

# Comprehensive Plan

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# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Introduction

### PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The City of Meridian recognizes that in order to make effective and economically sound decisions for the future, some type of policy must govern the decision-making process. The purpose of this Comprehensive Plan is to serve as a policy guide for the physical and economic development of Meridian. This plan shall be known as the “Comprehensive Plan of the City of Meridian, Mississippi,” and may be so cited, and further referenced elsewhere as the “Comprehensive Plan,” and herein as “the Plan” or “this Plan,” shall imply the same wording and meaning as the full title. The Plan will serve decision makers as a means of orderly development for the City at a minimal cost to the City.

A Comprehensive Plan has five characteristics. First, it serves as a guide to the physical development and future growth of a City. Second, they are long-range, often extending five, ten, or more years into the future. Current policies, which impact future development, are an integral part of the Plan. Third, they are comprehensive in scope. Plans include the entire City geographically and address all functions that make a City operational. Fourth, they include statements of the community’s future ideas and strategies for implementing those ideas. Finally, a Comprehensive Plan is used as a guide for decision-making by local government officials.

The Plan, required by state law, is in compliance with Sections 17-1-1 through 17-1-39 of the Mississippi Code Annotated. The Plan was developed to “bring about coordinated physical development in accordance with present and future needs...” (Section 17-1-11 Mississippi Code). Meridian’s plan is both geographically and functionally comprehensive in nature. Geographically, all the area within the existing corporate boundaries has been included in the Plan. Functionally, the Plan includes Meridian’s current practices and proposals for future economic development, public health and welfare, and land use. Additionally, the Plan serves as a means of citizen participation in local government.

### ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN

Section 17-1-1 of the Mississippi Code defines a Comprehensive Plan as follows: “... a statement of public policy for the physical development of the entire municipality or county adopted by resolution of the governing body....” A Comprehensive Plan must include a minimum of four components in order to comply with the statute. These components are long-range goals and objectives, a land use plan, a transportation plan, and a community facilities plan.

The goals and objectives of a Comprehensive Plan are made with respect for the future. Long-range community development plans help a community identify what it desires to achieve in the following decades. Section 17-1-1 of the Mississippi Code requires that the goals and objectives section of the plan address residential, commercial, and industrial development, as well as parks, open space and recreation. Additionally, street or road improvements, public schools and community facilities must be considered.

The second part of a Comprehensive Plan is the land use plan. This plan designates, in map form, the proposed distribution and extent of land use for residential, commercial, industrial and recreational lands, as well as public and quasi-public facilities and open space. The land use section of the plan contains projections of population, economic growth, and land use for the community.

The third part of a Comprehensive Plan is the transportation plan. This plan, in map form, classifies all existing and proposed streets, roads and highways, which are a part of the land use plan. The transportation plan covers the same time period that the land use plan covers. Based on traffic predictions, the plan includes arterial, collector and local streets, and roads and highways, as defined by minimum rights-of-way and surface width requirements.

The final portion of the Comprehensive Plan is the community facilities plan. Used as a basis for making capital improvement decisions, the community facilities plan includes: schools, parks and recreation, public buildings and facilities, and utilities.

The City of Meridian recognizes that the quality of life in cities is affected by the quality of development. People and businesses are attracted to higher quality developments. In fact, other cities around the country have discovered that quality development breeds more quality development. All development should be examined as to its effect on the community's image, because it is the community's image that is at stake. It is a well-known fact that one of the factors a business/industry considers in determining a location is the quality of life in a community. Quality of life includes such amenities as shopping, cultural and recreational opportunities, good schools and attractive business and residential areas.

A City desperate for development without regard to the quality of that development will not be able to successfully compete with communities that are more concerned with the quality of development and other quality of life issues. Therefore, the City of Meridian intends to foster those policies that will make this a more competitive community.

**PART I**

**GOALS, OBJECTIVES**

**AND**

**POLICIES**

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

The goals of the Meridian Comprehensive Plan and the continuous, Comprehensive planning process are to provide guidance for rational response to change. They reflect, ideally, consideration of a combination of community issues and facts, blended with community values, to ensure a greater quality of life. Goals institute the conscious statements of a community concerning what it wants to become, and how it will direct its energy toward that achievement. The Meridian Comprehensive Plan begins with a set of general goals. These are followed by more specific goals in the following areas: cultural and aesthetic, community facilities and services, environment, land use, residential, commercial, industrial, socio-economic, transportation and implementation.

Policy statements have been developed for each of the above categories. A policy statement usually consists of three or four policy levels. Policy statements in this plan are divided into four policy levels: goals, objectives, policies, and implementation programs. Definitions for these levels are as follows:

**GOAL:** The ultimate purpose of an effort stated in a way that is general in nature and not easily measured.

**OBJECTIVE:** A more specific, measurable goal.

**POLICY:** A specific statement guiding actions and implying clear commitment.

### IMPLEMENTATION

**PROGRAM:** A more specific statement of how the policy should be carried out.

Policy Statements may, in some cases, be followed by statements explaining the planning principle behind the policy statement. A second definition of policy (2) is a collective term describing those parts of the Comprehensive Plan that guide action, including goals, objectives, plan proposals and standards in both the text and illustrations (maps, diagrams, etc.). For the purposes of this plan, whenever the term policy is used, it should be understood to mean the collective term.

This plan should be implemented by a Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, and a capital improvements program. According to state law the plan should be consistent with the implementing regulations. Therefore, the policies in the plan should be reflected in the above three implementation devices (Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations and capital improvements program). In order to be effective as guidelines for day-to-day decision-making, the policies in this plan will supersede the zoning and Subdivision Regulations in cases where there are conflicts or where the regulations are not clear.

## **GENERAL GOALS**

**GOAL:** To maintain and improve the existing character of the community either as a residential community, as an industrial center, or as a combination of types.

**OBJECTIVE:** To make this community a planned community, which exhibit characteristics of residential, commercial and industrial communities.

**POLICY 1:** Through the use of the land use plan as a development guide, the character of this community will be more easily defined and developed.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

**PROGRAM:** Determine what type of community Meridian is and develop remainder of available land in a manner consistent with this finding and the land use plan.

**GOAL:** Through new developments to make the community a healthy, safe and convenient place, and to provide a pleasant and attractive atmosphere for living, shopping, recreation, civic, cultural, and service functions.

**OBJECTIVE:** To ensure that future development will be in the best interest of the community and its citizens, measures should be taken which will generally improve the quality of life of the citizens of this community.

**POLICY 2:** Use the Comprehensive Plan as a tool in guiding the future development of this community.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

**PROGRAM:** To develop an updated Comprehensive Plan.

**GOAL:** To guide and direct the development of the foreseeable future into desirable forms and patterns rather than inefficient sprawl.

**OBJECTIVE:** To prevent the inefficient use of land. By using the Comprehensive Plan as a guide to development, the desired land use pattern should be produced.

**POLICY 3:** Existing strip commercial development and residential sprawl should be controlled. Future development, in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan, should be of a more desirable nature.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

**PROGRAM:** Develop Land Use Regulations to be consistent with this policy.

**GOAL:** To coordinate living areas, working areas, and leisure time areas into an integrated relationship and create a unique combination of function, circulation, and image through which a balanced community development can be reached.

**OBJECTIVE:** Development of residential, commercial, recreational, and other areas should be in such a manner as to compliment the overall land use pattern.

POLICY 4: Development of programs, which result in a balanced community, should be implemented.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: The land use plan should be prepared, recognizing existing development and used to determine and guide future land use.

**CULTURAL AND AESTHETIC GOALS**

GOAL: To preserve and enhance the value of places and objects of historical significance and cultural importance to the community.

OBJECTIVE: To further develop Meridian's historic districts.

POLICY 5: The City will work to locate and register as landmarks the remainder of the historic sites and to maintain the historic district neighborhoods.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: ▪ Designate historic district neighborhoods as City landmarks in order to better protect those areas. Seek financial assistance from federal, state, and local sources to fund renovation and restoration of the historic districts.

- Include the Historic Districts as Overlay Zones in the Zoning Ordinance.
- Revise the Historic Preservation Ordinance as needed.
- Utilize the Charleston Principles in the conservation process.

Principle 1. Identify historic places, both architectural and natural, that give the community its special character and that can aid its future well-being.

Principle 2. Adopt the preservation of historic places as a goal of planning for land use, economic development, housing for all income levels, and transportation.

Principle 3. Create organizational, regulatory, and incentive mechanisms to facilitate preservation, and provide the leadership to make them work.

Principle 4. Develop revitalization strategies that capitalize on the existing value of historic residential and commercial neighborhoods and properties, and provide well-designed affordable housing without displacing existing residents.

- Principle 5. Ensure that policies and decisions on community growth and development respect a community's heritage and enhance overall livability.
- Principle 6. Demand excellence in design for new construction and in the stewardship of historic properties and places.
- Principle 7. Use a community's heritage to educate citizens of all ages and to build civic pride.
- Principle 8. Recognize the cultural diversity of communities and empower a diverse constituency to acknowledge, identify, and preserve America's cultural and physical resources.

POLICY 6: To publicize the City's historical landmarks as places of cultural interest.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: To promote Historic Preservation Week and to promote Meridian as a historic City.

GOAL: To preserve unique and traditional qualities and to create a new image of what the community could be under planned development.

OBJECTIVE: To promote the Main Street program as a means of continuing downtown restoration and improvement.

POLICY 7: The Main Street program and the African-American Historic District Redevelopment Plan should continue to receive support from the City in order to further development of the downtown area.

IMPLEMENTATION

- PROGRAM: ▪ To seek financial assistance, maintain adequate staff to fulfill the program's objectives, and advertise the Main Street program, as well as the African-American Historic District Redevelopment Plan, at cultural events.
- To use the Riley Foundation's Education and Performing Arts Center as a basis to revitalize the downtown area.

POLICY 8: Since adequate parking facilities are the key to the success of any downtown revitalization effort, parking should be addressed in conjunction with any development project.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Parking plans should be considered for all proposed downtown projects.

OBJECTIVE: To promote the Comprehensive Plan as a means of planned development for Meridian.

POLICY 9: The City should adopt and use this plan as the guide for future development decisions.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: The plan should be used as a tool for planning zone changes and the enactment of ordinances, which effect the development of the City.

GOAL: To designate and utilize areas of scenic value as important natural features to be developed.

OBJECTIVE: To pursue and promote the development of the Bonita Lakes.

POLICY 10: The development of the Bonita area should continue as funds become available and should be promoted publicly, as a much needed recreation area and as an environmental safeguard.

POLICY 11: The City should protect and preserve the quality of the Bonita Lakes.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: The promotion of this area should include plans and maps of the area's features to be displayed at Bonita Lakes and at community events.

GOAL: To encourage good urban design to improve the appearance of the central business district, the highways, streets, bridges, intersections and the street facilities that will enhance the aesthetic qualities and reflect the beauty and attractiveness of the community.

OBJECTIVE: To improve the overall visual image of Meridian.

POLICY 12: The Community Development Department should be consulted prior to any major improvements in the City that would significantly change the appearance of the central

business district, highways, streets, bridges, intersections and street facilities.

POLICY 13: The landscaping of public and private property and preserving existing trees where feasible should be encouraged.

POLICY 14: The size, number and location of signs should be regulated to improve the safety and visual quality along streets.

#### IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: The Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulations should be used as a basis for determining the approval and implementation of a project. Landscaping should be encouraged by standards that allow density increases or parking reductions in exchange for landscaping.

### **COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES GOALS**

GOAL: To provide good access to all types of facilities.

OBJECTIVE: To make facilities more accessible by providing public transportation to and from the facilities.

POLICY 15: Some routes may have to be altered in order to provide access to all community facilities from all areas of the community.

#### IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Coordinate efforts with the Meridian Transportation Commission.

OBJECTIVE: To make facilities more available to people by relocating present or constructing new facilities in areas where people reside or congregate.

POLICY 16: Construction of new community facilities should be located in areas determined to satisfy good planning principles as designated by the Comprehensive Plan. Existing structures should be examined to determine if they are providing needed services, and what segment of the population and areas the facilities serve. All facilities should be barrier free, so as to provide access to disabled/ handicapped individuals.

#### IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: As the need arises for additional facilities, the Comprehensive Plan should be used as a basis for determining the location of new facilities.

OBJECTIVE: To provide public facilities in a cost efficient manner.

POLICY 17: The construction/purchase of new public facilities or improvements/additions to older facilities shall be done according to the schedule in the Capital Improvements Program with the exception of emergencies. The maximum use should be made of existing infrastructure/public facilities.

The City will encourage orderly growth patterns, which minimize “leapfrog” type development patterns that leave developments that should be traversed by streets, public utilities and other facilities that necessitate public expenditures.

IMPLEMENTATION

- PROGRAM:
- A Capital Improvements Program should be developed and a capital budget should be developed each year and adopted by the City Council.
  - Encourage the development of vacant land with underused public facilities as funding becomes available.

*PLANNING PRINCIPLE (Commentary on Policies 15-17): Public facilities such as water, sewer, and streets should be provided to areas of the City in a cost-efficient manner. Vacant properties with underutilized facilities are wasteful of public funds and redevelopment of such properties should be encouraged.*

GOAL: To strengthen and improve educational and cultural institutions and encourage the location, design, and construction of their buildings for multi-use by the community.

OBJECTIVE: To improve or develop educational and cultural institutions.

POLICY 18: Educational and cultural institutions should be available for multiple purposes.

POLICY 19: Schools and other cultural institutions should be located within appropriate districts. Expansion should only be encouraged where compatible with the surrounding areas.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Coordinate these efforts with the Meridian Municipal and Lauderdale County School Districts and with private schools within the City limits.

GOAL: To develop recreational areas in a manner most effectively serving the community.

OBJECTIVE: To develop a Comprehensive Plan for recreational facilities to acquire open land appropriate in character at the proper time and to encourage their continued development, maintenance, and optimum use by the public to meet the needs of today and of the future.

POLICY 20: Current facilities should be examined to determine areas

where facilities are lacking. These areas should be targeted for future development. Vacant land in these areas should be purchased when funds are available and, if necessary, appropriate restrictions should be placed upon the land to preserve its use as a public recreational facility.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

**PROGRAM:** To develop a recreational plan.

**OBJECTIVE:** To encourage the public to use the City's recreational facilities.

**POLICY 21:** The Parks and Recreation Department should coordinate activities for all ages in the recreational facilities to encourage the maximum use of the facilities.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

**PROGRAM:** Parks and Recreation should provide summer youth programs, senior citizen's activities and other similar events, as funds are available, so as to familiarize the public with available facilities, and to encourage their use.

