

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
July 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The city of Mount Vernon has established and maintained public improvements that support a full service community. Passage of local sales tax elections, a downtown with a historic "niche" appeal, strategic location on Interstate 44, and the maintenance of urban infrastructure—all have helped build Mount Vernon as a county-seat of Lawrence County, and a sub-regional city center for southwest Missouri. The city has the opportunity to build on those strengths as it plans for growth inside the city with "infill" development, and outside the city in its urban fringe. Strengthening downtown while accommodating commercial development within established business districts is a major challenge for Mount Vernon. Stabilization of residential districts is important while serving new subdivisions in growth areas, along I-44.

Critical to development in Mount Vernon is a long-range plan with vision, including how to prepare for future annexation. The timing and phasing of growth should be paced so that limited financial resources can support the various infrastructure demands and opportunities. A key recommendation of the plan is to continue development of the capital improvements program (CIP) that ranks projects in phases. The CIP will allow the city to communicate its plans with others, such as MoDOT, and other economic partners. Examples of this plan would include when and where major road extensions get built and how they are most effectively funded as well as long range goals of extending of utilities south of I-44.

At the same time, the city must focus on the stabilization of neighborhoods. Incentive programs and continual enforcement of standards must be put in place and/or enhanced. Previous community opinion surveys clearly show support for public initiatives beyond the provision of basic services. Citywide beautification programs and biking/hiking trail improvements are all initiatives supported by the public, basic public safety services; are supported all though, storm water management and street lighting is seen as relatively deficient.

The city will continue to update land use regulations to ensure compatible and appropriate infill development. Development design guidelines are provided for evaluating proposals along the highways. This becomes a way to achieve the objectives of a better city "image" and to attract business; and is a critical aspect of public partnership with the private sector.

Overall, balancing new development with a "sense of place" in Mount Vernon is important. The city should implement the plan as a strategy for defining and enhancing its historic place in southwest Missouri, while responding effectively to change. How Mount Vernon defines its changing role as a community—whether as a county seat, sub-regional center city, or "bedroom community" to neighboring cities—will be shaped in part by its implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

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CHAPTER ONE
Comprehensive Plan Process

INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive plan is an official public document adopted by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council as a policy guide to decisions about the physical development of the community. It indicates in general how the citizens of the community want the City to develop in the near term as well as in the next 20 to 30 years.

The Comprehensive Plan is the official document for land use policy in the city of Mount Vernon. Long-range in nature, the Plan is intended to be a source of direction and guidance towards a desired end, rather than a static blueprint of future development of the City.

Purpose

The primary purpose of the Plan is to provide a comprehensive, long-term, and general policy framework that will direct the future growth of the City. It is long-term because it represents the long-term vision of the future physical condition of the community and its socio-economic well-being. It is general in order to accommodate the very dynamic nature of community planning. The Plan strives to ensure orderly, healthy and harmonious growth that maximizes public benefit while minimizing public cost.

The Plan also has a near term focus. It provides a foundation for land use and development control regulations. Any proposals or actions that are not in conformity with this Plan are deemed inappropriate unless proper procedures are followed to amend the Plan. The development of the Plan itself serves another important function or purpose: To obtain public input through a public participation process in the identification of long-term community development policies. The policies represent the community's common understanding of what growth they expect.

Planning Process

This Comprehensive Plan marks an important step in an on-going process of comprehensive community planning. It is the result of the joint efforts of the City Administration, the Governing Body, the Planning and Zoning Commission, the City staff, other government and non-government agencies, interested groups and citizens. The planning process is on-going. An annual review of the Plan should be conducted following its adoption and updates made as needed to reflect the changing values of the community.

Major Components

The Comprehensive Plan is a multi-faceted document that contains many components, each of which serves an intended function. These components and their major functions are summarized below:

- **Analysis of Growth Trends and Existing Conditions** contains statistical and analytical information that promotes an understanding of the values and opportunities that should be appreciated and taken advantage of and the constraints and problems that should be resolved. In addition, it contains projections of population, households, and land use based on the analysis of the historic trends and the anticipated future growth pattern in a regional context. These projections help in the formulation of strategies to effectively adapt the community to the future possibilities.
- **Community Vision and Policies** outlines the type of living, working and business environment the community desires in the years to come and will devote its resources to achieve.
- **Future Development Plan** contain specific goals, objectives and policies as related to socio-economic development, land use pattern, public infrastructure improvements, and public service provision. These policies establish the foundation for the development proposals that follow. The future development proposals outlined in these sections represent the desired strategies for accomplishing the established goals. Some plans also include development standards and requirements to prevent undesirable design and construction of public facilities.
- **Plan Implementation** summarizes the strategies that ensure the proposals get implemented. The section includes zoning text amendments and a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) process.

Geographic Location

Mount Vernon is strategically located near the center of Lawrence County, Missouri in the southwest region of the state and within about 30 minutes of Springfield, Missouri to the east and Joplin, Missouri to the west. The community is served by Interstate 44 and local Missouri highways 174, 39, and 96 which provide convenient commuter access to the large employment centers of the metropolitan areas.

PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION

The healthy and orderly growth of a community relies on the successful implementation of a set of well-defined development policies that serve as guidelines for all development decisions at present and in the future. These development policies should be formulated around a well-structured scope of planning that looks ahead and even beyond a pre-set time horizon.

At the same time, near-term implementation is important. Regulation of land development is one way the Plan is implemented. The Capital Improvements Program (CIP) presented in Chapter Five is another means of implementing the plan. Following are the roles played by key policy makers and administrators, and the relationship of the Plan to regulations.

Zoning Ordinance

A zoning ordinance is a legislative tool used for implementing the comprehensive plan. It delineates the boundaries for land use districts to regulate:

- use;
- density of population;
- lot coverage; and
- bulk of structures.

The purpose of the zoning ordinance is to:

- encourage appropriate uses of land;
- maintain and stabilize the value of property;
- reduce fire hazards and improve public safety and safeguard the public health;
- decrease traffic congestion and its accompanying hazards;
- prevent undue concentration of population;
- create a comprehensive and stable pattern of land uses upon which to plan for transportation, water supply, sewerage, schools, parks, public utilities, and other facilities; and
- protect and promote the public health, safety, convenience, comfort and general welfare.

Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision regulations are another legislative tool to implement the comprehensive plan by guiding the subdivision and development of land. Subdivision regulations provide coordination of otherwise unrelated plans as well as internal design of individual sites. The City of Mount Vernon needs to keep subdivision regulations up to date.

The general purposes of the subdivision regulations are to:

- protect and promote the public health, safety, convenience, comfort and general welfare;
- guide the future growth and development;
- provide for the proper location and width of streets, roads, building lines, open space and recreation and to avoid congestion of population;
- protect and conserve the value of land, buildings and improvements and to minimize conflicts among the uses of land and buildings;
- establish reasonable standards of design for subdivision in order to further the orderly layout and use of land; and
- insure that public facilities, including roads, water, sewer and drainage facilities are adequate to serve the needs of proposed subdivisions.

Role of the Planning and Zoning Commission

1. Adopt a plan for the physical development of the incorporated areas of the City.
 - Before adopting or amending the Comprehensive Plan hold a public hearing.
 - After adoption, certify a copy of the adopted plan to the City Council and City Clerk.
 - Record a copy in the Office of the County Recorder of Deeds office.
2. Advisory body to the City Council.
 - Hold public hearing to obtain public opinion regarding each rezoning application, special use

- permit application and proposed text amendment.
 - Adopt a recommendation to the City Council on each rezoning application, special use permit application and proposed text amendment.
3. Approve or disapprove both preliminary plats and final plats.

Role of the City Council

1. Enact and amend the zoning ordinance and zoning district map after considering the Planning and Zoning Commission's recommendation.
2. Amend the subdivision regulations after considering the Planning and Zoning Commission's recommendation. This responsibility does not include approving subdivision plats.
3. Accept or reject dedications of easements, rights-of-way and public lands on subdivision final plats after having been approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission.
4. Approve engineering plans for construction of public improvements.
5. Approve financial guarantees or financing mechanisms to ensure construction of all public improvements within subdivision plats.

Role of the Board of Zoning Adjustment

1. Primarily a quasi-judicial body rather than an advisory or legislative body.
2. Role in Zoning Administration is limited to two types of tasks:
 - The appeal of an administrative decision or interpretation where there is an ambiguous provision or an alleged error in the administration of the zoning regulations; and
 - Decide on other matters expressly granted to them by the zoning ordinance, such as granting of variances for cases of unnecessary hardship.
3. The Board of Zoning Adjustment is not involved in the administering of the subdivision regulations.

The Basis of Decision-Making

As with other "police powers", the exercise of zoning and subdivision regulations is subject to certain legal limitations. One of the most important of these limitations requires that zoning and subdivision regulations cannot be applied in an "arbitrary or capricious" manner. Decisions regarding zoning and subdivision issues cannot be fixed or arrived at through an exercise of will or by caprice, without consideration or adjustment with reference to principles, circumstances, or significance.

Ethical Principles

The following principles should govern the conduct of the Planning and Zoning Commission's business. These principles should be considered as advisory rather than mandatory. Should any questions arise about the interpretation and application of any of these principles, the City Attorney or planning staff should be consulted.

1. Serve the Public Interest. The primary obligation of Planning and Zoning Commission members and planning staff is to serve the public interest.
2. Support Citizen Participation in Planning. Because the definition of the public interest is modified continuously, Planning and Zoning Commission members and planning staff must recognize the right of citizens to seek to influence planning decisions that affect their well-being. Members should encourage a forum for meaningful citizen participation and expression in the planning process and assist in clarifying community goals, objectives, and policies.
3. Recognize the Comprehensive and Long Range Nature of Planning Decisions. Planning and Zoning Commission members and planning staff should recognize and give special consideration to the comprehensive and long-range nature of planning decisions. Planning and Zoning Commission members and planning staff must seek to balance and integrate physical (including historical, cultural, and natural), economic, and social characteristics of the community or area affected by those decisions. Planning and Zoning Commission members and the planning staff must gather all relevant facts, consider responsible alternative approaches, and evaluate the means of accomplishing them. Planning and Zoning Commission members and planning staff should expressly evaluate foreseeable consequences before making a recommendation or decision.
4. Expand Choice and Opportunity for All Persons. Planning and Zoning Commission members and planning staff should strive to make decisions which increase choice and opportunity for all persons; recognize a special responsibility to plan for the needs of disadvantaged people; and urge that policies, institutions, and decisions which restrict choices and opportunities be changed.
5. Facilities Coordination through the Planning Process. Planning and Zoning Commission members and planning staff must encourage coordination of the planning process. The planning process should enable those concerned with an issue to learn what other participants are doing, thus permitting coordination of activities and efforts and accommodation of interests. Planning and Zoning Commission members and planning staff should strive to ensure that individuals and public and private agencies likely to be affected by a prospective planning decision receive adequate information far enough in advance of the decision to allow their meaningful participation.
6. Avoid Conflict of Interest. To avoid conflict of interest and even the appearance of impropriety, Planning and Zoning Commission members who may receive some private benefit from a public planning decision must not participate in that decision. The private benefit may be direct or indirect, create a material personal gain, or provide an advantage to an immediate relation. A member with a conflict of interest must make that interest public, abstain from voting on the matter, not participate in any deliberations on the

matter, and step down from the Planning and Zoning Commission and not participate as a member of the public when such deliberations are to take place. The member must not discuss the matter privately with any other member voting on the matter.

7. Render Thorough and Diligent Planning Service. Planning and Zoning Commission members and planning staff must render thorough and diligent planning service. Should a Planning and Zoning Commission member or members of staff believe they can no longer render such service in a thorough and diligent manner, they should resign from the position. If a member has not sufficiently reviewed relevant facts and advice affecting a public planning decision, the member must not participate in that decision.
8. Not Seek or Offer Favors. Planning and Zoning Commission members and members of staff must seek no favor. Planning and Zoning Commission members and planning staff must not directly or indirectly solicit any gift or accept or receive any gift (whether in money, services, loans, travel, entertainment, hospitality, promises, or in some other form) under circumstances in which it could be reasonably inferred that the gift was intended or could reasonably be expected to be intended to influence them in the performance of their duties; or that it was intended or could reasonably be construed to be intended as a reward for any recommendation or decision on their part. Individuals must not offer any gifts or favors intended to influence the recommendation or decision of Planning and Zoning Commission members or planning staff.
9. Not Disclose or Improperly Use Confidential Information for Financial Gain. Planning and Zoning Commission members and planning staff must not disclose or use confidential information obtained in the course of their planning duties for financial or other gain. A Planning and Zoning Commission member or staff must not disclose to others confidential information acquired in the course of their duties or use it to further a personal interest. Exceptions to this requirement of non-disclosure may be made only when (a) required by process of law, (b) required to prevent a clear violation of law, or required to prevent substantial injury to the public. Disclosure pursuant to (b) and must not be made until after the Planning and Zoning Commission member or member of staff has made reasonable efforts to verify the facts and issues involved, obtain reconsideration of the matter, and obtain separate opinions on the issue from other planners or officials.
10. Ensure Access to Public Planning Reports and Studies on an Equal Basis. Planning and Zoning Commission members and planning staff must ensure that reports and records of the public planning body are open equally to all members of the public. All non-confidential information available to a member or planning staff must be made available in the same form to the public in a timely manner at reasonable or no cost.
11. Ensure Full Disclosure at Public Hearings. Planning and Zoning Commission members and staff members must ensure that the presentation of information on behalf of any party to a planning question occurs only at the scheduled public hearing on the question, not in private, unofficially, or with other interested parties absent. The official must make partisan information regarding the question (received in the mail, by telephone, or other communication) part of the public record. The Planning and Zoning Commission Chairman at the commencement of each public hearing ask if any member of has received any ex-parte communication. If any member has received ex-parte

communication concerning the application at hand, that member must describe the nature of the information received.

12. Maintain Public Confidence. A Planning and Zoning Commission member or member of staff must conduct himself/herself publicly so as to maintain public confidence in the public planning body and the official's performance. In administering the zoning and subdivision regulations, it is crucial that the decisions be made fairly and that they have the appearance of fairness. The credibility of the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Board of Zoning Adjustment the City Council, and public support for zoning and subdivision regulations in general, will erode quickly if there is an appearance of unfairness or impropriety in members of these public bodies. For this reason, it is important that a code of conduct be established and followed as closely as possible.

Conflicts of Interest:

In making zoning and subdivision decisions, members of the Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Zoning Adjustment, and the Governing Body should be acting in the best interest of the entire community. Whenever a member of any of these bodies is acting on an issue in which he or she also has a personal interest, an important element of fairness is lost. In general, a conflict of interest is any situation in which a member is in a position to act upon or influence a development request, which includes the potential for direct or indirect gain, financial or otherwise. In order to clarify this general rule, the following guidelines are recommended.

No member shall act on or influence any development request when:

1. The member has a potential for direct or indirect profit or financial gain from the development;
2. The member owns or is employed by any company, which is an applicant, subdivider, developer or option holder;
3. The applicant, subdivider, developer or option holder is an established and regular client of the member or the member's place of employment;
4. One or more of a member's immediate family (parent, sibling, spouse or child) has a direct financial interest in the development or is an owner or officer of any company which is an applicant, subdivider, developer or option holder; or
5. The member has a potential for indirect financial gain or loss because of related property or business holdings.

