

Executive Summary



TABLE OF CONTENTS TOC
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ACK
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY Page 1
FUTURE LAND USE MAP Page 11



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The City of Poplar Bluff 2008 Comprehensive Plan is the culmination of many individuals. We appreciate the time and effort they put in to this process and gratefully acknowledge their participation.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF POPLAR BLUFF

The following vision statements illustrate the community's preferred future:

- Protect the resources that make Poplar Bluff a great place to live and raise a family and provide excellent, cost-effective services and opportunities for all residents and business owners.
- Maintain the local character and high quality of life while minimizing negative after or side effects from future growth or development.
- Provide access to a wide range of social, cultural, recreational and other resources, events and facilities that enrich community life and promote active lifestyles.
- Collaborate with other governmental agencies to promote regional opportunities and solve regional problems.

The Poplar Bluff comprehensive planning process defined what residents want Poplar Bluff to be in 20 to 25 years. The plan calls for balanced and carefully planned growth, neighborhood stability and community diversity. It strives to protect and enhance neighborhoods and community character and outlines new planning initiatives such as developing quality neighborhoods supported by an expanded commercial tax base.

The Poplar Bluff Comprehensive Plan established several citizen-defined goals for each of the main planning elements covered in this Plan. The Comprehensive Plan Goals are as follows:

- Downtown Revitalization
- Ensuring Well Planned Future Commercial Development
- Maintaining Quality of Life
- Providing For Housing & Neighborhood Stabilization
- Ensuring a Safe and Effective Transportation System
- Provide For Future Residential Land Use
- Maintain, enhance and expand the City's parks and recreation system.
- Ensure the availability of public facilities, infrastructure and emergency services

2. Plan Construct

The Poplar Bluff Comprehensive Plan is organized in the following manner

A. Background

A great deal of historical and contextual information is provided in the plan. This information includes the history of the area, the local environmental conditions, zoning, and the area's socioeconomic background.

B. Public Facilities & Services Overview

THIS SECTION OF THE PLAN REVIEWS GENERAL CITY SERVICES, THE CITY'S BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS SPECIFIC CITY SERVICES SUCH AS UTILITIES AND ROADS, AS WELL AS SERVICES PROVIDED BY OTHERS SUCH AS WASTE HAULING

C. Comprehensive Plan Public Outreach

THE PREPARATION OF THE 2007 POPLAR BLUFF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN INCLUDED AN EXTENSIVE AND STRUCTURED PROGRAM OF CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT. IT INCLUDED THE FORMATION OF THE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE, THE HOLDING OF A SERIES OF TOWN PLANNING OPEN HOUSES, A SERIES OF STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED WITH THE VARIOUS HEADS OF CITY DEPARTMENTS, A PUBLIC SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED, AND BOTH THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL REVIEWED AND HAD INPUT INTO THE PLAN

D. Parks & Recreation Plan

This portion of the Comprehensive Plan examines Park Classification, Park Area Guidelines, Existing and Proposed Park Facilities & Supply of City Parks, Parks Distribution, and Outdoor Recreation & Public Use Areas. The section evaluates in a broad manner all of the facilities, parks, and greenway, examines opportunities for outdoor recreation, and provides recommendations

E. Transportation Plan

The connection between land use, transportation system, and support services is a critical juncture of all comprehensive plans. The Poplar Bluff Comprehensive Plan has an extensive transportation section. Items addressed in the transportation plan section includes the Street Classification System, Assessment of Existing Conditions, Traffic Volumes and Levels of Service, Bridges, Air Facilities, Railways, Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities, and Public Transportation. Additionally, important items that support and work within transportation systems are explored. These include Gateway Features, Transportation Ordinances and Street Standards, as well as Signage and Streetscape Standards. Finally, the bulk of the Transportation Plan ultimately forms the basis of a wide array of infrastructure recommendations.

F. Future Land Use Plan

The Future Land Use section of the overall plan is the point where all other sections are blended, data analysis is laid out in terms of where certain land uses are best located, and recommendations are made that provide the City direction on how to guide development and annexation.

This section addresses existing conditions, growth projections, and future land use map categories. It outlines the various land uses in the city including rural residential/agriculture, low density residential land use, medium density residential, multi-family residential, nodal commercial, commercial, downtown, industrial, parks & recreation, and institutional. Land use implementation strategies are included which include downtown revitalization & adaptive reuse, commercial redevelopment and infill, residential in-fill development, greenfield development, regional shopping & entertainment, and housing and neighborhood stability. Finally, the section discusses Annexation & Growth Management

The Future Land Use Plan is not to be construed as a proposed zoning plan. Using this section, coupled with the sections prior to the Land Use Plan, City management will be better able to apply the limited financial resources of the community to "best use".

