

I. INTRODUCTION

The *Comprehensive Plan* for the City of Conway is an update of the adopted “1996 Growth Plan” and was initiated by the Conway City Council in the fall of 2003. The *Comprehensive Plan* is a graphic guideline reflecting the communities’ goals and objectives and should be viewed as an official public statement by the City of Conway City Council to facilitate the orderly growth and development of the existing and urbanizing land areas of Conway. The implied policies are expressed graphically by the *Comprehensive Plan* and embrace the following:

- Policies regarding transportation and circulation patterns and the location of major roadways and related functional street classifications;
- Policies providing for the expansion of public facilities and community services;
- Policies providing for predominant types of long-range land uses within and adjoining the incorporated limits of the City of Conway; and
- Policies for guiding and coordinating the use of privately-owned land, buildings, and improvements, thereby establishing the nature and extent of public interest.

The Plan is based on an analysis of the area's population growth and development potential, the current capacity of the area's infrastructure to support development or change, and the preferred arrangement of land uses based on existing conditions, extensive public input, and community participation throughout the planning process.

The *Comprehensive Plan* has evolved through a community planning process whereby information was gathered, analyzed, and evaluated from both the land planning and engineering viewpoint to determine which areas would be most practical and suitable for future urban development based on utility capacity, slopes, floodplains and floodways, and the existing and planned transportation infrastructure. These Plan components were analyzed prior to preparing the Plan and integrated with the various planning issues identified herein.

Plan Purpose

The *Comprehensive Plan* is a "generalized guideline" for orderly growth and development of the community. It is not a precise blueprint; hence by nature it requires a continuous update, proper interpretation and the use of good judgment in implementing the strategies to achieve a sound balance between public and private interests. The Plan's acceptance does not imply the absence of acceptable alternative arrangements or configurations of specific land uses at various locations that may be better suited to satisfy the Plan's intent. Such changes, however, should be consistent with sound planning and development principles. The Plan should be modified periodically as deemed necessary.

Authorization

The planning authority and the planning area jurisdiction for the City of Conway are permitted by Arkansas State Statute Act 186 of 1957. Conway's planning area extends up to five miles beyond its corporate limits for the purpose of subdivision regulations. The City of Conway may choose to enforce such regulations within this territorial jurisdiction in accord with the adopted policies of the Planning Commission and City Council.

Zoning or the restriction of the "use" of land is limited to all properties within the corporate boundaries of the City and as modified by the 1987 State Statute Act 56. It is the expressed public policy of the City of Conway to exercise appropriate zoning control within its corporate limits.

Planning Boundary

The planning boundary for the City of Conway is synonymous with the planning area identified by the *Comprehensive Plan*. The Conway planning area represents roughly 130 square miles and is bordered by Cadron Creek on the north; Arkansas River on the west; Rooster Road on the east; and the southern edge of Round Mountain to the south. (Figure 1)

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for the purpose of subdivision regulations. The City of Conway has chosen to enforce such regulations within its territorial jurisdiction in accord with its adopted planning area jurisdiction. The regulation of the "subdivision" of land is controlled by the City of Conway within the territorial jurisdiction. This territorial jurisdiction does not currently extend to the limits of the planning area, but is subject to change by the city council as conditions warrant.

II. REGIONAL SETTING

Conway, located roughly 25 miles northwest of Little Rock, is a thriving community of nearly 50,000 persons and the most populated city within Faulkner County. It is part of the growing multi-county Little Rock Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). As part of this central region, Conway's growth and economic development are closely tied to central Arkansas's regional and industrial employment opportunities. Since 2000 the City of Conway has continued to grow dramatically and has emerged as a viable self contained community.

The City of Conway is regionally tied to a transportation system coordinated by Metroplan which strives to incorporate a variety of transportation options for future residents of the City. Conway is served by Interstate 40 and U.S. Highways 64 and 65. Additionally, Union Pacific Railroad provides main line rail service through the City of Conway and its Central Business District.