Other situations not covered by these guidelines should be left to the judgment of the member involved. Again, the appearance of fairness and impartiality is as important as actual fairness and impartiality.

When a conflict of interest does occur, however, the following steps should be taken:

1. The member should declare, and the record should show, that a conflict of interest exists with respect to a particular issue, and that the member will not participate in any discussion or action;
2. The member should step down from his or her regular seat and should not speak with any other members during the discussion of the issue at hand; and
3. The member should not represent or speak on behalf of the applicant, but may speak on this or her own behalf as a private citizen during the hearing.

Acknowledgment of Outside Information:

During any public hearing, it is presumed that all sides will have the opportunity to hear the opposing side's information and arguments, and to offer rebuttal. This right is lost when discussions are held or information is provided outside the public hearing. The possibility exists that a decision could be based on information that was never discussed publicly. To avoid this situation, Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Zoning Adjustment members should not receive any information relating to a case or discuss a case with anyone who has an interest in the outcome. Where such a discussion or information is unavoidable, the member should declare during the hearing, and the record should show, the general nature and content of the discussion or information and the participants in the discussion or the source of the information.

These guidelines also apply to any personal knowledge, which is relevant to the issue. If a member has any personal knowledge which will affect his or her decision, such information should be made public during the hearing and should be subject to rebuttal.

Informed Participation:

All parties with an interest in a particular development issue have a right to a decision based on all of the available information. Any member who is not informed or aware of the available information should abstain from voting on that issue. This includes the following situations:

1. When a member has not reviewed the application or the information submitted with the application;
2. When a member has missed all or part of a public hearing and has not been able to review a transcript of the hearing; or
3. When a member has missed all or part of the discussion between members prior to the vote.

As a corollary to this policy, it is the duty of each member to attend normally scheduled meetings as regularly as possible. Without regular attendance, informed decision-making and full participation in the regulatory process is unlikely.

**CHAPTER TWO
GROWTH TRENDS**

Demographic & Socio-Economic Profile

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan provides an overview of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the people of Mt. Vernon. People are the basic building block of any community. They move into and out of the community, invest in housing and establish businesses, and utilize the community’s resources. As such, past trends and existing characteristics of the population will influence the future growth and development of Mt. Vernon.

Data Sources

The information presented on historical and current demographic and socio-economic characteristics is derived from the decennial census data and the American Community Survey (ACS). For many decades, the decennial census short form provided basic demographic information for a community while the long form was used to collect sample data on socio-economic characteristics of the population. However, the 2010 Census involved only the census short form. The census long form has been replaced with the ACS.

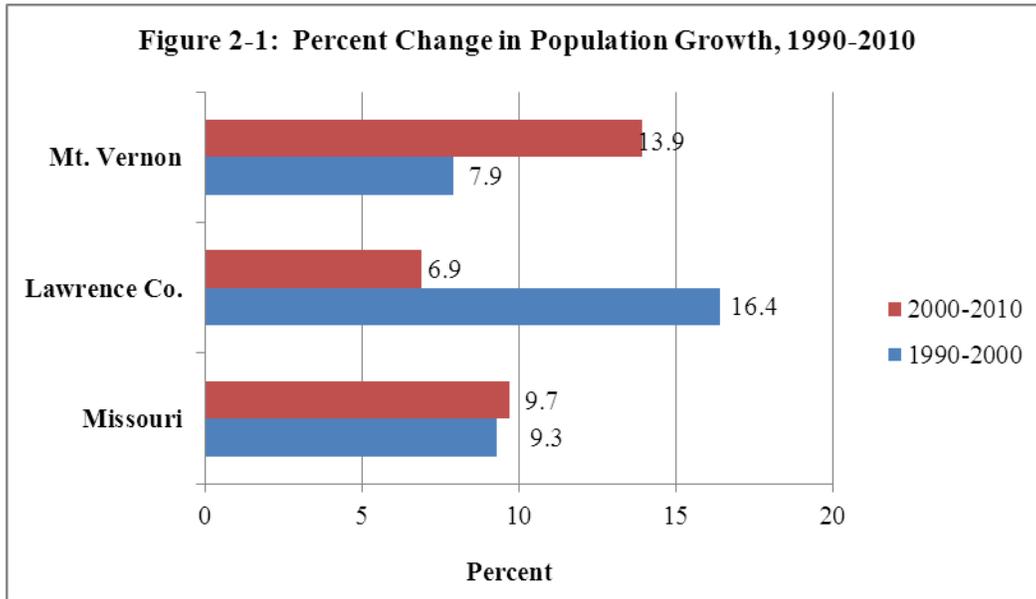
The ACS is an ongoing national sample survey that produces period estimates rather than point in time estimates. For small population areas such as Mt. Vernon, the ACS data is provided as five year estimates. The most recent ACS data release for Mt. Vernon and its peer communities are the 2006-2010 five year estimates.

Although the ACS contains many of the 2000 Census long form questions, the ACS data products are not the same as the data from the 2000 Census long form. A comparative analysis of census long form socio-economic data to the ACS data is not possible in many cases due to differences in questions, possible answers, time of data collection, and margins of error.

Population Growth Trends

Mt. Vernon has experienced slow to moderate growth since 1990. The city’s population grew by 291 persons between 1990 and 2000, a 7.9 percent increase. Mt. Vernon’s population increased from 4,017 in 2000 to 4,575 in 2010 for a growth rate of 13.9 percent, nearly double the rate of growth during the 1990s decade. Figure 2-1 compares Mt. Vernon’s population growth rate to that of Lawrence County and the State of Missouri. Missouri’s rate of population growth has remained relatively constant since 1990; both Lawrence County and Mt. Vernon’s growth rates have fluctuated substantially, although not during the same decades.

Table 2-1 provides a more detailed overview of population change in Mt. Vernon in comparison to nearby communities, Lawrence County and Missouri. All of the larger communities in Lawrence County have seen a steady increase in population, although rates of growth for each of these communities have also varied.



A trend common throughout many southwest Missouri counties since 1990 is the increase in population living in the unincorporated portions of counties (rural). Table 2-1 also shows the changes in total city population and rural population in Lawrence County. In 1990, 57.9 percent of Lawrence County’s population lived in cities; by 2010, the county’s total urban population decreased to 53.5 percent. Mt. Vernon’s proportional share of total Lawrence County population decreased from 12.3 percent in 1990 to 11.8 percent in 2010. The proportional share of population of all other peer communities also decreased between 1990 and 2010 with the exception of the part of the City of Monett that is located in Lawrence County.

Table 2-1: Population Trends, Mt. Vernon and Selected Jurisdictions, 1990-2010

Jurisdiction	Total Population			Total Change		Percent Change	
	1990	2000	2010	1990-2000	2000-2010	1990-2000	2000-2010
Mt. Vernon	3,726	4,017	4,575	291	558	7.9	13.9
Aurora	6,459	7,014	7,508	555	494	8.6	7.0
Marionville	1,920	2,113	2,225	193	112	10.1	5.3
Monett (part)*	2,053	2,227	3,125	174	898	8.5	40.3
Lawrence Co. Total	30,236	35,204	38,634	4,968	3,430	16.4	6.9
Lawrence Total Cities	17,463	18,907	20,655	1,444	1,748	8.3	9.2
Lawrence Total Rural	12,773	16,297	17,979	3,524	1,682	27.6	10.3
Missouri	5,117,073	5,595,211	5,988,927	478,138	392,369	9.3	9.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Census 1990; Census 2000, Census 2010, Summary File 1.

*Portion of Monett located in Lawrence County.

Age Composition

Table 2-2 shows detailed trends in the age characteristics of Mt. Vernon’s population. Mt. Vernon’s total youth population (under age 18) increased slightly by 236 persons between 1990 and 2000. The most significant changes in age groupings occurred in the population groups 18-64 and 65 years and older.

The aging of the baby boom generation, longer life spans and the southwest Missouri’s attractiveness as a retirement area has resulted in a significant increase in retirement aged population throughout much of the region. However, the national trend of an aging population is not nearly as consistent in Mt. Vernon. The city’s population aged 65 and older has increased, but only by a total of 56 persons between 1990 and 2010.

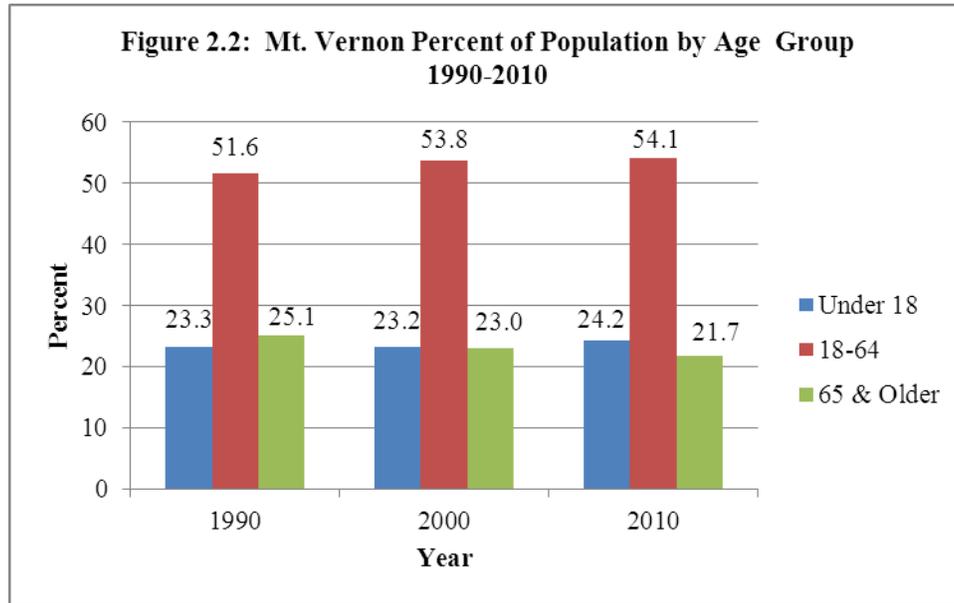
The only segment of the retirement age population that has consistently increased during this time is the age group 85 years and over. This trend is indicative of an out-migration of population in their early retirement years. The increase in population 85 years and older may be an improved level of services and facilities in Mt. Vernon that provide assistance or care for the senior population.

Table 2-2: Mt. Vernon Age Characteristics, 1990-2010

Age Group	1990		2000		2010	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
Under 5 years	231	6.2	262	6.5	333	7.3
5- 9	231	6.2	258	6.4	278	6.1
10-14	238	6.4	257	6.4	309	6.8
15-17	168	4.5	157	3.9	184	4.0
18-19	106	2.8	104	2.6	97	2.1
20-24	228	6.1	241	6.0	237	5.2
25-34	488	13.1	466	11.6	543	11.9
35-44	438	11.8	474	11.8	519	11.3
45-54	340	9.1	501	12.5	548	12.0
55-64	322	12.8	372	9.3	535	11.7
65-74	444	11.9	351	8.7	376	8.2
75-84	371	10.0	381	9.5	332	7.3
85 years and over	121	3.2	193	4.8	284	6.2
Total Population	3,726	100.0	4,017	100.0	4,575	100.0
Median Age	39.3		40.6		40.3	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 1990 Census of Population; Census 2000, Census 2010, Summary File 1.

The most notable percent change in age groups is the 18-64 age group. This age group has increased from 51.6 percent of total population in 1990 to 54.1 percent of population in 2010. The largest numerical increase has been in the 55-64 age group, growing by 213 persons during the two decades. Figure 2-2 graphically displays the trends in Mt. Vernon’s age groups.



Median Age

A comparison of median age of the populations for Mt. Vernon, neighboring communities, Lawrence County, and Missouri is provided in Table 2-3. There is no one consistent trend in changes in median age for all of these jurisdictions. Mt. Vernon’s 1990 median age of 36.1 years increased to 40.6 years by 2000, the highest for all communities. As shown in Table 2-2, Mt. Vernon had a substantial increase in middle age population (45-54) at the time of the 2000 Census which primarily accounts for its increase in median age.

Between 2000 and 2010, Mt. Vernon experienced a slight decrease in median age while the median ages of Aurora’s and Monett’s population decreased to a greater degree. In comparison, the median ages for Marionville, Lawrence County and Missouri increased.

Table 2-3: Median Age Trends, 2000-2010

Jurisdiction	2000	2010
Mt. Vernon	40.6	40.3
Aurora	36.1	35.8
Marionville	38.5	40.5
Monett	35.4	34.0
Lawrence County	36.9	39.1
Missouri	36.1	37.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000, Census 2010, Summary File 1.

Dependency Ratios

Dependency ratios are a useful measure for evaluating the potential effects of a community’s population age structure and broad trends in social support needs. The dependency ratio measures the number of dependent or non-working age population to the working age population. Youth (0-14) and seniors (65 and over) are considered the dependent population; the dependency ratio is the number of dependent age population per 100 working age population. As the dependency ratio increases, there may be an increased burden on the productive part of the population to provide for the economically dependent.

Table 2-4 compares the 2010 dependency ratios for Mt. Vernon, neighboring communities, Lawrence County, and Missouri. Overall, all communities have a total dependency ratio substantially higher than the State of Missouri’s 50.6 dependency ratio. Mt. Vernon’s total dependency ratio of 72.1 is exceeded only by the City of Marionville.

While the youth dependency ratios for Lawrence County and all the communities are higher than that for the State, the most significant differences are evident in the senior population dependency ratios. Mt. Vernon’s senior dependency ratio of 37.3 is substantially higher than all comparative jurisdictions with the exception of Marionville.

The natural aging of the population will likely result in an increase in total dependency ratios by the year 2020, especially as more of the baby boom generation move into retirement. For Mt. Vernon, this underscores the importance of maintaining and growing the income generating, working age population through local employment opportunities and quality of life services and amenities that will attract residents and families in their higher wage earning years.

Table 2-4: Comparative Dependency Ratios, 2010

Jurisdiction	Percent Under 15	Youth Dependency Ratio	Percent 65 and Over	Senior Dependency Ratio	Total Dependency Ratio
Mt. Vernon	20.2	34.8	21.7	37.3	72.1
Aurora	23.1	37.8	15.8	25.8	63.7
Marionville	20.1	35.3	23.0	40.4	75.7
Monett	24.0	39.0	14.5	23.6	62.6
Lawrence County	21.7	35.0	16.4	26.5	61.6
Missouri	19.6	29.6	14.0	21.1	50.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2010, Summary File 1.

Future Population Forecasts

Changes in population of any community are the result of natural change (births and deaths), in-migration, and out-migration. Forecasting future population is subject to error, particularly for smaller communities or communities experiencing a period of rapid growth. However, population forecasts do provide the city with a potential growth benchmark to assist in the advance planning necessary to provide adequate community infrastructure, services and desirable amenities to timely meet the needs of a growing population.

