

6.0 Land Use Patterns and Regulations

6.1 Existing Land Use Patterns

A map of the City's existing land use patterns reveals the past patterns of development and predicts the future development of the city. This inventory of land uses is also helpful in assessing the adequacy of the available supply of commercial, industrial and residential space.

In order to create the City of Monroe's first digitized land use inventory map, the City's existing computer file showing the land parcels in Monroe was brought into a Geographic Information System (GIS) program. This forms the base layer of information for the inventory map. Then, using the City's paper inventory of land uses, each parcel in the City was assigned a land use. This is the land use layer and it divides the City into the following land use categories:

- Agriculture
- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Community Service
- Public Service
- Park/Open Space
- Vacant

The land uses were then reviewed by the City of Monroe Planning and Zoning Division and changes were made based on staff recommendations. Using GIS it is possible to calculate the areas of all the land uses. Street and railroad right-of-ways and water areas were not included in the land areas. The following table shows the total area and the percentage of the city of each of these land uses.

Table 6-1 Existing Land Uses

Land Use	Acres	Percent
Agriculture	1,298	8.6%
Residential	4,571	30.2%
Commercial	1,559	10.3%
Industrial	602	4.0%
Community Service	1,437	9.5%
Public Service	910	6.0%
Park/Open Space	1,017	6.7%
Vacant	3,724	24.6%

Source: peter j. smith & company, City of Monroe Planning Department



6.1.1 Agriculture

Agricultural lands are areas used for growing crops or raising livestock. In the City of Monroe, 1,298 acres of land are used for agriculture. There is a horse pasture around Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and I-20, but most of this area is due to cultivated lands north and south of the airport on the east side of the City.

6.1.2 Residential

Only land that is used exclusively for residential purposes is classified as a residential land use. Residential uses in the same structure as a commercial use would not be classified as residential. The 4,571 acres of residential property make up nearly 30% of the City's area. The most fully developed residential areas are located on the north side of the City. The residential area between Texas Avenue and Winnsboro Road on the south side of the City is also almost fully developed. The residential neighborhoods between the downtown and airport complex and south of Winnsboro Road contain many vacant parcels that can accommodate infill development.

6.1.3 Commercial

Commercial property occupies 10% of the City. The largest commercial areas are located along Louisville Avenue, the downtown area, the Millhaven/I-20 corridor, and Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue. Forsythe Avenue, 18th and 19th Streets, DeSiard Avenue, 2nd Street and Winnsboro Road are also commercial corridors. There are many isolated commercial properties scattered throughout the City.

6.1.4 Industrial

Industrial properties are those engaged in manufacturing or warehousing facilities. Land used for industry comprises 4% of the City. The airport industrial park area contains most of the industrial uses. This area has a considerable amount of undeveloped land. Other industrial areas can be found at various locations with access to the railroad tracks. There are some industrial parcels located Downtown and on the western side of the I-20/Martin Luther King Jr. Interchange.

6.1.5 Community Service

Community service land uses include schools, churches, cemeteries, government facilities, institutions and medical facilities. There are 1,437 acres of land, 9.5% of the City, dedicated to community services in the City of Monroe. The University of Louisiana at Monroe is the largest of these areas. The government/civic center/medical complex on the south side of Downtown is another large area devoted to community services. There are also medical complexes located on Jackson Street in the south and Sterlington Road in the north. The community centers, including their outdoor recreational areas are designated as community service uses, as are school facilities outdoor recreation areas. These facilities, which are distributed throughout the City, contribute significantly to the amount of community service area. There are several churches on large parcels and many small churches which are located primarily in residential neighborhoods. These are also categorized as community services.



6.1.6 Public Service

Public services include transportation facilities and public utilities. Public Services account for 6% of the City. The airport makes up the largest portion of the 910 acres of land used for public services. The sewer treatment plant on Richwood Rd # 2 is a large public service possible. Monroe has two railroad yards located just east of downtown and north of Thomas Avenue near Jackson Street, which are also categorized as public service.