The Arkansas River presents an unrealized opportunity for industrial growth as well as a major physical constraint to the ultimate urban western limits of the City. It is projected to be an attractive catalyst for the City's emerging western residential and public growth corridor. Conway's general economic base remains focused on three institutions of higher learning (UCA, Hendrix, and Central Baptist College), growing industrial and service industries, and expanding retail, medical, and service establishments.

III. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Overall goals and objectives were reviewed by the citizens participating in the planning process. The following goals and objectives have been identified by various participants, stakeholders and city leaders as desirable. The Plan document strives to incorporate each in order to promote the betterment of health, safety and general welfare for the community.

- Provide the citizens of Conway with a high quality environment, one conducive for living, working, and pursuing leisure time activities;
- Provide opportunities for a variety of housing choices both suitable and affordable situated throughout the City in desirable surroundings which reflect the needs for all citizens;
- Protect established residential areas from encroachment of incompatible uses and provide a high standard for development and redevelopment of residential areas;
- Develop high standards for urban development to ensure lasting quality in the development of business, commercial, and industrial establishments;
- Undertake drainage and road infrastructure improvements;
- Provide a logical pattern of land uses throughout the community incorporating an efficient relationship between transportation, public services, residential, commercial, industrial, and business areas;
- Provide high levels of public service including but not limited to educational, public health, safety, recreation, utility, and administrative services;
- Encourage intergovernmental coordination and cooperation at all levels of government, particularly between the City of Conway and Faulkner County;
- Encourage continued development of a strong diversified economic base and provide for the orderly distribution of compatible business and industrial employment opportunities, where appropriate,

throughout the City;

- Encourage the protection of natural resources and promote the Arkansas River public use corridor for the enjoyment of present and future generations;
- Establish and implement regulatory procedures within the territorial jurisdiction that will enable the physical development of the area without unacceptable disruption or spoiling of the environment;
- Undertake appropriate annexations to achieve and maintain a logical and efficient city boundary for orderly long-range growth and development;
- Expand the City's park and recreational system and trail network where appropriate throughout the community and provide a series of open space corridors predominantly located along major creeks and within floodplain and floodway areas;
- Acquire additional park areas and improve existing park facilities;

IV. IDENTIFIED PLANNING ISSUES

Through a series of public forums and meetings with citizens, city officials, and stakeholders throughout the community over the past several months the following major issues were identified as potential problem areas to be addressed and resolved to the fullest extent possible within the *Comprehensive Plan* framework. Identified issues include:

- *Additional points of access to Interstate 40 and interchange land use protection from incompatible land uses and unplanned growth*
- *Increased rail activity and conflicts with vehicular traffic*
- *South Loop transportation alignment and corridor selection along with future right-of-way protection*
- *New airport location and its environmental impact*
- *New high school site and combined educational/park facilities*
- *Transitional and sensitive undeveloped land areas adjoining arterial roads and appropriate land use development controls for such areas including overlay districts*
- *Drainage improvements throughout city*
- *Central Business District revitalization;*
- *Adaptive reuse of existing airport property*
- *Additional industrial growth opportunities /expansion of existing industrial land areas*
- *Traffic congestion and need for expanded road capacities;*
- *Equitable public/private cost-sharing of new infrastructure improvements;*
- *Improvements to community parks and recreational facilities; trail and parkway expansions*
- *Cost-effective annexations and expanded corporate limits;*
- *Continuity of arterial and collector streets;*
- *Impact of walled or gated communities;*
- *Preservation and reservation of public transportation corridors from urban encroachment;*

- *Buffering of established single-family residential areas from incompatible and intensive land uses.*

V. POPULATION & GROWTH TRENDS

The City of Conway continues to be one of the fastest growing communities in the State. In 2000 the population of the City of Conway was 43,167, a net gain of nearly 16,900 persons since 1990. Since 2000 growth has continued at a rate of 3.3%. Population forecasts for both Faulkner County and the City of Conway through the year 2020 are noted by Figure 2. Faulkner County is likely to surpass 100,000 persons by the year 2006. Roughly 5.5 out of every 10 persons in Faulkner County will reside in the City of Conway. By the year 2020 the City of Conway should approach 76,200 persons, a net increase from 2000 of about 32,900 persons.