Population projections are very reliant on past growth trends, and generally assume that there will not be any significant changes in the birth and death rates, or other event such as loss of major employers that would affect population migration. Several population projections to the year 2030 prepared for Mt. Vernon are shown in Table 2-5. All projections are based on the city’s 1970-2010 decennial census counts.

Mt. Vernon’s growth rate since the base year of 1970 has been moderate overall, but has varied from decade to decade. Of the projections displayed in Table 2-5, the Parabolic Regression and Modified Exponential population estimates are considered a **continuing growth scenario**, more reflective of the growth patterns over the past two decades. The Linear projections and the Modified Exponential projections reflect a more **rapid growth scenario**.

The continued growth and rapid growth scenarios are both possible outcomes for Mt. Vernon. Given current trends however, the projections for rapid growth may be less likely. Populations rarely grow at an exponential rate over an extended time and it is therefore more unlikely that Mt. Vernon’s population would grow to over 6,000 by 2030.

Table 2-5: Mt. Vernon Population Projections			
Projection Technique	Population Estimates		
	2010	2020	2030
Linear Direct	4,575	5,069	5,563
Linear Regression	4,577	5,038	5,399
Parabolic Regression	4,510	4,799	5,021
Exponential	4,575	5,269	6,069
Modified Exponential	4,397	4,946	5,724
Projected Low		4,800	5,000
Projected High		5,300	6,000
Average		5,050	5,500

It is important to keep the range of future population possibilities in mind. However, for most planning purposes the average of these various projections may be a more likely pattern of future population growth. Planning and financing of public infrastructure and other communities facilities often takes several years and the more rapid growth projections should be considered for this planning process. A more conservative view of future population should be considered in financial planning for the city’s future.

As previously noted, all projections assume no major event that would significantly impact migration patterns. Attraction of new job creating businesses and economic growth is a priority for the city’s future. The attraction of major employers to Mt. Vernon or nearby would certainly impact new population in-migration to the community. The population projections should be updated in the event of this occurrence and at the time of the 2020 census.

Household Characteristics

The number of households in Mt. Vernon grew by 204 between 2000 and 2010, a 12.7 percent increase. Comparison of 2000 and 2010 Census data indicate that Mt. Vernon’s percentage of family households has declined and that overall, the city’s percentage share of household types does not closely mirror that of Lawrence County or the State in 2010.

The most notable changes in Mt. Vernon’s households has been the modest increase in the number of family households with children under age 18 and a more substantial increase in the number of non-family households, particularly the number of single person households. As shown in Table 2-6, Mt. Vernon has a substantially higher percentage of non-family households than Lawrence County and Missouri. The increase in single person households contributes to the noted decrease in average household size from 2.61 persons in 2000 to 2.31 persons in 2010.

Table 2-6: Household Characteristics, 2000-2010

Household Type	2000		2010			
	Mt. Vernon		Mt. Vernon		Lawrence Co.	Missouri
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent
Total Households	1,606	100.0	1,810	100.0	100.0	100.0
Family Households	1,006	62.6	1,101	60.8	70.0	65.3
With children under 18	452	28.1	521	28.8	30.2	28.5
Married Couple Households	754	46.9	770	42.5	55.3	48.4
With children under 18	290	18.1	329	18.2	21.6	18.9
Female householder, no husband present	199	12.4	259	14.3	10.1	12.3
With children under 18	127	7.9	149	8.2	5.9	7.1
Non-Family Households	600	37.4	709	39.2	30.0	34.7
Householder Living Alone	543	33.8	629	34.8	25.4	28.3
Average Household Size		2.61		2.31	2.56	2.45
Average Family Size		3.25		2.96	3.06	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000, Census 2010, Summary File 1.

Race and Ethnicity

Similar to most communities in southwest Missouri, Mount Vernon’s population is primarily White. Mt. Vernon has become somewhat more racially diverse since 2000, with the White along population decreasing from 96.6 percent to 95.3 percent in 2010. Although Table 2-7 notes a substantial percentage increase in other races and those identified as multi-racial, these groups are still very small in terms of absolute numbers.

Table 2-7: Race and Ethnicity, 2000-2010

Race	Mount Vernon			Lawrence Co.	Missouri
	2000 %	2010 %	% Change	2010 %	2010%
One Race	99.0	98.1	-0.9	98.3	97.9
White	96.6	95.3	-1.3	93.6	82.8
Black	0.7	0.4	-42.9	0.3	11.6
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.9	1.3	44.4	0.9	0.5
Asian	0.3	0.5	66.7	0.4	1.6
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Some other Race	0.5	0.6	20.0	3.1	1.3
Two or More Races	1.0	1.9	90.0	1.7	2.1
Hispanic or Latino (any race)	1.2	2.1	75.0	6.3	3.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000, Census 2010, Summary File 1.

Income and Poverty Status

The ACS 2006-2010 estimates show a median household income of \$34,858 for Mt. Vernon, slightly lower than the City of Monett, but more substantially lower than Lawrence County and the State of Missouri. Mt. Vernon’s lower median household income is likely due in part to its larger percentage of senior population that are living on retirement income. The city is home to several medical facilities which provide opportunities for well-paying jobs. Mt. Vernon is also an easy 30 minute drive from Springfield and its employment centers.

While the impact of the national economic recession has not impacted most southwest Missouri communities as significantly as other regions of the country, job growth has been slow and as the economy recovers many of the new jobs created are in the service industry. As Mt. Vernon plans for its economic future, opportunities for entrepreneurial small business startups should be promoted and encouraged.

The impact of the national economic recession Mount Vernon also has one of the lower poverty levels for families and individuals, 14.2% and 18.8% respectively. The poverty levels in Mount Vernon could result from the large number of older adults on fixed incomes as well as the growth of single parent households.

Table 2-8: Income and Poverty, 2006-2010 Estimates

Jurisdiction	Mt. Vernon	Aurora	Monett	Lawrence County	Missouri
Median Household Income (2010 dollars)	\$34,858	\$27,698	\$35,529	\$38,350	\$46,262
Median Family Income (2010 dollars)	\$42,371	\$39,627	\$47,229	\$46,206	\$57,661
Per Capita Income (2010 dollars)	\$16,050	\$16,795	\$19,116	\$18,777	\$24,724
Families below Poverty Level	14.2%	16.2%	22.8%	11.8%	9.8%
Individuals below Poverty Level	20.3%	22.2%	23.1%	17.3%	14.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2006-2010 estimates.

It should be re-emphasized that the data on income and poverty presented in Table 2-8 is from the ACS 2006-2010 estimates and represents an average over this time. Also as noted, the ACS data is based on smaller samples and is subject to a greater degree of error for smaller populations, including Mt. Vernon and its neighboring communities. The data on poverty levels is particularly subject to a margin of error of 35 or more points for all the communities. Therefore, the use of this data should be considered an estimate only and not compared to poverty level data collected during the 2000 census.

Lawrence County

***CHAPTER THREE
PUBLIC FACILITIES***

The City of Mount Vernon has maintained public water, sanitary sewer and storm water management systems over the years. Numerous improvements have been made in recent years, including a \$5 million improvement to the wastewater treatment plant. The City has made improvements to the water distribution and storage system as well, including 2 additional elevated storage tanks and new 8", 12" and 16" mains around the city to improve water pressure, financed with Certificate of Participation funds.

While improvements have been made—including upgrades to the systems which could include reductions in fire insurance ratings for the city as a whole—the system is still an older-capacity system in need of continued investment.

ELECTRIAL SYSTEM

Existing System

The electrical distribution system in Mt. Vernon is City owned. Power is purchased from Empire District under contract. The City has three substation points of delivery of power to the grid. Substation # 1 is near capacity at 4 KV while substations #2 and #3 have been upgraded to 12 KV.

Needed Improvements

The city continues to upgrade infrastructure (poles/conductors/transformers) as fiscal budget allows.

WATER SYSTEM***Existing System***

The existing distribution system consists of approximately 25 miles of 2" through 16" diameter water mains. The source of the water is seven deep wells distributed throughout the distribution system. The City is divided into two pressure zones. The low pressure zone is served by Wells 4 and 5. Well 5 (located in the northern part of the City) pumps into a 250,000 gallon elevated tank. Well 4 (Located in the central part of the City) pumps into a 400,000 gallon elevated tank. The high pressure zone is served by Wells 6 and 7. Well 6 (located on municipal owned Golf Course property) pumps into a 500,000 gallon elevated tank. Well 7 (located south of Interstate 44) pumps into a 500,000 gallon elevated tank. The only treatment given water is chlorination at all distribution points. Combined elevated storage capacity is 1,350,000 gallons and is adequate for emergency situations.

Wells 1, 2, and 3 pump into a 300,000 gallon underground reservoir, which in turn, after disinfection, is pumped directly into the distribution system, as well as pumping into # 4 elevated tower, which is the only chlorination it receives.

Needed Improvements

The City continues to upgrade older and smaller sized mains and are in a program to upgrade all meters to AMR (Automatic meter reading) as fiscal budget allows.

Budgetary numbers are being gathered for separate disinfection at the #4 well site.

WASTEWATER SYSTEM

Existing System

The existing wastewater collection system consists of gravity flow sewer system that converges onto the wastewater treatment plant located in the northwest part of the City. There are two lift stations in the system, one located on the east edge of the City and the other west of the WWTP serving NW Industrial Park.

The existing wastewater treatment plant is an extended aeration oxidation ditch—that includes aeration, settling, tertiary filtration, and ultra-violet disinfection before discharge into the receiving stream. - The plant design flows are summarized below:

Design Average Flow	1.35 mgd
Design Biochemical Oxygen Demand (5 day) and Suspended Solids	3,378 lb/day
Design Maximum Flow Through Complete Process (incl. Filter & Cl.)	4.0 mgd
Design Maximum Flow, 2 mgd bypassing filtration & chlorine	6.0 mgd
Design Maximum Flow, 6 mgd diverted into flow equalization holding pond	12.0 mgd

(Flow that is diverted into the equalization holding pond is pumped through the treatment process when influent flow return to normal)

Needed Improvements

The treatment capacity of the wastewater treatment plant is adequate for the present average hydraulic, organic, and solids loadings. However, the infiltration and inflow into the collection system during rainfall causes the peak flows to exceed the collection system capacity at certain locations resulting in wet weather overflows. The large wet weather flows can also exceed the hydraulic capacity of the treatment plant to provide treatment or to provide storage for later treatment.

The collection system was jet cleaned and TV inspected starting in late 2009 and finishing June 2010. In August 2012, the City was required to enter into a Peak Flow Voluntary Compliance Agreement with MoDNR and to develop a Bypass Elimination Plan which addresses (I/I) inflow and infiltration to eliminate bypass overflows and reduce chances of non-compliance. Once areas of rehabilitation are identified, funding will be included in the Capital Improvement Plan..

The scope and magnitude of the needed improvements are continually being defined by the city. Therefore, it is not possible to provide an estimate of cost for the needed improvements to the wastewater system; however, the city is working diligently with the MDNR to resolve the issues.

STORMWATER SYSTEM

Existing System

Storm water runoff within the City of Mt. Vernon generally flows overland until it reaches one of the major drainage ditches, which in turn flow into Williams Creek. The City has limited existing storm sewers for channeling runoff in developed areas.

NATURAL FEATURES MAP

Needed Improvements

A Storm water Management Plan was prepared for the City in 1995. This plan was prepared in response to numerous drainage and flooding problems experienced within the City. The plan identified twenty locations where flooding and drainage problems can be documented. The plan proposed culvert improvements at 16 locations, storm sewer improvements at five locations, channel improvements at four locations, miscellaneous channel/ditch improvements at three locations, detention basins at five locations, and other miscellaneous improvements. The total estimated 1995 costs for these improvements was \$5,348,850. Only a limited number of these recommended improvements have been made.

WATERSHED DRAINAGE AREA***General***

The following discussion of watershed and drainage areas is included because of its influence on the cost of extending utilities into new areas. The design of sanitary and storm water sewers is greatly influenced by the slope of the ground surface. In general, storm sewers follow the prevailing natural pattern of the watershed, and sanitary sewer do also to the extent possible. Since sanitary sewer flows must be conveyed to a wastewater treatment plant, it is sometimes necessary to use lift stations (pumping stations) to convey wastewater from one drainage basin to another drainage area that contains the treatment plant. The use of lift stations increases the cost of a sewer system and diminishes the reliability of the system. Therefore, future City growth is most easily served if it occurs in the same watershed area as the established part of the City.

Description

The City of Mt. Vernon is intersected by Williams Creek that flows from east to west through the central part of the City. Williams Creek flows into the Spring River approximately 3 ½ miles west of Mt Vernon. From there the Spring River flows west into Kansas and eventually joins the Arkansas River in Oklahoma.

All of the present City limits lie within the Williams Creek watershed basin, however, portions of the City lie within sub-drainage areas that don't join Williams Creek until a point approximately two miles west of the City. The extreme northern part of the city drains toward Truitt Creek that is located two miles west where it combines with Williams Creek. The southern part of the City that generally lies south of Missouri Highway 39 drains into an unnamed drainage creek that flows west and parallel to Williams Creek until it joins Williams Creek approximately 2 ½ miles west of the City.

Future Growth

Future city growth toward the east and west will generally be within the Williams Creek watershed. The area toward the southeast and up to ¼ mile south of Interstate-44 drains toward the City into the unnamed tributary of Williams Creek. However, land beyond ¼ mile south of I-44 is generally part of the Honey Creek watershed. The Honey Creek watershed is a completely separate watershed from the Williams Creek basin, and any growth into this area will require pumping of sanitary flows, or construction of a second treatment plant.

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CHAPTER FOUR
ISSUES AND PLANNING POLICY

PUBLIC POLICY MEETINGS SUMMATION

The City of Mount Vernon Comprehensive Plan was initiated during the fall of 1999 in a multi-step process. The planning consultants met with the Mayor, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission and city staff to discuss planning issues in general and agree upon a planning process. The consultants then held “key-person interviews” with representatives of the public and private sectors, including the city administration and the business community.

The public involvement/consensus-building process involved two public policy workshops and follow-up meetings with city staff, the Planning and Zoning Commission and citizens of Mount Vernon—many of whom remained involved after the public workshops:

- A “Focus Session” was held to identify the most critical issues facing the Mount Vernon Community in the coming years: near-term (1-5 years) and longer-term (up to 20 years);
- A “Policy Planning Charrette” was held to formulate “Action Steps” for the issues; and
- A series of public meetings hosted by the Planning and Zoning Commission to discuss the workshop results and the draft planning maps, in particular the Future Land Use Plan Map.

The City of Mount Vernon "Focus Session" was held on October 18, 1999 at the Spirit of '76 Recreation Complex in the Taylor Senior Center. The session provided an opportunity for residents, land owners and business leaders to identify issues that are critical to the community. The session was open to the public and invited stakeholders. Approximately 45 members of the community participated in discussing and ranking the important issues facing the City of Mount Vernon, now and in the future.

