

BENTON COUNTY DRAFT LANDUSE PLAN

INTRODUCTION

This Benton County Draft Landuse Plan has been developed by the Benton County, AR, Planning Department and the Benton County Advisory Landuse Plan Committee with assistance from the Northwest Arkansas Planning Commission, and the residents of Benton County, Arkansas. This Draft Landuse Plan is created with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing coordinated development of the county, which will, in accordance with existing and future needs, best promote the general welfare, efficiency and economy in the process of development. As such, the Draft Landuse Plan's policies, strategies, and recommendations are intended to be used as flexible guides to decisions regarding land use, transportation and streets, economic development and public facilities in coordination with the Benton County Zoning Ordinance.

Legal Authority

Legal Authority for county landuse planning:
is authorized under **A.S.A. 14-17-206 Purpose and Content of County Plan**

" (a) The county plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, efficient, and economic development of the county, or part thereof. In accordance with one (1) or more of the following criteria, the plan will seek to best promote the health, safety, convenience, prosperity, and welfare of the people of the county.

(b) All county plans shall reflect the county's development policies and shall contain a statement of the objectives and principles sought to be embodied therein. These plans, with the accompanying maps, charts, and descriptive matter, may make recommendations, among other things, as to:

- (1)The conservation of natural resources;
- (2)The protection of areas of environmental concern;
- (3)The development of land subject to flooding;
- (4)The provision of adequate recreation, education, and community facilities including water, sewer, solid waste, and drainage improvements;
- (5)The development of transportation facilities, housing development, and redevelopment; and
- (6)Such other matters which are logically related to or form an integral part of a long-term plan for orderly development and redevelopment of the county.

(c)(1) Areas of critical environmental concern include, among other things, aquifers and aquifer recharge areas, soils poorly suited to development, floodplains, wetlands, prime agricultural and forestlands, the natural habitat of rare or endangered species, areas with unique ecosystems, or areas recommended for protection in the Arkansas Natural Areas Plan. Plans for these areas shall give consideration to protective mechanisms which seek to regulate activities or development therein.

(2) These mechanisms may include establishment of special zoning districts, adoption and enforcement of building codes, acquisition of easements or land through capital expenditures programming, and specialized development policies. Where appropriate, county management activities for areas of critical environmental concern shall involve cooperative agreements with interested state and federal agencies.

(d)In the preparation of all plans for the county or part of a county, the plans shall be consistent 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."

History. Acts 1977, No. 422, § 4.0; A.S.A. 1947, § 17-1110.

The Benton County Quorum Court, upon recommendation of the County Planning Commission "may adopt the Draft Landuse Plan (to be expanded and finalized in future months) in whole or in part and may subsequently amended or extend the adopted plan or portion thereof.

Nature and Purpose of the Landuse Plan:

The general purpose of the Landuse Plan is to guide the county's development so that it occurs in a coordinated, efficient, and effective manner. The Plan is, thus, an advisory document, and it is intended to be amended over time as conditions and/or community preferences change and as Zoning Ordinances change.

On a more specific level, the Benton County Landuse Plan is designed to guide the county's day-to-day activities within the context of a long-range future vision. Toward this end, the Landuse Plan:

- .. Has a long-range time frame: The term "long-range" refers to the intention that this plan will provide for the future needs of the community insofar as it is possible to make reasonable projections and judgments. Although the intent of the plan is to be longrange, it is important that updates, every five years, are made to the plan to address the changing growth and development conditions in Benton County.
- .. Is general and should remain general: The term "general" means that the Landuse Plan should not address issues in great detail, but it should, instead, outline a desirable future development scenario by showing the general location, character and extent of physical development and the relationship of those elements.
- .. Is comprehensive in scope: "Comprehensive" means that the Landuse Plan should encompass the most significant physical elements of the community. Social and economic factors as they affect future development must also be part of the Landuse Plan's analysis and recommendations.
- .. Focuses on the physical development of the county: Physical development issues are those involving the coordination of basic development elements of the built and natural environment, such as infrastructure, streets, land use, public facilities, topography, habitat, water resources, etc.
- .. Clearly relates identified issues and goals to proposed policies, strategies, and recommendations: A plan can exhibit all of the characteristics listed above, but it will not be useful if the recommended actions contained in the plan do not directly address community goals and issues. The policies recommended in the Benton County Landuse Plan are intended first and foremost to serve as a guide to decision-making and to provide continuity in addressing issues.