**GOAL:** To designate land areas of prominence and pivotal location for public structures.

**OBJECTIVE:** To coordinate the location of public structures.

**POLICY 22:** Public structures should be located in areas most accessible to the public and in areas where other similar structures are located for the general convenience of the public.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

**PROGRAM:** Existing structures of this type should be identified on the land use map, as well as the availability of land in close proximity to land currently used for public structures. Available land should be purchased as funds are available, and, if necessary, appropriately reserved and zoned for public structures.

**ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS**

**GOAL:** To recognize and consider environmental constraints in the establishment of land use patterns.

**OBJECTIVE:** To regulate flood plain development.

**POLICY 23:** Areas subject to flooding should be monitored and regulated by a Floodplain Management Plan and the Floodplain Management Ordinance. Development should be limited and guided with the Floodplain Management Plan and the Comprehensive Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Participation in the Community Rating System of the National Flood Insurance Program by implementing the Floodplain Management Plan.

GOAL: To recognize and consider constraints of extreme soil characteristics.

OBJECTIVE: To decrease the rate of soil erosion.

POLICY 24: Soil erosion should be reduced.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Areas of extreme soil erosion should be determined and appropriate steps to slow the erosion should be outlined in the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations and a proposed Soil Erosion Ordinance.

*PLANNING PRINCIPLE (Commentary on Policy 24): Urban development creates a condition that increases the potential for soil erosion. Soil erosion is not only unsightly, but it also silts up drainage ditches and storm sewers, thereby increasing the chances of flooding.*

OBJECTIVE: To identify areas which have extreme soil characteristics and to manage development of those areas accordingly.

POLICY 25: Development is prohibited in areas where extreme soil characteristics preclude site development.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Land use maps and soil studies should be used to determine what areas are unsuitable for development.

GOAL: To recognize and consider use limitations of areas that exhibits hazard potential due to extreme slope or a combination of factors that include slope.

OBJECTIVE: To encourage proper use of land that has a hazard potential due to slope or some combination of factors that include slope.

POLICY 26: Development of lands with hazard potential should be discouraged except for purposes suited to such lands.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Determine affected areas and develop a strategy for land use.

**LAND USE GOALS**

GOAL: To promote compatibility in land uses.

OBJECTIVE: To coordinate land uses so as to create a functional and appealing image for the community.

POLICY 27: The City will follow local, State and Federal regulations to control pollution from disposal sites and treatment processes.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Zoning Ordinances and Subdivision Regulations will consider compatibility in land uses.

OBJECTIVE: To reduce storm-water runoff from new development, where appropriate, to lessen its adverse impact.

POLICY 28: Develop means to control the amount and rate of storm-water runoff in new developments.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: 

- Adopt a Soil Erosion Ordinance to allow the use of performance standards for controlling runoff, such as impervious surface ratios, retention basins and ponds, landscaping, grass-lined swales and open ditches.
- Provide for density increase incentives for reducing the amount and/or rate of runoff.

*PLANNING PRINCIPLE (Policy 28): The purpose of this policy is that urban development creates impervious surfaces, which increases the amount and rate of storm-water runoff and flood hazard potential.*

OBJECTIVE: To reduce highway traffic noise, which annoys and disturbs people, creates health hazards and reduces the quality of life for Meridian residents.

POLICY 29: The impact of hazardous noise levels should be reduced near highways and other major arterial streets.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: 

- Include in the Zoning Ordinance and subdivision regulations noise reduction techniques such as location of residential developments, buffer yards, clustering, and planned unit development.
- Explore other incentives to reduce potential noise hazards.

POLICY 30: The City should promote an urban pattern that provides for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods, reduces conflict among land uses, and protects the natural environment.

## IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Strengthen the entire community by working with developers to carefully plan the location and design of business establishments, residential areas, industrial development and recreational facilities.

GOAL: To promote orderly expansion of urban growth to provide efficient utilization of resources.

OBJECTIVE: To guide and direct future urban development in an efficient manner. Land use patterns such as strip commercial and residential sprawl have characteristics, which create an urban environment, which is costly and inefficient in terms of construction and maintenance of public facilities.

POLICY 31: Urban growth will proceed in an orderly fashion in conjunction with the land use plan.

## IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: To implement the land use plan through zoning policies, Subdivision Regulations, and other land development regulations.

POLICY 32: New strip commercial development should be discouraged in order to reduce the costly and inefficient use of public facilities and the creation of traffic congestion and hazards. Instead, the City of Meridian encourages commercial development in planned developments, in shopping centers, on sites utilizing shared access ways (curb cuts), on loop streets, or on service roads.

POLICY 33: Existing strip commercial areas should be encouraged to be redeveloped using the options in Policy 32.

POLICY 34: Urban activity centers or Mixed Use Districts should be encouraged to locate at the crossroads of major arterials.

POLICY 35: Strip commercial development should not be allowed to spread beyond parcels where it already exists in its present form unless it meets specific buffer and screening requirements.

## IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: When the need arises for additional facilities, the Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed and used as a basis for determining the location of new facilities.

*PLANNING PRINCIPLE (Commentary on Policies 31 – 35): As described by zoning authority Fred Bair in Planning Cities, “strip commercial describes only (commercial) development along the frontages of a single street, and does not include areas of concentrated business development such as shopping centers and central business districts.” As business developments spread out from the central business district to areas located along arterial streets in strips, which require frequent curb cuts, and continuous left-turn movements on the arterial, traffic congestion problems and other*

*hazards will occur.*

*In an effort to lessen the problems stemming from strip commercial development, strip zoning was developed, but has largely failed as a device to contain the hazardous and blighting influences of commercial development along a single arterial street. In fact strip zoning has worsened the conditions. In addition to uncontrolled curb cuts, strip zones are also characterized by an uncontrolled mixture of signage, non-landscaped areas, and vacant buildings. This is a blighting influence on nearby residential properties. Strip zoning is often wasteful of land and public facilities.*

*As traffic congestion on the arterial increases, the speed limit is lowered, and it eventually becomes necessary to either widen the street or to build a by-pass. If the same development pattern is allowed on the by-pass, it too will become congested and need widening or another by-pass.*

*Policies to avoid the ill effects of strip commercial development can be directed along two lines: new development and remedial action for existing commercial strips. New construction should be limited to shopping centers or planned clusters. Existing strips cannot be removed overnight, but they should not be allowed to become worse. Therefore, transitional regulation at the common boundaries between strip commercial and residential zones is necessary.*

GOAL: To develop vacant lots and parcels within built-up areas that are not being used for recreation or open space purposes.

OBJECTIVE: To make these properties economically viable.

POLICY 36: The City of Meridian encourages the development of vacant lots and parcels.

#### IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: The Planning Division will conduct a vacant land survey, identifying these properties and their development potential and constraints; then develop infill development strategies.

*PLANNING PRINCIPLE (Commentary on Policy 36): In Meridian there is a number of vacant lots and parcels primarily in residential zones, and, unless they are needed for recreational or open space purposes, they should be developed. Many of these lots are located in older residential areas and will most likely remain vacant unless strategies are formulated to develop these properties. An advantage to developing many of these vacant lots is that water and sewer are within close proximity, thus reducing development costs.*

### **RESIDENTIAL GOALS**

GOAL: To establish a residential density pattern that will produce desirable concentrations of residences and will not overburden the local community facilities or cause congestion.

OBJECTIVE: To allow modified residential development, which remains compatible with existing neighborhood residences and to encourage developers to share some of the costs of additional public facilities, which might be required.

POLICY 37: Residential development should be located on streets designed to accommodate it. High-density (15 or more dwelling units per acre) development will locate on Major Streets. The allowable density of a project should be determined by the physical and service constraints of the property, the area in which the property is located, the planning goals, objectives, and policies of the Community Development Department, and the development standards of this Comprehensive Plan and other local ordinances.

POLICY 38: High-density (15 dwelling units per acre and above) residential uses should be located on arterial streets or have direct access to Major Streets in order to accommodate the higher traffic generation rates of multi-family dwellings.

IMPLEMENTATION  
PROGRAM:

- These policies should be guided by the Land Use Plan and the Major Streets Plan.
- Encourage new development in areas located close to existing community facilities so as to reduce the community's servicing costs.
- Investigate the possibility of tax reductions for developers who help fund community facilities in neighborhoods.

GOAL: To offer a variety of dwelling types and to provide housing opportunities for a cross-section of the population.

OBJECTIVE: To avoid selective exclusion in housing and to encourage equal opportunity in the housing market by discouraging discriminatory practices.

POLICY 39: The City of Meridian will encourage the provision of affordable single-family detached housing through its development regulations.

IMPLEMENTATION  
PROGRAM:

- Allow the option of using underground utilities to reduce development costs.
- Encourage equal opportunity marketing agreements.
- Encourage the rehabilitation of older homes.

*PLANNING PRINCIPLE (Commentary on Policies 37 – 39) Affordable Housing: There are a number of communities that are taking steps to provide affordable housing. These steps include: reducing development standards, allowing manufactured homes in more areas, allowing accessory*

apartments in residential districts, and encouraging cluster housing development and zero lot line housing.

*The development standards that have been reduced in other communities are: minimum lot sizes, setbacks, minimum lot widths off-street parking standards, sidewalk standards, and minimum right-of-way and pavement widths. In the communities that were studied there was great concern that housing built under the reduced or more flexible standards was of high quality as well as affordable. Reduced standards should provide greater design flexibility; therefore, a more careful review of development proposals through site plan review should be undertaken. Further, planned Unit Development regulations can also be revised to be more flexible.*

*Other standards that can be reduced to bring development costs down and thus promote affordable housing could include the option of using open ditch drainage or curb and gutter. In the pursuit of encouraging affordable housing development, the City of Meridian should also be concerned that the housing built is of high quality and that the reduced standards are used to build affordable housing and not merely to reduce development costs of upper-scale housing.*

OBJECTIVE: To prohibit nuisance uses **and potentially hazardous uses**, in residential neighborhoods, **that can produce relocation or deterioration** and inhibit investment.

POLICY 40: **Group care facilities having residents, patients or clients that could pose a hazard to neighbors; or establishments that house or sell hazardous materials; or establishments selling alcohol; or other establishments or activities, any of which could pose a health or safety hazard or create ruinous blighting affects on residential neighborhoods are prohibited.**

#### IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Develop, **amend**, and **enforce** regulations which will eliminate these blighting influences from residential neighborhoods.

**GOAL:** To sustain high quality of neighborhoods and to protect individual property values by encouraging proper standards of design, construction and maintenance.

**OBJECTIVE:** Improve residential areas to increase the residents' overall quality of life and property values. Improvements that increase pedestrian safety, such as sidewalks, are strongly encouraged and may be required in areas where pedestrian traffic is present.

**POLICY 41:** Plan, develop and redevelop neighborhood improvements, which will encourage long-term livability of residents.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

**PROGRAM:**

- Upgrade or eliminate deteriorated housing to promote sound living conditions for all residents through code enforcement. The City should pursue Federal/State Grant programs to obtain funding for the rehabilitation of older residential structures.
- Encourage construction of sidewalks, open space and other amenities that make a safer, more livable neighborhood.

**POLICY 42:** Residential neighborhoods should be protected from the encroachment of commercial, office and industrial rezoning.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

**PROGRAM:**

- Use the land use plan to identify vacant land into which commercial and industrial uses can expand without encroachment into residential areas. "Commercial creep" should be strongly discouraged.
- Approve rezoning applications, which locate business and industrial uses adjacent to compatible uses if they meet standards set by the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance.
- Allow the extension of existing commercial districts only if they meet buffering and other requirements, which reduce blighting influences.
- Rezoning of individual lots within established residential neighborhoods for any commercial purpose should be strictly limited.

*PLANNING PRINCIPLE (Commentary on Policies 41 and 42): The rezoning of a residential area usually for commercial or office uses on a continuous basis is called "commercial creep." This process starts with the rezoning of a single lot from residential to commercial. The next-door neighbor finds that either he doesn't like living next to a commercial property or that his property loses value as residential property. Consequently, he obtains a rezoning for his property. This process repeats itself and commercial uses creep down the street one by one and rezoning becomes easier each time because it can be proven the neighborhood is changing. This process not only*

*disrupts residential neighborhoods but also introduces blighting influences and may overload existing public facilities. Industrial uses are generally incompatible with residential uses due to noise, traffic and other blighting influences.*

*In addition, the single most important investment many people make is in a home. Consequently, people do not favor development that adversely affects the value of their homes. Therefore, policy 42 seeks to conserve property values and neighborhoods from negative influences.*

GOAL: To insure some sense of privacy and healthful living environment in all types of housing, regardless of cost and location.

OBJECTIVE: To upgrade or eliminate deteriorated housing to promote safe and sanitary living conditions.

POLICY 43: Rehabilitation of substandard structures should be encouraged.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Target public and private programs to support the preservation and improvement of residential neighborhoods. Seek Federal, State and local funds for housing rehabilitation.

OBJECTIVE: To ensure the quiet enjoyment of property.

POLICY 44: All modifications in lot size, density and setback lines should be made so as to not substantially decrease the privacy of the residence.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Use landscaping, fences or walls to encourage privacy between dwellings and to act as a buffer to minimize the impact of street traffic.

POLICY 45: Transitional neighborhoods are those, which are slowly changing from one use to another, usually from residential to commercial. The concept of adaptive reuse is often used to convert older homes in these neighborhoods to office uses. However, neighborhoods, which are still viable and stable residential neighborhoods are not considered as transitional and should not be disrupted.

POLICY 46: Older residential neighborhoods, which have a substantial number of vacant or deteriorated housing units, may be considered for redevelopment as residential or office uses.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: The future land use plan should be used to designate transitional areas.

## COMMERCIAL GOALS

GOAL: To strengthen the entire community by carefully planning the location of shopping centers and the design of business establishments.

OBJECTIVE: regulating the design of shopping centers and business establishments should produce the desired land use pattern.

POLICY 47: New shopping centers and business establishments should be encouraged to locate in areas in close proximity to their service population and should be designed so as to coincide with the existing architectural features of the area.