The process for *Issues Identification* used at the Focus Session was a structured idea-sharing process. “Break-out” groups were formed to discuss the issues that were considered by the entire group. The break-out groups discussed the following series of issues:

1. **Future Land Use:** issues discussed related to the location, type and quantity of land uses as Mount Vernon grows.
2. **Economic Development:** issues discussed related to business and industrial growth in Mount Vernon and the surrounding area.
3. **Quality of Life:** issues discussed focused on specific issues that influence the caliber of the Mount Vernon area as a place to live and work.

The following information is a summary of the ideas and action steps expressed at the planning charrette session. The key issues identified and discussed at the workshops have been given **issue statements** based on the ideas and suggestions developed at the policy planning charrette.

Following the objective statement identified for each critical issue is a column titled policy steps. For each issue statement the city has listed the entity or group, public or private, which might be the

appropriate agency to help incorporate the statements and objectives developed at the workshops and follow-up sessions into a policy agenda.

LAND USE AND OUR COMMUNITY

Home Maintenance

The weaknesses of the community in terms of home maintenance may stem from an inability to pay for upkeep, and not from a “lack of pride” or poor code enforcement.

Issue Statement / Objective	Action Agenda
Continue to seek and obtain grant money for home maintenance programs.	<i>City Council, Planning and Zoning. Community Betterment</i>
Recruit reasonable and reputable home repair contractors to the city.	<i>Development community, Chamber of Commerce Business licensing through City</i>
Encourage or subsidize low interest home improvement loans; explore ways to fund elderly low-income grant programs, or similar assistance, such as fix-up days.	<i>City, Development community, local lenders. Chamber of Commerce</i>
Promote partnerships among local groups, such as the Chamber, the EDC Community Betterment, and the city codes department to address weaknesses and enhance the strengths of the neighborhoods.	<i>City, Chamber of Commerce, Development community.</i>
Continue to support investment and provide hauling services and other services or programs such as Semi-annual Clean-up	<i>City/community</i>
Home improvement programs should be targeted to increase the impact on an immediate area, and replicated throughout Mount Vernon.	<i>City/ Development community</i>

Annexation and Land Use

The city should annex territory by phases based upon a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) that balances new investment (to serve growth) with existing investment (to maintain older areas). The city should initiate annexation in order to control development patterns and trends. This is important given the lack of countywide zoning. Expansion south of I-44, for example, must be balanced with maintenance of older areas and expansion in other directions, such as in the northern districts of the city.

Issue Statement / Objective	Action Agenda
Plan for annexation or growth in prime areas, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North, West, Southeast and Southwest for residential growth. South along Highway 39, West along Daniel Drive, West along Hayward Drive and West along Bus. Loop 44 for commercial growth. • Around the Downtown square for institutional/office growth; 	<i>Planning and Zoning Commission; Council. Communicate with land owners in future annexation areas.</i>
Investment in existing infrastructure should be planned along with extension of public utilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to water pressure; • Improvements to sanitary sewers and extensions within defined drainage basins (emphasizing the efficiency of gravity-flow sewers; and • Correction of storm water drainage problems. 	<i>City phase investment in the new CIP; balance maintenance with new improvements.</i>
Plan for industrial growth: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the existing Industrial Park. • Acquisition of additional land adjacent to NW Industrial Park 	<i>City/EDC</i>

Infrastructure

Issue Statement / Objective	Action Agenda
<p>Plan for improvement of streets or other infrastructure that detract from the quality of life in Mount Vernon by adopting a Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Projects to consider for continuation or initiation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain participation by the city in neighborhood sidewalk replacements as one of a series of incentives for more private investment in residential areas; • Storm water management improvements throughout the built-up areas of the city, such as west of the Downtown square; • Sewer improvements; • Implement the recommendations of the I& I study generated by the By-Pass Elimination Plan • Inadequate water pressure in the north and east sectors of the city; • Water line and hydrant maintenance, such as a hydrant flushing and replacement program and related fire protection investment, is important. • Maintenance/replacement of older infrastructure, such as sanitary sewer lines with I&I problems utilizing trenchless technology whenever possible • Initiate airport needs assessment with the state of Missouri Aviation Division of MoDOT and develop a Master Layout Plan 	<p><i>City</i></p> <p><i>Expand as a city/owner cost share.</i></p> <p><i>Transportation Enhancement grants</i></p> <p><i>City/Owner</i></p> <p><i>City/Developer</i></p> <p><i>City</i></p> <p><i>City</i></p> <p><i>Continue maintenance program</i></p> <p><i>Lobby the State</i></p> <p><i>Lobby the State</i></p> <p><i>Plan in the CIP</i></p> <p><i>City/Private interests</i></p>
<p>The city should rank improvements based on fiscal strategies, maintenance needs and growth policies, including the support of commercial growth that adds to the local sales tax. A bond referendum may be needed to fund large improvements.</p>	<p><i>Initiated and should be high priority to complete</i></p>
<p>A utility rate study should be completed, for electric as well as water and sewer rates. Catch-up may be needed to reflect increased costs of services over time.</p>	<p><i>Initiated through the budget process</i></p>
<p>Consider stricter requirements for restoring public streets when cut.</p>	<p><i>City</i></p>
<p>Consider upgrading public street improvement standards</p>	<p><i>City</i></p>

QUALITY OF LIFE AND OUR COMMUNITY

Recreation

Issue Statement / Objective	Action Agenda
<p>Assess needs for community parkland and recreation activities (outside of public schools), to see how adequately they meet local demand and how they can be sustained, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseball and softball through high school age; • Men’s softball league; • Youth basketball through 6th grade; • Soccer through high school; • Youth football through 6th grade; • Golf leagues; and • Summer recreation programs through 6th grade. 	<p><i>City/ Parks and Recreation Dept./Public</i></p>
<p>Current active recreation facilities include playgrounds, ball fields, fishing pond and picnic areas at nine parks. Primary areas identified for expansion include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East of the Spirit of ’76 Recreation Complex; • A walking/biking trail along Williams Creek and other linkages to parks and neighborhoods; 	<p><i>Apply for State transportation enhancement funds for bike/ walking paths</i></p> <p><i>Contact the MPRA for assistance</i></p> <p><i>Use of Master Plan for Park development and upgrades</i></p>
<p><i>Update later</i></p> <p>Hiring a full time recreation director should be considered as an action step, if warranted after park and recreation plans have been set and the CIP adopted.</p>	<p><i>City</i></p>

Safety

Issue Statement / Objective	Action Agenda
Address safety concerns on the following roads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the truck stop and the interchange; • At entrances along the Bus. 44 commercial loop; • At the industrial park entrance; • • 	<i>Continue to communicate with MoDOT/ landowners/ developer; Use the Comp Plan as a tool</i>
Study need for center turn lanes on major arterial roads, in addition to Bus. 44.	<i>MoDot</i>
Continue implementing sign improvements: street identification and traffic safety signs, as well as school zone and crosswalk signs.	<i>MoDot</i>
Study proper signalization of intersections, correcting inappropriate spacing of certain signals, as needed.	<i>MoDot</i>
Continue community policing and public safety policies to maintain the low crime levels.	<i>City/ Community</i>

Beautification

Issue Statement / Objective	Action Agenda
The entrances to the city should add to a sense of community identity.	<i>City, Chamber of Commerce Rotary Community Betterment</i>
Better entrance lighting on roads should be considered.	<i>MoDOT/City</i>
The existing housing code enforcement program should be enhanced with more inspection personnel; codes should be updated by adopting current versions.	<i>City</i>
Consider ways to increase code enforcement where premises are not kept clean and structures are not maintained properly.	<i>City/Police</i>
Continue promoting the success of the city cleanup program so that it may be better utilized; and consider the program for expansion.	<i>City</i>
Rules for parking of autos and recreation vehicles should be enforced more diligently; encourage off-street parking and garaging of vehicles.	<i>City</i>

Education

The Mount Vernon public school system is felt to be complete with the exception of providing more Vo-Tech courses. The following opportunities to improve or expand the existing educational opportunities were identified by the participants.

Issue Statement / Objective	Action Agenda
Actively promote the availability and accessibility of the trade/higher education in the southwest Missouri region. Pursue partnerships to provide access to vocational training within the Mount Vernon region. Continue investigating trade/higher education programs as a joint effort with local employers.	<i>City/Schools EDC Crowder College Scott Technical School</i>
Continue workforce development programs. Initiate a local career center program with local industries. Take a proactive approach through a partnership between the City, school officials and other groups. Offer more specialized training for employees.	<i>City/Schools EDC and Chamber of Commerce</i>
Provide more life/work skills education through high school courses and non-credit community courses, i.e. personal finance, building a resume, interview skills, computer skills, etc. Survey community to determine need and desire for other community courses.	<i>City/Schools and EDC</i>
The web page should provide better communication with residents, visitors and potential investors.	<i>City and Chamber</i>
The educational offerings, such as the A+ Program, are considered strengths of the community. This is important to maintain.	<i>Partnership between High School and area colleges</i>

Housing

Housing supply and demand is a complex issue. It should be market-driven, but there is a role for the public sector to play in helping to fill a “void” in the market. In Mount Vernon there are voids in middle-range housing (\$80,000 to \$120,000 single-family, detached residences) and in the supply of housing for low-to moderate-income workers (in the \$60,000 to \$80,000 range) and in affordable rental property.

Further, there is pressure on the lower-cost housing market to “leak into” unincorporated Lawrence County—where there are no land use regulations or building codes—if lower-cost development is not allowed inside the city of Mount Vernon. The development trend of urban growth “spilling into” the county, just to escape regulation, is unacceptable and should be countered with responsible, affordable regulation inside the city.

Issue Statement / Objective	Action Agenda
The city should update zoning and subdivision regulations in a comprehensive way, keeping in mind the housing issues that are relevant to land use regulation.	<i>Planning and Zoning Commission</i>
Continue increasing code enforcement of adopted property maintenance code to reduce household clutter—on porches, in front yards, etc.	<i>City code adoption: Minimum Housing Code/ increase enforcement resources.</i>
Employ multifaceted approaches to the housing problem. Getting residents to qualify for a mortgage—bad credit, low earnings—is as important as housing supply.	<i>Educational effort city wide</i>

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Issues and Planning Policy

Issue Statement / Objective	Action Agenda
Target the development of more “affordable housing”, multifamily housing and rental housing is needed to meet the needs of first time buyers, single parent, lower wage employees, new residents and persons waiting to build or in the process of building a new home.	<i>Developers and lenders</i>
Promote housing opportunities such as long- and short-lease apartments or duplexes that could be located near health care facilities to allow temporary housing for families of residents.	<i>Developers and lenders</i>
Limitations for existing utilities and need for repair/update of existing facilities poses the greatest limitations on new development.	<i>CIP</i>

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND OUR COMMUNITY

Diversification of the Tax Base

A diversification of the existing tax base is desired to generate quality employment opportunities, additional revenue, and continued investment in the community, and opportunities for the citizens of Mount Vernon.

Issue Statement / Objective	Action Agenda
Provide tax incentives such and Tax Increment Financing to large employers as an incentive to develop (especially those offering higher-wage employment opportunities). Meet demand to expand services through partnerships and issuance of revenue bonds (general revenue bonds).	<i>City/EDC</i>
Place an emphasis on development in areas that can be served by existing utilities. The greatest limitation to new development is the city’s ability to provide services as well as available land. Determine the capacity and limitations of existing utilities so the impact of development can be considered and needs for expansion can be identified. Partner with new development to extend utilities in a cost-effective manner such as expansion of NW Industrial Park for new utilities.	<i>City/EDC/ Chamber</i>
Target development at strategic locations—according to the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map—to encourage accessibility by citizens and visitors.	<i>City</i>
Continue partnering with the Chamber of Commerce to increase exposure to Mount Vernon through advertising including use of the Internet site to promote or highlight the City and its assets.	<i>City and Chamber</i>
Promote availability of existing space and active use of the downtown area. Partner with downtown business to make public improvements that will spur private investment and development retention.	<i>Downtown merchants and land owners; Chamber</i>
Build on the city’s interstate exposure. Determine what if any development can take place south of I-44. This area would be good for industrial, manufacturing and commercial development because of visibility, accessibility and separation from residential development.	<i>City/EDC/ Chamber</i>

Public/Private Partnerships

The development of public/private partnerships between the city and other local and regional agencies with developers, investors, special interest and citizens groups can serve as a catalyst to achieving community goals and objectives.

Issue Statement / Objective	Action Agenda
Encourage businesses to use Workforce Development to increase the “labor/employee pool.”	<i>City/ EDC/ Chamber and local businesses</i>
The city should continue to facilitate more open forum discussions to resolve key issues and more community leaders (business, religious, etc.) should be involved/asked to participate.	<i>Entire Community Involvement</i>
Partner with the University of Missouri and current airport users to create better utilization of the airport. The cost to update facilities to create a usable community asset and revenue producer (support to industrial activities) could be identified and shared.	<i>City/ MU/ Airport interests/ Industrial community</i>
Partner with the Chamber and downtown business representatives to strengthen downtown. Work to bring an anchor that would draw users to downtown such as a grocery store or restaurant.	<i>City/ Chamber</i>

Downtown Commercial versus Commercial Center

Many citizens treasure Downtown as a unique feature of Mount Vernon. The downtown has historical and cultural significance that should be preserved for future generations.

Issue Statement / Objective	Action Agenda
Work to retain existing anchors and assets in the downtown such as the post office, banks, courthouse and city hall.	<i>Chamber EDC and City</i>
Work with the business community to pursue grants and other means of funding for redevelopment and revitalization of downtown.	<i>CBC and Chamber and City</i>
Promote/partner to develop anchors such as a grocery store and restaurants that will attract citizens to the downtown, provide more active uses and spur private investment that encourages or compliments other downtown development.	<i>EDC, Chamber and City</i>
Develop a neighborhood stabilization program to enforce current codes and promote property maintenance and public investment in residential neighborhoods around the square (2 block radius and along primary accesses).	<i>City and CIP</i>
Maintain Gibbs Park. Utilize Gibbs House as a possible museum /art gallery	<i>City in cooperation with Private investment Historical Society and Arts Council Board</i>

CHAPTER FIVE
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM

Planning is both process-oriented and production-oriented. The first step is to develop a Comprehensive Plan, a process that typically involves four entities—city staff, the Planning and Zoning Commission, the public at-large, and the City Council. The Mount Vernon Planning and Zoning Commission (hereafter referred to as the Planning and Zoning Commission) has begun the "planning process." The second step is to implement the plan. Implementation tools include the capital improvements program (CIP).

Within the context of the Comprehensive Plan many of the community's needs, desires, and goals have been discussed. The capital improvements program (CIP) provides an annual process of identifying and establishing priorities for specific improvements in order to achieve those goals. The capital improvements program provides a variety of benefits, as detailed in Chapter Five of the Comprehensive Plan. A more formal CIP process includes more public involvement, and helps assure fiscal implementation. This section, then, recommends both a process by which a capital improvements program can be developed, as well as a procedure by which projects can be ranked.

THE PROCESS

In order to be effective, a capital improvements program (CIP) must integrate community desires and goals in a formalized process of needs assessment and financial programming. The city of Mount Vernon has long followed an informal CIP planning process. The comprehensive plan establishes a more expanded process to formally include the Planning and Zoning Commission and the general public, along with Department Heads and the City Council to adopt the CIP. The more formal process would include invited citizen in an annual or as needed workshop to review the needed projects, the goals of the plan and the budget available for capital improvements. The meeting may be made a part of an annual or as needed plan update prior to budget adoption. The City Administrator and other staff should facilitate the meeting.