A copy of the Future Land Use Plan figure is included with this Executive Summary.



3. Primary Plan Results

Summarizing the detailed work done in the more than 100 pages of the Comprehensive Plan is not really the goal of the Executive Summary. However, providing the concise list of goals that were identified along with the Objectives & Implementation Strategies identified for each is important information to convey. Therefore, this summary is providing the goals, objectives, and strategies directly from the plan for executive and/or management use.

A. Downtown Revitalization

Goal

“Promote investment in the City’s central business district in order to attract and retain businesses, revitalize downtown and increase commercial and entertainment opportunities that attract people”

Objectives & Implementation Strategies

- Support the Downtown Redevelopment / Main Street program/group.
- Develop and implement a downtown master plan includes improvements to the streetscape, mixed land use redevelopment strategies, parking analysis, financing options, branding solutions, marketing, and business recruitment.
- Identify and procure funding for infrastructure improvements such as people gathering spaces, parks, trails, facades improvements, alley improvements, utility upgrades and flood control.
- Encourage the cooperation of all business and civic groups with an interest in the downtown work together in a unified effort to enhance the downtown experience.
- Create a special planning district or overlay that facilitates the preservation and adaptive reuse of the historic Downtown.
- Revitalize the riverfront area and improve access to the river by implementing the recommended greenway system.
- Encourage and aggressively promote new community events that capitalize on Downtown Poplar Bluff’s social, professional, cultural, recreational and entertainment opportunities.
- Encourage the development of boutique style specialty shops, restaurants, hotels and entertainment establishments within the historic downtown district.
- Develop a central theme or focus for the redevelopment of downtown.
- Develop design guidelines that require future redevelopment applications to preserve the historic character of downtown and provide a base level of architecture that fits within and contributes to the historic downtown.
- Create a special financing district to share the costs of public improvements such as the installation/improvement of sidewalks, street lighting, adequate parking provisions and other site amenities such as landscaping and the creation of outdoor meeting places.

B. Future Commercial Development

Goal

“Encourage integrated, balanced growth that benefits all residents and businesses by strengthening our positive business climate, proactively planning our future and responding to economic opportunities.”

Objectives & Implementation Strategies

Poplar Bluff currently appears to be leaking consumer spending and business activity to the surrounding areas in the area of specialty retail. This may be attributable, at least in part, to the absence of such retailers within the local Poplar Bluff marketplace. To create and maintain a diversified revenue base, the city should create a targeted economic development program that encourages diversification of the City’s retail base as well as other revenue sources. This program should include the development of zoning and development regulations that encourage innovative and/or state-of-the-practice development strategies and tenant mixes along with strategic business recruitment and retention efforts along with the following objectives and implementation strategies;

- Encourage commercial and mixed-use redevelopment focused primarily along the Westwood Boulevard and Pine Street (Business 60) corridors, along both sides of PP Highway and within the City’s historic downtown.
- Develop programs to attract light industrial land-uses such as technology based enterprises, medical, warehousing, light assembly, manufacturing, and transportation distribution into the city’s industrial areas shown on the Future Land Use Map.
- Develop an economic diversification plan that facilitates long term economic stability and reduces the City’s economic dependence on a few industries.
- Conduct a detailed market analysis to establish viable development “niches”.
- Recruit businesses that provide a better variety of retail shops, restaurants, and entertainment establishments.
- Improve and maintain the supply and quality of Poplar Bluff’s work force and promote local employment opportunities for Poplar Bluff residents to maximize the number of residents. Providing jobs within the City helps reduce spending outside the city and increases revenue within the City.
- Work with local community colleges to provide worker training that meets the needs of existing and anticipated businesses.
- Work with local school districts, trade schools and community colleges to develop programs providing school-to-career readiness in support of a skilled workforce for Poplar Bluff.
- Promote efforts that make the city more attractive to working families by improving housing options, educational opportunities, and other services that are attractive to working families.
- In accordance with the Chamber’s goals, conduct and promote a “Shop Poplar Bluff First” campaign.
- In accordance with the Chamber’s goals, promote and develop plans and procedures to attract visitors to the area. Work with the local tourism related entities to plan and promote monthly events.
- In accordance with the Chamber’s goals, promote improvement in local transportation measures by working cooperatively with the Chamber and the Missouri Department of Transportation to find ways to ensure future growth includes the following:
 1. A continued partnership in widening Highway 67 between Poplar Bluff and Fredericktown.
 2. Place a stop light in front of PBRMC.
 3. Evaluate options for a by-pass to service the Industrial Park.
- Reenergize community pride in the downtown area
- Focus on the clean-up and revitalization of the downtown area.
- Promote and restore the economic health, community pride, and quality of life for Poplar Bluff residents and visitors.



