to



ensure continued quality.

- ◆ **Established system for examining potential economic and fiscal impacts of decisions, policies, and results** – how to know whether a decision represents a wise use of resources.

For greater Paducah, failure to fully mobilize and leverage its many valuable natural, cultural, economic, institutional, human, and other resources for local and regional economic development purposes based on shared view about what constitutes a desirable future represents the greatest risk to future stability and quality of life. Integrating community, economic, and tourism development planning provides the mutual reinforcement needed to ensure effective strategy implementation.

Implementation

**6**

Implementation

Implementation requires intergovernmental cooperation. Paducah and McCracken County may be separate jurisdictions, but their success is closely linked. The City needs the County’s cooperation to ensure an overall plan and its implementation. The County’s economic health is tied to that of the City. The progress made in recent years has increased the ability of both to compete. However, the competition from Metropolis cannot be ignored. The City and County must work together to make themselves a more desired tourist destination. Attention to appearance will strengthen the ability to compete for new businesses and industry, as well as tourists.

One area that must be addressed is regulation. The City has a history of being a strong regulator, and the County, to date, has been reluctant to regulate. A lack of regulation has resulted in sprawl, which, as growth continues, will accelerate. Lack of regulation will not improve the appearance of the area, but, rather, will result in less appealing conditions.

The adoption of a joint plan is a positive first step in intergovernmental cooperation. Since regulations are needed to achieve many of the goals, the next logical step is a common land development code, so the regulations are identical everywhere. Another level of cooperation can be achieved by having independent authorities, such as the sewer authority, adopt the joint plan and follow it in the provision of services.

The City and County can look at ways to provide all the area’s citizens with services at the least possible cost by merging their services, revising service areas, and sharing resources. Another strategy is to make decisions on who provides specific services that benefit the entire community.

Natural Resources and Agriculture

The issues of natural resources and agriculture are important. A significant part of the area is within the floodplain. Paducah is situated in the floodplain, and marine industries must continue in such locations. Drainage and stormwater are critical issues because development can make flooding worse if not properly managed. Water quality is also an important related issue. The rest of the undeveloped land in McCracken County is currently in agriculture and forest, with scattered wetlands. Careful management of these resources is desired and essential to meet federal water quality efforts at controlling non-point pollution.

The development pattern can respect resources or endanger them. Sound planning should be such that development does not worsen flooding in built-up areas and avoids creation of new areas of flood damage. This is best done by a combination of prohibiting development in floodplains, protecting drainage courses, stormwater management, and sensitive design. Regulations are needed to accomplish these objectives. While individual ordinances address some issues, a more comprehensive approach to resource management is desirable.

Agriculture is still a viable use of the land. It is a difficult resource to address because the sale of land for development is far more lucrative than a sale for farming. Banks willingly loan on the development values of land, a practice that works against agriculture. Increased value for development prices land out of agriculture. Agriculture, while important as a land use and component of growth management, no longer plays a critical role in the area's economy providing only 1.1 percent of the County's employment is in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations. Further, only a handful of the farmers in the County can make a living in these pursuits. The supply of agricultural land, however, far exceeds the demand for development land over the next 50 years. Failure to address agriculture and forested lands permits scattered development and increases the cost of government.

The protection of natural resources or agriculture is complicated because there are two conflicting views of the land held by residents. Everybody can agree that protecting resources is important and makes the area a better place, in some cases reduces threats to health and safety, and provides needed habitat. The other view of the land is that it is a commodity to be bought and sold, with sale for the highest dollar value an objective. In protecting

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Natural Resources and Agriculture

**Natural Resources**

Paducah and McCracken County have topography and environmental elements that are very important. They impact land use, community character, and appearance. In addition, flood control and drainage are important problems, which are directly related to the area's environment. Earthquakes are another environmental area of concern that has potentially large impacts. Good agricultural soils are a resource that is essential to agriculture.

While agriculture can be addressed as a land use or an incidental to growth management, there are many resources that are interrelated in complex environmental relationships. They are really a separate issue and should have a chapter devoted to them, rather than being a minor sub-category in another chapter that is integrated into a comprehensive plan element.

resources, these two views clash. Finding an implementation scheme that best protects the land, while recognizing property rights, will be important.

