

"Batesville...It's Our Hometown...Make It Yours"

Source:Hail Bryant

Batesville, Arkansas Comprehensive Plan

PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY

This document presents the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Batesville, Arkansas. The Comprehensive Plan serves as an official policy statement of the city, outlining its goals and strategies for directing orderly growth and development within its Planning Area. The plan serves as an instrument that blends public and private interests to benefit the entire community.

The Planning Commission directed the preparation of the plan after careful study of the area. The planning process included public meetings, and the comments and ideas generated by the public are represented in this plan.

The purpose of the Land Use Plan is consistent with Arkansas Codes, Annotated (ACA) §14-56-403.

HISTORY

Batesville is the second oldest city in the state. Permanent settlers began moving to the area around 1810, forming posts on Poke Bayou where it flows into the White River. In 1820 the Poke Bayou Post Office opened, but the name was changed to Batesville Post Office in 1824. This post office is the oldest one in the state with continuous service. The name Batesville comes from Judge James Woodson Bates, the first territorial delegate to Congress.

The town of Batesville boomed when steamboats began traveling to the city in 1831. In 1872 a group of Presbyterians founded Arkansas College, now Lyon College, in Batesville. Lyon College is the state's oldest continuing private college.

Batesville received another big boost after the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern Railroad reached the city in 1883.

Today Independence County maintains its rich history and prosperity, and Batesville flourishes as a center of light industry, poultry processing, banking, and health care.

REGIONAL SETTING

Batesville is located in the northeastern portion of Arkansas and is the county seat of Independence County. The planning area is about 45 miles north of Searcy, 80 miles west of Jonesboro, 90 miles northeast of Little Rock, and 135 miles northwest of Memphis.

Batesville is well-connected to the rest of the state with U.S. and state highways, including four- and five-lane access via U.S. Highway 167 that runs through the center of the city. The city's regional airport, with its runway in excess of 6,000 feet, provides opportunities few comparable cities can offer. The city is also served by the Union Pacific Railroad.

Batesville's location amid the foothills of the Ozark Mountains places it in and near many outdoor recreational opportunities, including fishing, hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, canoeing, and hunting. Area fans also enjoy dirt-track racing at the Batesville Speedway. Batesville also hosts the Ozark Foothills FilmFest each year as well as the Scottish Festival at Lyon College. In addition, the Course at Eagle Mountain, one of the golf courses on the Natural State Golf Trail, is located in the city.

Batesville is a regional center for recreation and area citizens enjoy five municipal parks with a golf course, horse arena, two swimming pools, two tennis courts, basketball courts, and baseball, softball, and soccer fields.

Lyon College and the University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville (UACCB) are located in the city and serve as regional centers of higher education. Moreover, Batesville is a regional trade center serving 50,000 persons.

TRENDS

The Census estimates the population of Batesville reached 9,577 people in 2006. Batesville has grown steadily over the past 15 years.

In 2000, manufacturing and educational, health, and social services industries employed a majority of Batesville workers. The city is a regional employment center with a daytime population increase of 74.6 percent generated by the daily commuting of 7,050 people.

Batesville leads in educational attainment and incomes. In 2000, 77.6 percent of Batesville residents had graduated high school and 21.8 percent had received a bachelor's degree or higher. These percentages are higher than the county and state averages. In 2000, the median family income in Batesville was also higher than the county and state averages at \$42,634.

ISSUES

The issues discussed herein grew from a number of sources. For the main part, they reflect the work of two city-wide design meetings. At these meetings, local citizens gathered to work around tables with maps and drawing equipment to "plan" their community. From this effort, the professional planners gathered understanding of community issues and ideas with which to address them.



Charrette participants plan the future of their community.

Infrastructure

The greatest need in any city is the requirement to fix the basics. Without proper infrastructure, quality living conditions, overall safety, and other basic needs, the long-term success of other improvement projects will be limited. In Batesville, improving the wastewater system represents the absolute top priority. The current treatment system is out of compliance and, until this is remedied, few other plan elements can be effectively addressed.

Flood Control

Adequate flood protection is also critical in a city such as Batesville. While the location of the city on the White River creates a number of recreational possibilities, it also limits the amount of land suitable for residential, commercial, and

industrial land. Property owners with land located in flood-prone areas should understand its development limitations. While not suitable for most purposes, it may be suited for limited recreational uses.

Experiences with flooding in the early summer of 2008 reminded residents and public officials of the need to restrict development in the flood plain and abide by the prohibition against building in the flood way.

Downtown

Downtown Batesville is an important asset to the city for its history, charm, and the center of governmental activities. It will never serve again as the dominant retail center of the city and must reframe itself in a different form, such as a regional entertainment center.