The Planning Process:

The preparers of this Landuse Plan have followed a sequence of steps to develop this Benton County Draft Landuse Plan.

The planning process is made up of six steps and is continuous in nature. These steps include:

- .. Issues identification
- .. Data gathering and analysis
- .. Goal Setting
- .. Formulation of alternatives
- .. Implementation
- .. Feedback / evaluation

A public participation process was used to guide the preparation of this updated Benton County Draft Landuse Plan. As such, this process relied on the expertise of planners and staff, but also on the input of experts from a variety of fields, members of elected and appointed boards and commissions, an appointed Advisory Landuse Planning Committee, representatives of various community interest groups and community residents at-large. The various groups were given several opportunities to participate in the process. Those opportunities included:

- .. Interviews with key Benton County personnel and leadership, developers and citizens.
- ...
- .. A community meeting, open to the public, to gather information regarding issues currently facing Benton County and goals for the long-term development of the county.
- .. A community meeting, open to the public, to review and respond to future growth and development pattern alternatives, prepared in response to information and input gathered.

.. Public hearings, before the Benton County Committee of 13 and the Benton County Quorum Court during the adoption process. In addition to the public input sought and received, a technical analysis of data by the planning team was completed to identify and confirm demographic, economic and social information and trends within the county.

An additional source of information was a previous planning effort that was conducted between 1970 and _____ but it did not result in the adoption of a new Landuse Plan. Over this past six months planning period (included zoning ordinance planning) the county created a data book, conducted surveys and interviews, solicited broad citizen input through the "and formed an Advisory Landuse Planning Committee to formulate strategies. The document produced by this previous effort was a basis for this planning effort by providing data analysis, as well as identification of issues, goals, objectives and implementation strategies. The current planning effort advances the dialogue and tests the direction initiated by the county's previous efforts. Through renewed public outreach, issue and goal discussions, and additional analysis, the 2005 Draft Landuse Plan offers a direction for future growth, as well as an implementation strategy for the vision of the county and balanced preservation and growth. Through land use ordinances, budgetary activities, and other legal and policy documents, the primary implementation tools for the Landuse Plan are put in place. As the community changes and priorities shift, the Landuse Plan and associated planning efforts will need to be adjusted. Thus, the planning process and the Landuse Plan are dynamic in nature.

The intent is to ensure annual review and updates through continual maintenance of information, monitoring of community issues, and follow up on decisions made by the County Planning Commission and County Quorum Court. Thorough and complete evaluations of the Plan should be scheduled on five-year intervals. Such an approach makes the Plan a viable instrument, which is flexible and adaptable to unanticipated change.

Plan Implementation as an ongoing activity

Implementation of the Benton County Landuse Plan, which begins with the adoption of the plan document, should be an ongoing, day-to-day process. The Plan, by itself, does not bring about change. It merely identifies issues, articulates goals and objectives, defines directions and provides information regarding the future consequences of present actions.

Implementation of the Landuse Plan is directly connected to daily public and private decisions regarding the allocation of public and private resources and the need to coordinate the actions resulting from those decisions and the application of the Benton County Zoning Ordinance.

The final component of the continuous planning process is the acquisition and use of feedback from the community to evaluate the performance of the Master Plan and refine its recommendations. The utilization of feedback creates a Plan that is responsive to the needs of the community.

Plan Organization:

The Benton County Draft Landuse Plan consists of five primary sections: I) Introduction, II) Existing Conditions, III) Factors Influencing Change, IV)Future Land Use and Recommendations and V) Implementation.

.. Section I. Introduction: The first section of the Draft Landuse Plan provides a brief overview of the Landuse Plan as a process and its purpose.