**1.7.3 Consultant Commentary**

The elements of the Paducah and McCracken County Comprehensive Plan include: land use, transportation, community appearance, growth issues, economic development, and implementation. While each of these areas is needed, it is important to understand the issues are of critical importance. The plan cannot simply be a group of chapters; the chapters need to be part of an integrated whole that can be implemented. Implementation is critical; there are hundreds of well-conceived plans that are gathering dust because they cannot be implemented. While there are many reasons for this, one stands above all the others – significant disagreement about implementation that was not adequately addressed by the plan. These issues either are repeatedly addressed, are not resolved, or are simply not faced, resulting in a failure to implement. Resolving issues that lie in the critical path of implementation is essential, and identification of these issues is the major purpose of this document.

Breaking a plan into chapters often results in the failure to develop a coordinated plan. There is not always nice order to parts of the plan that ensure coordination. Further, there are traditional elements of plans that fail to focus attention on critical issues. As used here, critical issues are ones that are on the critical path to implement the plan, where failure to address the issue either results in no implementation or, because there are diverse values in the community, results in the issue being debated many times over. For example, promoting infill development is very often a goal in plans, but failure of citizens to understand what this means results in opposition at every application for infill zoning or plan approval. The opposition often succeeds in stopping the project or lowering the density and, thus, fails to achieve the infill and reduction in sprawl goals of the plan. On the other hand, while there may be concern about curbs or sidewalks, any policy, or even periodic debate, does not create problems that derail major segments of the plan.

General Plan Organization

The plan is being organized, as required by the Kentucky Statues, into chapters on land use, transportation, community appearance, growth issues, economic development, and implementation. In meetings with citizens and officials, some areas of concern became apparent which reflect on the

structure and organization of the plan. The following discussions address some of these concerns.

Land Use and Community Appearance - Land use and community appearance are often considered to be two separate issues when, in fact, they need to be integrated. Individual land uses may be attractive or unattractive, as shown in **Figure 1.10, Standard Design**, and **Figure 1.11, Custom Design**. In Figure 1.10, the standard corporate fast food restaurant is shown, which is what will be used unless the community enacts design controls. Figure 1.11 shows a custom design used in a community that required higher quality and was sensitive to its appearance. These two illustrations show how community appearance is controlled by design. There is a great difference in the appearance of these two fast food restaurants. Since land use is identical, it is clear that design – not land use – is the important factor. The architecture of the buildings, signs, and colors are treated differently. There is another way to think about community appearance, referred to as community character.

**Figure 1.12, Auto-Urban Shopping Center**, and **Figure 1.13, Suburban Shopping Center**, show two shopping centers, both of which have about the same building design. Again, land use is a constant; however, Figure 1.13 illustrates what is known as Auto-Urban character. It uses nearly 100 percent of the site for the building and parking, with little and often no room for landscaping in the parking lot.

Figure 1.10, Standard Design



Figure 1.11, Custom Design



Figure 1.12, Auto-Urban Shopping Center



Figure 1.13, Suburban Shopping Center



The shopping center in Figure 1.13, Suburban Shopping Center, despite the nearly identical building design, has a Suburban character. The difference is the intensity is much lower since nearly 50 percent of the site was required to remain landscaped. The trees were preserved in this area, resulting in a very different character. There are three different community characters that can be achieved with this same use: urban, auto-urban, and suburban. Downtown Paducah, for instance, functions as a shopping center with an Urban Character. Here the buildings are built to the sidewalk line and most buildings are at least two or more stories in height.

These examples of land use being held constant while community character is varied provide a new way of looking at a community plan based on character. The land use map, which provides a backbone for most plans, is a poor surrogate for the character of a community. In contested zoning changes, the neighbors are always concerned about the character of the community being changed by the use. An important decision is whether to plan based on traditional land use categories or on community character.

Figures 1.10 and 1.11 illustrate how sign control, architectural design or style, and other design elements impact the quality of the buildings or the use's appearance. This is very different from community character, although high quality design will always

produce a better community character than poor design. Design is a matter of quality, not land use or type of character.

Inter-governmental Coordination and Implementation - Intergovernmental coordination is clearly a critical element of implementation. However, it is so important it should be segregated from other implementation issues. The coordination between City and County is a critical issue. A major failing all across the nation is the fact that cities and counties are often inadvertently or, in some cases, intentionally frustrating the plans of the other. Having committed to a joint planning process, it is critical that the plan address

implementation first from the coordination of two separate political jurisdictions and secondly from the general actions, such as regulations or fiscal planning.

**NOTE:** It is recommended that the land use chapter be reconsidered as a chapter on community character and land use. This will ensure that the plan map, which is often a critical element of the plan, really addresses character.