

The General Land Use Plan

I. Summary

As one of the three main components of the Comprehensive Plan, the General Land Use Plan element supports those existing land uses which are most suited to their location, while suggesting changes in those existing uses which are likewise unsuitable. Primarily, however, the Plan proposes the most appropriate uses for land not yet developed.

Broad in nature, this Plan component attempts to guide "the most appropriate use" of the land for the larger public interest, as well as assist in the economic and physical growth of the City. The formulation of the General Land Use Plan is the result of extensive study and evaluation of the existing socio-economic trends as well as the past and present patterns of the development of the built environment. The two primary tools planners use to evaluate these trends are the Census and the land use survey. The Census, conducted every ten years by the federal government, is simply the accounting of such things as population, socio-economic data and housing throughout the United States. The second tool used is the land use survey, which is conducted every five years by the Urban Development Department staff and is an inventory of Mobile's land use or built environment and the general "health" of the City.

Through the use of these tools, planners, with assistance from community leaders and citizens, formulate a series of goals intended to guide growth and redevelopment within Mobile. In addition to the goals, the General Land Use Plan contains a land use map. This map is a graphical representation of such land uses as residential, commercial and industrial, and indicates where these types of uses should be located. Both the goals and the land use map comprise the heart of the Comprehensive Plan, serving as a statement of how Mobilians want Mobile to develop and redevelop.

The primary way in which the goals of the General Land Use Plan are implemented is through Regulatory Planning. Regulatory Planning is the controlling of land through the enforcement of Subdivision and Zoning regulations. Regulatory Planning is discussed in Section III.

II. Land Use Plan Goals

The General Land Use Plan identifies the land areas considered suitable for residential, commercial, industrial parks/open space, and various public uses such as educational facilities and religious institutions. When designating these areas, and subsequently developing the Zoning Ordinance, goals are an important consideration. The following discussion includes some of the goals considered:

A) Residential

In most cities, the largest amount of land is used for dwelling purposes. The primary goal is to provide a suitable living environment at an affordable cost for every household in Mobile by assuring that housing concerns and needs remain an integral part of the planning process. Residential housing types consist of detached single family or attached multi-family housing, ranging from duplexes to condominiums to apartment complexes.

- To eliminate incompatible land uses and overcrowding of land within existing residential areas and encourage compatible land uses into existing and future residential areas.
- In the undeveloped areas, provide for new neighborhoods that supply a variety of housing types, tied with other communities, areas of employment and the central city by main thoroughfares.

B) Commercial/Industrial

Mobile's commerce and industry originally located along the Mobile Riverfront. The Central Business District as well as the primary industrial areas are still found here today.

- Coordinate between the City, Mobile County, Alabama State Docks and railroads for the logical placement and preservation of industrial areas.
- As the City grows physically, delineate suitable placement of regional, community and neighborhood commercial centers. Maintain traditional commercial centers.

C) Open Space

Open space provides contrast to the urban environment and includes not only large, undeveloped lands but also the smaller areas like parks and cemeteries.

- To provide sufficient types and amounts of parks and open space that are well distributed and provide year-round opportunities for recreation.
- Attain land for parks, parkways, forestry and agricultural land reserves. Develop a belt of green space around the planning jurisdiction.

III. Regulatory Controls

A) Zoning Ordinance

Zoning is used to control the use of land in order to protect and promote the public's health, safety and welfare by allowing compatible uses within each type of zoning district. Every piece of property in the City of Mobile is zoned. The Zoning Ordinance includes 13 different classifications (5 residential, 6 commercial and 2 industrial) along with the official Zoning Atlas. In addition, there are standards

which regulate building height, setbacks, parking, landscaping, signs, tree plantings and others required for developing sites.

B) Subdivision Regulation

The subdivision of land is usually the first step in the development process. The City of Mobile must therefore be able to consider and approve the division of land and its potential development, as it impacts the services the City and County must provide. Because of this need, the State of Alabama requires that the Mobile City Planning Commission review subdivision applications within its Planning Jurisdiction. This Jurisdiction includes the City of Mobile and an area that extends five miles beyond the city limits. The Subdivision Regulations ensure that all new lots meet certain requirements including minimum lot size, proper access to a street and adequate utilities such as water and sanitary sewer facilities.