Housing Trends

Recent trends in housing starts since 1995 are reflected on Figure 3. Average annualized starts since 1995 have approximated 700 units annually, exclusive of manufactured housing. Nearly six out of every 10 housing units built since 1995 were single-family housing starts. Should current trends continue over the next 15 years, the City of Conway will absorb, on average, roughly 415 single-family permits and 290 multi-family units annually.

Housing Unit Demand

Over the next 15 years a net increase in population for the City of Conway is expected to be approximately 32,900 persons. Such population increase will generate a substantial demand for new housing of all types. Based on building permit information over the past decade for both single family and multi-family starts nearly 200 acres per year will be required to meet residential housing demand for the City. Over the next 15 years roughly 3,000 acres will be converted from undeveloped land to housing development. Taking into account residential land use absorption represents approximately 75% of all acres converted (25% for other supporting services: commercial expansion; industrial developments; schools; churches; parks; open space; streets; and other land use activities) it can be determined roughly 4,000 gross acres will be demanded and likely converted from rural or vacant use to urban purposes within the next 15 years. This land use demand represents approximately 6.3 square miles of urban development for the City of Conway of which 4.7 square miles will be for residential purposes.

Geographic Distribution & Growth Areas

The population of Conway is nearly equally distributed among the four political wards. Since the mid-90's the surge of residential development has been concentrated in a westward direction toward the Arkansas River and southward along Arkansas Highway 60 and selected scattered portions of Round Mountain. With the recent roadway improvements of Dave Ward Drive (Arkansas Highway 60) a continued and expanded westward urban expansion is anticipated for all areas served by the city's waste water treatment facility. The approximate 10,000 projected new dwelling units through the year 2020 needed to fulfill the projected population gain will consume between 3,000 and 3,500 total acres or roughly 200-250 acres per year. The vast majority of this urbanization, should present trends continue, is likely to materialize between the current city limits and the Arkansas River.

VI. MAJOR DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

Various important physical development constraints exist throughout the Conway urban area and have been considered in the preparation of the *Comprehensive Plan*. These constraints are described below and further identified within the Plan.

Flood Plains: The most critical constraint to urban growth and fringe development is the identified 100-Year Floodplain as established by the U.S. Corps of Engineers. Development should be discouraged in low-lying areas where the probability of severe flooding occurring is estimated at 1% in any given year and the loss of property and life can be expected to accompany such flooding.

Steep Slopes/Excessive Grades: Urban development potential is severely limited within land areas where grades normally exceed a slope greater than 25%. Increased infrastructure costs for streets, water, sewer, and

other services and the normal rocky terrain accompanying such grades make urban development in such areas costly and generally impractical. Development therefore should be generally discouraged. Two prominent areas exist within the Conway study area where severe slopes may likely impede development. These areas are: the Cadron Mountain range, north of town; and substantial portions of Round Mountain, south of town.

Existing Land Use Patterns & Physical Features: In most instances existing land use patterns will remain intact and are likely to be unaffected by future suburban growth. These patterns, however, will influence the nature and intensity of future land uses in the fringe growth areas. Existing patterns shaped by natural physical features such as lakes, rivers, subsurface conditions, and soils provide a dominant physical constraint to future growth patterns.