### IMPLEMENTATION

#### PROGRAM:

- The City of Meridian will encourage the location of neighborhood shopping centers within two miles of residential areas at the intersection of major arterial streets. Neighborhood shopping centers should provide convenience services and merchandise for the surrounding residential areas.
- The City of Meridian will encourage the location of regional shopping centers along Interstate 20/ 59. Regional shopping centers should supply service and merchandise, which appeals to a wider market area than Lauderdale County.
- The City of Meridian will encourage the location of general shopping centers or commercial areas along major arterial streets and the highways leading into the City. The merchandise and services provided should be of a wider range than that provided by neighborhood shopping centers.
- Office uses are allowed in any of the commercial districts, transitional districts or residential districts as home occupations. Office parks or office districts are encouraged to locate along arterial streets or highways.
- Mixed use districts (large-scale developments containing a mixture of office, retail, and residential uses) are encouraged to locate along major arterial streets and the Interstate highway.
- Evaluate existing shopping centers and existing commercial locations for areas of potential expansion. Make use of the land use plan in developing new areas of commercial activity. Develop appropriate commercial districts in the Zoning Ordinance.

POLICY 48: Redevelopment of existing strip commercial areas should be encouraged.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Provide technical assistance for redevelopment of strip commercial areas.

GOAL: To beautify the central business district by encouraging harmoniously and attractively designed structures, thus creating a new image of the community.

OBJECTIVE: To establish a sense of continuity in building design and in the overall central business district.

POLICY 49: An aesthetically pleasing central business district should be planned in accordance with the land use plan, with existing uses, and with the Riley Foundation's Education and Performing Arts Center.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Develop criteria for the central business district including minimum lot size, density and appearance of structures. Use landscaping, where appropriate, to further beautify the central business district.

GOAL: To encourage downtown development that will provide shopping, banking, health, residential, entertainment, administration, civic and cultural activities.

OBJECTIVE: To promote the idea of a centralized location which houses a mixture of commercial, residential and public uses.

POLICY 50: The Riley Foundation's Education and Performing Arts Center, Front Street Redevelopment and the Rosenbaum projects should be utilized to set the standard for future downtown development.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Develop criteria for a mixed-use center in accordance with the land use plan and promote Riley Foundation's Education and Performing Arts Center, Front Street Redevelopment and the Rosenbaum projects as such centers.

**INDUSTRIAL GOALS**

GOAL: To designate adequate and suitable land for the expansion of existing industries.

OBJECTIVE: Expansion of industrial areas should be determined based upon future predictions of industrial activity and the land use plan.

POLICY 51: Industries should be encouraged first to locate and expand within existing industrial areas to take advantage of more cost effective existing infrastructure.

POLICY 52: The City of Meridian will encourage industrial development in areas with relatively flat (less than 5 percent slope) topography, high capacity utility systems and direct connections to rail and highway facilities. Large industrial parks should be preferred to small isolated parcels to ensure the preservation of adequate amounts of land for storage, parking, and loading, well-planned internal circulation systems, and, generally, a more unified site design.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Work with local governments and economic development agencies to identify and analyze the land use needs of existing industries including acreage.

POLICY 53: Existing zoning should be reviewed and evaluated to determine the extent to which it relates to projected industrial land use needs.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Identify usable vacant land adjacent to existing industrial areas and designate a portion of this land for industrial use.

GOAL: Work with local governments and economic development agencies to identify well-located sites adequately served by highways, railroads, utilities and services for new industrial development.

OBJECTIVE: To promote new industrial development through accessibility to transportation, utilities and service functions.

POLICY 54: Industrial districts should be located in areas that can be cost effectively served by adequate transportation and utilities.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Work with local governments and economic development agencies to identify and analyze the transportation and service needs of existing and future industries. Zoning of appropriate sites will occur on an as needed basis.

GOAL: To develop a well balanced community with convenient facilities and a good business climate for attracting new industries.

OBJECTIVE: To identify Meridian as a prime location for industrial development.

POLICY 55: Meridian should be promoted as an ideal industrial location due, in part, to its atmosphere, educational opportunity, public facilities, and business climate.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: The desired well-balanced community should be achieved through careful implementation of the land use plan.

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC GOALS**

GOAL: To plan land use allocations and public facilities and services to meet the needs of the future.

OBJECTIVE: To promote a land use pattern which provides for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods, reduces conflicts among land uses and protects the local natural environment.

POLICY 56: Lands should be allocated for residential, commercial, industrial, public and recreational uses in accordance with this plan and the current economic conditions of the area.

### IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Existing zoning should be reviewed and evaluated to determine the extent to which it relates to projected land use needs.

GOAL: To provide adequate recreational, educational and welfare facilities for promoting a sound and healthy society.

OBJECTIVE: To provide for the intellectual and physical well being of the citizens of Meridian.

POLICY 57: Institutions such as schools, hospitals and recreational facilities should be located in appropriate districts on appropriate major streets. Expansion of facilities will occur as funding, and approval, becomes available.

### IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Location and provision of these resources should be based on population growth and the demand for services.

GOAL: To work with local governments and agencies to encourage the installation of business and industrial establishments that would be most desirable for the community from a socio-economic standpoint.

OBJECTIVE: To attract and expand business and industry in order to diversify the economic base, produce needed jobs, and raise wages.

POLICY 58: To strengthen the existing socio-economic base of the community through commercial and industrial growth in a manner compatible with current practices and the land use plan.

### IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Work with local governments and economic development agencies to identify business and industry that could be vigorously recruited through an economic development program. Prepare and nationally market a package of local inducements to attract new industries and help encourage new businesses form, such as

availability of appropriate sites, public facilities, property tax incentives, industrial development bonds and training inducements.

**GOAL:** To work with the Lauderdale County Tourism Commission to promote the growth of tourism by preserving local features of interest and by conserving the natural beauty of the community.

**OBJECTIVE:** Pursue available tourism avenues to promote historical and recreational sites.

**POLICY 59:** Meridian should be nationally marketed by the Lauderdale County Tourism Commission as a tourist destination.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

**PROGRAM:** Local attractions should be identified and promoted as tourist attractions, with emphasis placed on the historical districts' aesthetic qualities.

**POLICY 60:** Historic neighborhoods, parks, and other places of visual appeal should be maintained in a manner appropriate to the character of the site .

**IMPLEMENTATION**

**PROGRAM:** Local officials will cooperate with Federal and State officials to preserve these areas.

**GOAL:** To promote economic growth and stability and to enhance the existing economic base.

**OBJECTIVE:** To assign a high priority to economic development activities.

**POLICY 61:** Economic opportunities should be maximized for all City residents and a balanced, healthy and enhanced revenue base should be achieved.

**POLICY 62:** The existing infrastructure system should be maintained and enhanced in order to prevent the limiting effects on economic growth due to infrastructure decay.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

**PROGRAM:**

- Encourage the expansion of the existing economic base and attract new related activities. Institute a fair and equitable property tax rate, which will serve as an enhancement to economic development for all categories. Provide public services, which are consistent with the requirements for advanced economic development.
- Develop a Capital Improvements Program for the City to have a continuous program of regular maintenance and new construction of the City's infrastructure.

## **TRANSPORTATION GOALS**

- GOAL: To provide a network of roadways which allow for the safe and efficient movement of traffic between locations.
- OBJECTIVE: To design a comprehensive circulation system to serve the community and to integrate facilities and land use.
- OBJECTIVE: To provide better traffic flow by improving or constructing new north-south and east-west transportation routes.
- OBJECTIVE: To reduce traffic congestion on existing major and minor streets between homes and places of shopping and employment and to discourage through traffic in residential areas.
- OBJECTIVE: To improve vehicular accessibility and circulation to the greatest extent possible.
- POLICY 63: New commercial and industrial development should be located on arterial streets to lessen traffic congestion.
- POLICY 64: Schools, and multi-family complexes should be located with direct access to arterial streets to lessen traffic congestion.
- POLICY 65: Single and two-family housing will not have access onto arterial streets and access onto collector streets is discouraged because:
- As the number of curb cuts increases along a collector or arterial, the potential of accidents and traffic congestion also increases; and
  - Increased traffic volumes and speeds encountered on arterials and collectors make these sites undesirable as residential sites.
- POLICY 66: If it becomes necessary to locate houses along arterial and collector streets, then the front yard setback will also be increased. An increase in lot frontage may be required to provide space for a turn-around so that vehicles will not have to back out onto arterial or collector streets.
- POLICY 67: Parking that allows vehicles to back out onto major streets in commercial and industrial districts should be prohibited.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

- PROGRAM: ▪ Less congested routes should be identified and encouraged as alternatives. Use of public transportation should be encouraged and promoted as a means of reducing the number of

vehicles on the road at any one time.

- To develop a transportation plan element of the Comprehensive Plan including a major street plan, which designates all arterial and collector streets and designates new streets and those streets that require widening.
- The Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations should be revised to include provisions designed to reduce traffic congestion.
- Street intersections, which need to be redesigned to facilitate traffic flow, should be identified.

**GOAL:** To reduce the negative environmental impact of roadways in the area and to improve the community image by improving the landscaping along roadways.

**OBJECTIVE:** To acquire adequate rights-of-way for roadside planting to make streets and highways attractive and safe.

**POLICY 68:** Streets and highways should be landscaped in order to contribute to the overall pleasing visual image of the community.

#### IMPLEMENTATION

**PROGRAM:** Without sacrificing safety for attractive roadways, trees, shrubs, grasses and other ornamentals should be planted on rights-of-way. If necessary, additional land adjoining the current right-of-way should be acquired to accomplish this strategy. Energy efficient and non-offensive lighting should be used along public roadways.

**GOAL:** To provide free and non-congested routes between homes and places of shopping and employment and to discourage traffic from passing through residential areas.

**OBJECTIVE:** To alter traffic patterns between residential and commercial areas, especially during peak hours.

**POLICY 69:** Through traffic in residential areas should be discouraged. Alternate routes for through traffic should be identified and encouraged.

#### IMPLEMENTATION

**PROGRAM:** Citizens should be encouraged to shop in areas near their neighborhoods in order to reduce traffic on arterial streets, which should reduce the number of vehicles taking "shortcuts" through neighborhoods.

GOAL: The transportation system should be modified as necessary to improve the flow of traffic.

OBJECTIVE: To open new streets, to widen existing streets and to redesign intersections in order to improve traffic circulation and street conditions.

POLICY 70: Improve vehicular accessibility and circulation.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Improve major roads to and in existing and planned industrial office and retail areas to provide better access. Choose new road alignments, which disrupt or require the relocation of the least number of residents.

GOAL: To provide, where necessary, for public parking areas and garages to meet the needs in the central business district and outlying centers.

OBJECTIVE: To reduce traffic congestion from parking in the central business district.

POLICY 71: Institute a plan providing for adequate off-street parking.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Determine which areas are in most need for public parking facilities, and availability of suitable land. Encourage park-and-ride, public transportation and carpooling concepts.

GOAL: To provide for improved access to all forms of transportation.

OBJECTIVE: To provide for improved linkages.

POLICY 72: To utilize the Multi-Modal Transportation facility in downtown Meridian, which serves as a terminal for AMTRAK, intrastate and interstate bus operations, local transit systems and local taxi operations, including a shuttle operation to the Meridian Regional Airport.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: To seek funding for transportation studies from the Mississippi Highway Department to improve linkages.

**IMPLEMENTATION GOALS**

GOAL: To adopt and implement a Capital Improvements Program as a major tool for the accomplishment of the Comprehensive Plan.

OBJECTIVE: A capital improvements program should be based on a community facilities plan in accordance with Section 17-1-1 of the Mississippi Code.

POLICY 73: The capital improvements program should be the means of financing those capital improvements developed as a part of the plan.

#### IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: The capital improvements program should be a basis for planning for housing, schools, parks and recreation, public buildings and facilities, and utilities and drainage.

GOAL: To implement the land use plan through zoning policies, Subdivision Regulations, and urban revitalization activities which are in agreement with the plan.

OBJECTIVE: To use the land use plan as a guide for development of the area.

POLICY 74: The land use plan should be consulted before any development or policymaking occurs.

POLICY 74.1: The City of Meridian will employ flexible zoning administrative techniques (Variances, special use permits, rezonings, site plan review, and overlay zones) and decision-making standards for these techniques.

POLICY 74.2: “Use” variances are prohibited. Variances are only granted to relieve hardships involving dimensional requirements.

POLICY 74.3: Guidelines for reviewing rezoning applications should include standards for dealing with spot zonings:

- The proposal must not be a small parcel of land singled out for special and privileged treatment.
- The proposed change must be in the public interest and not merely for the benefit of a landowner.
- The proposed change is in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan and sound planning principles.
- The proposed change must not create an isolated district unrelated and incompatible to adjacent districts.

POLICY 74.4: The Land Use Plan should be used as a general guide to evaluate rezoning applications. Proposed rezonings maybe approved if they conform to the land use conditions.

POLICY 74.5: If the applicant’s property falls on or adjacent to a district having the same zoning classification, the effect would be an extension of the land use classification, if the density is appropriate.

## IMPLEMENTATION

**PROGRAM:** Development should be approved after a comparison with the land use plan's policies and found to be compatible. Changes in local building policies should be in accordance with the plan.

**GOAL:** To eliminate problems between developers and surrounding property owners concerning rezonings. Objections arise from adjoining property owners fearing developers not completing projects as proposed, thus becoming speculative rezonings.

**OBJECTIVE:** To be more responsive to the public to minimize conflict between surrounding property owners and developers in relation to rezonings.

**POLICY 75:** The Zoning Ordinance will contain conditional zoning provisions to provide flexibility for the Planning Commission and City Council in their decision-making concerning controversial rezoning issues.

## IMPLEMENTATION

**PROGRAM:** The Planning Division will research, analyze and propose specific amendments to the Zoning Ordinance for consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council to facilitate conditional zoning.

**GOAL:** To enforce zoning, subdivision and other land use development ordinances and construction codes throughout the planning area.

**OBJECTIVE:** To ensure compliance with the Comprehensive Plan for the public's health, safety and welfare.

**POLICY 76:** Zoning, subdivision and other development ordinances and construction codes should be strictly enforced.

## IMPLEMENTATION

**PROGRAM:**

- Inspection of construction and development will occur continually throughout the building process to ensure compliance with local codes. Violations will be handled as specified by the local code.
- The Zoning Ordinance, Planned Unit Development and the Subdivision Regulations should be regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to condense, simplify, and improve in order to make the regulations more easily understandable.