6.1.7 Parks/Open Space

Parks and open spaces are those areas dedicated to recreation or open space preservation. These uses make up 6.7% of the City. Chennault Park and Golf Course located east of the airport is the largest of these areas. There are also golf courses located on Deborah Drive, and in Forsythe Park and a vacant former golf course at Kansas Lane and Millhaven Road. Charles Johnson Park and the adjacent zoo make up another large recreational area. Other parks are scattered throughout the City.

6.1.8 Vacant

Vacant land is land that is defined as unused but has development potential. Almost one-fourth of the City is vacant. The largest area of vacant land is located east of Chennault Park. The airport industrial park area and an area around Armand Street and Bienville Drive contain a significant amount of vacant land with the greatest development potential. There are other large areas of vacant land with less development potential because they lie in flood plains or are isolated by railroad tracks. Many areas throughout the City contain large amounts of individual vacant lots that could provide infill development in established areas.

6.2 Existing Zoning

A zoning ordinance establishes permitted uses, minimum lot sizes, minimum front, side and rear setbacks for principal and accessory buildings, maximum building heights and maximum building and lot coverage. A zoning ordinance can also dictate construction material and architectural design. A zoning ordinance is a critical tool for controlling the type, density, and appearance of development within a municipality. The City of Monroe’s Zoning Code was originally adopted in 1961. The zoning code has been amended several times to date since its adoption.

Table 6-2 Existing Zoning

Zoning District	District Name	Area (Acres)	Percent
Residential Districts			
R-1	One-Family Residence District	4,386	29.1%
R-1A	One-Family Attached Residence District	57	0.4%
R-TH	Townhouse District	162	1.1%
R-M.D.	Residence Medium Density	2	0.0%
R-2	Multifamily Residence District	1,079	7.2%
R-3	Multifamily Residence District	0	0.0%
R-M.H.P.	Residence Mobile Home Parks	9	0.1%
Commercial Districts			
B-1	Transition Business District	542	3.6%
B-2	Neighborhood Business District	194	1.3%
B-3	General Business District	1,681	11.1%



Zoning District	District Name	Area (Acres)	Percent
B-3R	General Business-Residential District	174	1.2%
B-4	Heavy Commercial District	133	0.9%
B-5	Business Park District	406	2.7%
CBD-1	Central Business District	77	0.5%
CBD-2	Metro Business District	46	0.3%
Industrial Districts			
I-1	Light Industrial District	1,306	8.7%
I-2	Heavy Industrial District	200	1.3%
Other Districts			
O-L	Open Land District	4,148	27.5%
C-1	Campus District	484	3.2%

Source: peter j. smith & company, City of Monroe Planning Department

6.2.1 Residential Districts

R-1 One-Family Residence

The purpose of the R-1 District is to preserve areas where single-family development has occurred or is likely to occur. Commercial uses are not permitted in this district. Schools, churches and other community facilities are permitted upon review of either the Planning Commission or Board of Adjustment. The District makes up 29.1% of the City. The Largest area zoned R-1 is located on the north side of the City, from the University west to the Ouachita River. Much of the south side is also zoned R-1. Other R-1 areas are found between Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and the airport industrial park and east of the University around Cypress Point Drive.

R-1A One-Family Attached Residence

The R-1A District allows for slightly smaller lot sizes and attached single-family dwellings to achieve higher densities while a single family neighborhood character. There is 0.4% of the City zoned R-1A. Of the area zoned R-1A, only Point Drive has been developed. An area on Bienville Drive and two on DeSiard Street are zoned R-1A.

R-TH Townhouse

The R-TH District is designed for a mix of single family, two family and apartment buildings without drastically increasing the density of a traditional residential neighborhood. These areas are usually located within or adjacent to an R-1 District. Commercial uses are not permitted. A little more than 1% of the City is zoned for R-TH. An area on White Street is the largest area zoned for R-TH and is still undeveloped.

R-MD Residence Medium Density

The Purpose of the R-MD District is the same as the R-TH District with slightly higher density. One area on Martinez Drive off of Airport Avenue has been developed accounting for the 2 acres which are zoned R-MD.

R-2 Multiple-Family Residence

The R-2 District is intended for areas where there is a trend to develop higher densities through the conversion of large homes or use of vacant land for apartments. The District also permits, with the approval of the Planning Commission or Board of Adjustment, a few commercial uses to serve the higher density of people within the district. Just over 7% of the City is zoned R-2.