The Capital Improvements Process

In order to be effective, a capital improvements program must integrate community desires and goals in a formalized process of needs assessment and financial programming. The figure attached summarizes a basic process for the city and includes six major groups:

- **The "Capital Facilities Committee"** - a group of key city department heads and other key city staff members—appointed by the City Administrator—are recommended as a start to the CIP process. The City Administrator should lead the Capital Facilities Committee and include the following staff: Director of Public Utilities, City Clerk and Police and Fire Chiefs. In addition, the Mayor, one (1) Planning and Zoning Commissioner who is not on the Board of Alderman should be appointed. The committee would be responsible for establishing an inventory of capital needs within their respective areas of concern, undertaking an evaluation of each project request, describing each proposed project in sufficient detail for others to understand, and, as a group, providing a preliminary ranking of each project relative to the funding cycle (5 years and long-term). The approach mirrors the general procedure for CIP planning in Mount Vernon at this time, except that the elected and appointed officials would be brought in at the earliest point in the process to represent the City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission.

- **Administrative and Fiscal Review** - the City Administrator, as the chief administrative officer, and Mayor, should provide the first administrative and budgetary review in the capital facilities program process. Two key responsibilities of the City Administrator and Mayor will be to check the program for consistency with both legal requirements and previous years' plans, and to make a preliminary check for financial integrity.

- **The Planning and Zoning Commission** - the Planning and Zoning Commission should have two primary responsibilities in the CIP process. First, the Planning and Zoning Commission should ensure that recommendations within the CIP are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan update is being prepared to vest the Commission with a central role in the CIP process. Second, the Planning and Zoning Commission should take public comment in a regular meeting and serve as a recommending body to the City Council. The City Administrator and his designated staff should help manage the CIP process, providing research and administrative expertise, and act as liaison to the "Capital Facilities Committee."

- **The Public** - to maintain the integrity of the Comprehensive Plan and achieve established community goals, the citizens of the city should play a role in this process. The City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission should invite the public to a joint annual or as needed public hearing to comment on the recommendations of the Capital Facilities Committee.

- **City Council Workshop** - capital facilities programming involves many complex issues of both budgeting and development for the city. Because of the complexity of development in a growing, full-service community, detailed study should be undertaken by elected officials prior to adoption of the CIP. The City Council should hold a workshop to consider the reports of the "Capital Facilities Committee" and the Planning and Zoning Commission. The City Council Workshop will allow the Governing Body to study the proposed CIP in detail, reviewing projects for their consistency with public policy and assuring financial soundness. The City Council should refine the draft ranking of proposed projects, with the City Administrator directing the administrative role, and the other members of the Capital Facilities Committee assisting in the research and recommendation process.

- **City Council Adoption** - after rankings and reports from the Capital Facilities Committee—as submitted by the City Administrator and the Planning and Zoning Commission—the City Council will adopt the plan.

It should be kept in mind that this process is not linear as suggested here, but *cumulative and circular*. At the end of each budget cycle, the process begins again, building upon the work of the previous year.

CIP Priorities

When the capital improvements process begins, the initial list of projects are little more than a catalogue of needed and desired projects. As the Capital Facilities Committee establishes its recommendations, the ranking of projects should become more formalized, based upon a given set of considerations. Further, these considerations should follow throughout each level of refinement. At a minimum, each project should be evaluated and scored based upon five major factors, each of which has sub-elements to consider. The relative weight given to each element in the ranking system is largely up to City's policy makers. For the purpose of this discussion, each of the five major considerations is weighted equally, on a basis of one to five, with five indicating the greatest degree of need. The ranking system, then, is based upon the elements described below.

Maintenance

Ordinary - is this a project which may be necessary and improve the quality of life, but is not essential and could be postponed to a later year (example: street reconstruction)?

Continuation - is this project a continuation of a preceding year's on-going effort and therefore worthy of a higher degree of consideration?

Imminent - is this a project that represents some threat to the public health or safety if not undertaken? A failure in a sewage system would rank highly, while a nonessential bridge which could be temporarily closed might rate less highly.

Redevelopment

Support of Downtown - does the project support revitalization along downtown streets—such as along Main or Market Streets—or the corridors leading to the Downtown, such as Hickory Street as shown in the *Comprehensive Plan*?

Stabilization of Decline - a project in the downtown core, or in a designated *Neighborhood Stabilization Target Area*, which seeks to stem physical decline, might receive a higher rating than one within a blighted area because it can be seen as eliminating a greater problem before it occurs.

New Construction - projects which encourage new construction in older areas of the community are as important in many instances as projects in new areas. Consequently, they too should be given consideration in the programming process along with priorities at future I-44 interchanges.

Public Policy Support

Comprehensive Plan - projects which serve to implement the goals of the Comprehensive Plan—particularly to serve growth in the designated growth area where sewer and water service can be most cost-effectively extended—should be given immediate consideration.

Geographic Distribution - it is difficult for a CIP to be successful over the long-term if all projects are concentrated within a limited area. Consequently, both the historical and current year distributions of projects should be considered in the ranking process. Clearly, the future land use plan of the current Comprehensive Plan update should direct the public policy here. Investment, for example, where sewer interceptors are planned or under construction within a single drainage basin—or phased to coordinate among two or three basins—should be a guiding factor.

Timing - it is critical to allow financing of timely projects, such as matching funds for state grants. The CIP process should be flexible and re-evaluated to accommodate such circumstances; and the availability of such funds should be factored into the ranking. Private sector initiative should be evaluated and support with public projects, so that growth is served adequately.

Investment Opportunities

Term - consideration should be given to whether the implementation of a project has an immediate impact on the community.

Characteristics of the Investment - some projects, by their very nature, affect competition in the market place. For example, a major capital improvement, funded by the community at-large, for a retail-commercial development, should not be given as high a ranking score as one for industrial development. Public investment to encourage industrial development is a beneficial expenditure of public revenues.

Leverage - a project which leverages monies from other entities (grants, private investment, special assessments, etc.) might be rated more highly than one which must stand alone; particularly if the "window of opportunity" is small and a program must be taken advantage of immediately or be forever lost, such as CDBG funds for public improvements.

Uniqueness and/or Innovation - some projects represent a unique opportunity to the community. These projects, then, should receive additional consideration.

Debt Capacity

Availability - clearly the ability of the community to fund improvements must be a consideration. Consequently, a project that utilizes currently budgeted funds should be rated higher than a project that requires a tax bond vote.

Revenue Source - some projects may receive a higher rating because of the way in which they can be funded. For example, a project funded by a revenue stream unique to that project may be rated more highly than one which requires general obligation debt. In addition, projects which are funded by an equitable distribution of monies based upon impact may also rate more highly than one which requires an unfair collection of funds. As each project is considered, based upon the above described factors, some projects may rate highly under each category, some may rate well in some categories and less well in others and some projects may receive no rating within a given category. This system attempts to provide a degree of objectivity to a process that is often as much art as science. However, if carefully followed, the Comprehensive Plan should be implemented, public trust should be enhanced, and limited public funds should be expended in a more efficient manner; hopefully encouraging complimentary investments from other sources.

Finally, both the relative weight placed on a rating category and financial limitations are important elements to the review process. Consequently, it would be helpful if the City Council, as the primary policy makers of the city, would provide guidance on the availability of funds for capital improvements programming. As the process continues over time, the Planning and Zoning Commission will become better able to make recommendations to the City Council; they will better understand the funding limitations, become more aware of the needs for an emergency fund reserve, and, hopefully, become better informed concerning the differences between "planning" decisions and "political" decisions.

FINANCING OPTIONS

Missouri Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program

Below information can be found at www.missouridevelopment.org

1. Brownfield Redevelopment Program

Provides financial incentives for the redevelopment of commercial/industrial sites that are contaminated with hazardous substances and have been abandoned or underutilized for at least three years

2. Community Development Block Grant

Provides financial assistance to local governments for public improvements. Qualifying districts and nonprofit organizations may also receive CDBG Funding through their local government. The state CDBG program is available to non-entitlement cities and counties in Missouri.

3. Community Service Commission

Established in 1994 as a direct response to the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. The Commission operates as a point organization for promoting and recognizing service volunteers and is dedicated to fostering opportunities for all citizens to serve their communities. The Missouri Community Service Commission oversees AmeriCorps programs.

4. Delta Regional Authority

Helps economically distressed communities to leverage other federal and state programs which are focused on basic infrastructure development and transportation improvements, business development, and job training services.

5. Enhanced Enterprise Zone

Provides tax credits through Missouri Works to new or expanding businesses in a specified geographic area designated by local governments and certified by the Department of Economic Development (DED).

6. Historic Preservation

Provides an incentive to eligible applicants for rehabilitation of commercial or residential historic structures in the state of Missouri. The Incentives in the form of tax credits equal to 25% of the eligible rehabilitation expenditures of qualified historic structures.

7. MORESA

Provides supplemental state financial assistance for the redevelopment of designated economically depressed rural areas and financial incentives exclusively for the development of renewable fuel and other value-added agricultural product production facilities. The improvement district must be contiguous and legally designated a blighted area, not comprising more that 10% of the entire area of the municipality.

8. Neighborhood Assistance Program

A contribution tax credit program that allows approved agencies to offer contributors an incentive of tax credits to leverage local dollars for community development activities.

9. Neighborhood Preservation Act

Issues state tax credits to a homeowner who rehabilitates a home or to a homeowner or developer that constructs a new home for owner-occupancy in certain areas of the state. This act authorizes state tax credits for eligible residential rehabilitation and construction cost for properties located in distressed communities or defined census blocks.

10. Youth Opportunities Program

A contribution tax credit program that allows approved agencies to offer contributors an incentive of tax credits to leverage local dollars for positive youth development programming.

Economic Development Corporation

1. Purpose of Corporation

The corporation is organized for the purposes as set forth in its Articles of Incorporation, and as they may, from time to time, be amended.

The purpose of the Mt. Vernon Area Economic Development Corp., Inc. shall be the following:

The corporation is organized for the purpose of community development, economic development, and for the furtherance of educational and other civic projects designed for the benefit the public, especially those person living in or near Mt. Vernon, Missouri, This corporation is organized exclusively for the charitable, educational, religious or scientific purposes within the meaning of Section 501©(3) and/or Section 503©(6) of the Internal revenue Code.

No part of the net earnings of the corporation shall inure to the benefit, or be distributed to, its members, directors, officers, or other private persons except that the corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of this Article, the corporation should not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax Section 501(3)(3) of under the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States internal Revenue law), or (b) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States internal revenue law.)

2. No Political Activities

No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation and the corporation shall not participate in or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

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CHAPTER SIX FUTURE LAND USE

LAND PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Development of a long-range plan is an opportunity for the city to influence change, in the public interest, as it responds to development proposals. For the city to attain the objectives it has set for its growth, it is helpful to understand the dynamics of urban development. Without such an understanding, local efforts cannot promote community goals as effectively. The Comprehensive Plan has been developed with the land planning principles presented in this section, including land use externalities and distribution of public services.

Land Use Externalities

One of the most basic factors affecting the use of a given parcel of land is the impact on land use from adjoining parcels. Economists refer to this impact as a "land use externality" because it is often not taken into consideration by a property owner in their decision-making process.

As an example of land use externalities, a residential district which fronts an arterial road and faces a commercial strip has less value than a similar district integrated within a residential neighborhood. In effect, the land use incompatibility and loss of value creates a cost imposed by the commercial owners on the residential owners. The best way to minimize these external costs is to either:

- interrelate the multiple land uses in a planned mixed-use development; or
- separate incompatible land uses with effective urban design and buffers.

These planning principles help create effective transitions between residential and commercial areas. As urban uses expand within the Growth Areas, the urban pattern can be carefully planned to allow the major thoroughfare roads to continue carrying traffic; while at the same time, residential areas can develop in an attractive manner. Subdivisions must be designed to minimize conflicts. Characteristics that most people seek in a residential district—quiet, serenity, and stability—can be protected by implementing the recommendations of the comprehensive plan.

Non-residential uses can be made compatible with sensitive screening and other mitigating design features. Positive externalities can develop, as well. A concentrated shopping district will attract customers from a wider market area than will commercial uses dispersed throughout an area. For example, clustering retail and commercial uses where arterial roads intersect benefits the commercial use while protecting residential districts from commercial strips.

Neighborhood Design

The concern about urban design can be summarized by focusing on neighborhood design. Good urban design can help new developments relate to adjacent developments to form strong neighborhoods. The land use pattern of a neighborhood plays a major role in determining its strengths and weaknesses.

The current pattern of Mount Vernon neighborhoods is developed in a traditional grid street pattern, or "neo-traditional" pattern. Traffic flows easily through the neighborhoods. Besides houses, the neighborhoods are characterized by open spaces around schools, and in the few parks that exist. The Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map shows—in conceptual form—ways where more neighborhood

parcs are needed in future Growth Areas. Such public improvements are needed in the long term to serve the recreational needs of future residential districts.

PARKS AND RECREATION

One of the most visible measures of the quality of life in a community is the park system. Parks and recreational facilities provide opportunities for exercise and relaxation as well as a visual and psychic break from the routine of daily life. They also create open space, which helps implement the beautification objectives of the Mount Vernon Planning Commission. A benchmark or standard should be applied to identify existing deficiencies and/or surplus of facilities available to the Mount Vernon community.

In order to determine the deficiencies and surpluses of existing facilities within the City of Mount Vernon the minimum standards for recreational activities set forth by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) were used. This standard gives a baseline benchmark by which to compare a city's population to the number of facilities available. It is important to note that the NRPA standards are just that, a baseline, and comparisons must be made in the context of each individual community and its specific nature and makeup.

The first step in analyzing the adequacy of a park system is to review the type, size and location of existing parkland. Different types of parks serve different functions in the community and each type has its own requirement for size, location and equipment. The following section of the comprehensive plan describes the NRPA park classification scheme, classifies Mount Vernon park facilities and offers policy recommendations consistent with the community's goals and objectives.

Park Classifications

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has developed a classification scheme based on the service areas and functions of the park or open space. The categories identified include:

- Mini park;
- Neighborhood park;
- Community park;
- Regional or Metro park;
- Regional park reserve;
- Linear park;
- Special use area; and
- Conservancy.

The park facilities utilized by the Mount Vernon community will be discussed in terms of the NRPA classification scheme detailed in the following table.

