McGehee, Arkansas

LAND USE
AND
MASTER STREET PLAN

2010

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 The Plan

This document contains General Development Plan for the city of McGehee, Arkansas. The city council and planning commission developed this plan to guide the development of the city as it meets the challenges of the 21st Century. Typical of cities within the Mississippi River delta, McGehee faces a changing agricultural economy and lack of economic and population growth.

One important purpose of the plan is to establish the basis for enforcing land use regulations. The plan will also guide the decisions of both the Planning Commission and City Council during the planning period, estimated to be 15 to 20 years. The General Plan serves all citizens and property owners within the city as well as others having a stake in the future of the city. Specifically, it impacts the following:

- Residents of the area who expect a stable social and economic environment
- Potential residents or business owners who may move into the city
- Business owners whose livelihood depends on continued growth and prosperity
- The McGehee City Council, Planning Commission
- Municipal departments and department heads
- Organizations promoting economic development in the area
- Professionals in real estate or development

A primary concern of the plan is maintaining McGehee's position as a regional retail center. Its service area is one of agriculture and agriculturally-based industries. In this light, the plan concentrates less on prescribing precise land uses and more on creating a healthy and prosperous location for both businesses and residences.

1.2 Authority

The purpose of the General Plan is consistent with the provisions of Arkansas Codes, Annotated (A.C.A.), §14-56-403. This section requires that plans of a municipality be "… prepared in order to promote, in accordance with present and future needs, the safety, morals, order, convenience, and general welfare of the citizens." The statutes further state that plans may provide for, among other things, the following:

- Efficiency and economy in the process of development
- The appropriate and best use of land
- Convenience of traffic and circulation of people and goods
- Safety from fire and other dangers
- Adequate light and air in the use and occupancy of buildings
- Healthful and convenient distribution of population
- Good civic design and arrangement
- Adequate public utilities and facilities
- Wise and efficient expenditure of funds

1.3 Relationship to Regulatory Documents

The Arkansas planning statutes, in A.C.A. § 14-56-416 (a)(1) provide:

> Following adoption and filing of the land use plan, the commission may prepare for submission to the legislative body a recommended zoning ordinance for the entire area of the municipality.

The statutes further provide in A.C.A. § 14-56-417 (a)(1):

> Following adoption and filing of a master street plan, the Planning Commission may prepare and shall administer, after approval of the legislative body, regulations controlling the development of land.

These provisions, along with the modern history of planning since the landmark case of Village of Euclid, Ohio v. Ambler Realty Co., 272 U.S. 365 (1926), signify a strong relationship between the plan and its supporting regulations. In simple terms, a municipality first plans, then regulates. The primary supporting regulations consist of the zoning code and development (subdivision) regulations. As stated in A.C.A. § 14-56-412 (e):

> In order to promote, regulate, and control development and to protect the various elements of the plans, the commission, after adoption of appropriate plans as provided, may prepare and transmit to the legislative body such ordinances and regulations as are deemed necessary to carry out the intent of the plans, or of parts thereof.

Planners take these provisions literally and encourage municipalities to base decisions in land use and development upon adopted plans to the greatest extent possible. At the same time, it has been noted in court decisions in Arkansas that plans are not legal documents but rather broad statements of municipal policy. The legal force arises from the adopted regulations developed to support the plan. In order to reconcile these considerations, the Planning Commission will first determine if a proposal deviates from the spirit and intent of the plan. If it does, the Commission will then consider an amendment to the comprehensive plan before considering the proposal.

Chapter Two: Context

2.1 History

The history of the city of McGehee and the history of the railroad through McGehee are intricately interwoven. The history of the railroad dates back to 1870 when a railroad was constructed from Pine Bluff southeast through Varner, to Chicot.

In April 1923, the Gulf Coast Lines and the International-Great Northern were acquired, forming the Missouri Pacific Lines.

Important in the history of the town of McGehee is the McGehee family which came to the area from Alabama in 1857. Benjamin McGehee, his wife, Sarah, a son, Abner and daughters Laura and Mary settled on land that is now a part of McGehee.

Abner McGehee, son of Benjamin and Sarah McGehee purchased 240 acres of land on July 1, 1876, on which the town of McGehee was later to be located.

When the railroad came into McGehee in 1878 and continued south and southwest, people began to move into the area. Abner McGehee constructed a large commissary building and entered the mercantile business to accommodate the new arrivals.

One of the first buildings in the area was a saw mill. The lumber cut in this mill was used to build shotgun type rent houses.

A post office was established in the McGehee commissary, and in 1879 Abner McGehee became the first postmaster. The post office was named McGehee and served between 400 and 500 people.

An order of incorporation was signed March 5, 1906. The first meeting of the town council was held July 21, 1906.

Today the economy of the area is largely dependent upon agriculture. The railroad has been largely replaced by the trucking industry which hauls farm products from the gins and grain bins of the area to their destination. From a population of 400 in 1879, McGehee has grown into a community of about 5,000 citizens.

Chapter Three: Trends

The trends apparent within the city's planning area are consistent with most communities in the Arkansas Delta. They include the following:

1. The city and the county must deal with a decades-old trend in America away from an agricultural economy toward first a manufacturing economy and then toward a service/information based economy.

2. In recent years, areas such as Desha County and its cities have been particularly impacted by the movement of industrial jobs to overseas location. Some of the old familiar strategies of industrial recruitment are becoming less and less valid in the current world economy.

3. A shift from rail to highways in the movement of goods has favored cities on interstate highways. Most major industries now desire to locate within ten miles of a freeway.

4. Demographic shifts over the last twenty or so years have favored small to medium-sized communities that are located within commuting distance of large, metropolitan cities.

5. Most medium-sized and smaller communities in Arkansas face a departure of many of their young people upon the completion of their education as they seek employment opportunities in larger cities, particularly those in other states.

3.1 Population

Both McGehee and Desha County experienced a loss of over eight percent in population between 1990 and 2000. This is typical of cities in the region that face similar forces. Projections prepared for the state anticipate a similar loss for the next census, to be completed in the year 2010. It is vital the city leaders, business owners, and residents understand that such losses have little to do with any inherent flaws in the community and much to do with trends in farming areas throughout the United States.

In terms of population composition, McGehee is a diverse community. In 1990, 57.3 percent of the population was white and 41.8 percent was of African-American descent. Of the remaining population, the Hispanic population, a growing segment, represented 1.50 percent.