There are 52 separate areas of the City, several only one or two parcels in size, which are zoned R-2. The largest of these areas is located around Jackson Street between Hippolyte and Lidell avenues. Many of the other areas zoned R-2 are located around the downtown area. Most of these areas have been developed with some isolated vacant lots.

R-3 Multiple Family High Rise

The R-3 District is intended for a mix of high density apartments and office spaces within two miles of the downtown. No areas have been zoned for R-3 development.

R-MHP Residence Mobile Home Park

The R-MHP District is intended to provide areas for the development of mobile home parks. Nine acres of land have been zoned for mobile home parks. These areas are found off DeSiard Street west of Kansas Lane and are fully developed.

6.2.2 Commercial Districts

B-1 Transitional Business

The B-1 District is intended for low impact businesses such as professional offices which are not incompatible with residential development. Setbacks of 20 feet are required to minimize the impact on surrounding residential neighborhoods. Many of these districts are small isolated areas mainly on the north side of the City. Two large areas zoned B-1, located off Garret Rd south of the airport and off Highway 80 east of the airport, are vacant areas.

B-2 Neighborhood Business

The B-2 District is intended for businesses to provide retail goods and services for the daily household needs of the surrounding neighborhoods. There are 194 acres of land zoned B-2 in the City of Monroe. Large areas zoned B-2 are located along Forsythe Avenue, Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and Texas Avenue. There are several smaller areas located at intersections within residential neighborhoods.

B-3 General Business

The B-3 District provides a location for business that supply retail goods and services for the frequent and not so frequent needs of several groups of neighborhoods. These uses are more auto dependant than neighborhood businesses and are found along major thoroughfares. More than 11% of the City is zoned for General Business. Louisville Avenue (Hwy 80) and the Millhaven/I-20 corridor are major areas of General Business Development. B-3 zoned area are also located on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Sterlington Road, DeSiard Street, Winnsboro Road, South 2nd Street, Jackson Street. Vacant areas that are zoned B-3 are found on Ouachita Avenue and Lamy Lane.

B-3R General Business/Residential

The B-3R District is intended for a mix of general businesses and residential uses. Nearly the entire 174 acres zoned B-3R District is located north and east of the downtown area. East of the downtown there are many vacant parcels that could be developed.



B-4 Heavy Commercial

In addition to general businesses, the B-4 District permits large wholesale business, warehouses and some industrial uses. Just less than 1% of the City is zoned for heavy commercial business. Two major areas zoned B-4 are located around North 6th Street and Breard Street and on DeSiard Street at Commerce Street.

B-5 Business Park

The B-5 District is intended for commercial uses on large lots with extensive landscaping. Areas zoned as B-5 comprise 2.7% of the City's area. The North 18th and North 19th Street corridor north of Louisville Avenue is the largest B-5 area and is mostly developed with commercial uses. The area west of the airport is mainly vacant. Other areas zoned B-5 are developed with community services uses. These areas include the medical complexes on Jackson Street Bienville Drive and Sterlington Road and the Medical/Government Complexes around Lea Joyner Memorial Expressway.

CBD-1 Central Business

The Central Business District is located between Washington Street and I-20 and between North 6th Street and the Ouachita River. The District occupies 77 acres of land. This District permits a variety of uses which serve visitors as well as City residents. A higher density of development is encouraged with restrictions to prevent greater congestion in the area. The District is largely developed with community service uses.

CBD-2 Metro Business

The Metro Business District located just north of the Central Business District is also intended to provide retail sales and services for transient visitors as well as residents of the surrounding metropolitan area. The District occupies 46 acres of land and is more commercially developed than the CBD-1 District.

6.2.3 Industrial Districts

I-1 Light Industrial

The I-1 district is designed to provide for a variety of manufacturing and wholesale business with limitations to protect nearby residential and business districts. Nearly 9% of the City's area is zoned Light Industrial. The airport industrial park area, which is half developed, makes up a significant portion of this area. Another large area zoned I-1, located south of Chennault Park, is used for agriculture. Other I-1 areas exist at several locations adjacent to railroad tracts.