**GOAL:** To encourage sound land planning and attractive development by private enterprise.

OBJECTIVE: To involve the private sector in the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

POLICY 77: Private enterprise should be encouraged to actively participate in community development programs and policies.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Actively seek federal, state and local funds to help implement the plan's goals. Provide property tax reductions or exemptions for local industries and similar private investors.

GOAL: To achieve continuing coordination and cooperation of public and private agencies in regard to development policies, programs, and projects.

OBJECTIVE: To have public and private agencies work together to design and implement development policies, programs, and projects.

POLICY 78: Cooperation between public and private agencies should be encouraged in the coordination of development policies, programs and projects.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Committees including both public and private agency representatives should be charged with the continuous coordination of development activities.

GOAL: To maintain a continuous program of public communication in order to keep the planning goals constantly before the eyes of every citizen.

OBJECTIVE: To increase the public awareness of planning goals by reminding citizens of programs, which have already been activated, and those which have been proposed.

POLICY 79: The public should be informed of the planning goals of this community.

IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM: Goals should be publicized through public hearings and the media.

**PART II**  
**LAND USE PLAN**

# LAND USE PLAN

## POPULATION STUDY

Meridian is the sixth largest City in Mississippi, with a 2000 population of 39,968. As shown in Table I, the City has experienced a very inconsistent rate of growth. Between 1940-1960, the population increased almost 39%, but fell 8.7% in 1970. The population has continued to decrease from 46,577 in 1980 to 39,968 in 2000, a difference of -16.53%. Lauderdale County has experienced a slight increase in population from 75,555 in 1990 to 78,161 in 2000. Overall, Mississippi has experienced steady growth in population since 1960.

**TABLE I**

**HISTORICAL POPULATION LEVELS (IN THOUSANDS)**

	MISS.	% CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS PERIOD	LAUD. CTY.	% CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS PERIOD	MERIDIAN	% CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS PERIOD
1920	1,790,618	00.00	45,897	00.00	23,339	00.00
1930	2,009,821	12.24	52,748	14.90	31,954	36.91
1940	2,184,000	8.67	58,247	10.40	35,481	11.00
1950	2,179,000	- .22	64,171	10.10	41,893	18.07
1960	2,178,000	- .04	67,119	4.60	49,374	17.90
1970	2,216,994	1.79	67,087	- .04	45,083	- 8.70
1980	2,520,638	13.70	77,285	15.20	46,577	3.31
1990	2,573,216	2.04	75,555	-2.23	41,036	-11.90
2000	2,844,658	9.54	78,161	3.33	39,968	-2.67
2010*	3,698,055	23.07	83,632	6.50	46,044	13.2
2020*	4,918,413	24.80	94,648	11.67	53,925	14.61

\*Projected by the Planning Division, City of Meridian, MS  
Source: US Department of Census

Projections for both Meridian and Lauderdale County show substantial population increases over the next 20 years. Due to Meridian's population fluctuations, a least squares regression formula has been used to calculate projected figures for Tables I and II. These projections include area annexed 11/23/2008.

While the total population of Meridian fluctuated since 1940, there has been a steady overall growth in the number of non-white residents, including African-Americans, Hispanics, Native American, Asians, and others. The only decline in the non-white population occurred between 1960-1970. Since 1960, the number of white individuals has experienced an overall decrease. The largest decline was during 1980-2000 when the number of whites dropped by 11,030, a decrease of 38.6%, from 28,610 in 1980 to 17,580 in 2000, as shown in Table II. These projections show that by 2020 non-whites will comprise 62.5% of Meridian's population. This is a substantial increase from 34% in 1970. Since the overall population of the county has not changed drastically from decade to decade, the data suggest that white residents are moving to more rural areas.

**TABLE II**  
**TOTAL POPULATION BY RACE 1940-2020**

YEAR	TOTAL POPULATION	%CHANGE PRIOR YR	WHITE	% TOTAL	% CHANGE	NON-WHITE	% TOTAL	% CHANGE
1940	35481	----	22628	63.8	----	12853	36.2	----
1950	41893	18.1	27339	65.2	20.8	14554	34.7	13.2
1960	49374	17.9	32621	66	19.3	16753	34.0	15.1
1970	45083	-8.7	29682	66	-9.0	15401	34.0	-8.07
1980	46577	3.3	28610	61.4	-3.6	17967	38.6	16.6
1990	41036	-11.9	22149	54	-22.6	18887	46.0	5.1
2000	39968	-2.67	17580	44	-20.6	22388	56.0	18.5
2010*	46044	13.2	19782	43	11	26262	57.0	14.8
2020*	53925	14.61	20242	37.5	2.2	33683	62.5	22

\*Projected by the Planning Division, City of Meridian, MS  
Includes 1,513 persons in area annexed 11/23/2008.  
Source: US Department of Census

The adult population (persons over age 18) is projected to rise from the 2000 figure of 29,100 to 36,453 in 2020. Existing figures show a trend, therefore, figures illustrated in Table III were calculated using moving averages and total population figures from Table I were used and calculated using least squares regression model. The median age for people in Meridian in 1960 was 30.2 years. In 1970 it was 30.4, a slight increase. In 1980 the median age increased to 31.0 years and increased sharply to 34.6 years in 2000. This is a clear indication that the population is growing older and is a reason that the average household size is declining, since the elderly tend to live in single person households. A 14.51% increase in the number of individuals over age 18 is projected for 2020.

**TABLE III  
MERIDIAN'S OVER AGE 18 POPULATION**

	TOTAL POPULATION	OVER 18	% CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS PERIOD	% TOTAL POPULATION
1970	45083	30381	-0-	67.4
1980	46577	33106	8.97	71
1990	41036	29772	-10.1	72.6
2000	39968	29100	-2.31	72.8
*2010	46044	33106	12.1	71.9
*2020	53925	38718	14.51	71.8

\*Projected by the Planning Division, City of Meridian, MS  
Source: US Department of Census

The ratio of persons per occupied housing unit in Meridian is also declining. While the number of occupied housing units rose from 14,829 in 1970 to 15,966 in 2000, the number of individuals per household has fallen from 3.04 to 2.39 during the same period. Due to the proposed annexation, the number of occupied housing units is projected to rise from 15,966 in 2000 to 17,610 in 2020, as indicated in Table IV, while the number of individuals per household is projected to decrease. Figures illustrated in Table IV were calculated using least squares regression for the number of units, to smooth fluctuations, and moving averages for persons per household, due to an established trend.

**TABLE IV  
PERSONS PER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNIT**

	OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS	PERSONS/OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS
1970	14829	3.04
1980	17379	2.68
1990	16004	2.56
2000	15966	2.39
*2010	17219	2.5
*2020	17610	2.48

\*Projected by the Planning Division, City of Meridian, MS  
Source: US Department of Census

Overall, the population in Meridian is expected to increase in the next twenty years. Previous studies have forecast similar increases, only to find that the population did not grow as much as predicted. The 1970 Comprehensive Plan projected Meridian's 1990 population to be over 107,000, an extremely optimistic estimate. In order for this forecast to be useful as a planning tool, it has been assumed that the local, state, and nationwide economy will continue to recover and that employment opportunities will remain available in Meridian.

## **ECONOMIC STUDY**

Population trends as they relate to the economic history of Meridian and Lauderdale County are useful when determining future land use in the area. In 2009 the population of Meridian is approximately 40,000. Residential and commercial development together with a slight increase in population over the next twenty years is expected.

**TABLE V  
CITY OF MERIDIAN EMPLOYMENT 2002-2008**

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Civilian Labor Force	15,800	15,990	15,870	15,840	15,530	15,630	16,010
Unemployed	1,230	1,340	1,280	1,360	1,210	1,330	1,450
Unemployment Rate %	7.8	8.4	8.1	8.6	7.8	8.5	9.1
Employed	14,570	14,650	14,590	14,480	14,320	14,300	14,560

Annual Averages for the City of Meridian, Source: MDES Annual Labor Force Report

As indicated in Table V, the civilian labor force has increased slightly over the seven years studied, while annual unemployment rates fluctuated from 7.8% in 2002 to 9.1% in 2008, for an average annual rate of 8.3% for the period.

Meridian has an awareness of the importance of education. This is evidenced by a rise in number of high school and college graduates. Increasing percents of the population achieving higher educational qualifications shows an increased professional workforce with higher employment potential. According to Census information, the level of education attained by adults in Meridian twenty-five years of age and over has risen since 1990. In 1990, 26.1% had High School Diplomas or equivalent, in 2000, 26.3%, and in 2007, 29.6%. This is an increase of 3.5% over the time period studied. People having achieved a Bachelor's Degree in 1990 were 9.8%, 2000, 10.4%, and 2007, 11.6%. This exhibits a 1.8% increase.

**TABLE VI - A**  
**LAUDERDALE COUNTY EMPLOYMENT 1990-2020**

	Manufacturing	% Change from previous period	Wholesale / Retail	% Change from previous period	Office	%Change from previous period	Gov't.	% Change from previous period
1990	6010	-	9290	-	2250	-	4660	-
2000	5270	-14	12180	23.7	2120	-6.13	5970	21.9
2010	5080	-3.75	14090	13.56	1980	-7.07	9720	38.5
2020	4950	-2.62	15720	10.36	1930	-2.59	10690	9.07

Source: 2001 Woods & Poole Economics, Inc.

*Woods & Poole* projections for 2010 and 2020 were determined by using T-Statistics and average annual rate of growth for each category, and are shown in Table VI-A. In order to better forecast future economic growth, a comparison was made of the number of persons in Lauderdale County employed in manufacturing, wholesale/retail establishments, professional offices (insurance, real estate, finance, etc.) and government.

The number of persons employed by manufacturers has steadily declined since 1990, while the wholesale/retail category experienced an increase of 23.7% in 2000. By 2020, it is projected that it will increase by 41% and the number of employees will have risen from 9,290 in 1990 to 15,720, as shown in Table VI-A. The number of government employees in Lauderdale County has grown from 4,660 in 1990 to 5,970 in 2000. By 2020, the number of government employees is expected to top 10,690. Overall, the number of individuals working in professional office settings has declined from 2,250 in 1990 to 2,120 in 2000, and is projected to decrease to 1,930 by 2020.

**TABLE VI - B**  
**EARNINGS BY INDUSTRY in LAUDERDALE COUNTY 1990-2005**  
**(thousands of dollars)**

	Manufacturing	Increase / Decrease	Wholesale / Retail	Increase / Decrease	Service Industry	Increase / Decrease	Government	Increase / Decrease
1990	160,919	-	151,332	-	413,787	-	222,464	-
1995	204,277	+1.27%	190,598	+1.26%	543,097	+1.3%	272,022	+1.2%
2000	194,629	-0.95%	236,596	+1.24%	624,053	+1.1%	337,096	+1.2%
2005	171,446	-0.88%	218,927	-0.96%	841,753	+1.3%	400,436	+1.2%

Source: Regional Economic Information System, Bureau of Economic Analysis, April 2009

Earnings by industry in Lauderdale County and cyclic increase or decrease for each category, and are shown in Table VI-B. Data indicates that government is the most stable industry in Lauderdale County, followed by service industry, then wholesale / retail, and the most varying is manufacturing. The amount of income earned in the by manufacturers has shown an increase of 1% since 1990, the wholesale / retail category experienced an increase of 1.4%, the earnings in the service industry have risen by 2%, and in the government sector has shown a steady cyclical 1.2% increase, but earnings have risen 1.8% between 1990 and 2005.

### SUMMARY

Meridian experienced a slight increase in civilian labor force, and unemployment rate between 2002 and 2008. Overall, the earnings of individuals working in Lauderdale County rose between 1990 and 2005. The increase in earnings roughly corresponds with the 1.5% increase in inflation over the same time period therefore little increase in expendable income is represented. While these trends follow nationwide patterns, growth in Meridian has historically been at a slower rate than national averages.

2001 Woods & Poole Economics, Inc predicts that due to a rise in the participation rate in the labor force, total employment in Meridian should continue to increase at an average rate of .6% per year. Based on local employment trends, manufacturing and office employment opportunities appear to be increasing. The increased population will probably lead to an increase in the wholesale/retail work force, since an increase in total retail sales and total persons employed in this area is expected. Additionally, adequate space must be made available for both new and existing

businesses in Meridian. The number of government employees is also expected to increase, possibly to the extent that more government facilities will be needed. Most of the industrial development will locate within the existing and proposed industrial parks.

## EXISTING LAND USE

The land use survey is traditionally the most important survey of the planning process. In preparing the existing land use map (see page 38a), each parcel was coded according to its present land use and then transferred to a large base map which is divided into the following categories:

1. Low-density residential (1-6 dwelling units per acre)
2. High-density residential (7 or more dwelling units per acre)
3. Public/Quasi-Public
4. Commercial
5. Industrial

The field maps also located low-density office uses, which are shown as transitional areas. The existing land use map shows present land use patterns and provides a basis for the development of the future land use plan, including planning areas, and future zoning map.

Table VII depicts the relative sizes of existing land use categories within the Meridian Corporate limits. Land use categories have been depicted in acres, and each category is expressed as a percentage of the total area and the total developed area. (Also see map on page 38b)

TABLE VII

**SUMMARY OF EXISTING LAND USE AND VACANT LAND ANALYSIS  
PRESENTLY CONFIGURED CITY OF MERIDIAN 2009**

	<b>TOTAL ACRES 2009</b>	<b>% OF TOTAL AREA</b>	<b>% OF TOTAL DEVEL- OPED</b>	<b>% OF TOTAL VACANT AREA</b>
<b>TOTAL AREA</b>	<b>34,976.07</b>	<b>100.0%</b>		
Single-Family [Low Density]	5,553.62	15.9%	27.5%	
Multi-Family [High Density]	423.14	1.2%	2.1%	
<b>Total For Residential Uses</b>	<b>5,976.76</b>	<b>17.1%</b>	<b>29.6%</b>	
Commercial Uses	1,957.06	5.6%	9.7%	
Industrial Uses	1,322.89	3.8%	6.6%	
<b>Total For Productive Uses</b>	<b>3,279.95</b>	<b>9.4%</b>	<b>16.3%</b>	
Public & Quasi Public	6,959.02	19.9%	34.5%	
Street & Railroad Rights-Of-Way	3,727.58	10.7%	18.5%	
Electric Utility Rights-Of-Way	213.10	0.6%	1.0%	
Natural Gas Rights-Of-Way	20.00	0.1%	0.1%	
<b>Total For Supportive Uses</b>	<b>10,919.70</b>	<b>31.3%</b>	<b>54.1%</b>	
<b>TOTAL DEVELOPED LAND</b>	<b>20,176.41</b>	<b>57.8%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	
Water Bodies	398.44	1.1%		2.7%
Floodways	1,583.22	4.5%		10.7%
Floodplains	3,669.08	10.5%		24.8%
Severely Sloping Lands (In Excess Of 15%)	3,296.55	9.4%		22.3%
<b>Total Undevelopable Vacant Land</b>	<b>8,947.29</b>	<b>25.5%</b>		<b>60.5%</b>
<b>Total Developable Vacant Land</b>	<b>5,852.37</b>	<b>16.7%</b>		<b>39.5%</b>
<b>TOTAL VACANT LAND</b>	<b>14,799.66</b>	<b>42.2%</b>		<b>100.0%</b>

According to Table VII, “Summary of Existing Land Use and Vacant Land Analysis Presently Configured City of Meridian 2009”, the total land in urban use is 20,176.41 acres. An additional 5,852.37 acres are available for residential, commercial, or industrial use, but currently are vacant. A total of 8,947.29 acres is vacant because it lies in water bodies, floodways, floodplains, or is subject to severe sloping.