3.2 Education

According to the 2000 Census, the city had higher percentage of persons with a high school diploma with 70 percent. This was higher than either the state rate (66.3 percent) or that of Desha County (56.5 percent.) The percentage of persons with a Bachelor's degree or higher was (13.7 percent). This was lower than the rate for the state (16.7). In 1992, the city's rate had been higher. One explanation for the drop is the diminishing availability of jobs in the area that require an advanced degree.

3.3 Income

All income figures used in this section originated from the records of the United States Bureau of the Census.

As of the 1990 census, the median family income in McGehee ($13,341) was near the figure for the state as a whole ($14,134.) By the time the 2000 census figures appeared, the gap had widened and the income lever in the City of McGehee ($14,191) had grown less that the state level of $16,904. There are a number of factors that may have combined to create this trend. These include the generally depressed condition of the Arkansas Delta, a loss of manufacturing base, out-migration of higher income earning families, and an aging population that moved from a wage-earner category to retirement incomes.

Whatever the reasons, this trend represents a major condition to be addressed in this plan. This proposition is further supported by the fact that, as of the year 2000, the census reported that 26.7 percent of the families in McGehee lived below the poverty level. The state figure for the same period was 12 percent.

3.4 Housing

The housing stock in McGehee resembles that of most historically viable cities in the state. The only exception to this is the smaller percentage, relative to the state, of housing constructed during the last 20 years. This correlates directly to the lack of population growth in the agricultural regions of the state.

In terms of housing costs as a percentage of income, the figures for the city correspond closely the state. There appears to be no alarming unbalance in this area. This can be accounted for by the existence of a sound housing stock which, from visual inspections, has been well-cared for. Also, the city has engaged in an active program of demolishing substandard stock and while, there has been a net loss of housing, the loss of population has kept the demand for new housing low and the vacancy rate manageable.

Table One, on the following page, summarizes the housing characteristics in the city according to the last two reporting periods. It appears from the figures, and from national trends as this plan was being prepared, that there may be a greater demand for rental units during the planning period.

Although the figures in Table One are ten years old, they do indicate that housing costs are low in the McGehee area. It is likely that a large percentage of homeowners would not be able to afford the costs of new housing. It is vital, therefore, that existing units be preserved to the extent that they remain decent, safe, and sanitary.

TABLE ONE
HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS IN
MCGEHEE, ARKANSAS 1990-2000

	1990	2000
Total Housing Units	2,048	2,032
Single Family	76.2%	79.8%
Multi-Family	16.4%	15.1%
Mobile Home, trailer, or other	7.4%	5.2%
Occupied Units	90.1%	89.8%
Owner Occupied	65.6%	61.5%
Renter Occupied	34.4%	38.5%
Vacant Units	9.9%	10.2%
Homeowner Vacancy Rate	3.0	2.6
Rental Vacancy Rate	13.4	8.7
Median Value and Contract Rent		
Median Value of Owner-occupied Units	$39,700	$47,200
Median Contract Rent	$158	$213

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

3.5 Employment

At the time this plan took shape, the United States suffered from one of the worst economic downturns since the great depression of the 1930s. The national unemployment rate stood at 9.8 percent and predictions estimated a peak above ten percent. The unemployment rate for the state stood at 9.8 percent as well. For the individual 75 counties of the state, the unemployment rate varied from a low of 4.3 percent in Carroll County to a high of 14.8 in Arkansas County.

At the time, Desha County's unemployment rate was 9.9 percent, practically equal to the state and national averages. The Arkansas Department of Workforces Services does not provide unemployment data below the county level.

According to the departments 2009 Arkansas Labor Market and economic Report for the first six months of 2009, the employment categories showing the fastest growth in employment in eastern Arkansas were as follows.

- Chemical Manufacturing
- Wholesale Electronic Markets and Agents and Brokers
- Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction
- Warehousing and Storage
- Ambulatory Health Care Services
- Health and Personal Care Stores
- Hospitals
- Waste Management and Remediation Service
- Social Assistance
- Support Services

Conversely, the categories that experienced the greatest decline in employment are as follows.

- Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing
- Gasoline Stations
- Food and Beverage Stores
- Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods
- Plastics and Rubber Products Manufacturing
- Personal and Laundry Services
- Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing
- Food Manufacturing
- Machinery Manufacturing
- Miscellaneous Store Retailers

The data above should serve to guide local leaders in preparing strategic plans for the community's future. The information indicates, as might be expected, a move away from traditional manufacturing jobs and toward personal services and high-technology fields. The growth in heavy construction is no doubt due to a major refurbishing and upgrading of U.S. Highway 65 between Pine Bluff and Lake Village in southeast Arkansas.

3.6 Conclusions

Each planning project is unique and the approach should be customized to fit the community. While the development forces that confront the City of McGehee may be similar to those confronting other cities in the Arkansas Delta, McGehee is a unique place. Its growth plan should reflect that fact.

Census data report that the city and county lost population over the last reporting period. Projections are that this trend may continue for the upcoming census. For cities in Arkansas facing this situation, and a number of them are, it is common for those affected to believe that this is due to some internal reason that can be remedied with the right combination of programs and expenditures. Unfortunately, history does not support this argument.

To a significant degree, what faces the City of McGehee and Desha County is the result of a number of trends that are totally beyond the control of local government. The City's Plan, and most importantly, the goals and objectives it sets for its future course, needs to acknowledge these trends. If the Plan sets unrealistic goals, the inevitable result will be disappointment and abandonment of the Plan as irrelevant. Rather than lay out a course of action that runs counter to national trends, the City needs to consider strategies to improve the quality of life for its residents in a manner that does not depend on the outside world. Important trends include the following.

1. The city and county have always had a diverse population and one with widely different household economies. The fact that both county and local governments work hard to accommodate families of different backgrounds is highly commendable. Such communities must work that much harder to make sure that all voices are heard and that all viewpoints are considered. Communities with homogeneous populations find it relatively easy to agree on future planning strategies.

2. The city and the county must deal daily with a century-old trend in America away from an agricultural economy toward first a manufacturing economy and then toward a service/information based economy.

3. In recent years, areas such as Desha County and its cities have been particularly impacted by the movement of industrial jobs to overseas location. Some of the old familiar strategies of industrial recruitment are becoming less and less valid in the current world economy.

4. A shift from rail to highways in the movement of goods has favored cities on interstate highways. Most major industries now desire to locate within ten miles of a freeway.