I-2 Heavy Industrial

The I-2 District provides an area for industrial uses that are generally less compatible with other land uses due to nuisances or mass of the operation. Only 1.3% of Monroe is zoned for these uses. The area around the railroad yard on Jackson Street and an area that is separated from the City on Highway 165 are both zoned for these uses.



6.2.4 Other Districts

O-L Open Land

The O-L District is intended to protect existing parks and recreation areas. The District is also intended to preserve vacant land until such time that a development plan for the area is created and the zoning for that area is reclassified. The Open Land District covers 27.5% of the City. Most of this area is located on the eastern side of the City including the airport, Chennault Park and vacant land east of these facilities. Aside from the parks, other land zoned as Open Land include an area east of Gilbert Street, an area in the center of the City between rail lines, and on the peninsula at the end of Pargoud Street, which is susceptible to flooding.

C-1 Campus

The C-1 District is designed to create an atmosphere for educational facilities. The location of general uses within this district must conform to the master plan adopted in 1981. The University of Louisiana at Monroe campus and its adjoining facilities make up most of the 484 acres of this land area. There are two other areas which are zoned C-1. These areas are located around the E.A Conway Medical facility and on Texas Avenue.

Overview of Zoning

The Zoning ordinance for the City of Monroe establishes 19 separate Districts. The City has 7 different residential districts, although the R-3 High Rise District has not been used. The R-3 district allows commercial uses and is very similar to the B-3R District as a mixed use district. There are 8 commercial districts. The Central and Metro Business Districts are very similar in use and function. The City has two industrial districts and one special district and one other district. This is the Open Land District which is placed on undeveloped land until it can be rezoned to something else.

The Zoning Code establishes districts with different mixes of uses and bulk requirements. The code concentrates on uses and separation requirements instead of design controls and performance standards.

There is very little organization in the creation of zoning districts. As development occurs, land is rezoned into one of these districts through the rezoning process. The result of this process has created a patchwork of different zoning districts that follow no concrete pattern. There is a minimum area requirement for rezoning, but there are still individual zones of only one or two parcels. These could be the result of several circumstances and can be brought into compliance with the current zoning when appropriate.

6.3 Build Out Potential

A build out analysis is intended to demonstrate what kinds of development patterns will evolve in the City. The build out analysis helps to generate the series of considerations that will go into development of a Future Land Use Plan. The Future Land Use Plan is used to direct changes to the City's Zoning Code based upon the Comprehensive Plan.

In the build out analysis, scenarios are analyzed for their potential development impact in the City. The first scenario looks at how many residential units and square feet of commercial, office and industrial space could develop under current zoning assuming no existing structures. This is an important step because it establishes the maximum amount of development on the land in the City.



The second scenario is an analysis of how much additional development could take place under existing zoning with the current structures and development in place. For this analysis, the build out potential of undeveloped vacant land and agricultural land was calculated and certain assumptions were made to aggregate the amount of developed commercial area.

It is important to remember that build out scenarios show a completed picture of development in Monroe and illustrate an ultimate outcome for the City – one that may or may not ever be reached under normal circumstances. The function of the build outs is to inform a conversation about the preferred future of the City. The scenarios help focus discussion on the rate of growth over the planning horizon, which is 20 years and where that development should take place. Those discussions result in the Future Land Use Plan

Methodology

The build-out analyses were completed using geographic information system (GIS) technology. GIS uses a system of layers to create a whole picture of the zoning, land uses and constraints. The qualities of each layer are called attributes.

The first step of the build out is to assemble a parcel layer with both existing land use and zoning attributes. The parcel layer was intersected with a constraints layer. The constraints layers contained wetlands and flood prone areas. Depending on the scenario, assumptions were made as to how a given land use would be developed in a build out. The areas of these parcels were then summarized by zone to obtain an overall area that will be built out in each scenario.

Certain land can be removed from the build out scenario. Community and public service properties were assumed to remain as their current use and were removed from the calculations. Flood plains are often removed from these calculations as well. In the case of Monroe, however, all of the City is in the 500-year flood plain and close to a third is in the 100-year plain. The City's floodplains have developed and so they were left in.