Residential Uses: Meridian has 5,976.76 acres used for residential purposes, which represents 29.6 percent of the developed land in the urban area. This is generally the same as other

cities of similar size. This percentage decreased to 17.1 percent when compared to Meridian's total land area. Dividing the population of the City by the total residential acreage yields average densities of about 6 persons per net acre (in 2000).

Residential land uses in the planning area are predominantly single-family detached dwellings. Two-family and multi-family uses combined constitute only 423.14 acres. Single-family uses of varying densities are distributed throughout the City, with the lowest density units (1-6 dwelling units per acre) found primarily north of 20<sup>th</sup> Street. Multi-family uses are scattered throughout much of Meridian, some in complexes, the remainder in individual homes or buildings converted to multi-family use. Some of these multi-family uses are properly located on major streets, while others are found on minor residential streets where the potential for traffic congestion is higher.

Residential Problems: In addition to the location of multi-family uses on major streets, some major streets have single-family homes which front on them. Single-family homes with frontage and access on major streets tend to create traffic congestion and traffic hazards. These problems are a result of the large number of curb cuts and the fact that most vehicles back out onto these major streets. A good example of this is North Hills Street, which has an average daily traffic count of 15,000 between Poplar Springs Drive and Highway 39 (2000 data). North Hills Street has a large number of single-family homes which front on the street. The commercial development near the intersection with Highway 493, with more development to come, will increase traffic volumes on North Hills Street.

Another significant problem is that residential neighborhoods are often targets for commercial development. This process, called "commercial creep", usually starts with rezoning a lot to a commercial use. This leads to further rezoning and soon the neighborhood has a number of commercial encroachments, blight sets in, and the neighborhood is no longer desirable for residential purposes. One area that is particularly susceptible to "commercial creep" is 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Poplar Springs Drive from 16<sup>th</sup> Street to 46<sup>th</sup> Street. This area has a number of older, large homes, which can be converted, into inexpensive office space. The southern end of this linear strip from 16th Street to 22nd Street, already, has several offices and shops in a residential setting.

In fact, practically no part of Meridian is untouched by mixed uses. Mixed uses can be an asset to a community if precautions are taken to reduce blighting influences, but uncontrolled, unplanned mixed uses destroy neighborhoods. Most of the mixed uses in Meridian existed before zoning, while others came as a result of spot zoning. Care must be taken to avoid spot zoning.

Meridian's residential growth has been primarily to the north, however, the further north the more scattered the development, thus making it more expensive to provide public services. Scattered residential development is also found west of 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Kings Road and east of 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue. For the most part Meridian has developed along ridges, due to the common fact that roads generally run along the tops of ridges, thus leaving the interiors of many blocks as undeveloped gullies with severe slope.

There are four small areas of residential development that are somewhat isolated south and east of the central business district, between the railroads and the Sowashee flood plain. The people who live in these areas are predominantly elderly people who have lived in their homes for at least 30 or 40 years. Few, if any, young families move back into these areas. There are no longer any schools in these areas, and due to the proximity of heavy commercial and industrial uses, they are not desirable as residential areas. These residential areas will eventually fade away.

Cemeteries were mentioned in the 1970 plan as being scattered throughout the City, creating a blighting influence on residential development, especially since most are not well kept. Future cemeteries should be large tracts and located in the more remote areas of the County.

Meridian has a large stock of older homes. The City, through its effective code enforcement program, plays a vital role in the demolition of vacant, dilapidated structures. The City applies for and implements Federal grant projects for neighborhood revitalization projects, such as Project Pride I and II. The City typically donates vacant lots resulting from neighborhood revitalization projects to Habitat for Humanity for new residential construction. As a result of these projects, Habitat has constructed more than 40 new homes. In 2001, the City established a residential subdivision incentive program to encourage new residential construction. The incentive program assists developers with the cost of infrastructure improvements required by the City for new residential subdivisions.

Commercial Uses: Land for commercial use provides a location for wholesale or retail sale of goods and services. Professional offices and industrial plant offices not located in industrial areas are also included in this category. This category also includes commercial recreation areas such as motion picture theaters and amusement parks.

According to Table VII “Summary of Existing Land Use and Vacant Land Analysis Presently Configured City of Meridian 2009”, of the 20,176.41 acres of developed land in Meridian, 1,957.06 acres, or about 9.7 percent, is commercial land. If the total acreage (34,976.07) of Meridian is considered, then approximately 5.6 percent is developed commercial.

Land Use devoted to commercial uses varies considerably from city to city. While smaller or “bedroom” communities may utilize only 2% to 5% of the total developed area for commercial uses, larger, regional, and central cities may have as high as 27% of land devoted to commercial uses. According to information provided by the East Mississippi Business Development Corporation, Meridian acts as a regional center for medical/hospital services, retail commerce, and employment. The market area and service population for the above mentioned industries vary. The medical/hospital services market area is approximately 65 miles in radius and includes 21 counties and 505,710 people (2000 Census data). The retail commerce market area is approximately 50 miles and includes 14 counties and 340,008 people (2000 Census data). The smallest market area is for employment. It is approximately 35 miles in radius and includes 8 counties and 205,960 people (2000 Census data). Based on these figures and the anticipated continued expansions in these areas, it is justifiable to allocate up to 20% of the total land for commercial uses.

The primary concentrations of commercial development in Meridian are: the central business district, along Interstate 20/59, along 8th Street, along Highways 19 North and South, 11 South, 39 and 145, along 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Front Street Extension, and along North Hills Street and the Broadmoor area. These areas generate large amounts of traffic and a corresponding demand for parking space.

The development of strip commercial uses along heavily traveled arterial streets tends to create a number of traffic problems, which greatly reduce the capacity of the street to move traffic. A good example of this is 8<sup>th</sup> Street. The large number of curb cuts or driveways contributes to traffic congestion and traffic hazards. Future commercial developments should be allowed only on arterial streets and highways, preferably in planned developments like shopping centers. At the least, future commercial developments should share driveways and off-street parking.

A glance at the existing land use map, page 38a, indicates that there are many small

commercial uses scattered throughout the City, usually in residential areas. Many of these uses are of nuisance-type uses, and it is doubtful that they could ever be incorporated into a rational commercial zoning district. These uses then constitute a zoning problem and will have to be dealt with by nonconforming use regulation in the zoning ordinance.

There are a number of uses that generate controversy because of the type of use (i.e. funeral homes and cemeteries) or potential hazard (i.e. service stations). These and other difficult to locate land uses should be the subject of a future study to recommend better ways to deal with them.

Industrial Uses: Industrial uses are those that include warehousing, transportation of goods, manufacturing or processing a durable or non-durable product, and recycling used goods and materials. Industrial land uses have, for the purpose of analysis, been subdivided into two classes, light and heavy. Heavy industries are those which produce a perceptible amount of dust, odor, smoke or noise, or are otherwise dangerous or objectionable when in proximity to other areas where people live, work or play. Conversely, light industries normally have little or no obnoxious or dangerous characteristics. Sometimes there is a fine line between light industrial and heavy commercial uses. For the purpose of this analysis light and heavy industrial uses are combined.

Based on Table VII “Summary of Existing Land Uses and Vacant Land Analysis Presently Configured City of Meridian 2009,” Industrial uses constitute 1,322.89 acres or about 6.6 percent of the total developed area. There are four industrial parks in the Meridian area: Northeast Industrial Park, Central Industrial Park, the Meridian Industrial Park, and the I-20/59 Industrial Park. Many more industrial uses exist and are generally located in the southern third of the City where the topography has slopes of five percent or less. Some of these industrial uses are located near the four pockets of residential uses in south Meridian mentioned above. This presents problems for residential, as well as industrial uses. Allowing residential development in industrial areas makes land assembly for industrial development difficult, creates a potential for neighborhood complaints, and also makes further industrial development difficult. The proposed industrial park is surrounded by sparse residential population, separated from other uses by major highways and county roads, is in a fringe location and does not have excessive slopes.

Current Development Regulations: An analysis of the current zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations was undertaken and the general findings of the analysis are presented below:

Zoning Ordinance: The City adopted a Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance by Ordinance No. 3966 on January 11, 1994 replacing the City’s original Zoning Ordinance adopted by Ordinance 3297 on June 14, 1967. The new Ordinance was adopted to reflect new techniques and approaches developed over the past 20 years and to permit greater flexibility to solve development problems and adopt decision-making standards for development review. This Ordinance was amended in 2006 with major amendments which consolidated zoning districts, standardized setbacks, and other amendments intended to improve and condense the Ordinance.

Subdivision Regulations: The present regulations adopted July 2, 1992 provides regulations for the development of residential and commercial subdivisions. These regulations allow the developer the options of curb and gutter or surface drainage, and overhead or underground utilities in most zoning districts, which allows for the development of affordable housing. In 2003, the City amended regulations for subdivision incentives to assist developers with the cost of certain water and sewer

infrastructure improvements, based upon approval of construction plans per subdivision, on a first come first served basis. Additionally, property taxes on subdivided property may not increase, but may remain at the unimproved or agricultural, non-homestead rate until construction is completed and the City issues a Certificate of Occupancy—*this incentive will require State approval*. Amendments should be considered to better address commercial subdivisions and consider erosion control and landscaping. The Subdivision Ordinance was amended in December 2006 and in March 2007 to clarify responsibilities of the Community Development and Public Works departments, approval of plans and performance guarantees, digital plats, and an increase in minimum waterline size.

# THE FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

## OVERVIEW

The land use plan represents a composite of all the elements of the planning program. Within this context, the plan depicts in narrative, statistical and map forms the general relationships between land use patterns, major transportation arterials, schools, parks and other community facilities, and the overall environment of the community. Preparation of the land use plan was closely coordinated with the development of all other elements of the planning program, particularly the population and economic study, the transportation plan, and the community facilities plan.

In addition to coordinating the land use proposals with other elements of the planning program, preparation of this study largely consisted of two major work elements. The first work element was determining quantities of various land use categories needed to sustain anticipated future community growth through the planning period. The second major work element was selecting areas of the community that were best suited for a particular type of urban activity.

The land use plan should be used primarily as a policy guide for future development. The adoption of these policies by the City Council establishes their dominance as a guide for land use decisions, and that they may be changed only by amending the plan. The land use plan shall also be used, as a forecast of the future land needs of the Meridian area. Although the land use forecasts are for twenty years in the future, the life expectancy of the land use plan, for accuracy and applicability, is five to six years. This emphasizes the need to revise the plan every five years.

## METHODOLOGY AND LAND USE FORECASTS

The quantities of land needed to accompany various activities in an urban area depend on a multitude of interrelated factors. The most important of these factors are the composition and the characteristics of the population, the economy of the area, and the trends in the density of development. Since all three of these factors are closely related, a change in one will cause a corresponding change in the other two. For example, the density of development is dependent, to a large degree, on raw land and development cost (economic factors). Therefore, if these costs increase, the density of the development usually increases, unless the costs are offset by a corresponding increase in income, sales or other economic factors. Although there are numerous methods and techniques used to forecast demands for the future land uses in urban areas, all of these techniques rely, directly or indirectly, on estimates of these factors.

The future land use plan, in order to be useful as a policy tool for guiding land use decisions, must be carefully composed (See attached maps following this section, pages 46a and 46b). In drafting the Future Land Use Map the following factors were considered:

1. Existing land use patterns and growth trends,
2. Existing zoning patterns,
3. Projected future land use needs based on projected future population and employment converted to the number of acres needed to accommodate projected growth levels.
4. Flood plains, excessive slopes (over 15 percent), and soil types.
5. Location of Major Street and open space.
6. Building permit trends.

Permits issued by the Inspection Division within the last five years (2004-2008) have been reviewed; the following is the result of the study. A total of 4,758 permits were issued, these included foundation permits, sign permits, permits for the placement of storage buildings, additions or renovations to existing structures, and construction of new buildings. Of these, 867 were for new construction. Residential structures, which include new single-family, two-family, and multi-family buildings made up 40% of new construction permits issued. Commercial and industrial permits account for about 60% of the new construction permits issued. An additional 565 permits were issued for the demolition of existing residential, commercial, or industrial structures.

Table VII "Summary of Existing Land Use and Vacant Land Analysis Presently Configured City of Meridian 2009" requires consideration in development of the Future Land Use Map because it indicates the figures for developed land and available land for future development. Total land in Meridian is 34,976.07 acres. Subtracting 20,176.41 acres of developed land from the total leaves 14,799.66 acres of vacant land. Of this amount 8,947.29 acres are in water and waterways, floodways, floodplains, and severely sloping lands (over 15 percent slope). This leaves roughly 5,852.37 acres or 16.7 percent of the total land area of Meridian as vacant developable land. Table VII will also assist in shaping zoning districts. Land that is vacant or undevelopable will be zoned based on adjacent districts, probable development, or will be zoned agricultural.

