Piatt County Comprehensive Plan

2010

Piatt County Zoning
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GOALS & OBJECTIVES

ADMINISTRATIVE

Data provide perspectives on the future of Piatt County and includes a variety of plans and policies that will be used to achieve the future goals and objectives of the County. The plan is a guide that will be used to develop strong working relationships and improve the quality of service delivery.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goals and objectives are used to construct a vision for the future, incorporating public input, steering committee input, and best practices. Future conditions and a series of actions provide a path towards achieving the defined goals.

The planning process was aided by the oversight of a 16 member steering committee, participation of residents of Piatt County, and through the review and adoption by the Piatt County Board. The Piatt County Comprehensive Plan provides an update to the 1970 Comprehensive Plan.

Implementation and Administration

The plan lists implementation steps that will achieve the goals and objectives identified through the planning process.

Economic Development

Issues in economic development include job creation and development goals, new urban and rural infrastructure, adequate water and wastewater facilities, and issues in the environment. The plan proposes that the County continue its efforts to cooperate with other agencies (state and local) and develop a County economic development strategy. There is a distinct desire for greater employment in Piatt County; however, this should not be at the cost of residents’ quality of life. Regional coordination and marketing are noted as areas for improvement.

Community Facilities

The plan identifies some public services and facilities that are distinct separate entities from the County government. Schools, fire protection, ambulance service and senior services are examples where County government has little or no control, but does interact with these service providers (often through appointing agencies). The plan identifies some public services and facilities that improve residents’ quality of life including rehabilitation of substandard structures.

Utilities and Infrastructure

Maintenance of existing utilities and infrastructure is a key component of the plan. Growth and community desire to maintain the rural character of the County are challenges for infrastructure updates and expansion. A timely maintenance schedule and fiscal responsibility can allow the County to maximize existing infrastructure before expanding or replacing it. This applies not only to utilities and infrastructure operated by the County, but also to those managed by water systems, drainage systems, and sewers.

Housing

Housing in Piatt County is projected to continue to grow through the 2030 planning horizon. Residents are generally satisfied with housing options; however, it is noted that a small population is potentially underserved and could benefit from more alternatives in affordable housing.

Existing Conditions and Trends

The existing conditions and trends analysis is another fundamental element in the comprehensive plan. Historic trends and current data provide perspectives on the future of Piatt County. In addition, existing policies and plans are evaluated to ensure that the Piatt County Long Range Plan maintains consistency with them. As part of this analysis, a variety of data was collected and, where applicable, mapped for Piatt County. Formulating population and employment projections is another critical part of this planning phase. Projections provide a basis for estimating potential land, transportation, services, and infrastructure needs for the future. Residents and local decision makers evaluate potential growth patterns that capture how Piatt County might look given the estimated population and employment forecasts.

Essential Challenge

The major issue facing Piatt County today is balancing the rural agricultural character with development pressures of both high and low intensity land uses. The County has recently experienced and allowed an increase in rural residential development while pressure for commercial and industrial development has been met with opposition. The County Comprehensive Plan provides guidance regarding future development as well as the economy, community facilities, utilities, housing, historic and cultural resources, transportation, land use, natural resources, nature preserves, parks, and recreation.

Public Input

Ideas generated through conversations with the residents of Piatt County are a significant part of this plan. Input was gathered through a public workshop, phone survey, and at steering committee meetings. A SWOT analysis framework was used to guide the direction of goals and objectives and while a mapping exercise provided input for the Future Land Use Map. The public input that was obtained is not statistically significant. However, the information did provide relevant and useful perspectives that may have otherwise been neglected. Local input, best practices in planning, and steering committee guidance were influential in developing the Piatt County Comprehensive Plan.
**GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

**Historic and Cultural Resources**
Preservation, protection, and enhancement of historic and cultural resources. Additional interpretive information can provide residents with knowledge of the history of Piatt County and identify the variety of recreational opportunities and resources that exist in the County. The plan highlights standards of methodology, education, and interpretation of historic and cultural resources. Public and private entities alike can develop a culture of preservation. The plan designates central business districts as vibrant resources that provide an important function to communities and residents of Piatt County.

**Transportation**
The plan establishes general strategies for the transportation system in Piatt County. Recommendations are intended to provide tools by which travel and transport can be made safer, more efficient, and enhance the County's economic base. Issues related to transportation include a lack of pedestrian and bike facilities; longer commute times for residents, conflicts between agricultural vehicles and other vehicles, roadway maintenance, and insufficient public transportation. The greatest impact on the existing transportation system will be from land use development. Best management practices were identified to help manage impacts on the transportation system by linking land use decisions and transportation impacts, designing for multi-modalism, using traffic calming, and focusing on interagency coordination and public input.

**Land Use**
The land use portion of the plan provides an updated foundation for the County Zoning Ordinance. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide a blueprint for the future land use pattern. This identifies land uses that are desired or expected. Residential development has steadily increased in Piatt County and is expected to continue.

The plan recommends that this development primarily occur in municipalities where development is connected to municipal facilities with access to public services. Some residential development will occur in rural areas of the County. In these areas, two development type suggestions are lower density residential and conservation residential. Both of these development patterns focus on maintaining the rural character and natural environment. High density and medium density residential development are defined in the plan as examples of development that are desirable for incorporated areas in the County rather than rural areas.

Land uses identified in the plan include commercial, industrial, institutional, and agricultural, among others. Great concern was expressed regarding the siting of higher intensity land uses which are unsuitable or undesirable in some areas. Potential funding sources for all implementation will be sought ranging from federal to local sources. Site quality and feasibility were only generally assessed. More details and site analysis are required prior to development. The development of guidelines that assess the impact on infrastructure, the environment, mobility, preservation, and landscape character will help ensure that specific criteria are considered.

The plan states that land should be used for employment, residence, and recreation, not ‘consumed’. To accomplish this, the plan suggests development density and patterns that are compatible with agricultural lands and using the protection environment using a combination of regulatory and educational approaches.

**Natural Resources**
A variety of natural resources exist in Piatt County. Residents showed concern for land use priorities and conflicts between natural resource areas and farmland. They were also concerned with negative impacts from development. The plan identifies methods for protection, preservation, conservation, and restoration of natural resources. These methods of response depend on the resource and its relationship to people living in the community. The qualities of some natural resources are directly connected to public health and should be heavily controlled. Other natural resources have complicated trade-offs where conservation, restoration, and unregulated management are desirable methods.

**Future Land Use Map**
The Future Land Use Map is an image that represents both natural and man-made features of the County. Analysis and public input were used to classify uses of land in Piatt County that are suitable, and projected demand for land use types. Six land use categories described with both words and images can create an image of future land use in Piatt County.

**Plan Implementation**
Implementation of the Piatt County Economic Development Plan includes a series of long-term projects including an Economic Development Strategy. Potential funding sources for all implementation items have been identified ranging from federal to local sources. Successful plan implementation involves monitoring the plan to update priorities, seek new funding sources, complete benchmarks, and update the plan. The success of this Comprehensive Plan will be revealed through regulatory changes, increased public awareness and involvement, further planning and study, and interagency cooperation. This plan contains information that can be referenced on a regular basis by community members, officials and potential funding agencies.