Poplar Bluff has been, and is, a regional center drawing people from surrounding counties for retail trade, employment and health services. As a regional center, the city must plan not only for its own population, but also for those who benefit from the services offered. The demographics and economics of the region become as important as the demographics and economics of the city itself. Economic growth increasingly comes to those places that attract and retain the largest supply of talented workers or “human capital”. Surveys show that the most important locational factors used to site new businesses are based on regional development patterns, downtown vitality, and the proximity of housing to work, natural amenities and outdoor recreation. Economic gains are made when workers and businesses cluster in tight geographic proximity, thereby gaining quicker access to new ideas and technologies. The City should focus on providing these key locational factors to attract and retain a quality workforce and improve the quality of life for all residents, new and old.

C. Quality of Life

Goal

“Develop programs that promote community beautification, character enhancement and quality of life by preserving Poplar Bluff’s small-town character and building upon the City’s premier services, facilities, and nearby nationally recognized outdoor recreation amenities.”

Objectives & Implementation Strategies

The city will need to be prepared to provide the level and type of services and amenities demanded of an aging population, while also providing the housing, services and quality of life factors that attracts and retains young adults and children. The availability of good salaried jobs diversified housing options and entertainment/cultural attractions are key considerations that the City should consider to attract young adults while also serving the needs of the aging population. The following quality of life objectives and implementation strategies are also recommended;

- Protect the resources that make Poplar Bluff a great place to live and raise a family. More specifically, continue providing excellent, cost-effective services and opportunities for all residents and business owners.
- Maintain the local character and high quality of life while minimizing negative after or side effects from future growth or development.
- Provide access to a wide range of social, cultural, recreational and other resources, events and facilities that enriched community life and promote active lifestyles.
- Collaborate with other governmental agencies to promote regional opportunities and solve regional problems.
- Develop plans for major entrances into the city to create an aesthetically pleasing gateway corridor leading into the community. Gateways serve as a focal point, and can consist of monument structures, distinctive building designs or unique landscaping and lighting schemes.
- Maintain and build upon Poplar Bluff’s existing recreational and cultural successes.
- Preserve landforms and drainage patterns when designing sites for development. Excavation and fill of any identified wetland or floodplain is strongly discouraged. The appropriate state or federal agency should review projects involving these natural areas.
- Require the installation of quality landscaping along roadway rights-of-ways and parking areas and promote the use of landscaped berms, vegetation and decorative screening to provide buffering between different zoning districts and/or uses.
- Expand City parks where practical to include the use of environmental corridors and bike lanes on specific streets to form an interconnected park network that is fully and easily accessible from all districts within the City for pedestrians and cars.
- Require future development, including stormwater and utility improvements, to provide all necessary property right-of-way and consider easements for bicycle/pedestrian corridors.

D. Housing & Neighborhood Stabilization

Goal

“Preserve the character and stability of the City’s existing neighborhoods and promote the continued development of new, high quality residential development in the City’s residential growth areas that offer a range of housing options.”

Objectives & Implementation Strategies

- Expand the supply of dwelling units to provide appropriate housing for all social and economic classes such as assisted living facilities, multi-family developments and planned residential subdivisions
- Preserve neighborhood character by maintaining the city’s current quality of life and sustaining the current level of public services and facilities, including the parks and recreation system and schools.
- Support and encourage the development of neighborhood organizations that promote civic activities and empower residents to strengthen and protect their neighborhoods.
- Research available home improvement and low-income housing grants and provide applications for the applicable grants (Federal and State) at City Hall and sponsor programs to raise awareness and promote the utilization of the grants to help improve and maintain the city’s housing stock, specifically those of elderly and low-income homeowners.
- Neighborhoods should be encouraged to incorporate central gathering places such as, community gardens, parks, trails and playfields into their design in order to provide a common space for personal interaction.
- When possible, neighborhoods and major parks should be linked together via sidewalks, or a greenway consisting of bicycle paths and trails. One solution is to create a preservation corridor along natural corridors and watersheds such as the Black River. The intent is to create a linear park system connecting to activity centers, parks and neighborhoods throughout the community. A conservation easement is one method of establishing a public use corridor that would support passive recreation, pedestrian traffic, and the preservation of natural features.
- Encourage quality infill development of different housing types and density/intensity to coexist with existing neighborhoods.
- Develop planning and development regulations that protect residential neighborhoods from encroachment of incompatible activities or land uses that may have a negative impact on the residential living environment.
- Develop a plan to extend basic utilities to all existing neighborhoods and new subdivisions.
- Develop an annexation plan addressing the provision of infrastructure and the development of new residential growth areas, particularly along the bypass.