5. Demographic shifts over the last twenty or so years have favored small to medium-sized communities that are located within commuting distance of large, metropolitan cities.

3.7 Implications

In summary, the City of McGehee could benefit from a strategic approach rather than one focused on land use and potential population growth. Such an approach will focus on such things as maintaining and improving upon basic systems and building upon the assets of the city. The long range goal will be a community that will attract growth from new sources while retaining existing residents.

It is true that population growth has traditionally served as a chief indicator of a community's health. There are obvious benefits to an increasing population that make such growth a worthwhile goal. These include the following.

1. Increased population attracts more and larger types of businesses to the community.

2. Increases in population usually mean that more land is put into productive use, thereby increasing the amount of property tax revenue generated.

3. Increases in population enlarge the available work force to attract new industry.

4. Increases in population increase the level of sales tax revenue for the community.

The benefits outlined above also create costs that must be borne by the city in terms of municipal services. As the population grows, there are additional demands, for example, on police and fire departments, parks, streets and utilities. For this reason, some cities with explosive population growth have faced the greatest financial difficulties and some have had to resort to unpopular measures such as development impact fees. On the other hand, there have been isolated cases in which cities had a negative population growth while enjoying explosive commercial growth on a regional basis. In these cases, the result can be a major positive cash flow event.

Most of the benefits listed above are not confined to the city proper. Any increases in the collection of property taxes will benefit both the city and the county. Industrial development can benefit a region even larger than the county. City sales tax revenue accrues only to the city but is collected from a much larger population, even from some families simply traveling through the city.

In terms of implications for planning, the following might be considered.

1. There are no signs for the immediate future of a set of conditions that would create a significant increase in population.

2. The location of an interstate highway adjacent to McGehee could be a tremendous benefit but is too far into the future to impact planning for this planning period. In other words, current strategies may envision the new highway but should not depend upon it in the short term.

3. The City must expect to continue to be impacted by the negative trends that have beset the Arkansas Delta for the last 30 or so years.

On the positive side, the following are noticeable.

1. The city is stable and improving in overall appearance.

2. Revenue collections appear to be stable to increasing.

3. The city maintains a large retail trade area.

4. Agriculture is still a vibrant part of the city's economy.

5. The city seems to be weathering the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression and should be healthier as the country moves to recovery.

6. The city has a substantial history and legacy to build upon.

7. The existing utility and street system, while needing improvements as do all municipal systems in the state, face no immediate and potentially devastating problems.

Application to Planning Process

1. Instead of growth in population numbers, the city should concentrate on growing the quality of the population. This would include, but not be limited to, such areas as health, education, income, job training, and household incomes.

2. The city should continue the past programs of improving the physical setting of the city. This will include continued code enforcement, demolition of derelict structures, beautification projects, and programs aimed at improving housing quality.

3. Immediate efforts should continue to address these basic needs.

4. To the extent that it is financially possible, the city should partner with private business to promote business expansion. This should concentrate on upgrading the quality of existing business over attempts to attract new businesses.

5. Zoning and development decisions should be directed at stabilizing neighborhoods, increasing property values, making business development easier while promoting wise and efficient use of land.

6. Natural features such as the bayou should be considered a visual asset to the city.

7. A major goal of the city should be the development or redevelopment of vacant property.

8. The Planning Commission should pay particular attention to the appearance of corridors leading into and through the city.

9. The Planning Commission should encourage the development of workforce housing and housing for the "baby-boomer" population that is likely to seek retirement housing close to health care and services.

Land Banking and Land Trusts

Physical deterioration and absentee ownership are issues in the older parts of most cities. Land Banking and Land Trusts are two tools beyond code enforcement that a city can use to address these issues and spur quality housing development.

The Arkansas State legislature recently passed a law that allows local municipalities to practice land banking. Through land banking, the City has the power to purchase land and hold it for a number of years. During this time, the property has the potential to increase in value before it is sold. The city can also accumulate land over time to make it more attractive for developers. This is especially helpful in blighted areas. Instead of condemning property, sending notices to absentee landowners, or placing a lien on the property, all of which can leave the initial problem

unsolved for years and make neighboring property less attractive, cities can buy blighted land, accumulate it, and sell it for large-scale redevelopment.

With a community land trust, a nonprofit or other entity purchases previously developed land in the area and leases it out long-term, usually to low-income members of the community. The people leasing the land own their home but not the land itself. This allows the homeowners to accrue equity while giving the community land trust the power to restrain real estate speculation and gentrification, ensuring long-term availability of affordable housing. By supporting these initiatives, the City can play a big role in shaping its neighborhoods and ensuring they are attractive, safe, and affordable.

Chapter Four: Goals and Strategies

4.1 General

This section sets forth the goals, objectives, and policies which will guide the development of the comprehensive plan. They are based on the history, trends, geography, and issues facing the city. The goals are the end toward which the plan is directed and represent the overall vision of the city. The objectives are the means to achieving this end. An objective represents a clear "milepost" along the strategically chosen path to the goals. The policies set forth a course of action. Once the plan is adopted, these policies will outline the specific actions and stances the city will take in order to achieve its goals.

The main purpose of this plan is to influence community growth; however, there are several other issues the city should address before tackling growth issues.

First, the city should focus on fixing the basics, such as the utility and road system. Next, the city should focus on building on assets that already exist in the community. Then the city should focus on creating neighborhoods of choice and building family wealth. These areas stress that a city which is growing in population may not be as important as a city which is growing in quality. Such quality can be measured in terms such as median income levels, family health, education levels, employment opportunities, and quality neighborhoods. Addressing these areas first will add to the overall success of the city's strategies for growth and development.

4.2 Fixing the Basics

GOAL 4.2.1: To build and maintain a solid foundation for community growth and development.

> **Objective 4.2.1a:** Immediately identify, isolate, and address any instances of deterioration that would threaten the stability of any area of the city.
>
> **Objective 4.2.1b:** Identify and build upon successful redevelopments.
>
> **Objective 4.2.1c:** Maintain positive and helpful relationships with existing businesses.
>
> **Objective 4.2.1.d:** Adopt clear and progressive development regulations.
>
> **Objective 4.2.1.e:** Maintain a positive working relationship between the city council, planning commission and business community.

GOAL 4.2.2: To create good civic design and appearance in both commercial and residential areas.

Objective 4.2.1a: Include design standards in commercial buildings that front major entryways into the city.

Objective 4.2.1.b: Maintain the stability of exiting residential neighborhoods by making alternate forms of affordable housing subject to conditional use permits.