The Future Land Use Map will be instrumental in drawing the zoning map. In order for the zoning map to be optimally effective, it should closely mirror the Future Land Use Map. In addition to the Future Land Use Map, other considerations in drawing the zoning map are:

1. How many sets of districts shall there be?
2. How much space should be allocated to each type of district?
3. What types of land are suitable for each type of district?
4. What should be the physical relationships between various types of districts?
5. Where should the various districts be located, in general?
6. Where should the exact boundary lines of each district run?

In mapping zoning districts, there is usually a compromise between the districting pattern dictated by existing development and that called for by the future land use plan. The land use plan becomes a guide for this decision-making process, as well as for the deliberations to be followed in making later amendments to the zoning ordinance.

Generally, zoning districts reflect certain principles:

1. Compatibility of uses
2. Appropriateness of the land
3. Locational needs of uses
4. Affects of public services

As a general rule, it is more advisable to run the boundaries of a district along or parallel to rear lot lines, rather than through the center of a street. Where one side of a street is zoned for business and the other for residential use, there is a strong temptation for legislative bodies and courts to authorize business uses on the residential side of the street. Where a district runs parallel to side lot lines it should avoid splitting lots. Land situated similarly should be zoned alike. Care should also be taken that not too many non-conforming uses are created in each district.

The Future Land Use Map identifies and classifies existing corporate land area including the 2008 Annexation as follows: 36% residential, 8% industrial, 14% commercial, 21% agricultural, 20% public, and 1% transitional. Also delineated are the City's *planning areas*-located within the City's logical growth paths. Areas delineated outside the existing corporate limits are minimal areas the City reasonably anticipates annexing within the life of this plan. Substantial urbanization has occurred within these areas and it is anticipated to continue and accelerate in the future. Though conversion to urban uses are anticipated, specific Future Land Use

recommendations are not represented for these areas in this plan. The City of Meridian would propose to amend this plan at such time these areas are annexed, public input will be solicited. (*See Maps on pages 46a and 46b.*)

## **PART III**

# **TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

# TRANSPORTATION PLAN

## OVERVIEW

Meridian has developed several transportation plans beginning with the Comprehensive Plan by Michael Baker over 30 years ago. Later, in 1969 J. L. Paulk and Associates produced a Comprehensive Plan which lacked a major thoroughfare element because it anticipated an extensive transportation study and plan by Wilbur Smith and Associates, completed in 1972. The Paulk plan did, however include a map showing proposed street system improvements, many of which were also recommended in the Wilbur Smith Plan. In 1982, the Meridian Planning Department developed a Major Thoroughfares Study; recommendations partly based on the previous plans, and made them more implemental. In fact three of the recommendations have already been accomplished: straightening North Hills Street some by constructing a new road from 35th Avenue to the intersection of 52<sup>nd</sup> Street/North Hills Street and Highway 493, straightening the jog between North Hills Street and Lindley Road, and improving a portion of 29<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> Avenue traffic flow with an overpass in the Southside area. In late 1990, Wilbur Smith and Associates prepared a feasibility study for the proposed State Highway 19-Bypass. This study forecasts modest increases in population (9.6 percent) employment (15.4 percent) and traffic levels which have not occurred. Much of the suggested route for this throughway has been developed over the intervening years in a manner which will preclude its construction. In January 1991 the City Council adopted a *Major Street Plan*, prepared by the City's Planning Division, which lists arterial and collector streets and prioritized some needed improvements.

This *Major Street Plan* is the only completed portion of this Transportation Plan, thus, only streets are discussed. Air service, bus service, and rail service may be the subject of a future amendment. This is a street plan designed to connect residential, commercial and industrial areas with safe, convenient and non-congested routes.

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the important interrelationship between land uses and transportation. Various activities such as shopping and employment centers, schools and colleges, tourist attractions, and high-density residential development generate larger amounts of traffic than lower density residential or vacant undevelopable land. In the reverse, the construction of major streets can create pressure for more intensive types of adjacent land development. If designed properly, major traffic arteries connecting focal points or community activities will have better traffic flow and fewer traffic accidents without disrupting residential areas.

## PLAN DEFINITIONS AND COMPONENTS

For the Transportation Plan thoroughfares are defined as follows:

Street: A public or private thoroughfare used, or intended to be used, for passage or travel by vehicles and pedestrians and indicated on the *Major Street Plan* and further classified by the functions they perform

- (1) Private street: Any private way or place which is not dedicated to the public and for which maintenance shall
- (2) be the responsibility of a designated non-public entity and which provides the principal means of access for abutting properties.
- (3) Public street: Any public way or place, which is dedicated to and accepted for public use, and maintenance,
- (4) and which provides the principal means of access for abutting properties.

Interstate: An access-free, high-speed road with grade separated interchanges. Its function is to carry traffic with controlled access, no parking and no grade intersections for long distances. The City of Meridian has one interstate route providing connection with the rest of the country. Interstate 20/59 runs through the southern third of the City. West of town, I-20 connects to Jackson and on to Dallas. After passing through Meridian, I-59 leaves its joint corridor with I-20 and heads south to New Orleans. The east route along this same corridor leads to Tuscaloosa/ Birmingham and on to Atlanta.

U. S. Highways: Three numbered U. S. Highways provide this area with service. Two of these, U. S. 80 and U. S. 11, have both lost traffic due to the now-existing interstates, but are still important in providing service to areas close to Meridian. U. S. 45 is still an important carrier of traffic and links the City to other areas such as Mobile, Alabama.

State Highways: Meridian also has three numbered state highways: Mississippi 39, Mississippi 493, and Mississippi 19. Routes 493 and 39 serve areas north of Meridian, while Route 19 goes in a northwest-southeast direction through the City.

Arterial Street: A class of streets that carry relatively large volumes of through traffic from local and collector streets and conduct it to and from the various traffic focal points in the City. Arterials interconnect the principal traffic generators within the City as well as important rural routes. A

secondary function of arterials is to provide access to abutting properties. The length of a typical trip on the system should exceed one mile, and arterials generally should be spaced about one mile apart. These thoroughfares also provide the motorist access to the state and federal highways and to the interstates discussed above.

Collector Street: A street designed to facilitate traffic movement between arterial and local streets and to provide indirect access to abutting properties. Shall have a minimum right-of-way of sixty (60) feet and be constructed to the standards of the City's Subdivision Ordinance. Collector streets should be spaced at approximately half-mile intervals.

Local Street: A street whose primary function is to provide vehicular and pedestrian access to property abutting the public right-of-way. They should terminate or connect with collector or arterial streets within a half mile of all abutting properties. Average Daily Traffic counts on residential local streets should range from 100 to 1,500. Minimum right-of-way should be 50 feet [60 feet in heavy commercial areas] and paving width 26 feet minimum. Curb and gutter streets are preferred, but parallel drainage swales may be allowed in special circumstances.

## **INVENTORY**

The inventory of designated major streets which forms the basic skeleton upon which the Transportation Plan is to be implemented is listed below and further illustrated on the *Major Street Plan Map at the end of this section*. The interstate systems of roadways including associated service roads, though important to this plan, are not listed.

### **MAJOR ARTERIAL STREETS:**

- U.S. Hwy 11
- U.S. Hwy 45
- U.S. Highway 145
- Old U.S. Hwy 45
- Old U.S. Hwy 80
- State Hwy 19
- State Hwy 39
- State Hwy 493
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue from 14<sup>th</sup> Street to U.S. Hwy 145
- 8<sup>th</sup> Street from Hwy 11 S/19N to 6<sup>th</sup> Street
- 6<sup>th</sup> Street from 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue to 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue from 6<sup>th</sup> Street to 18<sup>th</sup> Street
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue from Front Street to 14<sup>th</sup> Street {continues as minor arterial}
- 29<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> Avenue from North Frontage Road to 8<sup>th</sup> Street {continues as minor arterial}

North Hills Street from 35<sup>th</sup> Ave. to 18<sup>th</sup> Ave. {continues as minor arterial each way}  
Highland Park Drive/ State Boulevard from 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue to North Hills Street  
18<sup>th</sup> Avenue from North Frontage Road to 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
10<sup>th</sup> Street from 6<sup>th</sup> Street to 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
24<sup>th</sup> Avenue from 7<sup>th</sup> Street to Poplar Springs Drive  
14<sup>th</sup> Street from 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Front Street and Front Street to HWY 39

**MINOR ARTERIAL STREETS:**

29<sup>th</sup> Avenue from 8<sup>th</sup> Street to North Hills Street  
23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue from 14<sup>th</sup> Street to 43<sup>rd</sup> Street to PSD  
North Hills Street from Hwy 19N to 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue and from Hwy 493 to east  
39<sup>th</sup> Avenue 8<sup>th</sup> Street to Highland Avenue  
State Boulevard Extension from North Hills Street to  
Chandler Road from HWY 19N to State Boulevard Extension  
Newell Road from Hwy 39 North to Old U.S. Hwy 45  
20<sup>th</sup> Street from Hwy 19 to 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue  
Poplar Springs Drive from 22<sup>nd</sup> Street to North  
Grand Avenue from St. Paul Street to “C” Street  
Fifth Street from Old U.S. Hwy 80 to Front Street  
“B” Street from 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Hwy 39  
40<sup>th</sup> Avenue from Royal Road to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street  
49<sup>th</sup> Avenue from 8<sup>th</sup> Street to South  
10<sup>th</sup> Avenue from Front Street to North Hills Street  
6<sup>th</sup> Street from 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Front Street and Front Street Extension from 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue to HWY 39  
22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Heights from 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to South  
Briarwood Road (Hwy 39 to east)  
Old Country Club Road (Lizelia Road to Poplar Springs Drive)  
Van Zyverdan Road (Briarwood Road to Lizelia Road)  
Confederate Road (Hwy 39 to Old Country Club Road)

## **COLLECTOR STREETS:**

King Road from 38<sup>th</sup> Street to North  
40<sup>th</sup> Street from King Road to Grandview Avenue  
37<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> Streets from Grandview Avenue to State Boulevard  
26<sup>th</sup> Street from State Boulevard to 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue  
34<sup>th</sup> Street From Poplar Springs Drive to Hwy 39  
Grandview Avenue From 43<sup>rd</sup> Street to 34<sup>th</sup> Street  
61<sup>st</sup> Court From Old Poplar Springs Drive to East  
11<sup>th</sup> Avenue From 61<sup>st</sup> Court to Windmill Drive  
Windmill Drive From 13<sup>th</sup> Place to Hwy 39  
43<sup>rd</sup> Street From Poplar Springs Drive to Country Club Drive  
Country Club Drive From Grandview Ave. to North  
23<sup>rd</sup> Street From 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue to 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
7<sup>th</sup> Street From 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
26<sup>th</sup> Avenue from Donald Street to 20<sup>th</sup> Street  
Donald Avenue From St. John Street to 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
St. John Street From 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue to Donald Avenue  
Bonita Drive from I-20/59 to Hwy 19S  
Virginia Drive From Bonita Drive to 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Heights

Hillcrest Drive from 22<sup>nd</sup> Ave. Heights to South  
45<sup>th</sup> Avenue (From 5<sup>th</sup> Street to State Boulevard)  
Bounds Road (From Chandler Road to State Boulevard)  
College Drive (From Hwy 19 to 20<sup>th</sup> Street)  
Lakeland Drive from Old U.S. 80 to Old 8<sup>th</sup> Street Road  
Old 8<sup>th</sup> Street Road (From Hwy 19 to West)  
Old Poplar Springs Drive from Hwy 493 to North  
Hawkins Crossing Road (From U.S. Hwy 11/80 to Bonita Drive)  
Bonita Drive (Also known as Oak Grove Road to Azalea Drive)  
Azalea Drive (From Bonita Drive to Lake Drive)  
Lake Drive (From Azalea Drive to Hwy 19)  
Knight-Parker Road  
SweetGum Bottom Road from Hwy 19S to U.S. Hwy 11/80  
Will Wright Road and Murphy Road from Hwy 19S to U.S. Hwy 11/80  
Briarwood Road from Hwy 39 to east  
Old Country Club Road from Lizelia Road to Old Poplar Springs Drive  
Van Zyverdan Road from Briarwood Road to Lizelia Road  
Confederate Road from Hwy 39 to Old Country Club Road

## **ANALYSIS**

The street circulation network in Meridian is generally adequate to meet demand with regard to capacity. Additionally, the major thoroughfares have poor site distance and alignment at many intersections, an absence of interconnectivity, obsolete traffic control devices which do not meet warrant, and the chaotic location of ingress and egress points.

Additionally, there are several specific deficiencies:

Virtually every street in the central business district is currently classified as a major thoroughfare. This does not promote effective distribution of traffic and leads to unnecessary traffic control devices which are both costly and inconvenient. This is exacerbated by the current designation of many streets for one-way flow. A study is underway for the purpose of identifying specific changes in this system. It is anticipated that this work will identify the Downtown Core as a primary origin and destination for traffic movements and seek to minimize and concentrate through traffic.

Similarly, efforts are continuing toward the establishment of a “campus” type environment for the major downtown medical facilities. Known as the Medical District Campus Plan, this effort seeks to terminate most public streets and utilities at the boundary of the campus to create flexibility for the private owners [primarily hospitals] with regard to future growth and development. To accomplish this, a series of by-pass routes will be developed to divert through traffic around the campus to reduce internal conflict and congestion. These proposed by-pass routes are: North-18<sup>th</sup> Street from 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue to HWY 39; East- 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue from 18<sup>th</sup> Street to 6<sup>th</sup> Street; South- 6<sup>th</sup> Street/ 8<sup>th</sup> Street from 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue; West- 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue/ 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue from 8<sup>th</sup> Street to 20<sup>th</sup> Street.

Beyond the downtown area, each of the thoroughfares has its own set of deficiencies. Some of these are well known and have been proposed for change for a long time.

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## PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a list of proposed improvements:

### **HIGH PRIORITY**

- Survey for warrant all traffic control devices and make adjustments as so determined;
- Widen to 5 lanes – North Hills Street, from Highway 493 east to Hwy. 39 [Included in MsDOT - Statewide Improvement Program];
- Convert to two-way flow 8<sup>th</sup> Street/ 6<sup>th</sup> Street from 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue;
- Convert 10<sup>th</sup> Street to east-west priority arterial from 6<sup>th</sup> Street to 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue;
- Convert 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue to north-south priority arterial from 6<sup>th</sup> Street to 18<sup>th</sup> Street;
- Convert 18<sup>th</sup> Street to east-west priority arterial from 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and extend to intersect Highway 39 @ 17<sup>th</sup> Street;
- Convert streets in the Downtown Core to two-way flow as directed by engineering study currently in process.