There are not enough homes within walking distance to support major retail businesses, and therefore downtown businesses face the problem of dependence upon automobiles. This, in turn, creates problems with parking, a concern downtowns were not designed to handle.

Some of the older buildings around the edge of downtown are deteriorated and don't add to the overall image. These could be redeveloped as parking and as uses that would support and enhance the downtown experience.

Trails

Cities in America were largely given over to the automobiles in the last half of the 20th century. This resulted in communities that are not particularly friendly or accommodating to pedestrian or bicycle traffic. This, in turn, has contributed to the overall increase in obesity and other diseases connected with lack of physical activity.

Participants in the design charrettes consistently emphasized the need for sidewalk and trail systems to counter these problems. Future transportation planning should include considerations for pedestrian and bicycling systems.

Recreation

Recreational facilities can greatly influence a community's quality of life and its ability to attract new jobs, tourists, and modern retirees. Batesville residents believe the existing recreational system could be reorganized and expanded.

For example, residents want a centralized sports complex. This complex coupled with smaller neighborhood parks, playgrounds, and trails will help build a comprehensive, functional system.

The Poke Bayou and riverfront areas also possess untapped potential as recreational attractions. Citizens recommend developing these areas with parks, trails, boat rentals, small lakes, retail shops, and entertainment venues to better utilize this resource. Citizens also recommend using flood-prone areas for water impoundments to create fishing and recreational lakes.

Housing

Housing is a vital part of a community, and a variety of housing helps promote a healthy city. Residents of Batesville want to preserve its historic character while also building for the future.

Higher densities, loft apartments, zero lot line housing, and other types of housing benefit the community by providing so-called “workforce housing” or housing for working families that are just entering the market. The city needs to provide for all residents, giving special consideration to the housing needs of special groups such as retirees, students, rural residents, and low- to medium-income residents.

Beautification

Without proper planning and regulating, many cities lose the appeal they once had. Citizens want to beautify the city’s entry ways and major corridors with landscaping and distinct welcoming signage. Entry ways are important because they are a visitor’s first impression of the city and help define the city’s identity. U.S. Highway 167 and the entrance to Lyon College are important gateways in the city. Preservation of trees and open space are also important to a city with the existing charm of Batesville.

Streets

Citizens of Batesville believe the city should extend some streets and construct alternative routes in certain sections of the city. They particularly cited east-west connectors and improved access to the medical complex. Ideas for alleviating traffic included widening streets, adding lanes, or constructing alternative routes such as the long-proposed eastern bypass.

Industrial Development

Industry is an important component of Batesville’s economy. Many citizens want the city to focus on improving and expanding existing industries before attempting to attract new ones. Others support plans to attract smaller, cottage-size industries, biomass production industries, or aviation-related industries. In promoting industrial development, the city will support programs at UACCB and Lyon College that train students to work in Batesville’s industries.



FutureFuel Chemical Company of Batesville

Growth

In the next couple of decades Batesville will most likely grow in population and area. The city will have to plan for the demands of growth in order to continue to prosper. This will include hiring new staff, upgrading city utilities and streets, and expanding city services. Members of the community feel that the city needs a new fire station, new sports park, a community center, additional city inspectors, and other services. The city needs to be proactive in promoting expanded broadband services.

Future prosperity will also rely on the continued success of



U of A Community College

Not only is growth in numbers important, but growth in quality is just as necessary.

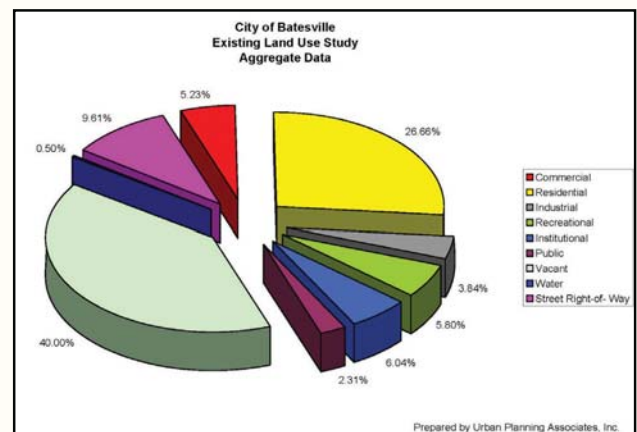
The city will work to better educate its citizens and encourage young adults to return to the community after college. The city will support cultural programs such as the community orchestra, community theater, art gallery, the Ozark Foothills FilmFest, and Old Independence Regional Museum.