4.3 Building on Assets

GOAL 4.3: To build on existing assets within the community.

Objective 4.3.1a: Build a diversified economic base.

Objective 4.3.1b: Develop a positive image through aggressive marketing.

Objective 4.3.1c: Improve Downtown as the city center.

Objective 4.4.1.d: Connect open spaces and parks with pedestrian and bicycle systems

Objective 4.4.1.e: Preserve the historic and natural features of the city.

4.4 Creating Neighborhoods of Choice

GOAL 4.4.1: To enhance residential areas and provide quality neighborhoods for all residents.

Objective 4.4.1a: Maintain residential neighborhoods that are functional and offer easy access to work centers, the central business district, and community facilities such as parks and schools.

Objective 4.4.1b: Keep and attract people who work in McGehee to live in the city.

Objective 4.4.1c: Preserve, protect, and enhance the environment.

Objective 4.4.1d: Expand public space.

Objective 4.4.1e: Continue present code enforcement and demolition programs.

4.5 Building Family Wealth

GOAL 4.5.1: To increase the welfare, wealth, and overall quality of living for families in the community.

Objective 4.5.1a: Increase the percentage of high school graduates entering college.

Objective 4.5.1b: Increase the percentage of young people returning to work and live in McGehee after completing higher education.

Objective 4.5.1c: Work with Arkansas Economic Development Commission and the Chamber of Commerce to support local business growth and encourage new businesses to locate in the city.

Objective 4.5.1d: Improve family health through community health and nutrition programs.

4.6 Influencing Community Growth

GOAL 4.6.1: To manage development in a way that will maintain community stability and prosperity.

Objective 4.6.1a: Assure that residential properties develop so that the values of adjacent properties do not suffer.

Objective 4.6.1b: Assure that the character of residential property is not affected by the encroachment of incompatible land uses.

GOAL 4.6.2: To maintain a functional and desirable transportation system.

Objective 4.6.2a: Maintain connectivity and harmony among the various neighborhoods of the city.

Objective 4.6.2b: Maximize roadway capacity and preserve corridors to allow for future roadway construction.

Objective 4.6.2c: Create a more walk-able community by building corridors that are inviting and functional for pedestrians.

Objective 4.6.2d: Assure that infrastructure improvements will not focus solely on streets and automobile transportation, but will consider the broader transportation environment, including sidewalks, streetscapes, bike paths, trails, and overall connectivity of pedestrian routes.

GOAL 4.6.3: To coordinate land use planning, growth, and utilities in the most efficient and effective manner.

Objective 4.6.3a: Provide all areas within McGehee with adequate sanitary sewer and water distribution facilities and to assure the availability of utilities for the continued growth of the city.

Objective 4.6.3b: To ensure that future development will neither exceed the ability of the land to maintain vital natural functions, nor the availability of public facilities to support that development.

Objective 4.6.3c: To achieve well-planned developments that feature a maximum use of the land, good traffic circulation, convenient access and egress, and a pleasant environment for the residents and to reduce per capita cost of municipal services.

Chapter Five: Land Use Plan

5.1 Plan Elements

The General Plan acts a guideline. It is based on an analysis of the city's past and present trends. These include population, land use, housing, natural resources, economy, public facilities, and transportation.

To provide the best plan possible it is important to treat issues affecting the city in a realistic and honest manner. The city is experiencing the effects of long term trends common to many communities within the Arkansas Delta. The city's population is declining, the city is aging both in terms of population and housing stock, and access to good employment opportunities is limited. These trends are not the result of any failure on the part of the city or community, but are indicative of a larger shift in society. As such, the city should strongly direct its efforts toward growing in quality rather than growing in population.

Community Development

What this means in real terms is that the city should work toward maintaining and enhancing the beauty of the city's built environment through beautification programs and sustained or increased code enforcement efforts. The city should also collaborate with and work to support organizations in the community that foster the growth and development of the city's residents through programs such as youth reading, adult education, youth recreation, etc. Investments in these areas will work to position the city as competitive force in attracting future growth and economic development when projects such as the future Interstate Highway 69 are completed.

Community events and programs are a way to support the local economy. The plan recommends the city create and promote community events, especially in the downtown area, on a monthly basis. This will help support the restaurants and retail shops downtown and create a greater sense of community. It may also draw visitors to McGehee from the surrounding area. Possible community events and programs include sports tournaments, festivals, fairs, parades, and concerts. These events should be planned and executed in such a manner as to exhibit the most positive aspects of the community. This might include a festival honoring local history or industry, a tasting of foods from local restaurants, or an exhibition of goods from local merchants and artists.

Regulations

While the city should direct strong efforts toward growing in quality, additional issues require attention as well. At current the city does not have regulations governing the subdivision of lands within the city, and its zoning regulations are dated. Without updated and complete regulations the interests of the city residents and property owners have limited protection from the adverse effects of incompatible development. Adopting updated regulations will protect both the city and its residents and help insure logical and compatible future development occurs that maintains or increases the value of property for residents.

Gateways

Some of the most important aesthetic features of a city are its gateways and major corridors. This is the first thing people see when they enter the city, and, in a way, these areas illustrate the city's character and priorities. Consequently, the design of these areas should be a priority for the city.

The plan recommends the city implement beautification projects around its gateways. These would include increased landscaping, additional signature signage, and other improvements. In order to gain community support for beautification projects, the city should work to get the community involved in the effort. If residents have invested their time into beautification projects, they are more likely to support continued efforts by the city. The plan recommends the city help organize and support community beautification projects to get residents involved. These might include neighborhood clean-up days, "Yard of the Month" competitions, Adopt-A-Street programs, a community garden project, or other programs.

Downtown

Downtown McGehee provides a healthy, vibrant central business district for the community. While in good shape, downtown is undoubtedly in a transitional state. The plan encourages the redevelopment of downtown vacancies. Plan goals and objectives recognize the changing role of downtown from a major commercial center to a district suitable for unique shops, small businesses, restaurants, and mixed commercial-residential uses. The city and Chamber of Commerce should work to attract businesses into the downtown area. However, maintaining downtown should go beyond working to attract business.

The plan suggests increased business coordination and promotion downtown. Research suggests downtowns with standardized business hours tend to fair better commercially. Coordinated promotions can also help attract customers for all businesses instead of only individual stores. The idea is to have businesses downtown work together as a functional, cohesive group rather than many disparate units. A central entity, such as the Chamber of Commerce, dedicated to downtown coordination could aid in facilitating small business development and achieving the above aims. Additional support for downtown could come in the form of recreational programming.