Availability of Utilities: Extension of municipal water and sewer service throughout the City provide the primary catalyst to continued growth. Accelerated growth patterns in the western, southern, and selected eastern sections of the City are likely due to new or available water and sewer capacity. The west and southern sectors of the City are anticipated to be the primary growth sectors over the next two decades. Eastward urban expansion is likely to be concentrated along principal arterials where adequate water and sewer service exists and where water service conflicts with the Vilonia Water Improvement District is not an issue. According to officials at the Conway Corporation, the City-owned utility service company, water storage tank capacity is in-place to accommodate the projected growth throughout the planning area. Full municipal utility services do not appear to be a development constraint for Conway.

VII. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FEATURES

The *Comprehensive Plan* for the City of Conway and its emerging urban area is graphically portrayed by the plan map and encompasses the three statutory requirements: 1) master street plan; 2) public facility plan; and 3) existing land uses.

Additionally, the *Comprehensive Plan* has been prepared based on a careful analysis of utility infrastructure, existing conditions, floodway/floodplains, land ownership and subdivision patterns, existing zoning, physical constraints, and future plans for industrial and business development. Issues identified herein were likewise incorporated to achieve acceptable and compatible long-range land use relationships.

The Comprehensive Plan suggests a land use pattern for about twice the amount of land likely to be urbanized by private land development by the year 2020. This excess capacity allows for:

- flexibility for a growth rate greater than projected;
- additional land area to accommodate a variety of public and quasi-public uses not directly addressed by the plan including expansions of the University of Central Arkansas, Hendrix College, Central Baptist College, and other private and public institutions; expansion of medical facilities and hospitals, and increased opportunities for additional major parks and open spaces and recreation facilities.
- options and flexibility of choice for private developers in selecting development locations;
- the possibility for the Plan to serve as a general planning framework beyond a 15 to 20-year planning period.
- the ability for the Comprehensive Plan to provide a broad land use guideline for more precise plans by both public and private entities, particularly within the transitional zones.

Conway's Comprehensive Plan Elements

The basis for the Plan is the anticipated demand for land use activity based on projected population growth. The existing corporate limits for Conway encompasses roughly 39.6 square miles an increase of slightly over 8 square miles since 1996. About 1/2 of this land area is used for active urban purposes. To evaluate future land use needs a simple analysis of supply and demand for all major land use categories was compiled. Existing supply reveals roughly 15,000 acres of land is utilized for urban purposes. Since 1996, (the date of the previous plan update) about 3,200 acres have been absorbed for all urban purposes

To guide appropriate land use decisions and relationships of major land uses (residential, commercial, industrial, public, agricultural) the Plan provides a series of existing and proposed land use types throughout

the study area.

Land Use Classification System

The *Comprehensive Plan* includes a number of land use symbols graphically indicated by color and letter designation on the Plan's legend. Other characteristics of the categories of land use and the zoning districts which would be appropriate in implementing the Plan are noted below. However, it should be noted a detailed review of actual development proposals in relation to the context of individual sites will ultimately determine the appropriate zoning action by the appropriate government reviewing agencies.

To facilitate the elimination of strip commercial development and to improve the possibilities of clustered planned commercial areas, commercial activities are clustered at appropriately spaced intervals on the plan referred to as "commercial nodes" near the junctions of selected major arterial roadways. Such commercial nodes are reflected within the plan and are noted as:

- **Neighborhood Convenience Center (NC):** Areas appropriate for neighborhood convenience centers are distributed throughout the Plan and are identified as "quick shop" small-scale retail sales and services providing primarily convenience goods and services to adjoining neighborhoods (i.e. service station). Maximum size - 20,000 square feet of floor area - 2-3 acre site. (Appropriate zoning: C-2).
- **Neighborhood Shopping Center (NS):** Major convenience shopping centers typically anchored by a large grocery store or supermarket. Maximum recommended size – 100,000 square feet of Gross Leaseable Area with appropriate acreage of approximately 15-20 acres. (Appropriate zoning: C-2).
- **Community Shopping Center (CS):** Community shopping centers are planned developments with one or more major general merchandise stores. Maximum recommended size - 250,000 square feet Gross Leaseable Area within an approximate 40-acre site. (Appropriate zoning: Commercial Planned Unit Development).
- **Strip Development District (CD):** Free-standing retail sales and services business, tourist and transient services, and small-scale offices. (Appropriate zoning: C-3).
- **Highway (Interstate-40) Commercial Development:** To be located within the immediate area of influence (+/- 1,000') of the pending new intersections of Interstate 40 with arterial roadways. These highway service areas and surrounds are to be planned as integrated units allowing for future extensions of frontage roads where appropriate.
- **Office Park (OP):** Small-scale planned office developments with 8,000 to 40,000 square foot buildings up to 3 stories in height. (Appropriate zoning: O-1).
- **Transitional / Mixed Land Use District :** Allocated primarily along major roadways where more intense land uses are deemed appropriate this zone affords a conversion of property to more intense uses (multi-family residential, professional offices, limited commercial) only when sensitivity to adjoining residential areas is taken into account. Typical depth of transitional areas from the abutting arterial not to exceed 660' and should encompass a wide natural perimeter buffer zone. Site plan review for transitional zones is highly desirable and recommended.

Significant Comprehensive Plan Highlights & Development Opportunities

Important aspects of the *Comprehensive Plan* include:

1. The long-range location of three (3) additional points of access into the interstate 40 to alleviate traffic congestion and improve overall traffic circulation.
2. The location of the adopted south loop arterial alignment around western and southern Conway.
3. Planned continuity of the arterial street network throughout the urbanizing area of Conway. Location of expanded collector streets to appropriately disperse neighborhood traffic to abutting arterial street system.
4. Location of three "special study areas" within the established central city for refined and detailed land use considerations.

5. Location of FAA approved new municipal airport facility site and street network to serve the adjoining airport district.
6. Expansion and enhancement of the public park system focused predominately along major drainage-ways or utility easements with linkages to a connected pedestrian trail/pathway system and the school's park/playground network.
7. General location for multi-family and non-single family residential areas with range of desired residential density.
8. General location of future school and park/playground sites as well as community parks.
9. Selected office park concentration and development and expansion for at least three office park complexes.
10. Transitional zone mix use development along major arterials (i.e. Dave Ward Drive, US Highway 64 East). Transitional zone development will require a "site plan review" process which in turn shall address compatibility issues, buffering and intensity of non-single family applications.
11. Non-single family use near or adjacent to Conway Regional Medical Center where acceptable small-scale medical office and related uses are deemed appropriate.
12. Development of limited commercial uses at scattered selected commercial nodes in accord with restricted square footage, building footprints and adjoining land use buffers to established single-family residential areas. Each node contemplated at build out of supporting residential areas.
13. Graphic identification of existing floodway and floodplain and discouragement of urban development patterns within such floodprone areas.
14. Disbursement of employment generators throughout the community as well as future light industrial land uses.
15. The protection of a broad north-south public river corridor along the east bank of the Arkansas River between the Arkansas Highway 60 River Bridge and the future slack water harbor site near Cadron Creek. A public pedestrian linkage south of the river bridge to the future proposed river front park (west of levee near new airport site)

Transportation Plan

Conway urban area transportation plan is reflected by Figure 6 and shows the functional classification of streets throughout the planning area. The continuance of existing collector and arterial streets is critical to the dispersion of traffic in Conway and the alleviation to some of the current traffic problems. The Master Street Plan reflected by Figure 1 has been incorporated within the overall Comprehensive Plan and will be an integral part of the Plan. As part of the planning process it is anticipated that over time necessary adjustments will be made for the precise alignment of collectors and arterials throughout the urban areas and such adjustments should be considered as part of the platting process.