Lyon College

Land Use and Vacant Land

The following chart shows the existing land uses within the city. About 40 percent of the land within the city is vacant, much of it due to topography and floodplain. There are still areas to be developed. Infill development in these areas will maximize the use of municipal utilities and services already in place. Vacant land that is not suitable for development can be used as parkland, open space, or a nature reserve. Some in the community recommend that the city needs more industrial land.



OUR PLAN

The following summarizes the approach for dealing with the issues facing our community. The approach was developed by the planning commission with a great deal of assistance from the following.

- Individuals participating in public meetings and charrettes during the planning process.
- City staff.
- Other city commissions.
- Other entities dealing with specific aspects of Batesville's growth and development.

The ideas presented will remain fluid and flexible so as to meet future challenges swiftly. They are intended to drive policy and not to regulate.

Infrastructure

All participants in the planning process agree that correction of the wastewater system must remain the top priority of the city until it is resolved. The estimated costs of the most basic solution to the wastewater problems ranged from \$32 million to \$45 million, a cost well beyond the current finances of the city. Funding will require multiple sources and the understanding of area residents that doing nothing is not an option.

Resources

Since cities in Arkansas derive the majority of operating income from the Local Option Sales Tax, considerations of

retail trade are important. The accompanying figure provides an estimate of the city's retail trade area.

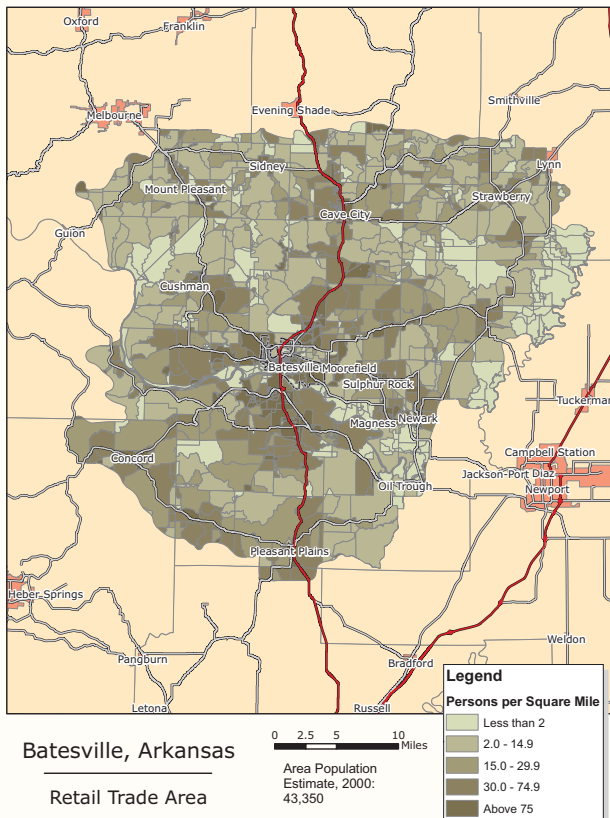
Batesville derives a great deal of its financial resources from households outside the city limits. In return, the city must obligate itself to provide basic traffic, water, and wastewater services to allow the movement of people, goods and services within the planning area.

Housing

In order to promote a healthy, diversified housing stock, the city will revise its zoning codes to allow for higher densities, zero lot line housing, loft apartments, and other varied and affordable options for working families, the elderly, students, low-to-moderate income residents, and people just entering the housing market.



Batesville enjoys a rich historical tradition in housing.



Flood Control

Batesville has experienced the devastation caused by the flooding of the White River and realizes the potential for future damage. The city now has updated floodplain delineations from FEMA and will increase efforts to control development in flood-prone areas. No building can occur within designated floodways.

Major construction outside floodways but within the floodplain will be discouraged and controlled. Ideally, this land will be designated for open-space, recreation, and light construction that could withstand periodic flooding.

Downtown

In order to revitalize Downtown Batesville, the city will strategically reframe its approach to the area. The city will support the collaboration and diversification of downtown businesses so that people are drawn to the area throughout the day and evening. The city will aim to create functional trails and linkages to downtown to increase pedestrian traffic and reduce vehicular traffic. The city will also support higher densities around downtown and the construction of additional housing in and around downtown. The city will restudy its zoning codes to reflect this strategy. The city will also promote public owned/leased parking facilities in the downtown area to facilitate the transformation.

Trails

The city will develop a comprehensive trail system that includes sidewalks, bike trails, and bike lanes. They will link schools, major attractions, and community facilities. Pedestrian access will help support the growth and redevelopment of other key elements of this plan, such as the downtown and the riverfront areas. The City will target trails in areas recommended by the community and city staff throughout the planning process and during its implementation.



