

WASHINGTON COUNTY

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Plan for Land Use and Development

2006

THE COUNTY PLAN FOR LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The Washington County Quorum Court hereby adopts a County Plan to:

- Provide a basis for making decisions concerning the future growth and development in the unincorporated areas under its jurisdiction; (at this time the Quorum Court has expressed its preferences to zoning portions of the county within certain distances from incorporated city limits and thus, all the goals identified herein may not apply)
- To coordinate and give direction to public and private development;
- To protect the agricultural and rural residential flavor of the county and the environment.
- To balance community interests and goals with individual property rights.

The quorum court recognizes the need to encourage a logical and orderly development of the lands within the county's jurisdiction.

The county plan is a long-term policy and planning tool to be used as a guide to the future development of the area, and as such, it provides a consistent framework within which individuals and public officials can make their own development decisions, knowing that they are all working toward common, compatible goals. The plan sets forth how the physical environment should be developed for the health, safety, convenience, prosperity and welfare of the people of the county. It is the intent of the plan to provide for each of the respective components necessary for land use and development controls

The plan will consider incorporated communities' development plans, jurisdictional areas and regulations, and plan and act accordingly.

It is for these purposes that the county plan has been developed and adopted.

SECTION II. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS

In an effort to attain the type of development desired by county leaders and citizens alike, the following matters should be considered.

1. Retain the agricultural nature and rural residential character of the county through proper development regulations; while at the same time recognizing the need for industrial land uses, principally where adequate utilities, roads, and other infrastructure exists or will exist. This will allow the industrial and commercial uses and rural residential lands that choose to locate in the county, as well as help to insure that incompatibility with agricultural, residential, and other uses is minimized.
2. Commercial development, though necessary, must be weighed according to its impact on agricultural and residential area.
3. The protection and preservation of agricultural lands through the proper use of regulatory mechanisms is critical to retain the rural nature of the county.
4. Ensure protection of the county's natural environment, floodplains, watersheds, and natural resources and features.
5. Adequate Roads and other intrastate should be considered in the development process.
6. Ensure that all county plans are consistent to the extent possible with state plans and other related regional, county, and municipal plans in order to avoid inconvenience and economic waste, and to assure a coordinated and harmonious development of the county, region, and state.

SECTION III. PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

A. LAND USE CONSIDERATIONS

1. RESIDENTIAL

Several goals surfaced as paramount in the PARA Task Force meetings and in a meeting held by the Quorum Court. These include:

- a. Provision of a safe living environment that offers quiet, privacy, and a rural flavor and atmosphere;
- b. Provision of quality residential development of good design, developed in a manner accessible by an adequate street system to avoid costly infrastructure extensions;
- c. Protection of residential areas from incompatible adjacent land uses;
- d. Protection of property values; and
- e. Provision of safe and adequate access to residential areas, installed in a manner to accommodate emergency and other services.

To achieve these objectives, it is essential to:

- a. To provide for development of residential areas at appropriate densities.
- b. Update, administer and enforce subdivision regulations; and develop, adopt, and enforce zoning and related regulations and codes;
- c. Require development to be connected to utilities and utilize zoning as a means to guide the progression of development;
- d. Protect the character and integrity, and property values, of single-family, residential areas;
- e. Protect residential neighborhoods from inappropriate non-residential influences through the use of regulatory controls;
- f. Ensure land use and development patterns which provide for the most efficient and effective use of available utilities and services, including fire protection; and,
- g. Maintain an adequate county road plan and standards to guide and accommodate traffic movement; to develop differing categories of roads; and to protect rights-of-ways for planned, future roads.

2. LIGHT COMMERCIAL

Continuing with the primary goal of retaining the rural characteristics of Washington County, light commercial uses should be allowed if:

- a. Not incompatible with adjacent residential and agricultural uses; or by conditions placed on such to mitigate its impact. Together with community facilities and compatible residential uses, this use typically serves as a buffer between general commercial and strictly residential uses.

3. GENERAL COMMERCIAL

Again, the goal of retaining the rural aspects of the county should remain a priority. Other goals to be met in general commercial land use one:

- a. Provision of accessible, convenient and attractive commercial locations, while avoiding or minimizing commercial development where inadequate or substandard infrastructure exists;
- b. Location of general commercial development at the intersection of major roads for convenient access, and to discourage strip commercial development;
- c. Identification of areas within the county for future general commercial development;
- d. Encouragement of attractive, safe and sanitary commercial development with adequate fire protection, utilities, and access;
- e. Discouraging the indiscriminate mixing of commercial development into residential and agricultural areas; and,
- f. Provision of safe, adequate, and regulated access to commercial areas.