Land Use

The future land use map accompanying the narrative portion of the general plan summarizes the land use allocations for the city of McGehee. The future land use map is general and will be used by the planning commission and city council when making land use decisions.

The plan reflects a mix of the existing land use patterns, current zoning, and projected future land uses. The land use classifications on the future land use map correspond to zoning district classifications within the city's existing zoning code. However, additional land use classifications that do not correspond to the zoning classifications can found be in the future land

use map. These classifications are public/quasi-public and recreational uses. These uses are allowable under many different zoning districts in the zoning code.

In making future land use decisions the planning commission and city council should evaluate the impact of any decision on the existing nearby residents and the community at-large. The city should ensure the health, safety, and general welfare of it citizens are protected, but should also encourage the full use of private property.

Chapter Six: Work Plan

The plan for the city described herein is a simple one. This reflects the fact that while population is not increasing, the city is still a regional commercial center. As such—although it now faces a nation-wide recession—revenues should remain relatively stable. The primary challenges for city officials and community leaders are to make community a pleasant and comfortable place to live and to improve the lives of all citizens by a measurable amount each year. The following list summarizes activities directed at meeting those challenges.

1. The planning commission shall maintain the current stability among the various land uses. There is considerable vacant commercial and industrial land and it should satisfy demand throughout the planning period. The planning commission will encourage the re-use of existing vacant commercial property instead of re-zoning additional sites.

2. The city will continue the past programs of improving the physical setting of the city. This will include continued code enforcement, demolition of derelict structures, beautification projects, and programs aimed at improving housing quality. The city will expand the program of demolishing substandard and unsafe buildings to include removing building slabs and foundation. This will improve the appearance of the city as well as allowing temporary green space. It will also help improve the image of the city as a healthy and thriving environment.

3. The city will add, to its zoning regulations, requirements that commercial buildings on designated corridors will have front facades of approved materials and metal buildings will not be allowed.

4. The city council will establish a beautification committee charged with developing enhancements to existing features such as Crooked Bayou and existing parks.

5. The planning commission will designate gateway corridors leading into the city and develop regulations that will help present a positive image to visitors and residents alike.

6. The planning commission will submit updated development regulations to the city council for consideration. This will include subdivision regulations that will control the quality of any new subdivisions built within the city's planning area boundary.

7. Instead of growth in population numbers, the city will concentrate on growing the quality of the population. This would include, but not be limited to, such areas as health, education, income, job training, and household incomes.

8. To the extent that it is financially possible, the city will partner with private business to promote business expansion. This means placing a priority on upgrading the quality of existing business above attempts to attract new ones.

9. The Planning Commission will encourage the development of workforce housing and housing for the "baby-boomer" population that is likely to seek retirement housing close to health care and services.

Chapter Seven: Master Street Plan

The Master Street Plan for the City of McGehee sets forth official policy regarding the overall transportation system within the City's Planning Area Boundary. The transportation element forms a part of the City's overall comprehensive planning process. As such, it is not a legally binding document but rather a statement of policy. It should provide much of the basis for the review of any future development proposals reviewed by the Planning Commission. The plan serves the following purposes, as a minimum:

It establishes a functional classification system for streets and other transportation elements within the City and its planning area boundary.

It classifies both existing and proposed transportation elements according to an established functional classification system.

It sets forth, in graphic form, the location of existing and proposed transportation elements within the City's planning area boundary.

It establishes cross-sections for the various types of transportation elements that may be constructed within the planning area boundary.

It states policies which govern both the creation and implementation of various elements of the Master Street Plan.

It provides the statutory basis for the planning commission to implement the regulations contained in the City's Subdivision Code.

Goals

The Master Street Plan seeks to achieve the following goals:

TO ESTABLISH A TRANSPORTATION NETWORK TO SERVE THE PLANNING AREA FOR A TWENTY YEAR PLANNING PERIOD.

TO PROMOTE EFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCES COMMITTED TO CONSTRUCTION OF TRAFFIC FACILITIES IN BOTH THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS.

TO ALLOW EQUITABLE METHODS OF FINANCING NECESSARY TRAFFIC FACILITIES.

TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC FLOW AND REDUCE CONFLICT POINTS IN THE PLANNING AREA.

TO EXPAND THE MARKET AREA FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRIES BY REDUCIING TRAVEL TIMES.

TO ENSURE AN ADEQUATE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS WITH LIMITED PUBLIC RESOURCES.

Policies

The following policies are adopted and made part of this Master Street Plan:

Where appropriate, new developments will facilitate the interconnection of streets throughout the City and its planning area.

No subdivision plat shall be approved by the Planning Commission or City Council that does not comply with the Master Street Plan.

New developments adjacent to or encompassing existing streets shall be responsible for construction of the half street adjoining their property to the functional classification shown on the Master Street Plan.

Access points for individual properties fronting collector, minor arterial and major arterial streets shall be kept to a minimum to facilitate traffic movement and reduce accidents.

No City utilities will be furnished to properties in developments that have not complied with the provisions of the McGehee Subdivision Code.

The City encourages the use of non-vehicular traffic elements such as pedestrian ways and bike paths in new developments.

It is the City's policy that any new home or business constructed will front on an existing public street in order to provide fire, police, and other emergency services. Exceptions will be made for multi-unit apartment complexes and manufactured home parks.

Functional Classification

Following are highlights of the major physical recommendations indicated on the Master Street Plan Map.

STATE HIGHWAYS

Throughout the urban area, several major highways serve the City of McGehee. They serve as major and minor arterials for the master street plan but are under the control of the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department.

ARTERIAL STREETS

Arterial streets serve as major trafficways within a city, typically carrying high volumes of traffic. It is not anticipated that new arterial streets will be needed within the planning period. However, the sharing of cost for new arterial streets will be negotiated between the Arkansas Highway Transportation Department (if applicable), the developer, and the city.

COLLECTOR STREETS

The primary function of a local collector street is to take traffic from predominantly residential neighborhoods and direct them to an arterial network. As such, collectors serve a useful purpose in collecting, distributing, and dispersing traffic away from residential areas. It is important to design collectors so they will not function as continuous through streets, but will serve to collect traffic and place it onto perimeter arterial type roads.

As new developments occur, they will be responsible for construction of the collector street system. This will include improving all or a portion of existing streets located within, or adjacent to, the developments.