**Table 6.1
Parks and Open Space Guidelines**

Park Category	Function	Service Area	Desirable Size	Acres / 1,000 Pop.	Desirable Site Characteristics
Mini-Park	Specialized facilities that serve a concentrated or limited population; or specific group such as tots or senior citizens.	Less than ¼-mile radius.	1 acre or less	0.25 to 0.5 acres	Within neighborhoods and in close proximity to apartment complexes, townhouse developments or housing for the elderly.
Neighborhood Park/Playground	Area for intense recreational activities, such as field games, court games, crafts playground apparatus area, skating, picnicking, wading pools, etc.	¼ to ½-mile radius to serve a population up to 5,000, such as in a neighborhood.	15+ acres	1.0 to 2.0 acres	Suited for intense development. Easily accessible to neighborhood population, geographically centered with safe walking and bike access. May be developed as a school-park facility.
Community Park	Area of diverse environmental qualities. May include areas suited for intense recreational facilities, such as athletic complexes or large swimming pools. May be an area of natural quality for outdoor recreation, such as walking, viewing, sitting, picnicking. May be any combination of the above, depending upon site suitability and community need.	Several neighborhoods. 1 to 2 mile radius	25+ acres	5.0 to 8.0 acres	May include natural features, such as water bodies and areas suited for intense development. Easily accessible to the community served.
Regional Metropolitan Park	Area of natural or ornamental qualities for outdoor recreation, such as picnicking, boating, fishing, swimming, camping and trail uses; may include play areas.	Communities within 1 hour driving time.	200+ acres	12.0 to 18.0 acres	Contiguous to or encompassing natural resources.

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Future Land Use

Park Category	Function	Service Area	Desirable Size	Acres / 1,000 Pop.	Desirable Site Characteristics
Regional Park Reserve	Area of natural qualities for nature-oriented outdoor recreation, such as viewing, and studying nature, wildlife habitat, conservation, swimming, picnicking, hiking, fishing, boating, camping and trail uses. May include active play areas. Generally, 80% of the land is reserved for conservation and natural resource management, with less than 20% used for recreation development.	Communities within 1 hour driving time.	1,000+ acres; sufficient area to encompass the resource to be preserved and managed.	Variable	Diverse or unique natural resources, such as lakes, streams, marshes, flora, fauna, topography.
Linear Park	Area developed for one or more varying modes of recreational travel, such as hiking, biking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, canoeing and pleasure driving. May include active play areas and can link one or more of the above categories of parks.	No applicable standard.	Sufficient width to protect the resource and provide maximum use.	Variable	Built or natural corridors, such as utility rights-of-way, bluff liens, vegetation patterns, and roads that link other components of the recreation system or community facilities, such as school, libraries, commercial areas, and other park areas.

Park Category	Function	Service Area	Desirable Size	Acres / 1,000 Pop.	Desirable Site Characteristics
Special Use	Areas for specialized or single purpose recreational activities, such as golf courses, nature centers, marinas, zoos, conservatories, arboreta, display gardens, arenas, outdoor theaters, gun ranges, or downhill ski areas, or areas that preserve, maintain, and interpret buildings, sites, and objects of archeological significance. Also plazas or squares in or near commercial centers, boulevards, parkways.	No applicable standard	Sufficient size to protect the resource and provide maximum use.	Variable depending on desired size.	Accessible to communities and/or tourists and tourist amenities.
Conservancy	Protection and management of the natural/cultural environment with recreation use as a secondary objective.	No applicable standard.	Sufficient to protect the resource.	Variable	Variable, depending on the resource being protected.

Source: National Recreation and Park Association, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Mount Vernon Park Facilities

Neighborhood Parks. A neighborhood park provides both active and passive recreation for all participants. Ideally, neighborhood parks should provide a wide range of recreational opportunities, including ball diamonds, hard-surfaced courts (i.e. tennis, basketball), volleyball, play areas and other such facilities. Not all of the park, however, must be fully developed. Part may be left as a natural area where patrons are free to use their imaginations in pursuit of recreational activities. Provisions should be made for older citizens as well as physically or mentally disabled users. Mount Vernon area neighborhood parks include:

- Wynne Park
- Kings Park
- Shafer Park
- Gibbs Park

PARKS AND RECREATION MAP

Community Parks. Usually an area of diverse environmental qualities that may include areas suited for intense recreational facilities, such as athletic complexes. The area may also have a natural quality suitable for outdoor recreation activities such as walking. A community park provides separated facilities for quiet and active play areas for use by all age groups. All-day usage, planned recreational programs of competitive sports, passive entertainment, large group gatherings, and individual usage are characteristics of community parks. Typical facilities included in community parks are lighted and unlighted ball diamonds lighted tennis courts, comfort stations, swimming pools, areas for lawn games, multi-purpose areas, wooded areas, shelter houses for picnicking with adjoining space for play apparatus for preschool children, and open areas of natural landscape away from city noises and traffic hazards. Other facilities often included are arboretums and flower gardens, bicycling and hiking trails, band shells and/or out-door theaters and zoos.

A community park should serve several neighborhoods within a three mile radius. A minimum of forty acres should be provided in a community park but the recommended size is eighty acres. In order to determine the appropriate size for a community park, five to eight acres of parkland should be provided for each 1,000 population. Community parks in and around Mount Vernon include:

- Ewing Park;
- Spirit of '76 Park.

Regional/Metropolitan Park. Areas of natural or ornamental qualities for outdoor recreation, usually serving communities within one hour driving time. Such parks may include sports facilities or play areas. Regional parks near Mount Vernon include:

- Table Rock Lake State Park
- Stockton Lake State Park
- Roaring River State Park
- Wilsons Creek Battlefield
- George Washington Carver Memorial

Regional Park Reserve. Areas of natural qualities for nature oriented outdoor recreation and may include active play areas. A majority of the land should be reserved for conservation and natural resource management. Stockton Lake is an example of a regional park reserve enjoyed by the Mount Vernon community.

- Robert E. Talbot Wildlife Area

Linear Park. Areas developed for one or more modes of recreational travel such as biking or hiking. Linear parks may connect one or more of the other park areas.

- Williams Creek Park / Lake

Special Use Park. Areas for specialized or single purpose recreational activities such as golf courses, outdoor theaters, zoos or gardens. Includes areas that preserve, maintain or interpret buildings or other sites of architectural or archeological significance. Plazas or squares in more urbanized settings are also included in this category. Special use areas in Mount Vernon include:

- The Jones Memorial;
- Adamson Cabin; and
- Municipal Golf Course as part of Ewing Park

Park Recommendations

Based on the service areas and the number of facilities currently utilized by the Mount Vernon community, it appears that the city is fairly well served. As the City's growth areas experience residential development, the demand for areas that are accessible by foot or bike increase. Neighborhood parks, in large part, serve this segment of the community. Neighborhood park areas also function to encourage or enhance neighborhood identity and cohesiveness that can sometimes be slow to develop in newer subdivisions.

The indicated linear park along the Williams Creek basin is suggested to link with the Spirit of '76 Recreation Complex. This major recreational improvement should be studied for feasibility and financing, to include extensions east and west into Growth Areas. Such improvements will create efficient and safe corridors for active recreation and enjoyment of the Mount Vernon small town "sense of place;" as well as links to other parks for bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

Through the Subdivision Regulations, developers can be required to set aside parkland or fees for the recreation system. The opportunities for linkages and linear connections should be examined as park or recreation areas are planned and developed. Linkages could be to newly designated recreation areas or to existing neighborhood or community parks and special use areas. Fees collected in lieu of parkland dedication could be directed towards a recreation facility that contributes to the entire community such as a city-owned, community recreation center.

Distribution of Public Services

Certain urban patterns are more efficient and therefore less costly to serve than others. This issue has increasing relevance as the city plans for growth. Compact growth within the Growth Areas—the "solid colored" land uses outside the Mount Vernon corporate limits—can be achieved by prohibiting "leap-frog" development over large tracts of undeveloped land and by focusing growth where sanitary sewer and water service is most cost effective. The Mount Vernon wastewater treatment plant located adjacent to Williams Creek can serve the sub-drainage basins that form the city's Growth Areas. This provides the potential for cost-effective sanitary sewer service extensions to serve the Growth Areas that drain south and west to Honey Creek and Spring River. Phasing the extension of sanitary sewer mains within discrete drainage basins as shown on the Natural Features Map will maximize the cost-effectiveness of these extensions by guiding development in the Growth Areas.

Because extending city services further south of I-44—sanitary sewer trunk mains and laterals—will require long term investment, the extension of services to serve new growth areas must be coordinated with private development initiatives. Therefore, development adjacent to the Growth Areas that cannot connect onto a sanitary sewer line should be of a rural density that does not foreclose or "block" future urban development.

A second means of increasing service delivery efficiency is to cluster urban land uses—which have the need for fire and police protection—into planned development districts, shown on the Future Land Use Plan map as residential, public/semi-public, institutional, retail-commercial and industrial land uses. This clustering allows for the concentration of public investment in protection where they are most immediate. The challenge for the city is anticipating development within the Growth Areas; then extending utilities at a time and in a manner that most cost-effectively serves that growth.

BUSINESS LOOP (MOUNT VERNON BOULEVARD) CORRIDORS

The City of Mount Vernon Comprehensive Plan creates a development plan for the Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) Corridors. The plan includes the following:

- a review of existing land use reports and maps that affect the Growth Areas;
- development of a future land use plan; and
- development of a traffic access plan.

The traffic access plan includes:

- a major street plan for the city of Mount Vernon road system; and
- policies for limiting access to Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) and to future frontage roads of I-44.

MAJOR STREET PLAN

The Major Street Plan classifies various highways and roadways within the city. In addition, access control standards and guidelines are established which set minimum distances for intersections and driveways along arterial and collector roads.

Individual roads and streets do not serve trips independently; rather, most trips involve movement through a network of roadways. A functional classification system of roadways provides a method for channeling traffic in a logical, efficient and safe manner.

Roadway Classification System

The existing road and highway network is classified by function. Roads and highways are grouped into classes or systems according to the service they provide. The factors that identify roadway classifications are:

- the level of through-traffic movement; and
- access to adjacent land or individual properties.

Roadways are not classified by the amount of traffic they carry; however, higher traffic volumes are usually consistent with upper level roadway classifications, discussed below.

The functional classification for roadways uses a hierarchical structure to identify the operation of all roadways within a transportation system. The hierarchy of road types in ascending order is: local roads, collector roads, arterial roads, and expressways/freeways. Lower level roadways, such as local or collector roads, provide more direct access to property than do higher level roadways, such as arterial roadways or freeways.

MAJOR STREET PLAN MAP

Roadway classifications dictate the design standards for construction of a roadway. The function of a roadway, traffic volume, and adjacent land use determine the type of roadway which should support daily traffic activity. General roadway design standards have been developed by the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) as defined in "A Policy of Geometric Design and Highways and Streets". The ability to improve an existing roadway by constructing additional lanes or other improvements to AASHTO standards, however, may be constrained by the existing development in the Growth Areas. The AASHTO standards are summarized below for arterial, collector, and local roadways.

Local. Local roadways provide direct access to private property. The ideal traffic volume for local roadways is less than 1,500 vehicles per day. The recommended width for a local roadway is 28 feet and the recommended minimum right-of-way is 50 feet. If a local roadway is constructed without an enclosed storm water system, the right-of-way should be increased to 60 feet in width so that the open storm water drainage system will be located entirely within the right-of-way. On-street parking is usually permitted. However, in order to meet fire codes which require a 20-foot path for equipment, parking should be limited to one side of the roadway.

Collector. Collector roadways are best classified as two-lane collector roadways and three-lane collector roadways.

The two-lane collector roadway functions to collect traffic in residential neighborhoods. Because traffic volumes on two-lane collector roadways may range between 1,500 and 5,000 vehicles per day, residential properties abutting the collector road may not be as desirable as those abutting a local road. The road width should accommodate two 16-foot lanes and curb and gutter for a width of 36 feet. To accommodate sidewalks and street lighting, a right-of-way of 60 feet is needed. Parking and private access to the collector should be discouraged. If needed, parking should be allowed on one side only.

A three-lane collector roadway section is appropriate for collecting traffic in commercial land use areas, such as a business park or shopping center where traffic demand is expected to range between 1,500 and 12,000 vehicles per day. This road section includes two 12-foot through lanes, and can be widened by adding one 12-foot center left turn lane. The recommended road width for a three-lane collector including curb and gutter is 40 feet. Sidewalks should be provided on both sides. The right-of-way width to allow for the roadway, sidewalks and street lighting should be a minimum of 70 feet. On-street parking should be prohibited.

Arterial. Arterial roadways are appropriate for carrying traffic through land uses without being disrupted by properties fronting on the road, or by cross streets. An arterial road section includes four 12-foot through lanes and should provide an additional left turn bay at all signalized intersections and any major intersections. A minimum road width of 52 feet and right-of-way width of 80 feet are recommended. Sidewalks should be provided on both sides. Only public roads should be allowed to access a four-lane arterial road and road spacing should be related to design speed as per a five or six lane roadway. The ideal range for traffic volume on a four-lane arterial roadway is between 12,000 and 25,000 vehicles per day.

Expressways/Freeways. Freeways and expressways are primary arterial roadways which are fully or partially access controlled facilities. These routes are typically the highest traveled corridors, serve major activity centers and carry the major portion of trips entering or leaving the city.

Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) Corridor Roadway Classifications

The roadway classifications described above are applicable to the major roadways in the Growth Areas. These roadways are classified based on their function that corresponds with the description of the roadway classifications. The Table below identifies the functional classification of collector roadways, arterial roadways and expressways/freeways that will be classified within the Growth Areas. Roads that are not identified as either a collector road, arterial road or expressway/freeway are classified as local roads. As development occurs within the Growth Areas, other roadways need to be classified as either collector or arterial roadways.

**Table 6.2
Major Roadway Classifications**

Name of Roadway	Roadway Classification
Bus. Rt.44	Major Arterial
Spring Park Blvd.	Arterial
East Street	Collector
N. Main/Bus. 39	Arterial
174 Highway	Major Arterial
McCanse Street	Collector
Hayward Drive	Arterial
Hickory	Downtown Arterial
Landrum	Collector
Sloan Street/Highway V	Arterial
Walnut Street	Collector
Market/Bus. 39	Downtown Arterial
Farm Road 1147	Collector
Daniel Drive	Collector
39 South	Arterial

Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) functions as a major arterial providing both regional access and local arterial access to future interchanges that will serve major land uses, such as the future growth areas. Development along Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) must be carefully planned to allow it to efficiently carry traffic onto local arterial roads. Further, roads and driveways intersecting the local arterials—that provide links to Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard)—must be designed in a manner that will minimize traffic conflicts and maximize access to new development.

The properties abutting the west end of Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) in Mount Vernon is largely undeveloped. As development occurs along Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard), there will be increased pressure for curb cuts. The development of frontage roads serving I-44, should be planned with restricted access in the same manner. Further, the city should plan for locally improved arterial roads, as shown on the Future Land Use and Major Street Plan map, to benefit from the regional improvements.

Access Control

Just as the design of a roadway helps to move traffic efficiently, controlling access to the roadway system can help do the same. The lack of an adequate access control policy or plan increases the probability of having traffic hazards and increased traffic congestion. Traffic hazards and traffic congestion reduce the capacity of the roadway to accommodate the traffic volumes for which it is designed. Traffic congestion and traffic hazards increase the pressure to widen roadways which requires additional public funds.