VIII. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The tools available to the City of Conway for achieving the stated goals and objectives as stated herein include the *Zoning Ordinance* and the *Subdivision Regulations*. Other regulatory measures may be adopted including sign, landscaping, and site plan review ordinances and stated policies regarding the extension of water and sewer utility services. All of these regulatory measures should work hand in hand if sound planning objectives are to be realized. The main code enforcement regulations (subdivision and zoning ordinances) must work hand in hand to achieve the overall Growth Plan as noted herein. Without these appropriate controls, emerging property on the fringe of the city limits may disregard these measures and cause long-term negative impact and a possible deterrent to adjacent new development in outlying areas. In turn, the City will inherit problems associated with incompatibility and substandard development and may suffer the long-term consequences of having to upgrade services and facilities to areas that allow ineffective development to occur. The Growth Plan for Conway provides a basic guideline for consideration

by the governing body regarding subdivision plat approval and rezoning requests.

Utility Services

The availability of utility services, primarily water and sanitary sewer extensions, provide the prime catalyst for urban growth. Such service is a prerequisite to urbanization and care must be exercised in allowing the extension of municipal services to areas not identified to be urbanized over the next two decades. Extension of municipal services by the City should be made in accord with sound land use policies whereby cost-effective municipal operations can ultimately be achieved.

Additional Regulatory Measures

In addition to the above referenced procedures, the City may also enact an *overlay zoning district* to guide development along sensitive river corridors, highway corridors and arterial roadways. This overlay district is common in areas where additional setbacks may be required whatever the land is zoned in order that specific site design and landscaping regulations can be imposed. The overlay zone could specify that parking areas be landscaped with shade trees and further regulate signs of specific type, height, area, illumination, and other aspects of sign design. Additionally, a site plan review process could be required to set up a procedure by which the Planning Commission would receive information from developers and could shape development throughout sensitive areas.

Annexation Strategies

New annexations throughout the urban area are recommended for those areas likely to urbanize within the immediate future. Annexation should be considered in light of where the City can adequately and effectively extend municipal services. Annexation should also be encouraged to square off municipal boundaries and to avoid islands within the County that are surrounded by municipal boundaries. Specific areas for urban growth and development should be identified and annexations occur with adequate advance notice to individual property owners in accord with the City's ability to extend municipal services and capital improvements into such areas. It is anticipated that within the next several years additional annexations to the west of Conway toward the Arkansas River will be necessary as well as additional lands south toward Round Mountain. Depending upon the pace of urbanization to the east, it is anticipated the corporate limits will further expand past Skunk Hollow Road toward Vilonia along US Highway 64. It is important that those areas experiencing rapid urbanization, particularly along arterial roads where the chance of incompatible growth and strip commercial development could occur, fall under the regulatory measures of the City to avoid long-term problems with incompatible land uses and unrestricted points of ingress and egress to properties.

IX. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CITY OF CONWAY

Tab Townsell, Mayor

City Council Aldermen

Andy Hawkins, Ward 1
David Grimes, Ward 1
Adam Weeks, Ward 2
Sandy Brewer, Ward 2
Jack Bell, Ward 3
Mary Smith, Ward 3
David Henze, Ward 4
Shelia Whitmore, Ward 4

City Planning

William A. Polk, AIA, AICP, Director
Ken Pickett, Assistant Director
Brian Patrick, AICP, Assistant Director for Special Projects
Christy Sutherland, Planner
Val Seay, Administrative Assistant

City Engineer

Ronnie Hall

City Attorney

Michael Murphy

City Planning Commission

Jeff Allender, Chairman	Velton Daves, Secretary
Reginald Jackson	Greg Lock
Tim O'Brien, Vice-Pres.	B Chuck Winkelman
Chris Riggins	Adam Thomas
Junior Storie	Bill Graff

Conway Corporation

Richard Arnold
Chris Bordeaux

CONSULTANTS

Castin & Associates, Little Rock

John A. Castin, AICP, Project Planner

Urban Planning Associates, Little Rock

Jim VonTungeln, AICP

Ashley Pope, Planner & Graphic Coordinator