LOCAL STREETS

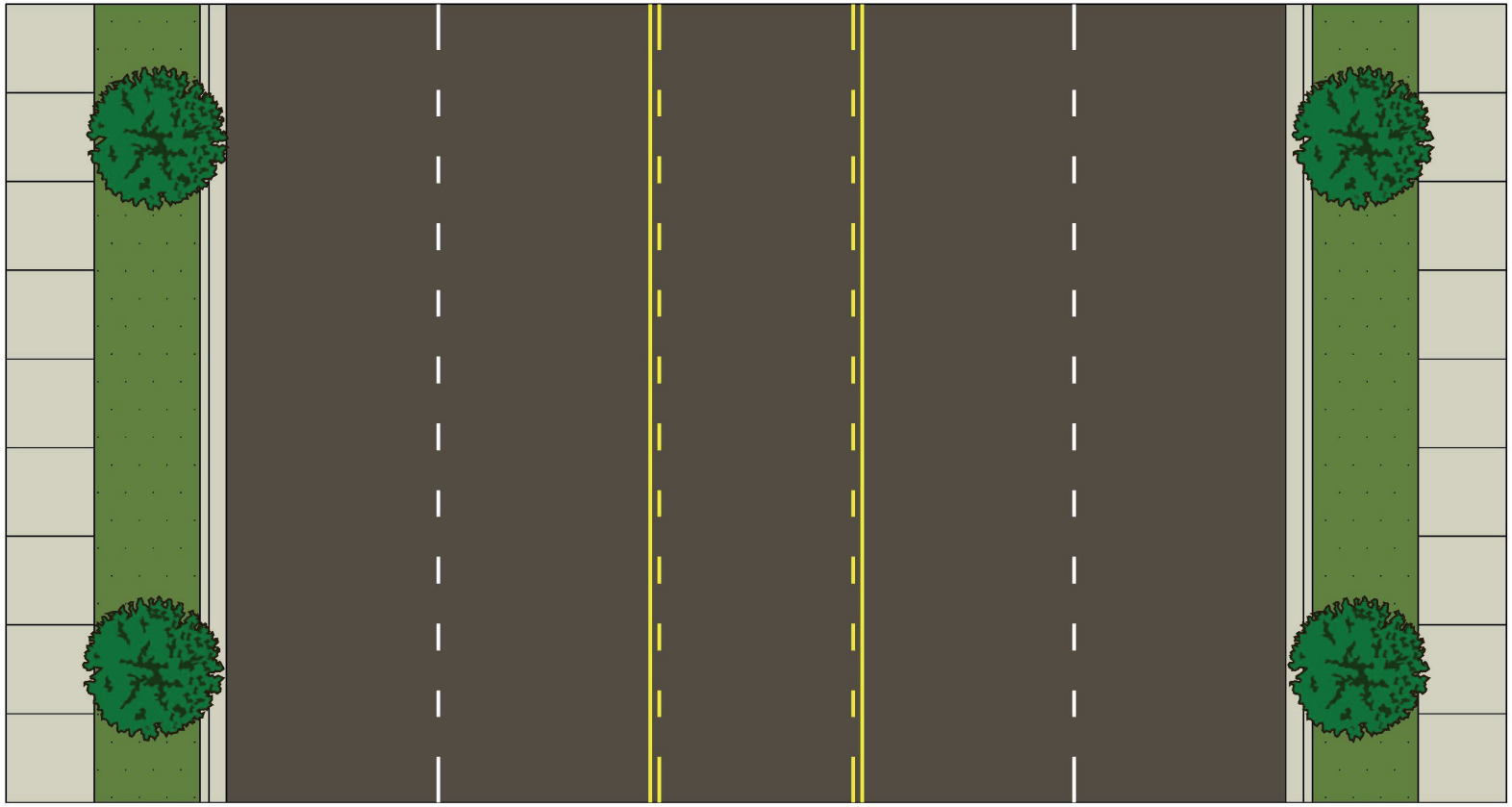
The purpose of local streets is to provide access to properties fronting on them. As a result, travel speeds are slow and local streets may share the roadway with bicycle and pedestrian traffic. Developers are responsible for all costs associated with local streets.

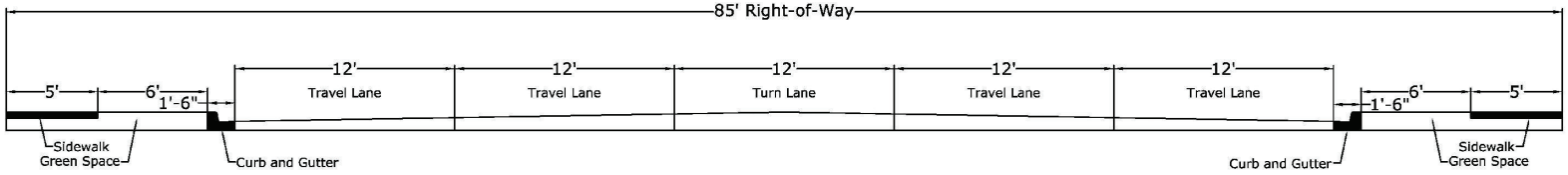
STANDARDS

The following standards are established for new street construction by functional classification.