Roadway capacity can be increased or decreased in a number of ways. The method utilized most frequently to increase capacity is to widen a road to provide additional travel lanes. In some instances, however, it is not feasible to add additional travel lanes due to abutting land uses on either side of existing roadways. In these instances, other methods of increasing roadway capacity may be more appropriate. Other methods include constructing intersection improvements, turn bays, medians, restricting road and driveway access or providing traffic signal timing improvements. Conversely, road capacity can be decreased by adding cross roads, driveways, traffic signals, or other traffic control devices. By developing an access control policy, road capacity can be maintained to accommodate future development.

Specific design characteristics associated with each functional classification depend on factors such as projected traffic volumes and local access control policies. Traffic volumes of 10,000 or 15,000 vehicles per day can be accommodated by a four-lane arterial road or by a two-lane arterial road which includes turn bays, good signal and intersection spacing, and private driveway access control. **In many cases, a well-built two-lane arterial road can function as well as a four-lane road at approximately half the cost.**

Local Arterial Streets Parallel to Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard): Access Control. Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) provides regional access as well as access to abutting properties. Therefore, it is critical that a sound access control policy be followed as development occurs on property directly abutting the highway.

Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) is improved with turn lanes. The route is capable of carrying a larger volume of traffic. Based upon the average daily traffic volume, there is sufficient excess capacity to accommodate traffic from future development in the Growth Areas.

As future development occurs, minor roadway improvements may be necessary to prevent traffic congestion from increased traffic movements on Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard). Such improvements may consist of turn bays, restricting road and driveway access, or providing traffic control devices. The need for these improvements must be carefully balanced against the need to allow for the efficient movement of traffic through the Growth Areas. Therefore, the carrying capacity of Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) must be protected by limiting the number of cross roads, driveways, traffic signals, or other stop controls.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Residential development in Mount Vernon is projected to follow the pattern shown on the future land use plan map, based on the ability and willingness of the city to extend infrastructure. Low to moderate density development is expected to proceed within the drainage basis identified in Chapter Three, "Public Facilities." Residential development is projected to extend in the following directions:

- North of the city on 174 Highway within areas already served with sewer.

- In the west corridors, such as along Spring Park Boulevard
- Linking to the west Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) interchange as extensions of the existing residential districts.

**TABLE 6.3
Projected Density of Residential Development in the City**

Density Patterns	1.0 Unit per 3 Acres	2.8 Units per Acre	10.0 Units per Acre	Population/Acre at 2.54 Persons/Unit
Low Density	40%	60%	0%	4.6
Low/Moderate Density	10%	80%	10%	8.3
Higher Density	0%	20%	80%	20.3

Source: Bucher, Willis & Ratliff Corporation

Probable Residential Development Pattern -- Near-Term

The most probable development pattern for the city of Mount Vernon is a low-to-moderate-density development pattern. The low-to moderate-density residential pattern is summarized in the table above. The scenario is presented as an ultimate build-out pattern of urban development in the City, either on vacant parcels and platted lots as infill housing, or on newly subdivided land. The pattern represents gross density of 3.3 units per acre on average for residential development. The development scenario is based on the population projections which indicate population growth.

For planning purposes the planning growth areas are expected to experience urban growth in up to three or four square miles of land during the next 20 years, applying the 3.0 multiplier to account for market inefficiencies. The multiplier is applied because of the dispersed nature of development at the "urban fringe." Residential development is expected to spread in four patterns:

- In low-to moderate-densities north of I-44 inside and in the Mount Vernon Growth Areas as indicated on the Future Land Use map as solid colors, served by municipal waste water systems;
- At rural densities of 5 to 10 acre lots or larger east of Mount Vernon served by on-site septic systems;
- Incrementally on infill lots currently platted and served by infrastructures in the city; and
- South of Mount Vernon along the interstate in areas where the city elects to extend infrastructures.

The Future Land Use Plan Map illustrates the adopted land use plan policy. The residential developments are presented in the development patterns noted above, and grouped in compatible districts. The map becomes a policy guide for future zoning amendments, capital improvement programming and related plans.

Long-term Development. The city has the capacity to serve future development which should occur beyond the 15-20 year time frame of the comprehensive plan. In these cases, the long-term designation

indicates where land should be allowed to develop in the near-term at low densities. These are lands on the outer fringe of the immediate Growth Area on the Future Land Use Plan map. Two development patterns should be allowed:

- sell-offs in the agricultural areas outside Mount Vernon at low densities; and
- large lot residential development at densities of one dwelling per 5-to10-acres.

Because there is no planning and zoning in Lawrence County, the city of Mount Vernon is forced to consider annexation to protect its growth areas. The areas should be planned for coordinated growth under the influence of the city of Mount Vernon in order to maximize local municipal coordination of services.

City of Mount Vernon Future Land Use Plan Map Legend—Explanation

The "Future Land Use Plan" map is developed based on the following legend:

Low-density Residential	Development at densities of 3.0 to 4.0 units per acre; served by municipal services as extensions of the Urban Service Areas.
Higher Density Residential	More than 4.0 units and up to 10.0 units per acre.
Public/Institutional	Institutional uses for government and educational purposes mixed with retail-commercial primarily.
Retail-Commercial	Retail business uses, including shopping centers and isolated retail establishments.
Industrial	Industrial assembly and warehousing, with limited manufacturing uses as defined in the zoning regulations based on SIC codes. Intensive land uses for manufacture and assembly of goods associated with industrial activity, as defined in the zoning regulations based on SIC codes, would be heavily buffered.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP

City of Mount Vernon Future Land Use Plan Map Legend—Explanation (Continued)

Mixed- Use	Retail-commercial, office-commercial and light industrial uses mixed within a unified district with design standards to assume compatibility among the high intensity uses.
Parks and Recreation	Park land and active recreation by private groups, both current and future parks as needed.
Linear Park	Improved active recreation linkages from one park to another park.
Long-term Development	Development of land uses to occur beyond the time frame of the Comprehensive Plan subject to the availability of city services, particularly in Urban Service Areas. Priority will be given to development in near-term development areas of the community in order to maximize the efficient use of city resources.
Downtown Overlay District	The area in and around the courthouse square where retail-commercial, office and institutional and neighborhood residential uses are encouraged to be maintained in a stable environment, including design standards to promote compatible infill development, appropriate redevelopment and site-sensitive design.
Interchange	Land areas defined by MoDOT to be developed as interchanges with the highways where adjacent land should be annexed by the city and served with municipal services.

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PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the goals and objectives of the plan, the existing land use patterns of the city, and the future land use issues of the plan, the following recommendations should be followed in implementing the future land use plan, the intent of which is illustrated on the "Future Land Use" map.

Recommendation -- Residential Land Use**Encourage opportunities for expansion of residential development in the Urban Service Areas of Mount Vernon where indicated on the Future Land Use Map.**

- Prepare for higher-density development in and adjacent to future business districts in growth areas, along the Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) corridors;
- Adopt screening and landscape standards to ensure compatibility between higher-density and existing low-density residential districts, as well as between residential and non-residential districts;
- Update landscape requirements for off-street parking screening; and
- Adopt design standards for reviewing multifamily development which address:
 - Site appropriateness,
 - Building arrangement,
 - Access,
 - Parking and circulation,
 - Service facilities,
 - Outdoor storage,
 - Buffers from neighboring land uses, and
 - Signage and lighting.

Stabilize existing residential neighborhoods.

- Create financing through "Neighborhood Improvement Districts" and similar programs and targeted special assessments;
- Increase demolition of abandoned homes to support housing investment in sound structures and to create opportunities for infill development;
- Concentrate multifamily housing as buffers between commercial uses and single-family residential uses;
- Target capital improvements to maintain infrastructure in established neighborhoods, such as street and storm water improvements as in-fill development.

Initiate strategies in partnership with the private sector to further a pro-active housing action agenda.

In order to affect the city's neighborhood stabilization agenda, new strategies must be pursued. To meet the plan's objectives – the city must be aggressive in their pursuit. These endeavors are the critical components of a comprehensive multi-year effort Mount Vernon should undertake to impact the quantity and quality of the city's housing stock.

- Pursue Infill Development on Vacant Developable Land - The City of Mount Vernon should become pro-active with infill development. A targeted effort that directly solicits landowners of vacant lots should be implemented.
- Encourage “Residential-Design Manufactured Housing” - Housing built “off site” is a reasonable approach to overcome the shortage of local contractors. There is an increasing consumer acceptance of this form of housing. The units can be placed on a permanent foundation, improved with pitched roofs and composition shingles, double width, with front porches, to look like site-built homes. They should be allowed—along with modular homes on foundations—through the building permit process.
- Support the development “manufactured home parks” and the “Residential-Design Manufactured Housing” mentioned above as a means of meeting market demands and providing low cost housing alternatives. The city should be pro-active in meeting low cost housing demands. Encouraging and supporting this housing to develop within the higher density residential districts identified on the Future Land Use Map, within the Mount Vernon city limits as opposed the county, and allows the city to ensure quality through city initiated quality control.
- Establish a Local Incentive Program for In-fill Residential Development Incentives should be considered by the city to encourage home expansion, renovation and improvements. These may include such savings as waiving local permit and inspection fees. Partner with groups such as Habitat for Humanity and provide information and or apply for City administered CDBG funds.
- Encourage local businesses and community groups to start more neighborhood gardens or parks on vacant lots.

Ensure well-designed residential development that meets the community’s goals and objectives for residential housing through the adoption of residential development guidelines.

Good urban design can help new developments relate to adjacent developments to form strong neighborhoods. The land use pattern of a neighborhood plays a major role in determining its strengths and weaknesses. The current Mount Vernon pattern of neighborhoods meets traditional planning standards. Most older neighborhoods are linked in the traditional grid street pattern, which today is called a "neo-traditional" pattern. Neo-traditional concepts should continue to steer new and infill development in Mount Vernon and the Mount Vernon Urban Service Areas.

Residential land use in Mount Vernon should be driven by a strong emphasis on the implementation and enforcement of the Mount Vernon Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, while exploring innovative regulatory approaches in response to private sector development needs. The following section contains guidelines based on neo-traditional planning principles for new and infill development.

- **Encourage the development of logical, interconnected street grids, and avoid “jigsaw” street systems.**

Interconnected, grid-like street systems allow for a more dispersed traffic pattern because there are multiple routes to move from one place to another within the city. A grid configuration of streets helps to minimize peak hour traffic flows. In addition, these interconnected systems are more comprehensible and, thus, easier for visitors and residents alike to find their way around the city. On the contrary, “jigsaw” street systems, with no apparent repetition or order, can be disorienting and tend to funnel traffic to

collector-type roads, even for short distance travel. This situation contributes to unnecessarily heavy traffic on main roads at peak traffic periods. It should be noted that a gridded street pattern does not necessarily require all streets to be straight. The design of the roadway system should work with the land. The basic goal for the city's overall road layout is a system of north-south roads that regularly intersect with east-west roads.

- **Encourage the development of tree-lined streets.**

Mount Vernon should encourage the planting of street trees as part of an ambitious street tree program for new development. Street trees provide shade for streets and sidewalks, help moderate temperatures, improve aesthetics, and generally encourage pedestrian use of sidewalks. Street trees also maintain a ceiling or canopy that further imbues a “small town” atmosphere.

- **Encourage landscaping, primarily through preservation of mature trees and existing vegetation.**

Trees, shrubs, flowers, and other elements of the surrounding environment of a housing area greatly contribute to the quality of life within that area. Shade, wind breaks, beautification, and attraction of songbirds and other wildlife are all benefits of substantial plant communities within housing areas. By far the easiest way to capture these benefits for the residents of a housing area is to preserve the existing vegetation of a site as it is developed, rather than relying on newly planted materials to grow and mature, slowly recreating an environment which already existed in many cases.

- **Encourage grass or planting strips between curbs and sidewalks.**

This space provides safety for pedestrians on the sidewalks and creates an area suitable for street-tree plantings.

- **Encourage a diversity of housing façade styles and colors in new or infill developments.**

Repetitive or redundant façade styles within residential developments tend to diminish the visual interest and perception of quality in an area. Providing several façade styles allows for more individual expression of interest and taste and helps preserve the community’s “small town” character.

- **Encourage front porches on new houses.**

Front porches allow homeowners to comfortably spend more time near the front yard and street. This creates a greater opportunity to know ones neighbors, maintain a casual surveillance of the area, and thereby maintain a safe residential neighborhood. This also reinforces a neighborhood ambiance.

- **Require sidewalks where appropriate.**

One of the most significant elements of neighborhood atmosphere and function is that residents can easily walk to other places within the neighborhood and Mount Vernon

community. By requiring sidewalks, pedestrian use is indicated as a priority in the community because of a prominent, safe, and accessible system.

- **Promote the creation of deep lots for more green space.**

Deep residential lots allow for more green space within a residential community by providing room for more backyard shade trees, landscaping, and in instances where existing vegetation is nearby, more beneficial wildlife habitat. Houses should not be allowed to be pulled back off of the streets because of deeper lots as this diminishes the small-town pedestrian quality of the street environment. Yard setback requirements should also specify a "build-to" line.

- **Encourage visually appealing, points of beautification within subdivisions.**

The development of points of beautification within new subdivisions can enhance the perception of neighborhood, a characteristic that is important in the development and maintenance of small-town atmosphere.

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- **Limit development that causes premature extension of utilities and services.**

Identify areas of the city's future growth or "Urban Service Areas" where there are private sector pressures for urban growth, or where growth pressures are projected to occur during the planning period. Encourage development and extension of city services in those areas.

Recommendation - Annexation

Future annexations should be planned as presented in the public facilities section to avoid straining municipal resources. To most efficiently utilize current infrastructure investments, further annexations should be undertaken as part of a proposed five-year capital improvements program (CIP).

Strategically plan annexations in the near-term to implement long term desired growth.

- Further annexation should be undertaken within planned "Urban Service Areas" in response to urban growth pressures.
- Annexation should be targeted to control short-term development in Urban Service Areas that are important to long-term growth plans Land with short-term development potential that can be easily serviced by existing infrastructure.

Absent the presence of one of these three factors, annexation should not be undertaken. This recommendation must be tempered, however, by the realization that poorly planned development outside current boundaries could limit the city's future growth capabilities. The lack of zoning in the county must be a major consideration in determining which areas must be annexed. In

appropriate development along I-44, for example, will have significant impacts on future development patterns and the ability to implement the goals and objective of the plan. Thus, annexation decisions must balance the problems of assuming short-term service costs against the long-term benefits.

Research and consider adoption of an "adequate public facilities" policy relating to road improvements, public utilities and other capital improvements in the newly annexed and unplatted areas of Mount Vernon.

- Establish fees for developer contributions as part of an "adequate public facilities" policy relating to arterial and collector streets, public utilities and related development improvements on unplatted lots in Mount Vernon.
- Restrict development approval where public facilities need to be extended based on the readiness of the public to invest.

Recommendations -- Open Space:

The amount of open space within Mount Vernon directly impacts the quality of life of its residents. The "sense of place" in Mount Vernon was identified as a major value, based in part on rural and small city "openness". Open space is defined as an area of land or water or combination thereof planned for maintenance of the natural environment in its undeveloped state; or for passive or active recreational use by all residents of a platted subdivision, or by the general public, including an area of recreational activities such as swimming pools, tennis courts, and shuffleboard courts; and which does not include areas utilized for streets, alleys, driveways or private roads, off-street parking or loading areas.