Calculations used for each zone are based on the maximum allowable density of development in each of the zone under current Monroe zoning, or, where these standards are not dictated by zoning, the calculations are based upon assumptions made from observations of local conditions.

A potential build out analysis was performed based on the current zoning. A build out analysis estimates the amount of development that could occur based on a set of assumptions. This analysis will only analyze the amount of new development that can occur on developable vacant and agricultural land. It is impossible to determine the amount of development that would occur as a result of redevelopment. The analysis was performed using a Geographical Information System (GIS). A land use layer was created as described in Section 3.1

A zoning layer was obtained from City of Monroe. The zoning layer was combined with the land use layer so that the resulting layer had attributes of both existing land use and existing zoning district. The GIS program calculated the areas of each polygon within this combined layer. The resulting database was then brought into an MS Excel spreadsheet. Here, the areas could be summarized by land use and zoning district. Only the vacant and agricultural land uses were summarized. Based on the zoning district, calculations were performed on the resulting areas to establish the possible number of residential units, commercial space, and industrial space that could be developed. The following explains the method for calculating the potential for each district.



Zoning districts that do not appear did not have vacant or agricultural land that could be developed or had no development potential of their own, for example the Open Land District.

Residential Districts

Each residential district has a minimum lot size per residential unit associated with it. With development of new residential development, roads need to be built and some open space provided. To compensate for this, 20% of the area was deducted for these facilities. To calculate the number of potential residential units 80% of the area was divided by the minimum lot size per unit for the district. The higher density districts used a sliding scale for land area based on the number of units. This analysis used a single lot size per unit based on the expected average number of units created under each type of development. The following calculations were used for residential districts:

- R-1 (80%) Area/7,200 = Residential Units
- R-1A (80%) Area/6,000 = Residential Units
- R-TH (80%) Area/4,000 = Residential Units
- R-2 (80%) Area/2,200 = Residential Units

Commercial Districts

The commercial districts did not specify a floor area ratio or maximum building coverage. Maximum Building site is controlled by the setbacks and height restrictions. This analysis conservatively assumes that one third of a lot area will be used for a commercial building with one floor in the B-1 through B-4 Districts. The B-5 District assumes a 50% building coverage with two story development. For the CBD Districts, were development is denser, assumes an 80% building coverage with two story development. The following calculations were used on commercial districts.

- B-1 (33%) Area = Commercial Space
- B-2 (33%) Area = Commercial Space
- B-3 (33%) Area = Commercial Space
- B-3R (33%) Area = Commercial Space
- B-4 (33%) Area = Commercial Space
- B-5 (50%) Area x 2 = Commercial Space
- CBD-1 (80%) Area x 2 = Commercial Space
- CBD-2 (80%) Area x 2 = Commercial Space

Industrial Districts

The Zoning Code also does not set a floor area ratio or maximum building size for industrials uses. This analysis assumes that 50% of a lot will be used for an industrial building with one floor. The following calculations were used on industrial districts.

- I-1 (50%) Area = Industrial Space
- I-2 (50%) Area = Industrial Space

Based on these assumptions and calculations, the following table presents the potential new development that could occur in the City of Monroe.



Table 6-3 Build out Potential

Residential Districts		
Zoning District	Total Area (Sq. ft.)	Residential Units
R-1	27,821,175	3,091
R-1A	1,381,333	184
R-TH	3,246,401	649
R-2	8,761,342	3,186
Total Residential Units		7,111

Commercial Districts		
Zoning District	Total Area (Sq.ft.)	Commercial Area (Sq.ft.)
B-1	15,127,131	4,991,953
B-2	2,320,901	765,897
B-3	20,834,695	6,875,449
B-3R	2,661,274	878,221
B-4	1,597,019	527,016
B-5	5,070,089	5,070,089
CBD-1	135,738	217,180
CBD-2	618,144	989,031
Total Commercial Space (Sq.ft.)		20,314,837

Industrial Districts		
Zoning District	Total Area (Sq.ft.)	Industrial Area (Sq.ft.)
I-1	28,074,292	14,037,146
I-2	128,794	64,397
Total Industrial Space (Sq.ft.)		14,101,543

The two principal assumptions to this build out analysis are that there an unlimited demand to develop vacant parcels exists and that the zoning remains the same. If the vacant and agricultural parcels were built out to full capacity, another 7,111 residential units could be accommodated. The largest areas where residential development could occur are around Chauvin Lane, Cypress Point Drive, Bienville Drive, and Harvester Drive. Other residential development would mainly be infill. Based on the existing zoning, more than 20 million square feet of commercial space could be built. The largest areas for commercial development would be around Lamy Lane, Frontage Road, and off Highway 80 east of the airport. The airport industrial park, which is only half developed, would accommodate most of the 14 million square feet of industrial development possible under this analysis.