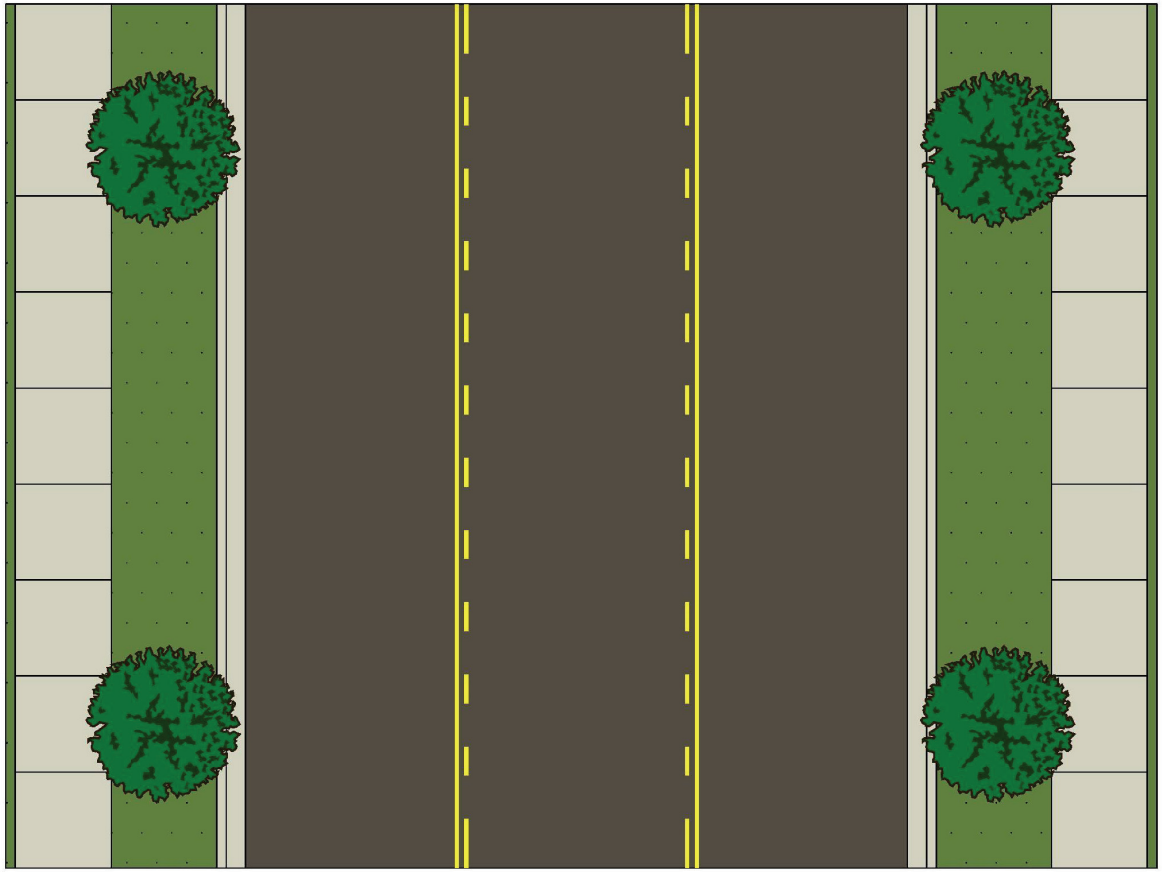
Classification	R-O-W Width	Street Width
Principal Arterial	70 – 90 Feet	60 – 90 Feet
Collector	60 Feet	36 Feet
Local	50 Feet	27 Feet

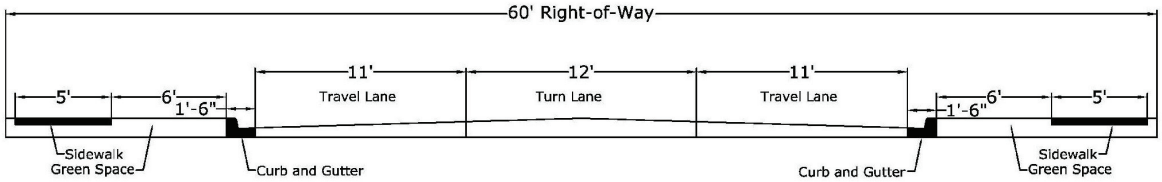
A1 - Arterial



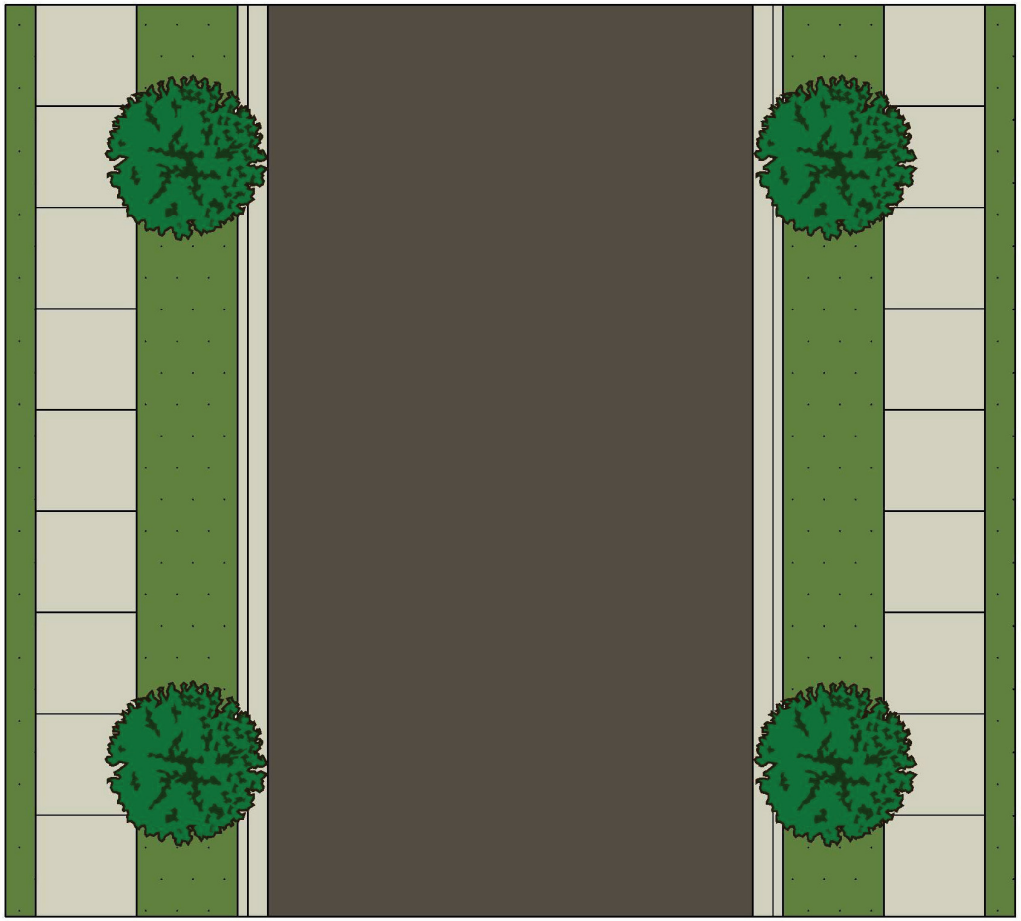

85' Right-of-Way
5'
6'
1'-6"
12'
Travel Lane
12'
Travel Lane
12'
Turn Lane
12'
Travel Lane
12'
Travel Lane
1'-6"
6'
5'
Sidewalk
Green Space
Curb and Gutter
Curb and Gutter
Sidewalk
Green Space