Recommendations --

Support commercial growth with financing mechanisms.

- Prepare financing plans, such as special assessment districts, to extend infrastructure improvements to connect to utility main extensions;
- Target CIP projects to support development within commercial districts.

Create good urban design along commercial thoroughfare corridors by linking developments with common and consistent design patterns to promote orderly commercial development.

- Develop commercial district regulations to expressly require site plan review of all commercial development and to establish design standards;
- Cluster commercial centers, particularly community centers, at the arterial roads which connect to the highway interchange, such as along I-44;
- Coordinate major thoroughfare improvements in the Major Street Plan with patterns of commercial growth so that streets can accommodate increased traffic volumes, in particular on future north/south streets on the east and west sides of the city; and
- Create strong continuous corridor edges using either consistent building setbacks or continuous sequences of plant materials, street light standards and compatible signage;
- Minimize curb cuts and median breaks by requiring adjacent commercial uses to design internal connections between parking lots to minimize street traffic and curb cuts;
- Encourage commercial developments to be pedestrian-oriented with clearly identified walk-ways between parking lots and buildings;
- Lighting for businesses and parking lots should be low glare and designed so as not to shine directly into adjacent residential areas;
- Where possible, encourage the location of developments internally to site, maintaining a solid vegetated edge along thoroughfare frontage;
- Encourage parking lots to be planted with street landscaping as well as appropriate number of shade trees (one tree for every five to ten parking spaces is recommended); and
- Commercial and industrial developers shall maintain trees, plants, and fences they have installed as landscaping and buffering

When regulating new commercial development on arterial roads, such as along Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) protect the capacity of the road to carry arterial traffic.

- Businesses should be clustered in developments to allow for the preservation of turning movement capacity;
- Use the site plan review process to promote clustering development for maintaining design standards and preserving traffic capacity;
- Orient and align buildings and developments with a sensitivity to the existing cluster development along the corridor and to establish a sense of design; and
- Encourage the design of residential and office park internal traffic circulation to make parking more efficient.

Encourage a Private/Public Beautification Program

- In order to further enhance and build upon the positive appearance of the city a streetscape plan for the I-44 and Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) corridors should be developed. The program should include such things as trees, enhanced traffic signals, storm water drainage, curbs and gutters, uniform setbacks from the interstate, etc. Anytime visible public investment is made in an area, new private investment considers that area more favorably. Targeted commercial recruitment will be more successful where there is strong evidence of public investment.

Promote a Tourism Program

- City of Mount Vernon should plan on capturing a larger share of tourist to local attractions as well as area destinations, such as Shepherd of the Hills, Branson entertainment, and Precious Moments Chapel attractions. The site plan and site development standards would apply.

Adopt “Downtown Design Guidelines” for Downtown Mount Vernon.

To ensure new and redeveloped uses in and near the downtown preserve or complement the established character and historical significance, building in the Downtown area should meet minimum development standards. The following guidelines should apply to any such development in Downtown Mount Vernon:

- Careful consideration of durable materials, proportions, and shapes, emphasizing the importance of roofs as integral and embracing elements of the over-all design, is particularly important. Building rooftops shall utilize the following features:
 - Parapets concealing flat roofs and roof top equipment; or
 - Overhanging eaves
- Roof mounted equipment, including ventilators and satellite dishes shall be screened from view (100% opacity) or isolated so as not to be visible from ground level of any adjacent public thoroughfare or residentially zoned area, up to a maximum of three hundred feet (300') away. The appearance of roof screens shall be coordinated with the building to maintain a unified appearance.
- All electrical and mechanical equipment located adjacent to the building and visible from any adjacent public thoroughfare or a residentially zoned area shall be screened from view (100% opacity), up to a maximum of three hundred feet (300') away. Such screens and enclosures shall be treated as integral elements of the building's appearance.
- All telephone and cable television lines, electrical services and distribution lines shall be placed underground, except that this provision shall not include meters, electric and telephone service pedestals, transformers, three-phase feeder lines, sub-transmission and transmission lines (34.5kv and above), electrical substations and such other facilities as the utility may deem necessary to install utilizing "overhead" type construction.
- The form and proportion of new buildings or redevelopment shall be consistent or compatible with the scale, form and proportion of existing development in the downtown.
- Pedestrian Access: Pedestrian access shall be an integral part of the overall design of each development. The pedestrian access should provide not only safe and convenient access to and from off-street parking areas but should also connect with abutting properties and developments so as to create an alternative means of transportation for residents of the downtown:
 - Sidewalks at least 5 feet in width shall be provided along all sides of a lot that abut a dedicated public or private street. A continuous internal pedestrian sidewalk shall be provided from the perimeter public sidewalk to the principal customer entrance(s). This internal sidewalk shall feature landscaping, benches, and other such materials and facilities for no less than 50 percent of its length.

- Sidewalks shall be provided along the full length of the building along any facade featuring a customer entrance and along any facade abutting public parking areas. Such sidewalks shall be located at the building facade to provide continuous edges; and shall incorporate planting areas for landscaping along the street.
- Internal pedestrian sidewalks shall be distinguished from driving surfaces through the use of special pavers, bricks, or scored concrete to enhance pedestrian safety and the attractiveness of the sidewalks.
- Architectural design should be complementary of historic colors, shadow lines and contrasting shapes indigenous to the downtown. The use of walls in a single color, with little detailing or completely blank, is strongly discouraged.
- Monotony of design in single or multiple building projects shall be avoided. Variation of detail, form, and siting shall be used to provide visual interest.
- Loading docks, trash enclosures, outdoor storage and similar facilities and functions shall be incorporated into the overall design of the building and the landscaping so that the visual and acoustic impacts of these functions are reduced to as great an extent as possible and are out of view from adjacent properties and public streets.
- Building facades that are 100 feet or greater in length shall incorporate recesses and projections along at least 20 percent of the length of the building facade, reflecting the archetype of the downtown. Windows, awnings, and arcades must total at least 60 percent of the facade length abutting any public street.

Recommendation - Industrial Growth:

The city should establish guidelines to provide a clear, consistent approach to the review of zoning and development requests for two principal types of business/industrial developments:

- mixed-use business park centers; and
- infill industrial development.

The first category is a new concept of business development important to the establishment of “curb appeal” at the three I-44 interchanges of Mount Vernon. The plan identifies land for large-scale commercial development along I-44, which could include business park centers. Retail-commercial developments that seek high traffic count locations should be targeted for the interchange entrances and on arterial streets and frontage roads; however, the business park concept could be applicable further from the main road entrance, where there is good visibility from the interstate. This concept would be applicable to expansion of commerce from Springfield and Joplin.

The commercial strip business should be allowed to develop on arterial and frontage roads only in accordance with the major road access limitations. These principles are shown on the Future Land Use and Major Street Plan map.

The other type of industrial development—infill industrial—is important to Mount Vernon to ensure land use compatibility. The city applies its site planning and site development standards to ensure that vacant industrial lots meet the following:

- Access control;

- Site compatibility; and
- Basic design guidelines when adjacent to residential districts.

Recommendation - Existing Development:

Previous studies in the community have emphasized the need to promote investment in existing development in Mount Vernon, in addition to attracting new business and residents. To maintain the quality of existing development and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of residents and visitors to Mount Vernon, the city may achieve this goal through the following strategic options

- Promote compatible development patterns and activities.
- Create flexible yet effective zoning ordinances.
- Encourage and enforce property maintenance.
- Increase investment in public infrastructure.
- Create new and utilize existing financing opportunities.

The means that the city will use to attain the above objectives include:

- **Pre-occupancy Programs**

The city will strive to work proactively with builders, developers, property owners and/or tenants to ensure the timely and problem-free occupancy of newly completed or redeveloped buildings or structures. This may be done, for example, by developers and other parties' relevant to a project meeting with appropriate city staff members to address concerns as the transition from the construction phase of a project to occupancy phase begins.

- **Property Maintenance Incentives**

- The goal of the city is to work cooperatively with property owners to achieve voluntary compliance with property maintenance codes and prevent nuisances from developing in the community. To encourage owners to maintain their property in a manner that promotes the livability of the community, the city will:
Be proactive and communicate clearly with property owners or tenants in identifying potential code violations and providing information on options for the remedying of unsafe and/or unhealthy conditions.
- Provide an annual opportunity for homeowners and residents to dispose of potentially hazardous, bulky and/or unwanted items (e.g. home appliances, electronics, furniture, etc.) and yard-waste.
- Coordinate efforts for addressing property-maintenance violations between the Building & Code Enforcement Department and the Police Department. The main reason for this approach is that the two departments are the primary city employees that are out in the community on a daily basis and share responsibility for effecting compliance with existing codes and ordinances. Code-enforcement personnel are trained in identifying housing conditions that reflect illegal operations. Similarly, police are trained in property maintenance ordinances.

- **Neighborhood Redevelopment**

In some areas a multitude of conditions may occur that create existing residential land-uses that no longer meet community needs. Housing may be deteriorated beyond a point of repair (i.e. infrastructure and homes no longer appeal to new home buyers or existing residents) and/or land-use patterns may have changed. In these areas, neighborhood redevelopment may be an appropriate alternative. A possible approach the city may utilize in this instance is the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) within a TIF District to remove deteriorating housing and create a commercial center.

Recommendation – Community Gateways:

Several key intersections and corridors within Mount Vernon serve as a primary means of access to the community. Thus, these intersections and the activities surrounding them are often a visitor’s first impression of the City. These key intersections and corridors will function as “gateways” into Mount Vernon. These gateways not only influence visitors’ perceptions, but can also help promote the quality of life and vitality of the community with Mount Vernon residents. As such, special attention and planning consideration should be given to these locations.

The planning and design considerations given to gateways should be based upon a hierarchy of importance, based upon purpose, location, traffic volumes, street function and visibility. Gateways should be identified as primary, secondary and transition gateways.

- **Primary Gateways**

Primary gateways should identify the City of Mount Vernon as a whole. Primary gateways are identified as the major interchanges with I-44, including Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) and Highway 174. In addition, the Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) corridor leading to and from I-44 should be considered part of the primary gateways.

The major features of these gateways should include:

- A prominent features such as large-scale public art, statuary, fountains, gardens or park-like settings;
- Signage to clearly identify entrance into Mount Vernon. Brick, stone or other high-quality materials should be incorporated into the signage to further establish the gateway; and
- Landscaping to accent the surrounding corridor and prominent features. A combination of street trees, ornamental trees, shrubbery, ground covers and ornamental plantings should be used to accent and coordinate the design.

Gateway features serve as landmarks within the City, welcoming visitors, and reminding residents of the Mount Vernon quality of life and instilling a local pride.

- **Secondary Gateways**

Secondary gateways should identify the City of Mount Vernon as a whole, but on a smaller scale than the Primary gateways. These gateways are identified as the intersections between all other arterials. Secondary gateways include intersections such

between Business Loop (Mount Vernon Boulevard) and County Road 2130, Spring Park Blvd, Market, Hickory, Walnut and East Streets.

As opposed to primary gateway features, those of the secondary gateways are intended to be at a pedestrian scale instead of primarily auto-visible. The major features of the secondary gateways are:

- A prominent features such as public art, statuary, fountains, gardens or park-like settings;
- Signage of brick, stone or other high-quality material;
- Landscaping to accent the surrounding corridor and prominent features. A combination of street trees, ornamental trees, shrubbery, ground covers and ornamental plantings should be used to accent and coordinate the design;
- Benches, trash receptacles, pedestrian scale lighting, unique paving patterns at crosswalks, and other streetscape elements.

- **Transition Gateways**

Transition gateways are identified for those areas where a distinct change in activity or land use takes place or a specific district begins along an arterial or collector roadway. Transition gateways are used to identify the entrance into unique destinations or corridors. For example, the entrance into downtown along Market Street and Hickory Street or at the entrances to the industrial parks off of County Road 1112, Highway 39 and Kings Park.

Transition gateway features are on a smaller scale than primary or secondary gateways. The major features of the transition gateways are:

- Signage to clearly identify the entrance into the district;
- Landscaping to accent the streetscape and signage. A combination of street trees, ornamental trees, shrubbery, ground covers and ornamental plantings should be used to accent and coordinate the design;
- Benches, trash receptacles, pedestrian scale lighting, unique paving patterns at crosswalks, and other streetscape elements to create pedestrian scale where sidewalks provide accessibility.

The City should work closely or partner with local developers to ensure that adequate aesthetic considerations are given to development near identified gateway locations. As part of a formalized site plan review process the City should consider the visual impacts of development at these locations. Development should incorporate architectural features such as building recession and projections, canopies and awnings, window and high-quality materials to accent and complement the gateway development. Building orientation and parking should also be carefully planned to minimize the adverse impacts of the negative features of the site. Trash dumpsters, loading areas and parking should be screened with appropriate landscaping.

Many of the gateway locations identified have been developed, making the efforts to establish the gateway concept more difficult. Initial improvements may focus around landscaping. Overtime, as redevelopment occurs or partnerships are formed, the larger-scale elements like public art and signage can be added.

For those areas that are not currently developed or in which limited development has taken place, efforts to establish the gateway concept should begin immediately. Conceptual plans for development of gateways in these locations should be developed, so that as development does begin to occur, a clear vision can be presented. This vision would serve as the basis for requirements for land dedication or acquisition and special design considerations.

Recommendation – Airport:

Previous studies have indicated a desire to expand the operation of the airport in order to generate additional revenues and encourage further local economic development. The amount of additional investments required should be weighed against the potential revenues expected. The ability to provide adequate utilities and access should be major considerations. The city should explore partnership with the University of Missouri to pursue a possible joint-development and operation venture.

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APPENDIX A

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

	Support Downtown	<input type="text"/>	
	Stabilization of Decline	<input type="text"/>	
	New Construction	<input type="text"/>	
Public Policy Support			<input type="text"/>
	Comprehensive Plan	<input type="text"/>	
	Political Considerations	<input type="text"/>	
	Geographic Distribution	<input type="text"/>	
	Timing	<input type="text"/>	
Investment Opportunities			<input type="text"/>
	Term	<input type="text"/>	
	Character of Invest	<input type="text"/>	
	Leverage	<input type="text"/>	
	Uniqueness/Innovation	<input type="text"/>	
Debt Capacity			<input type="text"/>
	Availability	<input type="text"/>	
	Revenue Source	<input type="text"/>	

APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND CONTACTS

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AASHTO	American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials
CBC	Community Betterment Committee
CIP	Capital Improvement Program
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CPTED	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
DRC	Downtown Revitalization Committee
HPC	Historic Preservation Committee
ITE	Institute of Traffic Engineers
MDNR	Missouri Department of Natural Resources
MGD	Million Gallons Per Day
MODOT	Missouri Department of Transportation
MPRA	Missouri Parks and Recreation Association
MVIDC	Mount Vernon Industrial Development Corporation
OSEDA	Office of Socio-Economic Data Analysis
SSA	Social Security Administration

Telephone Contacts:

CBC
DRC
HPC
MDNR
MODOT
MPRA
MVIDC
OSEDA