- Use existing neighborhood organizations and/or leaders to assist in the education of housing maintenance programs.
- Continue strict, consistent code enforcement to prevent property deterioration and to protect property values.
- Budget for infrastructure needs such as sidewalks, streets, water lines and sewer lines.
- Develop small-scale incentives, including “rent-to-own” programs, to help meet the demand for affordable housing.
- Implement a pilot infill project: Target the redevelopment of underutilized parking lots.
- Promote financing programs for home repairs and maintenance (target low income, disabled, and elderly) to help sustain the City’s current supply of affordable housing.
- Conduct a housing survey of every neighborhood. Map results and prioritize areas in need of assistance.

E. Transportation

Goal

“The City shall ensure the transportation system provides safe and effective circulation and economic development potential.”

Objectives & Implementation Strategies

- Make sure the Highways 60 and 67 upgrades are done in a manner that promotes and supports the city’s goals and objective contained herein. Go beyond basic engineering requirements and try to make improvements in the areas of aesthetics and multi-modal access.
- Provide a thoroughfare system, which includes signage, road improvements, and the addition of new roads, that allows safe and efficient travel through the City- with special emphasis on improving cross-town accessibility. The arterial and collector street system should be laid out with an emphasis on connecting neighborhoods and encouraging access within and between neighborhoods.
- Streets should be designed to a pedestrian scale including the installation of pedestrian level lighting, street furniture, street trees and landscaping.
- Sidewalks should be required on both sides of every street unless alternative pedestrian routes are available.
- Consider modifying signal timing and installing turn lanes where traffic flow tends to back up or increase safety risks.
- Consider sidewalks and bicycle lanes for all planned roadway improvements.
- Implement a community-wide greenway system- starting with a pilot project/trailhead in the downtown area and extending along the Black River. The greenway is intended to increase pedestrian travel, encourage active lifestyles and expand year-round park and recreation options for all ages.
- Trailheads, picnic areas, restroom facilities and parking areas should be provided at the major points of access to primary trail/pathway segments. Additionally, educational kiosks should be located at trailhead locations and along trail routes.
- Implement access management techniques along all major collector roads and arterials as recommended in Chapter 6.
- Consider traffic calming measures at all pedestrian crossings to reduce vehicular speeds and improve the safety and circulation patterns for pedestrian users. Traffic calming measures may include but are not limited to, alternative paving materials, on-street parking, lighting, landscaping, reduced lane widths, choke points, traffic circles or any combination thereof that reduce apparent street width and protects pedestrians from moving traffic.
- Implement traffic calming downtown to help slow traffic, beautify and increase pedestrian safety and convenience. Use traffic calming at key corner locations to provide safer pedestrian crossings and better orientation for both pedestrians and drivers.
- Support and assist in the implementation of the US 60 and Business 60 interchange recommendations as provided in Chapter 6.
- Implement the airport improvements recommended in Chapter 6.
- Promote and facilitate the creation of gateway features such as professional landscaping-including crepe myrtle plantings, monument signage and other aesthetic features at the City’s primary, secondary and transitional gateways.
- Manage and maintain the current transportation system assets, capacities and levels of service.
- Ensure that congestion on the City’s roadways does not reach levels which compromise economic competitiveness or the quality of life.
- Address all modes of transportation when considering transportation improvements with an emphasis on pedestrian and bicycle linkages to community activity centers.
- Coordinate land use, transportation, economic development, environmental quality, and community aesthetics in all transportation improvements in a manner that meets today’s needs without compromising the ability to address the needs of future generations.
- Updated the City’s sign ordinance and other design standards to help create a consistent, more desirable physical and visual streetscape.

F. Future Land Use

Goal

“Promote land development that preserves existing neighborhoods and the natural landscape, topography, vegetative cover, scenic view sheds and natural drainage patterns.”