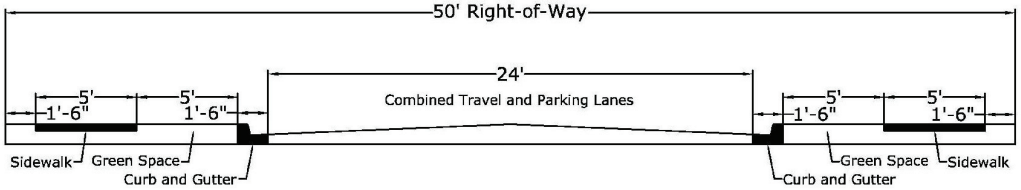
C1 - Collector





L1 - Local




50' Right-of-Way
24'
Combined Travel and Parking Lanes
5'
1'-6"
5'
1'-6"
5'
1'-6"
5'
1'-6"
Sidewalk
Green Space
Curb and Gutter
Curb and Gutter
Green Space
Sidewalk

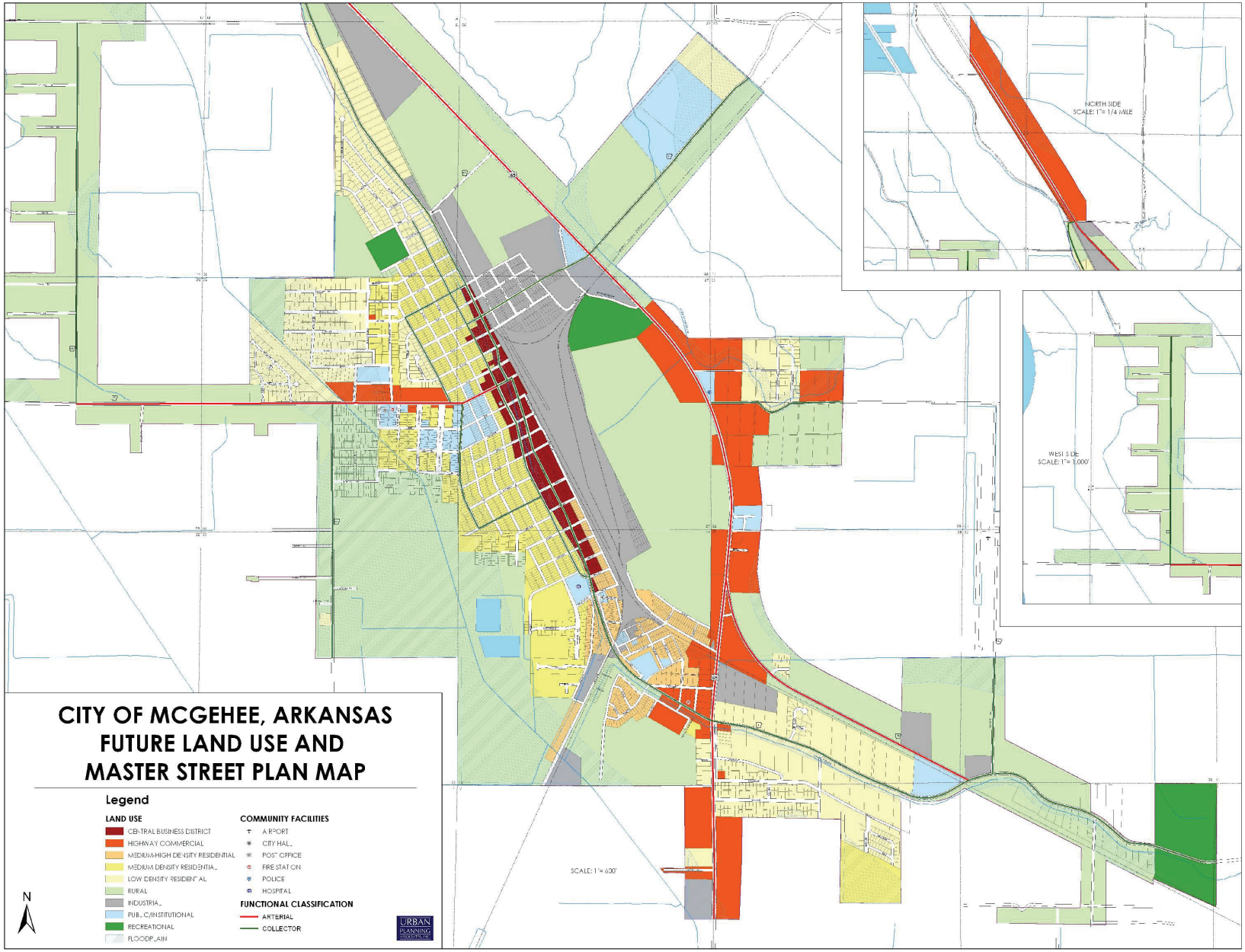
Chapter Eight: The Plan Map

The map on the following page summarizes the future land use plan in graphic form. It is not a zoning map. Its purpose is to set forth long-range policy with regard to zoning and regulation land use.

The proposed land uses follow closely the existing zoning pattern of the city. Given the number of demolitions of derelict commercial buildings, there should not be a great need for additional commercial land to be zoned commercial. The planning commission will, however, consider any future requests on a case by case basis.

The preservation of good civic design was a major goal discussed during the preparation of this plan. The land use map identifies key corridors leading into the city which will be considered for the application of design standards.

One of the primary issues sure to confront the planning commission during the next several years will involve affordable housing. Manufactured housing and modular housing will both provide sources of affordable housing. Their use, without substantial modification, may not be appropriate in every location. The zoning code will, therefore, create a conditional use procedure so that the location of alternate forms of affordable housing may be considered by the planning commission on a case-by-case basis.


CITY OF MCGEHEE, ARKANSAS
FUTURE LAND USE AND
MASTER STREET PLAN MAP
Legend
LAND USE
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL
MEDIUM-HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
RURAL
INDUSTRIAL
PUBLIC/INSTITUTIONAL
RECREATIONAL
FLOODPLAIN
COMMUNITY FACILITIES
AIRPORT
CITY HALL
POST OFFICE
FIRE STATION
POLICE
HOSPITAL
FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION
ARTERIAL
COLLECTOR
N
URBAN PLANNING RESOURCES
SCALE: 1" = 600'
NORTH SIDE
SCALE: 1" = 1/4 MILE
WEST SIDE
SCALE: 1" = 1,000'