

## *Rolla Comprehensive Plan Update, 2005*

### **PLANNING PARAMETERS MEMORANDUM**

**01/10/2005**

#### Understanding the Assignment

Staff has been directed to move forward with the initial steps necessary to accomplish an update of the 1996 Rolla Comprehensive Plan. It is particularly appropriate to revisit Rolla's Comprehensive Plan now due to the passage of time (almost ten years since the Plan was completed). The updated plan would amend the 1996 Plan to reflect the growth and changing needs/conditions of the community. Another reason to pursue an update concerns the 1996 Plan's failure to provide specific direction for policymakers concerning the physical development and long-term infrastructure needs of Rolla. It did not adequately consider a large enough planning area beyond the 1996 corporate limits or evaluate alternative growth scenarios.

The Rolla Comprehensive Plan Update will not replace, but may re-evaluate other recently completed plan amendments and system plans, such as the Southside Development Plan (adopted as an element of the 1996 Plan in March 2002) or the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan (completed in October 2003, but not adopted as an element of the Comprehensive Plan). One goal of the assignment is to integrate these plans into a single, more usable document.

A second goal of the Comprehensive Plan Update is to ensure that the needs of Rolla will be addressed, and that appropriate guidance is provided for future decision-making on issues such as land use, growth management, community design, natural resources and the environment, transportation, housing and neighborhood preservation, infrastructure and services, and economic development issues.

#### What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is an official document adopted by a city as a long-range policy guide for decisions about the *physical development* of the community. The plan is not a regulatory ordinance, but a guide to be used when ordinances, such as zoning or subdivision regulations, are revised and administered. Nor should the comprehensive plan become a detailed capital improvements program or contain a budget. It should be used, however, as a guide in the more detailed development planning and budgeting that must occur before those facilities are constructed.

The comprehensive plan is not intended to solve the myriad of socio-economic problems that confront the city and its residents, but it can contribute toward solving some of those problems. For example, the plan does not address strategies to reduce poverty, but could provide guidance for efforts to develop more affordable housing.

The plan can help improve decisions on development-related matters by providing the city with information on how much the community may grow, its priorities, what actions will help achieve community objectives, and how all the elements relate to one another.

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The term “comprehensive” refers to the coverage of the plan for all portions of the city and all facilities that relate to physical development.

### Functions of a Comprehensive Plan

The functions performed by a comprehensive plan are many and complex, but they can be grouped under three principle categories:

1. The plan is an expression of what a community wants. It promotes the public interest rather than the interests of individuals or special interest groups in the community. It provides an opportunity for citizens to participate in their community’s long range planning. The plan lays-out a vision of what might be, a statement of goals, a listing of objectives, and policy statements to inform residents, developers, decision-makers, and others governmental entities about the City’s “ground rules” for development.
2. The plan, once adopted, serves as a guide to decision making. It provides the means for influencing the many public and private decisions that will create the future of Rolla. It allows technical knowledge to influence political decisions and interjects long-range considerations into the determination of short-range actions.
3. The plan in some cases may represent the fulfillment of a legal requirement. It may be a necessary obligation in order to use zoning. Such a mandated plan can, of course, fulfill the first two functions, but the fact that it is required adds a distinctive dimension to the planning process.

### Scope of Work

The “Scope of Work” can be found in *A Recipe for Comprehensive Planning*. The recipe includes Part One: Project Initiation and Organization; Part Two: Collect and Analyze Data; Part Three: Prepare, Review, and Adopt the Updated Comprehensive Plan.

### Planning Horizon

It is anticipated that the Rolla Comprehensive Plan Update will provide adequate policy guidance for at least the next sixteen years (2005-2020).

### Urban Growth Area

The Rolla Comprehensive Plan Update will encompass an Urban Growth Area (UGA) of approximately 5.7 square miles, not including the 11.6 square miles currently within the Rolla City Limits (please refer to the attached map). The UGA is intended to represent the area in which urban-scale growth will be encouraged based on the present and expected future availability of necessary public infrastructure. The term “urban-scale” is intended to denote development densities consistent with those currently found in Rolla (approximately an average of 15,000 square feet of land consumed for each new dwelling

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unit). The concept also addresses a service level normally required for urban growth to occur, such as central water and sewer, street system, and other municipal-type services.

In locating boundaries for the UGA, a number of factors were considered. They include drainage basins, utility service corridors, community identity considerations, neighborhood types, logical service delivery areas for police and fire, traffic access and circulation, the continuation of street patterns and others.

The UGA reflects the additional space needed to accommodate the population growth estimates and the future land development needs of the community for a time period **including and beyond** the stated planning horizon of sixteen years. The maintenance of a healthy real estate market requires that sufficient land (2 to 3 times the land area “absorbed” over the next sixteen years) should be available for annexation and development in the UGA when appropriate. Under no circumstances would the entire UGA necessarily have to be annexed into the City over the next sixteen or even twenty years to meet the growth needs of Rolla. The UGA cannot be used to predict exactly where or when growth will occur, just where it will be encouraged or supported.

The UGA designation is being proposed as guide for public and private land use and infrastructure investment planning. From the public’s perspective, urban-scale development outside of the UGA will not be encouraged through the extension of urban-scale services. The City has or will develop the capacity to provide urban-scale services such as police and fire protection as Rolla grows into the UGA. Establishing a Rolla UGA will also assist in negotiating service area agreements with rural water districts and rural electric coops. When Rolla’s leaders determine that an annexation program is required and in the best interests of the community at large, the forethought represented by the UGA designation will form an important component of the planning process.