.. Section II. Existing Conditions: The Plan's second section analyzes the various existing conditions (both regional and local) that affect the county's future development. This section addresses topics, such as population, economics, the natural environment, land use and development, land use regulations, major streets and transportation, educational facilities, and public services and utilities. The planning implications of these existing conditions are also addressed in this section.

.. Section III. Factors Influencing Change: The third section of the Draft Land Use Plan identifies the strategic issues facing Benton County, and it also presents a series of general, long range planning goals. These issues and goals are community based, meaning that they were derived from a public process. While the previous section of the Draft Landuse Plan provides an analytical, rational framework for planning, this section presents the wants,

needs, concerns, and desires of the community at the time the plan was developed. In this section, growth and development pattern alternatives are presented and analyzed. These patterns illustrate different approaches to the manner in which the county will choose to physically grow and develop in the future.

The growth and development pattern alternatives were presented to the public for their review and comment. From this information and the public response, the recommendations and implementation strategies were prepared.

.. Section IV. Future Land Use and Recommendations: This is the most significant section of the Landuse Plan. It

includes Future Land Uses and the recommended growth and development pattern (map and text) for Benton County. The growth and development recommendations present policies for planning elements, such as growth, development patterns, transportation, public facilities and services, and parks, recreation, and open space.

.. Section V. Implementation This section focuses on putting the plan into action by outlining implementation tools and specific tasks. The implementation tools outline the means that are currently, or should be at the county's disposal for the implementation of the Draft Landuse Plan, and they provide guidance for the future development of the county. An implementation matrix is presented that outlines the on-going, short-term, medium-term and long-term strategies required to implement the recommendations of the Benton County Landuse Plan. It should be noted that the process does not necessarily create a one-to-one relationship among goals, objectives, recommendations and implementation strategies. Thus, each implementation strategy could respond to or satisfy one or more of the conservation and development goals of this plan.

Benton County:

This Draft Landuse Plan is a living document that should accommodate changes in development patterns and styles. As such, it is appropriate to review and update the Benton County Landuse Plan at regular intervals. The current plan is a system of land use recommendations that designate different uses be separated into various districts. Additionally, the county has experienced growth in population and is expected to continue this trend with an additional population increase over the next 20 years.

To balance growth and the protection of the natural and rural character of the county, a plan that responds to the current development climate is necessary. This Benton County Draft Landuse Plan is a performance and design based land use planning system that allows the county to make decision based on desirable growth, development patterns and the design aspects of a particular development proposal. The Benton County Draft Landuse Plan is structured to assist the county and its residents in achieving their growth and development goals.

INFORMATION ABOUT BENTON COUNTY, ARKANSAS

Benton County and Bentonville are named in honor of Thomas Hart Benton, a U.S. Senator from Missouri, who played a key role in persuading Congress to admit Arkansas to the Union on September 30, 1836, as the 25th state. The county was organized in 1836.

✓ Benton County is 886 square miles with a perimeter of 142.25 miles. The topography is gentle rolling hills (Ozark Mountains). The average annual rainfall is 40 to 45 inches.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports a population of 153,406 in Benton County in 2000, with an estimated population of 172,003 in 2003 (a 12.1% increase). Bentonville is the county seat and had an estimated population of 26,397 in 2003, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The largest city is Rogers, with an estimated population in 2003 of 42,795. There are 17 incorporated cities and towns and 6 unincorporated towns in the County.

The County Judge is the chief executive officer for county government in Arkansas. In Benton County, the County Judge is elected for a term of two years. The Quorum Court is the legislative body of Benton County and is comprised of 13 members (Justices of the Peace), who also serve a two-year elected term. The County Judge and Justices of the Peace may be re-elected for additional two-year terms.

In 1960, the Army Corps of Engineers began work on Beaver Dam, impounding a major part of the White River and creating Beaver Lake. Beaver Lake is approximately 50 miles in length and covers approximately 31,700 acres, with about 483 miles of shoreline and an elevation of 1,120 feet. There are several U.S. Corps of Engineers parks and campgrounds surrounding Beaver Lake. The Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area (formerly known as the Beaver Lake State Park) is the only state park in the County.