6.4 Future Land Use and Zoning Implementation

The Future Land Use Plan for the City of Monroe serves as the blueprint for revision of the city’s zoning code. The Future Land Use Plan reflects the zoning. It is also recommended that the city implement design standards as a mechanism for preserving and enhancing the character and quality of life of the city and its neighborhoods.

The Future Land Use plan is based on a thorough review of the existing zoning as well as a comprehensive understanding of the city’s built environment and organization. Through an understanding of the community’s character – described in Chapter 4 – a basis for the continued orderly development of the city was created. This section describes the process and product of the Future Land Use Plan and provides guidelines for the revision of the Zoning Code to be consistent with the Future Land Plan.

6.4.1 Future Land Use Plan

Better organization and integration of certain uses to better serve residents is the general goal of a Future Land Use Plan. During the inventory phase of the Comprehensive Plan project, every street in the City was visited. This resulted in a clear understanding of the advantages and disadvantages inherent in the existing land uses and the zoning as it has been applied in the City. The Future Land Use Plan provides a strategy the City can use to proactively address the future organization of land uses to enhance the quality of life for residents and protect the character of the community.

The Future Land Use Plan shows how the overall goals of the Comprehensive Plan can be accomplished. The Future Land Use Plan clearly identifies opportunities for a range of commercial uses, better organizing them within the City and consolidating them to create commercial corridors, neighborhood commercial centers and mixed use areas. The mixed use areas are centered on the downtown and reach out to the south, north and east to create a dense, urban, vibrant center city. The Future Land Use Plan also contributes to potential economic opportunities by clearly identifying new and consolidating and enlarging current industrial areas. By providing areas for residential growth, the Future Land Use Plan contributes to future community vitality through the development of new neighborhoods and additional population.

The table below summarizes the additional residential units and square feet of commercial and industrial area that could be added in the City. The build out addresses the agricultural, vacant and underutilized areas of the City.

Table 6-4 Future Land Use Plan Build Out

Future Land Use	Area	Acres	Residential Units	Commercial Space (Sq.ft.)	Industrial Space (Sq.ft.)
Residential	92,102,142	2,114	6,766		
High Density Res	10,008,587	230	2,757		
Neighborhood Commercial	2,855,571	66	229	471,169	
Highway Commercial	25,892,583	594		8,544,552	
Urban Mixed Use	16,504,492	379	3,789	13,203,594	
Industrial	53,641,477	1,231			26,820,739

Source: peter j. smith & company, inc.



The assumptions used in this build out are:

- Low density residential: 4 units per acre
- High density residential: 15 units per acre
- Neighborhood mixed-use commercial: half the acreage at 20 units per acre and one-third of the other half commercial space (assumes 33 percent lot coverage)
- Highway commercial mixed-use: the entire area at 33 percent lot coverage commercial use
- Urban mixed use: one half of the area at 2- units per acre residential and the other half at 80 percent lot coverage
- Industrial use: Entire area at 50 percent lot coverage

6.4.1.1 Residential Uses

Low density residential use is the basis of the city, offering residences in densities of between four and seven units per acre. These areas include the currently developed city and a new residential area east of the airport. **High-density residential** areas are located east of the university and east of downtown and are in densities of 15 to 20 units per acre. A new **urban mixed-use** area accommodates residential uses and commercial uses and would include residential densities at 20 units per acre. **Neighborhood commercial mixed-use** also includes residential and commercial uses but at a lower intensity of seven units per acre. If the vacant, under-utilized and agricultural areas of the city were built out at these residential uses and densities, there is the potential for 13,542 additional residential units in the city.