In order to realize these goals, the county should take the following actions:

- a. Adopt zoning regulations, and update subdivision regulations to guide commercial development;
- b. Encourage planned, integrated commercial areas by discouraging spot commercial development in residential neighborhoods and agricultural areas, and the stringing out of commercial development along roads;
- c. Adopt a future land use map, which identifies potential commercial locations;

- d. Adopt codes to insure safe and sanitary development;
- e. Through zoning, restrict the location of new general commercial development to commercial nodes and/or with certain conditions;
- f. Restrict non-commercial, incompatible uses from locating in areas designated for general commercial uses;
- g. Assure traffic safety by guaranteeing sufficient off-street parking, off-street loading facilities, and well-located ingress and egress points;
- h. Provide adequate physical screening, and open areas to serve as a buffer between the commercial uses and abutting residential areas or agricultural areas; and,
- i. Encourage attractiveness by designing areas to integrate with residential areas.

4. INDUSTRIAL

The chief goals for industrial development are:

- a. Provision of sites which are located adjacent to major thoroughfares or other adequate transportation facilities;
- b. Allocate land in sufficient quantity, where infrastructure exists, or will exist, so that industrial growth can be accommodated to benefit both industry, and the county. This will ensure that industrial land is protected from encroachment by non-industrial uses; and,
- c. Provide for ample utilities and services to support industrial development.

These goals can be achieved through the following operations:

- a. Adopt development regulations and standards to provide for quality development;
- b. Identify suitable land for reservation of future industrial growth;
- c. Provide adequate services, utilities and accessibility;
- d. Insulate industrial sites from other activities by location or buffers; and,
- e. Require provision of ample off-street parking and loading space.

5. AGRICULTURE

Protecting agricultural lands and uses, as valuable resources, is critical to Washington County's economy and character, and is of the utmost importance. As a crucial element in retaining the agricultural character and rural nature of the county, it is doubly important to protect, and in some cases, preserve agricultural lands.

This objective should be met by the identification of agricultural areas to be protected, and the adoption and enforcement of regulatory mechanisms to minimize and avoid the effect of incompatible adjoining uses.

B. CIRCULATION

To establish an effective manner of circulation of people and goods throughout the community, and to provide access to all parcels of land, an efficient well-balanced system of roads is required. The various roads and the quantity and type of traffic they handle have a substantial impact on the adjoining and surrounding property.

The following are traffic policy goals and the actions that may be necessary to achieve them:

1. Logical development of the county requires:
 - a. Protection of public assembly areas and recreational areas from through traffic;
 - b. Providing adequate access to commercial areas of the county by way of routes avoiding residential and agricultural areas.
2. Safe and efficient movement of people and goods requires:
 - a. Provision of pedestrian walkways and sidewalks within higher density residential areas, and along major streets where required for public safety;
 - b. That an assortment of roads be provided, specifically designed to serve the variety of particular traffic needs in the area;
 - c. That each thoroughfare, and the parking associated therewith, be designed with adequate capacity to accommodate anticipated traffic; and,
 - d. That thoroughfares be planned so that commercial traffic is, to the extent possible, kept off residential roads.

It should be located and designed to serve, but not disrupt, existing and future work and living areas, and shopping/leisure areas. In return, land use areas, densities, and activity centers should be located in anticipation of transportation service requirements.

Since the various roads and the traffic they handle have a great impact upon the adjacent and surrounding property, it is recommended that roads should be classified into the federal/state Functional Classification System, and designed in accordance with the functions they perform in the overall road network.

C. FIRE PROTECTION

The public fire protection system must afford maximum security from fire loss while minimizing costs of service and fire insurance costs.

The county can realize this goal by:

- a. Locating fire stations on adequate sites and directly adjacent to major streets for the utmost accessibility to development within its service area, and the least amount of friction to adjacent land uses;
- b. Avoid duplication of fire station service areas to lower county fire protection costs;
- c. Working directly and cooperatively with all area fire departments that serve the unincorporated areas.