Important agricultural crops include hay and pasture for livestock. In 2002, Benton County led the state and was third in the nation for broiler (poultry) production.

The largest manufacturing industries are Bekaert Corporation (steel tire cord); Clayton Mark (water system tanks, yard hydrants & water system accessories); Crane Company (carbon steel valves); Glad Manufacturing (Glad plastic bags & plastic cling wrap); Foam Molding Corporation (structural foam plastics & enclosures for electronic equipment); Kraft Foods (bulk cheese), Preformed Line Products Co. (pole line hardware for overhead power, splice cases & related products for telecommunications industry, rubber molding, injection molding, wire drawing & forming); Rogers Tool Works (carbide compacts for the oil industry, palletizing dies, blanks & carbide cutting tools, reamers, tool holders with inserts, drills, carbide wear parts & lathe tools); Superior Industries (aluminum road wheels); and Tyson's, Inc. (poultry processing & distribution centers, specialty frozen chicken items).

The largest service & retail employer is Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., which is headquartered in Bentonville. Numerous Fortune 500 companies (as well as smaller firms) have regional offices in Benton County to support their accounts at Wal-Mart.

Historical sites in Benton County include:

- Pea Ridge National Military Park (Battle of Pea Ridge during the Civil War)
- War Eagle Mill and War Eagle Bridge (water-powered grist mill)
- Cross Hollow (Civil War encampment & battle field)
- Monte Ne (resort town now covered by Beaver Lake near Rogers)
- Simon Sager Cabin (log cabin open to the public in Siloam Springs)
- 1875 Peel Mansion & Historic Gardens (built by Colonel Samuel West Peel in Bentonville)
- Hawkins House (museum in Rogers)

Famous people from Benton County include:

- Sam and Helen Walton (founder of Wal-Mart, Inc.)
- Betty (Blake) Rogers (Will Rogers' wife)
- Coin Harvey (built Monte Ne resort)
- Louise Thaden (famous pilot)
- Tom Morgan (writer for the Saturday Evening Post and Life Magazine)

Benton County has seven school districts (Bentonville, Decatur, Gentry, Gravette, Pea Ridge, Rogers & Siloam Springs) that include 45 public schools. The enrollment for the 2001-02 school year was 25,991 students.

The Northwest Arkansas Community College (two-year college) is located in Bentonville and John Brown University (four-year college) is located in Siloam Springs.

II. EXISTING CONDITIONS

- a. Demographics – Need data from Jeff Hawkins or Sam Walton Business College U of AR
- b. Economics – Also need data from Jeff Hawkins or Sam Walton Business College
- c. County Features

- (1) Existing Environment – Wetlands, Watersheds & floodplains, Threatened & Endangered species, Cultural Resources, etc.
- (2) Existing Developments – industry, wastewater treatment plants, etc.

III. FACTORS INFLUENCING CHANGES

a. Issues

- (1) Quality Growth & Development
- (2) Economic Development
- (3) Infrastructure and Transportation
- (4) Environment and Open Space
- (5) Education and Communication

Summary

b. Goals & Objectives

- (1) Quality Growth & Development – to promote growth and development that creates
- (2) Economic Development –to attract quality development and jobs to the county.
- (3)Infrastructure and Transportation –to provide infrastructure that adequately serves the existing community, as well as new development.
- (4) Environment and Open Space –to ensure environmentally sensitive development throughout the county, particularly large-scale development, such as industry.
- (5) Education and Communications –to provide quality public awareness and a high level of communication regarding planning and development issues.

c. Growth Alternatives

d. Development Pattern Alternatives

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Future Land Uses, Growth Patterns and Policies
- b. Development Pattern Application

V. IMPLEMENTATION

- a. Implementation Tools

VII. APPENDIXES

- a. Maps- Need a Resource map from Elizabeth Bowen showing vegetation, lakes, rivers, streams, ponds, etc. and also a map similar to the Zoning Ordinance Map showing existing developments
- b. Graphs
- c. Tables

Will need a document cover, preferably with a multi-resource use photo or drawing depicting landuses in Benton County.

Will also need a TABLE OF CONTENTS