**INTERMEDIATE PRIORITY**

- Improve the southern end of 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue, known as Phase II of the 29<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> Avenue Grade Separation Project including constructing a second railroad overpass, replacement of the Sowashee Creek Bridge, and widening the street to four lanes to the Interstate;
- Extend 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue south from Windmill Drive to its intersection with the projection of 61<sup>st</sup> Court AND extend 61<sup>st</sup> Court east to Hwy 39;
- Extend Windmill Drive from 13<sup>th</sup> Place west to Old Poplar Springs Drive;
- Extend 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue from 52<sup>nd</sup> Street north to intersect with Highway 493; which will result in a major north-to-south route. It will be necessary to acquire property/homes in the Dogwood Hills Subdivision;

**LONG RANGE PRIORITY**

- Connect 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue and extend south from D Street across Sowashee Creek and connect to I-20.
- Extend 40<sup>th</sup> Street from Kings Road to Highway 19.
- Construct a new collector street connecting King Road with Chandler Road.

**TABLE VIII TRAFFIC VOLUME PROJECTIONS**

<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>**2015</b>
<b>NORTH HILLS ST. Kings Road. - 35th Ave.</b>	6,080	8,500	9,100	11,000	12,000
<b>NORTH HILLS ST. 35th Ave. - Poplar Springs Drive</b>	10,180	13,000	19,000	19,000	20,500
<b>NORTH HILLS ST. Poplar Springs Drive- MS HWY. 39 N.</b>	11,050	12,000	15,000	18,000	19,500
<b>40TH ST. 40th Ave. - Highland Ave.</b>	1,990	2,500	2,300	2,400	2,500
<b>40TH ST. Poplar Springs Drive - 23rd Ave.</b>	1,330	1,200	1,400	1,400	1,500
<b>20TH ST. MS HWY. 19 N. - College Dr.</b>	2,840	3,900	4,000	4,500	5,000
<b>20TH ST. College Dr. - State Blvd. Intersection</b>	4,940	7,600	7,500	6,600	7,100
<b>20TH ST. 41st Ave. - Royal Road</b>	6,160	*	7,200	7,900	8,500
<b>8TH ST. 45th Ave. - 39th Ave.</b>	12,200	21,000	16,000	18,000	19,500
<b>STATE BLVD. 30th St. - 33rd St.</b>	4,630	4,500	4,300	4,500	4,200
<b>POPLAR SPRINGS DR. 26th St. - 40th St.</b>	6,290	6,000	5,100	4,700	4,400
<b>23RD AVE. South of 20th St.</b>	10,060	*	10,000	12,000	13,000
<b>23RD AVE North of 20th St.</b>	6,470	7,600	7,800	7,700	8,200
<b>22ND AVE South of E St.</b>	13,040	16,000	15,000	19,000	20,500
<b>10TH AVE. 23rd St. - 33rd St.</b>	*	2,200	2,500	3,100	3,900
<b>MS HWY 493 Poplar Springs Drive - City Limits</b>	2,980	3,400	3,800	4,300	4,700
<b>MS HWY 39 N. North of US HWY. 145 Intersection</b>	13,410	16,000	19,000	21,000	23,000
<b>MS HWY 39 N. South of US HWY. 145 Intersection</b>	*	23,000	27,000	29,000	32,200
<b>US HWY. 145 N North of US HWY. 39 Intersection</b>	*	6,300	6,400	6,400	7,000
<b>MS HWY 145 S. (Roebuck Drive) I 20/59 - City Limits</b>	8,130	10,000	7,400	8,600	9,200
<b>U.S. HWYS. 11/80 North of MS HWY. 19 S. Intersection</b>	3,590	3,700	3,300	3,800	4,100
<b>MS HWY. 19 N. Old HWY. 80 - U.S. HWY. 11</b>	19,010	26,000	23,000	24,000	26,000
<b>MS HWY. 19 S. I 20/59 - City Limits</b>	9,370	9,600	12,000	14,000	15,000
<b>I 20/59 49th Ave. - 31st Ave.</b>	32,300	38,000	42,000	48,000	52,000
<b>I 20/59 31st Ave. - 22nd Ave.</b>	26,980	36,000	54,000	59,000	64,500
<b>I 20/59 22nd Ave. - MS HWY. 39 North</b>	28,810	48,000	39,000	43,000	56,500

Source: MDOT- traffic counts

\*No count taken \*\*CD:Planning-projections

**PART IV**

**COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN**

# COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN

## OVERVIEW

Community facilities are buildings, lands, equipment and services, which are owned and operated for the benefit of the community. Some of these services are essential to maintaining a healthy and safe community, while others are focused toward the cultural and educational aspects of a community. Often a community facilities plan is used as a basis for a capital improvements program. This plan will address Meridian's parks and recreational facilities, public schools, public buildings and facilities, water and wastewater utilities, garbage disposal, and police and fire protective services.

## PARKS AND RECREATION

Currently, Meridian has 20 parks and recreational areas/facilities that comprise 361.9 acres. Under development, the Bonita Lake Park will consist of an additional 1800 acres. Many of the existing parks are neighborhood facilities of five or fewer acres. Most parks include ball fields and other recreational facilities, which serve the needs of children, teens and adults. An 85-acre, 18-hole golf course is located in the southeastern most portion of Meridian, with the remaining facilities scattered throughout the City.

According to current standards for a City the size of Meridian, neighborhood park areas should be about 3.5 acres per 5,000 population. Meridian's current park system is close to these standards. Table IX lists all existing parks, acreage, facilities, programs and ages served under the jurisdiction of the Meridian Parks and Recreation Department. (*See attached map – pg. 65a, "Parks, Schools & Fire Stations" for locations.*)

### TABLE IX PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE MERIDIAN PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

1. MERIDIAN JAYCEE SOCCER COMPLEX  
(Leased from East Miss. State Hospital)  
LOCATION: West Meridian, Section 9, T6N-R15E on Old 8<sup>th</sup> Street Road  
ACREAGE: 25+ -  
FACILITIES: 13 soccer fields (2 lighted); multi-purpose storage/concession building; restrooms; and a 500-car parking area  
PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: Youth soccer leagues and/or special events  
AGE GROUPS SERVED: Children and pre-teens

2. JOHN MOSS FIELD  
LOCATION: West Central Meridian, Section 15, T6N-R15E access from Old 8<sup>th</sup> Street Road and 65<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
ACREAGE: 3.4  
FACILITIES: Fenced and lighted baseball field with associated facilities plus a seating capacity of 800 spectators  
PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: Baseball programs and tournaments; home field for the Meridian High School Baseball team (field is also used for Dixie Boys Baseball program)  
AGE GROUPS SERVED: 15-18
  
3. SAMMIE DAVIDSON COMPLEX  
(Leased from East Miss. State Hospital)  
LOCATION: West Central Meridian, Section 11, T6N-R15E, access from College Drive and 20<sup>th</sup> Street Extension  
ACREAGE: 19  
FACILITIES: Four (4) fenced and lighted softball fields with associated facilities and six (6) fenced and lighted tennis courts  
PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: Softball league programs and tournaments; tennis and tennis tournaments; walking/jogging  
AGE GROUPS SERVED: All
  
4. SKEWES PARK  
LOCATION: Southwest Meridian, Section 14, T6N-R15E, access from 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
ACREAGE: 2  
FACILITIES: Playground; picnic area; backstop and sandlot field  
PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: General recreation  
AGE GROUPS SERVED: Children and pre-teens
  
5. PHIL HARDIN PARK  
LOCATION: North Meridian, Section 36, T7N-R15E, access from 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Shumate Road

ACREAGE: 13

FACILITIES: Four (4) fenced and lighted baseball fields with associated facilities and one multi-purpose practice field

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: Boy's baseball league and baseball tournaments

AGE GROUPS SERVED: Ages 7-12

6. HIGHLAND PARK

LOCATION: Central Meridian, Section 12, T6N-R15E, access from State Boulevard, 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, 19<sup>th</sup> Street, 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and 17<sup>th</sup> Street

ACREAGE: 46

FACILITIES: 20,000 sq. ft. multi-purpose Frank Cochran Center; four (4) picnic shelters; picnic area; children's playground; four (4) fenced tennis courts; antique carousel; Kendallwood Craft Center; Jimmie Rodgers museum; multi-purpose practice field; swimming pools and bath house facilities; duck pond; Administration Building; and one (1) baseball field with associated facilities (Jimmie Rodgers museum and train to relocate to the REA building downtown)

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: Arts, crafts, and handicrafts programs at Kendallwood Craft Center; special handicapped programs (Camp High Hopes) such as music, games field trips, gymnastics, picnics, and therapeutic playground equipment; swimming and lifesaving instructional programs; special events; festivals

AGE GROUPS SERVED: All

7. SENIOR CITIZENS CENTER

LOCATION: Central Meridian, Section 1, T6N-R15E, 3300 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue

ACREAGE: 9

FACILITIES: Multi-purpose senior citizens center with conference and meeting rooms, kitchen facilities, concessions, billiards room, television and ceramic studio

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: Instructional programs in drawing, painting, ceramics, exercise, bridge, sewing, cross-stitch, knitting, tatting, calligraphy, aerobics, gymnastics, tumbling, cake decorating, and pool

AGE GROUPS SERVED: Senior Citizens

- 8. VELMA E. YOUNG PARK**  
LOCATION: East Central Meridian, Section 7, T6N-R16E, access from 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 26<sup>th</sup> Street  
ACREAGE: 15  
FACILITIES: Children's playground; two (2) lighted outdoor basketball courts; swimming pool; wading pool; bath house; multi-purpose community center with restrooms; ceramics center; 3 picnic shelters; and a multi-purpose practice field  
PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: Swimming instruction; public swimming; ceramics instructional program; aerobics and exercise programs; after school children's activities; and special events  
AGE GROUPS SERVED: All
- 9. BEN ARTHUR DAVIS PARK**  
LOCATION: Central Meridian, Section 17, T6N-R16E, access from 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 13<sup>th</sup> Street  
ACREAGE: 4  
FACILITIES: One basketball court  
PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: General recreation  
AGE GROUPS SERVED: Children and pre-teens
- 10. CRESTWOOD YOUTH ACTIVITIES COMPLEX**  
LOCATION: Southeast Meridian, Section 20, T6N-R16E, access from South Frontage Road  
ACREAGE: 3 + -  
FACILITIES: Two (2) fenced and lighted Little League baseball fields with associated facilities; a two-story multi-purpose building; walking track  
PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: Little League Baseball; T-ball  
AGE GROUPS SERVED: Children and pre-teens
- 11. BONITA LAKE PARK**  
LOCATION: Sections 15, 16, 21 AND 22, T6N-R16E, access by Highway 19 South and State Highway 45

ACREAGE: 1800+

FACILITIES: Contains an upper and lower lake for a combined area of 250 acres; boat launch; 16.6 miles of unimproved trails; 3.2 miles of improved trails; lighted 1.19 mile walking track around the lower lake; 2 pavilions; 2 grill areas; restroom facility; and an equestrian staging area

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: Fishing; boating on the upper lake; hiking; biking; equestrian; and jogging/walking

AGE GROUPS SERVED: All

**12. LAKEVIEW MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSE**

LOCATION: Eight miles southeast of Meridian, Section 25, T6N-R15E, access from Causeyville Road

ACREAGE: 85+

FACILITIES: 18 hole golf course and pro-shop with associated facilities

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: Golf; golf clinics; and golf tournaments

AGE GROUPS SERVED: School age to Senior Citizens

**13. NORTHEAST PARK**

LOCATION: Northeast Meridian, Section 7, T6N-R16E, Hwy. 39 and Newell Road – 7300 Newell Road

ACREAGE: 85

FACILITIES: Multi-use facility with meeting rooms, restrooms, concessions and storage; 4 lighted softball fields; ½ mile walking/running asphalt loop; 3-lighted soccer fields, concessions, restrooms; large picnic pavilion; full service tennis facility with 10 lighted and fenced courts, pro shop, concessions; and “Planet Playground”

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: Softball, soccer, and tennis, each with tournaments; and special events

AGE GROUPS SERVED: All

- 14.** DUMONT PLAZA  
LOCATION: Downtown Meridian, intersection of 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
ACREAGE: .5  
FACILITIES: Pavilion  
PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: General recreation  
AGE GROUPS SERVED: All
- 15.** MONUMENT PARK  
LOCATION: Downtown Meridian, intersection of 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
ACREAGE: .25  
FACILITIES: Benches  
PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: General recreation  
AGE GROUPS SERVED: All
- 16.** BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB  
LOCATION: West Central Meridian, Section 12, T6N-R15E, 1717 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
ACREAGE: 9  
FACILITIES: Multi-purpose community center with offices, conference room, 12 meeting rooms, restrooms, kitchen and dining facilities; gymnasium  
PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: After school children's activities and special events including character and leadership development, education and career development, health and life skills, arts, sports, fitness, swimming, bowling, workshops, and computer lab  
AGE GROUPS SERVED: 5-18
- 17.** PAULDING PICNIC PAVILION  
LOCATION: South Meridian, access from Paulding and Davis Streets  
ACREAGE: .5  
FACILITIES: Playground and pavilion  
PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: General recreation  
AGE GROUPS SERVED: All

**18. BEN CHANEY MEMORIAL PARK**

LOCATION: South Central Meridian, access from the intersection of Paulding and 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue

ACREAGE: 2

FACILITIES: 2 covered picnic tables; 2 sandlot baseball fields with backstops

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: General recreation

AGE GROUPS SERVED: All

**19. Q.V. SYKES MEMORIAL PARK**

LOCATION: Southwest Meridian, access from Q.V. Sykes Lane (a.k.a. Lover's Lane)

ACREAGE: 40+ -

FACILITIES: 3 large baseball fields with backstops

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: General recreation

AGE GROUPS SERVED: All

**20. SOUTHWEST BASKETBALL COURT**

LOCATION: Southwest Meridian, access from 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street

ACREAGE: .25

FACILITIES: Basketball court

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES: General recreation

AGE GROUPS SERVED: All

The overall goal of the City is to provide quality recreational facilities and programs with diversity and balance that are available to all City residents. This is accomplished by offering organized sports leagues for youth and adults, a wide variety of recreational and instructional classes at various centers and facilities, numerous special events and festivals, as well as passive leisure activities that enhance the quality of life for our residents.