6.4.1.2 Commercial Uses

The Future Land Use Plan includes **neighborhood commercial mixed-use and urban mixed use**. Both of these areas are planned to be commercial and residential, lending to a vibrant urban street life and vitality. A more intense **highway commercial mixed-use**, for highway and office/commercial and retail uses has been located along the I-20 spine and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive to Sterlington Road and north to the edge of the City. If the vacant, agricultural and underutilized areas of the City were built out in these uses, more than 22,000,000 square feet of additional commercial space could be added in the City.

6.4.1.3 Industrial Uses

In addition to the airport area, which is shown in the Future Land Use Plan as a larger and more contiguous industrial area, an area at the south end of the City has been added. Together, if the vacant, agricultural and underutilized areas of the City were built out these areas could result in an additional 27,000,000 square feet in added industrial space in the City.

6.4.2 Zoning Overview & Review

The existing zoning ordinance was originally adopted in 1960 and amended continuously since. It should be entirely updated to facilitate redevelopment and improve the character and quality of development. The purpose of zoning is fundamentally to preserve the “health, safety and general welfare of the community”. However, zoning should be viewed as a tool to locate and organize the land use in a community, to design the form of the community and to enhance its function.

The new zoning should be more flexible and include mixed uses. The new code should also incorporate design standards. Unlike zoning, design standards control the impacts of uses; zoning controls the uses themselves. By using design standards, a greater mix of uses is allowed, improving the function and form of the community as well as its economic vitality.



6.4.2.1 Purpose of the Code

Therefore, the purpose of the zoning ordinance is to create the tools to preserve, enhance, and implement quality community character. The modern zoning ordinance should:

- Be easier to understand
- Be easier to use
- Encourage good development
- Expedite good development
- React to the economy
- Revitalize downtown
- Enhance community identity

The following outlines areas to be improved in the City of Monroe, Zoning Ordinance: Districts, Design, Additional Regulations, Format and Approvals.

6.4.2.2 Districts

The number of districts should be minimized to allow mixed uses and mitigate land use conflicts through design and performance standards.

The current zoning ordinance has 19 districts. The proposed zoning ordinance could have as few as six districts.

Existing Districts:

- Residence Districts: R-1, R-1A, R-TH, R-MD, R-2, R-3, R-MHP
- Business Districts: B-1, B-2, B-3, B-3R, B-4, B-5, CBD-1, CBD-2
- Industrial: I-1, I-2, O-L, C-1

Proposed Districts:

- Residential (R-1, R-1A)
- Higher Density Residential (R-TH, R-MD, R-2, R-3)
- Commercial (B-1, B-3, B-4, B-5)
- Business (B-2, CBD-1, CBD-2)
- Industrial (I-1, I-2)
- Institutional (O-L, C-1)

6.4.2.3 Design

Design-based zoning incorporates design standards in the regulations to implement a greater degree of control over the built form, the site and the community context. Design standards should be inherent in all aspects of the code including districts, specific uses and additional regulations.

The current zoning ordinance has few design standards. Article V outlines minimal design standards for building spacing and orientation, planned unit developments and mobile home parks.

Design standards should be comprehensive, easy to understand and used to replace districts minimizing segregation of land use and allowing mixed use development. Standards should be encoded and include:

- Block: length, width, access, parking, orientation, segmentation, coverage, context



- Building: height, setback, proportions, composition, roofline, appurtenances, orientation, color, context, materials, entrances, illumination, transparency, signage, lighting, address number, signage.
- Site: adjacency, coverage, connection, screen, buffer, landscape, shading, signage, vehicle entrances, pedestrian linkages
- Street: hierarchy, dimension, material, lighting, bike lanes, furniture, cross walks, bump outs, plants
- Pedestrian Ways: walkways, sidewalks, bike ways, trails, promenades, patios, plazas
- Parks/Open Spaces: hierarchy, program, furniture, size, access, orientation, location

Additional design standards would be included in Regulations for Specific Uses and Regulations Applying to all Districts.