Objectives & Implementation Strategies

- Follow a hierarchical growth model that prioritizes restorative development activity, such as downtown revitalization and adaptive reuse, as the preferred growth strategy, followed by infill, redevelopment and Greenfield development.
- Promote the provision of housing, commercial services, entertainment, cultural venues, higher educational institutions and other quality of life amenities that appeal to young adults age 18 to 34.
- Encourage development in areas where municipal services can most easily be extended. New development should not be permitted until such time municipal services are available.
- Parks and open space should be designed as an integral part of new development based on an overall plan. Linear parks and trails should be incorporated into the design of new development to ensure they tie into existing or proposed trail/greenway plans.



- More unique types of development such as conservation subdivisions and cluster developments should be encouraged in order to attract residential growth.
- The cost to extend the infrastructure required to serve new development should be shared by the new development areas.

G. Parks

Goal

“Continue to maintain, enhance and expand the City’s parks and recreation system.”

Objectives & Implementation Strategies

- Support improvements as needed to keep pace with the latest trends in park and recreation services, facility market demands and the acquisition of additional parkland and the establishment of open spaces, greenbelts and trails as needed to serve the City’s population.

Greenway and trail development provides recreation amenities that are accessible to users of all ages and function to preserve open and environmentally sensitive areas. Promote and facilitate open space and environmental protection as recommended in Chapter 5.

- Promote Outdoor Recreation Tourism- Poplar Bluff is in a unique geographic position to capitalize on ecotourism, conservation and recreational opportunities throughout the Ozarks.
- Connect the city’s parks and open spaces with a system of trails, sidewalks and bicycle lanes. Connecting the city’s recreation areas, neighborhoods and schools helps to improve functionality and increase the utilization of park and transportation systems.
- Promote Healthy City Initiatives

H. Community Services & Facilities

Goal

“Ensure the availability of public facilities, infrastructure and emergency services that adequately serves Poplar Bluff’s present and future needs. These facilities and services include water, sewer, stormwater, cable, roads, schools, police, fire, library and other general services.”

Objectives & Implementation Strategies

- As the population ages, the percentage of income spent on housing related costs and medical expenses will increase. The housing, medical and related retail industries that provide the aforementioned services will benefit from the increased demand. The City should encourage the development of these markets and service delivery sectors. Recreation services, public safety, public transportation, housing assistance, and water and sewer service to residential developments are all areas that need careful evaluation to ensure they meet the needs of the aging population.
- Promote compact, low impact development throughout the community. Compactness can be achieved by encouraging development adjacent to the existing built-up area rather than allowing “leap-frog” development, which skips over large tracts of undeveloped land. A second means of increasing service delivery efficiency is to cluster those land uses which have the greatest need for fire and police protection, such as high value commercial uses or hazardous industrial uses. Clustering will allow the concentration of services and infrastructure and minimize costly utility runs and infrastructure costs.
- Construct a new fire station (Station #4) in the western portion of the city near PP Highway and hire nine (9) new firefighters to operate the new station.
- Upgrade the existing Police Department facilities and continue to evaluate the need for upgraded or improved public safety services (police, fire, etc) and identify appropriate locations for the development of new facilities to accommodate future growth needs.
- Substantially upgrade or relocate City Hall into a building in the Central Business District that could be adaptively reused as a centralized facility that could accommodate a variety of city departments and functions. If City Hall is rebuilt, it should stay in or near the Central Business District to serve as a redevelopment catalyst to increase the confidence to invest in the downtown area.
- Develop and award a unified trash hauling contract to minimize truck traffic on the City’s roads and neighborhoods. Make sure the contract includes weekly yard waste removal in the summer and fall, recycling and annual bulk and white goods pick-up services
- Formulate an annexation policy based upon future growth patterns, ability to provide public facilities and services, and suitability of land for development.
- Plan for long-term infrastructure improvements to serve future development along Highway PP, Highway 60, and Downtown and along the bypass.
- Concentrate public capital investments into areas that are contiguous with currently developed land and that are currently served by existing facilities.
- Require new development to install sidewalks, landscaping, preserve trees and share in the cost of the construction of other infrastructure improvements.
- Initiate development agreements that help pay for the direct and indirect costs of new infrastructure development.
- Implement access management solutions along Westwood Avenue, and wherever curb cuts are closely located and/or unnecessary.
- Encourage project developments to incorporate alternative transportation elements (pedestrian walkways, bike facilities, public transit etc.) into proposed site improvements.