Proposed trail along Pioneer Drive

Recreation

The city will create a comprehensive parks system plan that builds on existing assets in the community. The city's strategy will be to combine all sports facilities into a centralized complex and disperse smaller parks, playgrounds, and greenspaces in neighborhoods around the city.

When developing future parks, the city will consider the recommendations expressed by the community during the planning process, including the need for a park on the west side of town, the creation of a community/recreation center, and other recommendations.

The city will also work to enhance the Poke Bayou and riverfront areas with parks, trails, boat rentals, entertainment venues, and other beneficial developments. Flood-prone areas will be recommended for lake impoundments.

One of the top needs identified by the public during the planning process was to consolidate youth sports activities in a unified location. This will remove the burden upon parents who have children in different activities at the same time.

Planners identified three possible locations for a unified sports complex. One exists in the floodplain of the White River, another lies in the area along Miller Creek, and the third would involve expansion of the present sports complex in the north portion of the planning area. A fourth location was removed from consideration because its proposed location was in the floodway of the White River.

The general locations of the proposed alternates are shown on the plan map on the opposite page.

Transportation

The proposed transportation system appears as part of the comprehensive plan map on the opposite side of this brochure. It recognizes the potential for an eastern bypass as shown on the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department's 2006 Capacity Needs Map. This bypass would provide a beneficial impact on future industrial growth east of the city. The transportation plan also recognizes the need to improve street-connectivity within the city to allow better fire and police protection.

The plan calls for additional streets serving the schools and the medical complex. One will connect the Eagle Mountain community with the school facilities on Pioneer Drive. This facility has been a part of the adopted master street plan for some time but has never been built. A second street improvement is the connection of the south end of Jennings Lane with the north end of Jennings Lane and continuing across Harrison Street/Highway 69 to connect with 30th Street and Neely Street.

Another proposed street is a connection between Virginia Drive/Hospital Circle and 20th Street. This will provide better access to the medical center, a major asset of the Batesville area.

The plan proposes upgrading 20th Street from its intersection with Pioneer Drive to Harrison Street/Highway 69 to a major arterial-level street.

The planning commission will also study the possibility of an east-west connector between East Main Street/Highway 223 at the Miller Creek Road intersection and Highway 69 in the Sawmill Subdivision area.

The plan proposes a major traffic artery as part of the redevelopment of the existing Batesville Country Club golf course property and would include upgrading Myers Avenue from U.S. 167 to 20th Street.

Beautification

The city will take a comprehensive approach to beautification that considers signage, landscaping, preservation, and other elements by creating new regulations. The city will combine stronger sign regulations with landscaping and welcoming signage to enhance corridors and gateways. Moreover, the city will develop landscaping and tree preservation guidelines for new developments.

Community Facilities

Planned community facilities appear on the plan map. These include the new fire station and a long-range goal of a special-needs firefighting facility at the airport.

Batesville enjoys the benefits of a superior school system that should be supported by the comprehensive plan. This means, among other things, improving the transportation system to serve area schools. Such improvements will include the proposed street connections shown herein.

The transportation system should include enhancing opportunities for students to walk or ride bicycles to schools. Thus the proposed trail system is designed to include schools as points of destination and origin.



The Batesville Regional Airport

Public Safety

In addition to the normal considerations of police and fire protection, the city must be aware of other safeguards to the public health and safety. The Arkansas Fire Prevention Code is enacted by state statute and must be enforced by every city. It is vital, therefore, that code enforcement activities be improved.

The provisions of the fire code extend to the design of subdivision and multi-family complexes. The planning commission will, accordingly, take the provisions of the code into account when reviewing subdivision plats.

In the future, the planning commission will insist on complete and detailed drainage control features for any new development, regardless of its size. No development may be approved that, in the opinion of the City Engineer, will contribute to problems of off-site drainage.

Since the 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City, each city must remain aware of internal and external dangers to its

citizens. The planning commission will take this into account when allocating land uses and commercial activities near municipal systems and adjacent to residential areas.

In addition, the city will make every attempt to document locations of hazardous materials stored within the city. The most effective method of doing this is through use of business permits. This plan recommends the immediate adoption of such a system in order to allow the fire and police departments to monitor locations of specified activities and materials.

Monitoring

The planning commission will monitor the provisions of this plan and make adjustments as necessary to carry out or protect its provisions and intent. The city council will provide the planning commission the technical and professional support it needs to carry out this mission. In addition, the planning commission will communicate with staff, elected officials, other commissions, and the private sector to remain aware of planning issues.



Source: Urban Planning Associates, Inc.

Goal: To build upon the natural beauty and charm of Batesville.

Acknowledgements

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