D. UTILITY POLICIES

1. WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS

The primary goals for the water distribution system policies include:

- a. The County does not own nor operate a water system assuring sufficient quantity of high quality water for the domestic needs of county residents.
- b. Have available capacity to provide for fire protection purposes.

To realize these goals, the following actions should take place:

- a. Developers should be responsible for the construction of water system improvements required to provide the level of service determined by the respective water systems.
- b. Provide sufficient capacity in each development for providing adequate fire protection, as well as meeting future area needs.

2. SEWAGE COLLECTION AND TREATMENT SYSTEMS

Washington County does not currently have a sanitary sewage collection and treatment system. As such, individual on-site systems or decentralized sewer systems are necessary. With regard to such systems, goals are to:

- a. Insure a healthy and attractive environment for the county residents by making every effort to ensure that on-site wastewater systems and decentralized sewer systems are adequately regulated.
- b. Assure that malfunctioning systems that are observed by, or brought to the attention of county officials, are immediately referred to the Health Department and/or ADEQ for prompt action and repair.
- c. Discourage through all means possible the placement of septic systems and decentralized sewer systems in designated floodplain areas.

The county has established and implemental policies to assure adequate operation, upkeep and care of decentralized sewer systems. Through regulatory measures, every effort should be made to assure the most effective method of wastewater treatment is provided in all developments.

SECTION IV. ANALYTIC INFORMATION

Current demographic statistics for the County:

WASHINGTON COUNTY	TOTAL POPULATION	UNINCORPORATED AREA
1990	113,409	31,794
2000	157,715	38,082
2005	180,357*	40,082

* U. S. Census Bureau Estimate

SECTION V. CONCLUSION

The county plan and policies are intended to convey county government's determination as to how unincorporated areas should be developed and appear at some reasonable future date. In Washington County's case, these policies put forth goals for land use such as protection of agricultural lands, retention of the rural character of the county, and encouragement of growth patterns that will protect the county's natural environment, open spaces, and water resources.

To achieve these goals, county government must be able to plan the future use of land to see that the plan is carried out. In reality, such a plan must inevitably restrict, provide for, and guide development where it is appropriate. Land use regulations may perform these functions. They provide development guides and standards, establish certain restraints and constraints on development, and offer inducements to encourage better design and land use.

Zoning can provide considerable enforcement of the county plan. It is the most common and most powerful land use regulation employed by local governments and the only one that can resolve the complaints made by the citizenry. Zoning acts as a guide for development when it designates specific areas for specific uses. For example, it may allow for all various types and densities of residential usage in appropriate locations within the county. It can also encourage commercial and other development to occur at a time and place that county government deems suitable. In addition, zoning may be used as a means to preserve desirable characteristics of the county, prevent the encroachment of undesirable and incompatible land uses that adversely affect property values, and protect agricultural, as well as environmentally sensitive areas of the county.

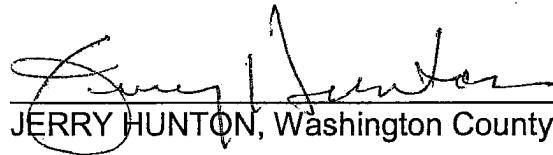
Subdivision regulations establish the legal and substantial process of controlling the division and development of property, and set forth design standards relating to suitability of land, public access, conformance to plans, streets and easements, utilities, drainage, sediment and erosion control, and so forth. These regulations may also be employed by county government as a means to achieve county plan goals. Coordination with cities that exercise planning and subdivision authority in their territorial jurisdiction is imperative. Pursuant to law, the county has a review and comment role and responsibility in these areas, with subdivision approval authority resting with the respective city exercising such subdivision authority with certain exceptions as provided by law.

While zoning and subdivision regulations give county government the power to regulate land use, it should also be open to the use of new growth management and land use development tools.

The county plan, then, is a forward-looking document, with the power of zoning and subdivision regulations behind it. In addition to these implementation tools, the plan has the power of human resources behind it, whether they are in the form of the

planning board, elected officials, or the general citizenry. These parties should consult and use the plan frequently and diligently. It should be updated routinely to reflect changes in the attitudes of those it is intended to serve.

By effective use of the county plan, and its implementing tools, Washington County can encourage and effectuate logical and orderly development of land in unincorporated areas within its jurisdiction. Furthermore, the county can continue to strive for and maintain the high quality of life its rural citizens currently enjoy.



JERRY HUNTON, Washington County Judge

Adopted by the Quorum Court on November 9, 2006.