6.4.2.4 Additional Regulations

The current zoning ordinance has Supplementary Regulations regarding: inundation, natural production, illumination, prior restricted land, mobile buildings, bed and breakfasts, supplementary height and area regulations, supplementary yard regulations (accessory structures, fences, walls, hedges, buffer protection, screen planting and protection standards)

The proposed zoning ordinance should include Additional regulations for Specific Uses including but not limited to: Accessory Uses, Animal Related, Car Wash, Communications Structures, Drive - Thru, Home Occupations, Mini-Storage Warehouse, Motor Vehicle Rental/Repair/Sales/Service, Places of Worship, Residential Care, Temporary Uses, Sexually Orientated Business, Truck Terminals, Riverfront and Waterfront Uses, Mobile Home Parks etc.

Regulations Applying to all Districts including but not limited to: Air Conditioning, Air Quality, Dumpsters and Refuse Storage, Fences/Walls, Landscape, Buffers/Screening, Tree Removal, Excavations/Site Grading and Filling, Hazardous Materials, lighting, Off-Street parking, Off Street Stacking, Outdoor Storage, Outdoor Displays, Sign Regulations, etc.

6.4.2.5 Format

Zoning should implement the goals, objectives and policies desired by the community and defined in the Comprehensive Plan. The zoning regulations are one of the most significant laws that a community will create because they direct the future: form, character and experience of the community. The law should be community-based, clear, concise and easy to use, incorporating graphics, flow charts, matrices and a “how to” approach.

The following is an outline of the proposed zoning format to facilitate the use and understanding of the zoning ordinance.

1. Quick Reference Guide
2. Table of Contents
3. General Information
 - a. Purpose
 - b. Document Usage
4. Zoning Map
5. Road Hierarchy Map (potential in mixed use districts)
6. Zoning Designations and Purpose
7. Land Use Matrix



8. Prohibited Use Matrix
9. Accessory Use Matrix
10. Dimensional Requirements Matrix
11. Residential Districts and Design Standards
12. Mixed Use Districts and Design Standards
13. Special Purpose Districts and Design Standards
14. Additional Regulations for Specific Uses and Design Standards
15. Regulations Applying to All Districts and Design Standards
16. Incentives
17. Procedures
 - a. Staff Approval
 - b. Zoning Reclassification
 - c. Conditional Use Permits
 - d. Site Plan Approval
 - e. Subdivision Plan Approval
18. Non-conformities
19. Administration and Enforcement
20. General Provisions
21. Word Usage and Definitions
22. Appendix

6.4.2.6 Approvals

The approach is to facilitate the approvals process by developing an equitable and comprehensive zoning and design standards document. The benefit of design based zoning is that residents, developers, staff and elected officials can easily use the regulations to create a more attractive and enhanced community experience. The approvals process should use a concise checklist based on specific design standards that incorporates variations as defined in the ordinance.

The approvals process should be threefold:

1. Staff Approval

The completed checklist of design standards is submitted to staff and certified by a staff design professional. The project is pre-approved if it meets the standards with minor variations.

2. Minor Site Plan Approval

If the variations exceed the prescribed “minor variation but the majority of standards have been complied with the project may be approved within a short duration. Approval could be by staff or planning body.

3. Site Plan Approval

If a project does not employ prescribed design standards it is reviewed by staff which makes a recommendation and submits to the planning body. The design standards are used as guidelines to evaluate the project.

6.4.2.7 Conclusion

The proposed Zoning Ordinance should be easy to understand and use by elected and appointed officials, residents, municipal staff and the development community. To be more effective the Ordinance needs to be reformatted, the approvals process needs to be streamlined, design standards need to be encoded for all districts, the number of districts should be reduced and a comprehensive approach to the development of additional regulations and applicable design standards needs to be introduced.



6.5 Land Use Patterns and Regulations Findings

- There is a considerable amount of vacant land within the City of Monroe.
- Many neighborhoods and business areas have scattered vacant parcels throughout.
- Some of the zoning districts seem redundant or have very little variation.
- Zoning district areas are created when they are needed rather than set according to a future land use plan.
- There are few design controls within the Zoning Code
- Under current zoning, the City could accommodate an additional 7,111 housing units, and in excess of 20 million square feet of commercial space and another 14 million square feet of industrial space
- The current zoning code was adopted in 1958; it should be updated to protect the character of the city and improve the quality of life