At this time, Meridian has ample open space and recreation facilities to serve the public. However, demographic and economic changes will have a significant impact on the nature and type of need and demand for recreational facilities and programs in the near future. With projected increases in the numbers of middle-aged and senior citizens, a national emphasis on physical fitness, and an increasing amount of leisure time, Meridian's Parks and Recreation Department has begun to feel the demand for additional facilities and services such as: an indoor recreational facility for such activities as swimming, exercise, and sports leagues currently being conducted in various school gymnasiums, additional neighborhood parks in newer subdivisions, relocation of one or more older parks and sports

complexes that have outlived their usefulness, additional programs and classes offered to our senior citizens, and a complete renovation of several facilities that need to be modernized and updated. The City's public golf course must be renovated in the near future to keep up with the demand and high traffic that uses the course on a daily basis.

## **PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*(See map on page 66a, "Parks, Schools & Fire Stations" for locations.)*

The Meridian public school system consists of thirteen school campuses, with a combined 2008 enrollment of approximately 6,612 students. Of these facilities, eight are elementary schools, two are middle schools, two are junior high schools and one is a high school. A vocational school is located near the high school campus. Post-secondary education is available from the Meridian Community College, the Meridian branch of Mississippi State University, and the University of Southern Mississippi's Meridian Nursing Program. Additionally, several parochial and private schools are also located in Meridian.

Six other schools have been closed in recent years due to dwindling school enrollment within the City. Most of these facilities are occupied, but a few remain vacant. Uses of the former schools include a homeless shelter, elderly apartments, offices for community services and other public agencies. With the anticipated move of the ninth grade classes to the high school campus in 2009 will come another vacancy as Kate Griffin Junior High will be closed. Finding and adaptive reuse for this and other former schools should be a land use priority over the next ten years.

## **PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES**

*(See map on page 66b, "Other Public Facilities.")*

Public facilities include City Hall, the Public Works Complex, one Police Station—including three satellite locations, eight Fire Stations, an Airport, Housing Authority offices facilities and residences and the Transit System Office.

The Union Station Multi-Modal Transportation Center, tower and station, currently houses Amtrak, Greyhound, Norfolk Southern, and East Mississippi Business Development Corporation, The 1906 Mission Revival Style Railway Express Agency (REA) building, listed as a Meridian Historic Landmark, State of Mississippi Landmark, and a contributing element to the National Register of Historic Places Depot District ('79), located adjacent to the Multi-Modal Station, has been rehabilitated on the exterior with further rehabilitation planned.

The City of Meridian entered into an interlocal agreement with Lauderdale County to build a 91,250 sq. ft. multi-purpose Livestock Arena on 21.27 acres at the southwest intersection of Highway 19 and 45. Meridian is the County seat of Lauderdale County. The County Courthouse and the Courthouse Annex, located within the City, house many County offices. State agencies are located throughout the City. The Federal Building houses the main Post Office as well as the Federal Agency Offices.

Meridian has one art museum and one public library, both located in the downtown area. The Meridian Museum of Art is located in a former Carnegie Library building. Cultural facilities such as theaters, museums and libraries are adequate for the present time, but changes in population and age distribution may result in a need for expanded facilities.

## **WATER AND SEWER FACILITIES**

Sanitary Sewer Facilities: The City's Sanitary Sewer Treatment Facility utilizes mechanical treatment with an activated sludge primary treatment plant and 2-stage denitrification secondary treatment plant. This facility's two plants have a combined capacity of 13 MGD (million gallons per day), and are located on U. S. Highway 11 South. The treatment facility utilizes a newly renovated aeration system and sludge press and upgrading plans include the replacement of screw pumps. The City's sewer system contains 420 miles of sanitary sewer collection lines and 56 lift stations. Additionally, the City provides sanitary sewer service to Meridian Naval Air Station. This new sewer service is pressurized and consists of 78,820 linear feet of 16" force main and a new treatment plant in east Meridian with a 1.5 MGD capacity.

Two other additions to the City's Wastewater Treatment Facility includes sanitary sewer for the City's 1996 annexation that includes the proposed new industrial park, extensions along Bonita Drive, 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue East and Sweetgum Bottom Road. Finally, sanitary sewer service to the East Mississippi Regional Correctional Facility at Lost Gap was completed some time ago.

The City of Meridian currently treats the Town of Marion's wastewater in the amount of approximately 128 MG annually. Based on the results of a recent legal action, the City may be receiving compensation for this service soon.

Water facilities: The City operates an eight (8) deep well system with emergency water back up from Bonita Lakes. The system utilizes two treatment facilities: the B Street Water Treatment Plant with a 9.2 MGD capacity that utilizes five (5) wells and the North Meridian Water Treatment Plant which has a 6.6 MGD capacity and utilizes three (3) wells. The system contains 420 miles of water lines. Water storage facilities include the Mt. Barton storage tank that has a 5 MG capacity and two recently completed elevated storage tanks, Fire Tower Road storage tank with a 2 MG tank and North Meridian storage tank, with a 1 MG capacity. Recent improvements to the water system include a ½ MG clear well, a new chlorination system and new lime and alum system for the B Street Treatment Plant. Additionally, extensions into several new residential and commercial developments, as well as, areas annexed since 1992 have occurred.

## **SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL**

Waste Management provides solid waste disposal, and garbage and trash collection, which includes a recycling program. The City of Meridian entered into a contract agreement with Waste Management on April 3, 1990 for disposal services and on December 15, 1992 for collection services. The City of Meridian has a contract coordinator or a liaison to confer with Waste Management. Presently, 12,448 households and 2,000 small commercial clients are provided curbside pick-up twice weekly. The City imposes regulations on Waste Management to ensure quality service for the citizens of Meridian.

## **POLICE PROTECTION**

As of December 2002, the City of Meridian has approximately 102 sworn police officers. The City's officer to population ratio is 2.55 officers to 1,000 people. This ratio favorably reflects the comprehensive protection the City enjoys. To provide efficient service, the police department is comprised of specialized units to combat specific problems as they occur. Examples of specialized units are: the K-9 unit, narcotics, drug awareness & resistance education (D.A.R.E.), directed area response team (D.A.R.T.), advanced accident investigative team (A.A.I.), and bike patrol. The City no longer maintains a jail and all detainees are now housed at the Lauderdale County Detention Facility. The police department has one main office at 2415 6<sup>th</sup> Street and three satellite offices: 1) an east precinct-at 2213 Hwy. 39 North, 2) a west precinct-at 806 Hwy. 19 North, and 3) a mall precinct-in Bonita Lakes mall at 1000 Bonita Lakes Circle. A new security facility proposed for the 2400 block of 7<sup>th</sup> Street is under design and planned for construction in 2010-2012.

## **FIRE PROTECTION**

The fire department provides a variety of services including fire suppression, fire code inspection, fire investigation, fire prevention education, and Countywide rescue. The City is served by 110 fulltime firefighters working at seven stations located as shown on the map of *Parks, Schools & Fire Stations* at the end of this Part. Since 1998, the Mississippi Rating Bureau designated Meridian as a class 4 community. The fire department answers 3,200 calls per year.

## **HOUSING**

Although not completely made up of "community facilities" by definition, Meridian's housing component is important to this plan. Much of what would normally be included in the housing plan part of a comprehensive plan is included in either Part I.-Goals, or Part II- Land Use. See *Goals, Objectives and Policies* pages 15-19 for overall residential goals and *Land Use Plan* pages 34 and 39-41 for residential use goals. According to 2000 census data, Meridian had 17,890 housing units: 8,984 owner occupied, 6,982 renter occupied, and 1,924 vacant. This includes both privately and publically owned units. Approximately 10% of these units are publically owned, operated and maintained through the Meridian Housing Authority a sub-unit of City government. Over the past ten years the MHA has carried out an aggressive program of rehabilitation and/or rebuilding the oldest of these units. On the private side, many housing units suffer generally from old age, lack of maintenance, and abandonment. The construction of new units has not kept pace with the demolition of older units during this period. Approximately 90 residential demolition permits per year have been issued whereas; only about 33 new housing permits are issued per year over the decade.

## **CONCLUSION**

Implemented by the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, various land use ordinances, building codes, and a capital improvements program, the *Comprehensive Plan* will serve as a guide for the physical and economic development of Meridian. The goals put forth in this plan are designed as strategies for the long-term planned growth of the City. Meridian recognizes that in order to meet both present and future needs and in order to experience economic and physical growth, comprehensive planning is essential. It is for these reasons that the Meridian Comprehensive Plan has been developed.

## APPENDIX A-GLOSSARY

Adaptive Reuse – The development of a new use for an older building or for a building originally designed for a special or specific purpose.

Architecturally or Historically Significant Places – Sites or structures which possess characteristics associated with a particular period, a particular style of design or construction, or which are associated with an important person or event in history.

Buffer Area or Yard - A strip of land, identified on a site plan or by a Zoning Ordinance, established to protect one type of land use from another land use that is incompatible. Normally the area is landscaped and kept in open space.

Capital Improvement Program (C.I.P.) – The long-range schedule of government projects, prepared annually, with estimated costs.

Cluster Development – A type of development in which structures are arranged in closely related groups, so that higher densities may be achieved in certain areas, preserving natural features or open space in other areas.

Collector Street – Larger streets in neighborhoods, which carry residential traffic from these areas to major streets.

Conditional Zoning – The process whereby property can be rezoned a particular zoning district classification, with conditions or limitations on the uses permitted.

Curb Cuts – The opening along the curb line at which point vehicles may enter or leave the roadway.

Floodplain – Any land area susceptible to being inundated by water from any source.

Floodplain Management Plan – The plan by which provisions of the Flood Ordinance are managed.

High Density Residential – Residential areas having a minimum gross density of over six dwelling units per acre.

Infill – Development which occurs on vacant land in urbanized areas.

Infrastructure – The basic public facilities and services, which allow development to occur, such as utilities and streets.

Land Use – The function that occurs on a particular piece of property, such as residential, commercial or industrial activities.

Leapfrog Development – The development of relatively cheap land on the urban fringe by jumping over the more expensive land located immediately adjacent to existing development.

Low Density Residential – Residential area having a gross density of 6 units per acre or less.

Main Street Program – A program developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to revitalize downtown areas.

Major Street – An arterial or Collector Street.

Mixed-Uses – Compatible placement or integration of two or more distinct land uses, within close proximity or different uses within the same structure.

Mixed-Use District – Designated areas, along transit ways or at interstate interchanges, to be developed or redeveloped with a variety of compatible high intensity uses, subject to performance standards. Existing areas of mixed-use in appropriate locations are indicated on the Existing Land Use Map. Additional mixed-use districts will be designated in District Plans.

National Flood Insurance Program – A federal program to make flood insurance from private companies affordable to individuals in participating communities. Participation requires the local government to prohibit flood-retarding structures in the designated floodway and to require flood protection (filling, elevation, flood proofing) for structures in the designated flood fringe area.

Nuisance – An interference with the enjoyment and use of property, endangers personal health or safety, or is offensive to the senses.

Open Space – Any parcel or area of land or water essentially unimproved and set aside, dedicated, designated, or reserved for public or private use or enjoyment, or for the use and enjoyment of owners and occupants of land adjoining or neighboring such open space.

Overlay zone – A set of zoning requirements that is described in the ordinance text, is mapped, and is imposed in addition to those of the underlying district. Developments within the overlay zone must conform to the requirements of both zones or the more restrictive of the two.

Planned Development or Planned Unit Development – Development process that allows

flexibility in site design and is intended to encourage the clustering of structures, mixed housing types and land uses, and the preservation of natural features and open space.

Planning Areas - Areas studied for annexation outside existing corporate limits, located along paths of growth.

Public Services and Facilities – Those services and facilities normally provided by the government, such as sewers, streets, libraries and fire protection.

Right-of-way – A strip of land acquired by reservation, dedication, forced dedication, prescription or condemnation and intended to be occupied or occupied by a road, cross-walk, railroad, electric transmission lines, oil or gas pipeline, water line, sanitary storm sewer and other similar uses. Generally, it is the right of one to pass over the property of another.

Road Capacity – The amount of traffic that a road is designed to carry safely, measured in vehicles per hour or day.

Runoff – The portion of rainfall that flows over a land surface into a stream instead of soaking into the ground.

Sedimentation – The process of eroded material settling into a stream channel or lake bottom.

Service Road or Street – A street running parallel to a freeway, expressway or arterial and serving abutting properties.

Setback – The minimum required distance between a structure and property lines.

Site Plan Review – The process whereby local officials, usually the planning commission and staff, review the site plans of a developer to assure that they meet the stated purposes and standards of the zone, provide for the necessary public facilities such as roads and schools, and protect and preserve topographical features and adjacent properties through appropriate citing of structures and landscaping. The process often allows considerable discretion to be exercised by local officials since it may deal with hard to define aesthetic and design considerations.

Special Use – A use that would not be appropriate generally or without restriction throughout the zoning district, unless controlled as to number, area, location, screening, or relation to the neighborhood. Special uses require a special use permit.

Strip Commercial Development – Commercial land use, usually along major roads, which has developed without coordination, on a lot-by-lot basis and is characterized by frequent curb cuts, a complete automobile orientation, hazardous turning movements and confusing signage.

Substandard Housing – Housing which has one or more significant violations of building, housing or health codes.

Swale – A shallow, gently sloping drainage way intended to carry runoff only during and immediately after a rainfall.

Transitional Areas – An area that is in the process of changing from one type of use (usually residential) to another (usually commercial). Transitional also refers to uses and structures permitted under the Zoning Ordinance, which, by their nature or level and scale of activity, act as a transition or buffer between two or more incompatible uses, e.g., where commercial uses are adjacent to residential neighborhoods.

Underutilized Facility – A public facility, which is not being used to the capacity for which it was constructed.

Urban Sprawl – The outward expansion of urban development at very low overall densities and in a frequently noncontiguous pattern.

Zoning – Local regulations, enforced by police power, which divide the City into districts and specify the allowed use, height and bulk of buildings, density and open space, for the purpose of promoting health, safety, morals, and the general welfare of the community.

## APPENDIX B- BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. *City of Meridian, Mississippi Comprehensive Plan 1992.*
2. *2001 Woods & Poole Economics, Inc.*– Lauderdale County, Mississippi: pg. 71-72.