

# UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODES

## CHRISTIAN COUNTY, MISSOURI

### INTRODUCTION

**Statement of Philosophy** - Christian County's most pressing challenge is how to maintain a desired quality of life in the face of pressures resulting from rapid population growth and urbanization. Undirected, rapid growth is changing the physical and rural landscape of Christian County and placing greater demands on the County's resources. It is the general philosophy of the Christian County Comprehensive Plan and the Unified Development Codes to provide for guided or planned growth that is compatible with and preserves the best qualities of life in Christian County and that promotes conservation and maintenance of the County's natural resources.

**Growth in Christian County** - With a population of 54,285, Christian County was one of the fastest growing counties in the State of Missouri in 2000. Between 1990 and 2000, Christian County's population increased by 66.3%. While there has been a steady increase in the number of persons living in the cities, there has also been a similar increase in the population living in the rural areas of the County. In 2000, over 51.2% of the County's total population lived in the rural areas.

Rapid population growth has brought with it increased demands on the County's resources. Growth in the County's rural areas is placing strains on the delivery of public services, such as education, fire protection and law enforcement. Rural roads, not designed to urban traffic level standards, are seeing increased traffic congestion. Rural growth has also placed demands on the County's groundwater supply and concerns for groundwater quality. Growth has also resulted in a rapid conversion of prime agricultural soils to urban development and increased potential for large scale deforestation in environmentally sensitive areas. For the most part, the rural areas of Christian County do not have mechanisms or programs in place or the financial resources to respond to the problems of uncontrolled growth.

Overall, rapid growth is changing the character of Christian County. While the southern parts of the County are still primarily rural in nature, the northern portion of the County is quickly becoming an urban landscape. The rapid growth that the County has experienced over the past two decades is projected to continue in the future, resulting in even greater changes in rural Christian County. The County's population is projected to more than double by the year 2020. If 51.2% of the expected growth occurs in the rural areas (as occurred between 1990 and 2000), the rural population would double to more than 65,000 persons by the year 2020. There would be more people living in the rural portions of the County by the year 2020 than there were in the entire County in 2000.

Clearly, the form that new growth takes will have great implications for the quality of rural life and the total amount of resources that will be needed to accommodate this growth.

**The Comprehensive Plan** - In an effort to guide future growth in Christian County that preserves the best qualities of rural life, protects the natural environment and promotes efficient use of resources, the Christian County Planning and Zoning Commission has prepared and adopted the Christian County Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide for future land development and public services and is intended to be used by the County's elected officials and advisory boards in decision-making regarding development, resource management and public infrastructure issues.

The Comprehensive Plan sets forth a series of goal statements which represent the ideals to be achieved in Christian County. These goal statements, which were developed by the Christian County Planning and Zoning Commission following public meetings and input from special studies on existing conditions and needs in the County, establish the framework for the Comprehensive Plan and the policies and recommendations for future development contained in the Plan. The major goals of the Comprehensive Plan include:

- \* Protect, preserve and enhance the quality of the natural environment.
- \* Promote land development patterns that are consistent and compatible with existing development and the environment.
- \* Protect and preserve agricultural uses from encroachment from incompatible urban development.
- \* Support governmental programs and regulations designed to protect the public's health, safety and welfare.
- \* Provide for a major transportation system that will efficiently and safely move traffic throughout the County and into adjacent regions.
- \* Ensure adequate water and sewage disposal for all development in Christian County.
- \* Encourage an orderly rate of growth that preserves the desirable qualities of life in Christian County and that is within the financial capabilities of the County to provide necessary public services and infrastructure.

**Relationship of Comprehensive Plan to the Unified Development Codes** - The Christian County Comprehensive Plan is the policy guide for future decision-making on land development, public infrastructure and resource management for Christian County. The land development and public infrastructure policies and recommendations of the Plan are implemented through the regulations contained in the Unified Development Codes for Christian County. The Comprehensive Plan and the Unified Development Codes are intended to work together to achieve the County's goals. The Plan establishes policy; the Development Codes translate policy into action.

The Unified Development Codes for Christian County contains two land development regulations—zoning and subdivision regulations. Traditional zoning regulations govern the use of private land and related development factors such as density of development, bulk and intensity of development. Subdivision regulations govern the manner in which land is divided into sites for development and the provision of public utilities and infrastructure.

The Christian County Planning and Zoning Commission has determined that traditional zoning, which divides land into broad categories of use, would not adequately meet the needs and desires of Christian County's citizens, nor would it be able to adequately respond to varied and unique development issues in different areas of the County. Therefore, the Unified Development Codes provide for a more flexible and dynamic approach to land use regulation.

A Permit System for all future development has been established. Individual proposals for development will be evaluated on the basis of established performance criteria (referred to as absolute or relative policies). The extent to which a proposed development meets the requirements of the performance criteria will be determined through a defined numerical rating system. Approval or denial of a permit for development is based on the proposed development's contributions to beneficial growth and land use patterns, compatibility with surrounding uses, impact on environmental quality and availability of public infrastructure and services.

**The Unified Development Codes are specifically intended to:**

- \* Provide for a dynamic land use regulation system. Rapid growth has brought immense changes to Christian County. Land use regulations must be able to respond to changing community conditions and changing public desires and values.
- \* Provide for evaluation of the environmental, social and economic impacts of proposed development on its immediate community and the County as a whole. The varying impacts of different developments can be more adequately addressed.
- \* Provide for a land use regulatory system that fosters innovation and creativity. The development community is offered the opportunity and incentives to promote and provide for the best development possible.
- \* Provide for review of development proposals in a timely manner. Through early public notification and differing levels of permit procedures, the process by which development proposals are reviewed and determinations made on permits will be shortened. This will benefit both the interested public and the development community.
- \* Provide for fair and justifiable decision-making. All parties, including the development community and concerned citizens, should know in advance what is required for a development proposal to receive permit approval. The performance criteria evaluation system contained in the Unified Development Codes outlines the requirements for permit approval.