

TO: The Sycamore Plan Commission

FROM: Bill Nicklas  
City Administrator

DATE: April 23, 2003

RE: April 28, 2003 Special Plan Commission Meeting

**I. Workshop**

**A. Further Discussion of the Proposed Comprehensive Plan.**

This special meeting will provide an opportunity for the Plan Commission to focus on a revised Land Use Map and the revised text of the Comprehensive Plan without a competing “action” agenda involving development requests.

Although the public has been engaged in a dialogue about possible land uses in the City’s mile-and-a-half planning area for nine months, a focused discussion about possible land uses by the Plan Commission began in earnest after the charrette of January 11, 2003. At the regular Commission meetings of January 13, February 10, March 10 and April 14, and at special Plan Commission meetings on January 27 and February 24, the Commission held lively discussions about possible land uses as well as ultimate growth limits. On February 24, a general consensus was reached regarding a land use map drafted by Land Vision, with the following expectations:

- a) that some “fine-tuning” would be done to more accurately represent the limits of certain uses (e.g. the limits of residential vs. agricultural uses on Mt. Hunger Road);
- b) that a revised legend should be created to characterize the land uses more faithfully in language on the plan.
- c) That a northeast sub-area plan should be produced to further delineate expectations for growth and amenities in that city quadrant.

At the last regular Commission meeting of April 14 some specific suggestions were passed along to the staff. The following notes address those concerns and others that have been mentioned in recent months.

## **The Land Use Map**

The City's official Land Use Map is probably our most important planning tool. It is the first document that inquiring realtors, developers, and propertyowners interested in buying or selling real estate outside the corporate limits want to see. Even though it paints our desires with a broad brush, the Plan grabs the viewer with bold graphic statements. More important, by showing in general what we do want, we set a higher standard of proof for those who would depart from the Plan. Exceptions to the Plan, however minor, should be the focus of attention in any development review process, and should promise special benefits before they are accepted. The attached, revised Map hopefully reflects all suggestions to date.

## **The Comprehensive Plan**

During and after the meeting of April 14, a number of revisions were suggested. Some address typographical errors; others have led to substantive changes. Here is a list of the textual changes:

- ◆ In Chapter Six, "the Northeast Regional Planning Area," the "green belt" has received more definition.
- ◆ In Chapter Four, "Land Use Plan," Section A. "Residential Development," the Brickville Road area has received more attention particularly with respect to the transition area between rural residential development that is already established and urban residential development that may someday develop.

In addition, the section addressing residential densities (pp. 43-44) takes a different tack. In a departure from the 2000 Land Use Plan, the proposed map does not encourage or discourage any particular residential densities and gives the Commission the widest latitude to define compatible developments with respect to contiguous subdivisions. However, the categorizations of low, medium, and high density must remain for several reasons. First, they are relevant to previously annexed areas. Second, they carry an open space expectation that prompts more amenities such as park space, bike paths, nature trails, etc. during negotiations with developers. Third, density is a common language in the development business and is suggestive of opportunities as well as concerns that should be key points of discussion in any Plan Commission review.

- ◆ In Chapter Three, "Goals and Objectives," Section G, "Community Facilities," local taxing bodies are encouraged to share long-range capital plans. The benefits are several: (1) the process may reveal ways to share resources; and (2) the overlapping debt of the community can be tracked more carefully. In addition, the text has been revised to encourage an investigation into the location of neighborhood parks on infill parcels in older, established parts of town.

## **Regulations to Moderate the Pace of Residential Growth**

At the April 14 meeting a revised regulatory method for pacing the number of permits in new developments was presented to the Commission. This table is attached with some minor revisions to better explain how the "development bank" would be used.

If the Commission so directs, the concept of such a regulatory tool could be brought to the City Council as a consideration only, in order to test the Council's opinion of such a step to manage residential growth in the Sycamore planning area.

**B. Information for the Good of the Order.**

The Commission might be interested in a recent article in "Planning," the monthly periodical of the American Planning Association (see attached). The article highlights the "top ten" features of a successful downtown streetscape design. Sycamore's version fares very well by these criteria. (P.S.: a unique informational kiosk for the brick eyebrow in front of Paulsen's should be built by City workers in May).