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Purpose of the Long Range Development Plan

A plan is a policy framework, or a roadmap, that affects the decision making direction regarding the physical, social and economic environments of a city. The Dothan 2030 Plan contains goals and strategies for steering the City of Dothan's policy and decision making over the next 20 years. While the Plan provides a roadmap, continued vigilance to changing needs requires that the Plan be revisited and updated on a regular basis.

Dothan's Long Range Development Plan will define goals and strategies necessary for land use; community appearance and design; housing and neighborhoods; jobs and economic vitality; transportation; public services and facilities; natural resource protection; open space and recreation; history, arts and culture; and regional participation.

The Long Range Development Plan is intended to be used as a tool by for the staff to make recommendations to the Planning Commission as well as the City Commission in areas such as proposals for annexations, considerations of regulatory amendments or other changes, or policy changes. The Planning Commission and the City Commission should use this Plan as a tool in their evaluation of proposals brought before them.

THE LONG RANGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

What it is	What it isn't
➢ A statement of City policy	➢ A Zoning Ordinance
➢ A guide to decision making	➢ A Land Development Code
➢ A framework for more specific planning	➢ A rigid or static document
➢ A tool for education and communication	➢ A Capital Improvements Plan
➢ A view in long range perspective	➢ A City Budget template
➢ A way to improve quality of life	➢ A specific project development plan

The Plan should be made readily available to the public so that they might understand the long range goals and objectives of the City. It will also provide a basis for various City-level development regulations and ordinances as well as the foundation for proposed capital improvement or Community Development Block Grant projects.

Legal Foundation

The State of Alabama Statutes state 'any municipality is hereby authorized and empowered to make, adopt, amend, extend, add to, or carry out a municipal plan as provided in this article and to create by ordinance a planning commission with the powers and duties herein set forth.' (Title 11, Section 11-52-2). Furthermore, the Statutes state (Title 11, Section 11-52-8) 'It shall be the function and duty of the commission to make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality, including any areas outside of its boundaries which, in the commission's judgment, bear relation to the planning of such municipality.'

Title 11, Section 11-52-9 defines the conduct of surveys and studies; purpose of the plan. 'In the preparation of such plans the commission shall make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of present conditions and future growth of the municipality with regard to its relation to neighboring territory.' It goes on in this section to define the plan's general purpose as 'guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the municipality and its environs…'

The procedure for its adoption is outlined within Title 11, Section 11-52-10 of the Statutes.

Logical Foundation

No one and no business would prosper without an understanding of where they are at a point in time, what their goals and objectives are, and a plan for the accomplishment of those goals and objectives. Likewise, no municipality would be able to respond to quality of life issues or matters of health and safety of its citizens without a plan identifying community goals and objectives and mapping out a way to achieve them.

Title 11, Section 11-52-9 requires that a municipality establish studies that define present conditions. Not withstanding the statute, it would be irresponsible for a person, business or municipality to not first understand its current conditions, assets and weaknesses, opportunities and constraints as a benchmark from which to plan an improved future.

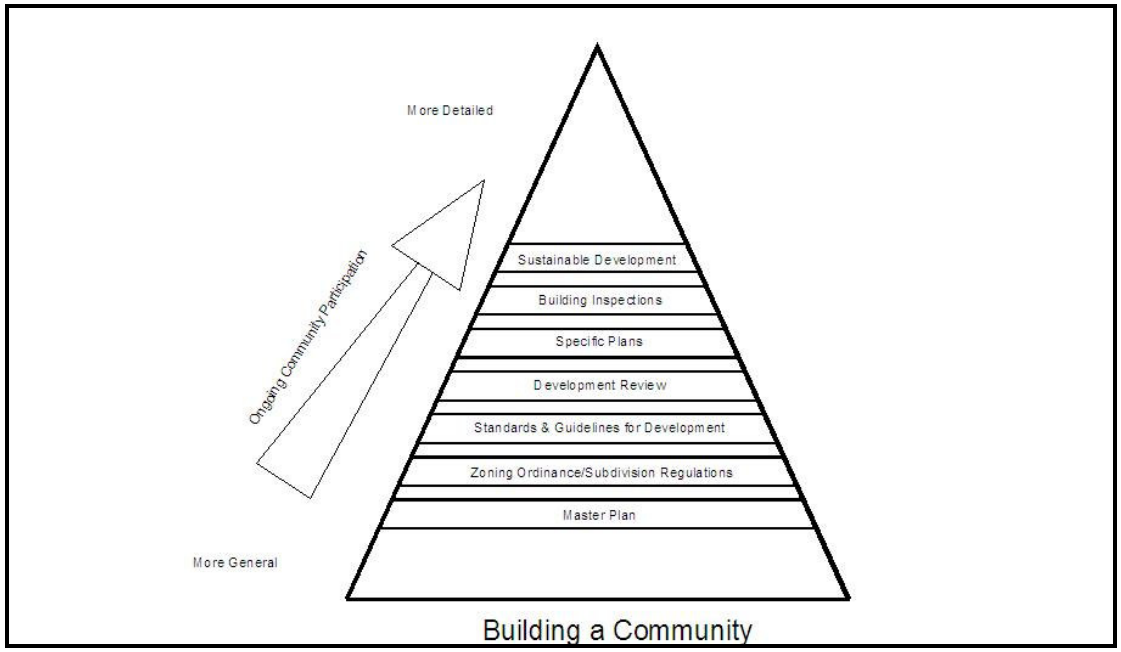
Dothan 2030 is such a plan that considers where we are, where we've been and where we want to be. Its adoption and implementation will chart a reasonable course for the development of the City as well as its environs.

The Long Range Development Plan should be used in conjunction with development regulations, construction documents and programs that together form the development process. The following illustration shows the relationship between each element in the process. At the base of the pyramid is the long range plan followed by layers of other procedures, documents and programs (public and private) that derive their existence and purpose from the overall goal of the plan; sustainable development. The arrow on the left indicates the continued community involvement throughout the planning process through public hearings as well as other forums and venues.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come. The most often quoted definition of sustainable development is "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

Sustainable development ties together concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems to support the man-made environment to the social challenges facing humanity. As early as the 1970s "sustainability" was employed to describe an economy "in equilibrium with basic ecological support systems." Ecologists have pointed to The Limits to Growth, and presented the alternative of a "steady state economy" in order to address environmental concerns.



Sustainable development can be conceptually broken into three constituent parts: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and socio-political sustainability. Applied to this long range planning effort, the overall goal then is to promote development in the community in a manner that does not outstrip the resources available to build it, whether they are environmental, economic or socio-political.

Land Development Process

The Long Range Development Plan establishes the foundation and framework for decisions, the Land Development Code is one of the tools that can be used to implement the goals and bring the strategies to reality. The Land Development Code is comprised of the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations which together, specify the development plan review process. These legal documents are employed to facilitate the goals and strategies identified and outlined in the Plan.

Standards and Guidelines for Development

The typical Development Code contains documents which define and regulate architectural and site design standards unique to specific areas of Dothan or specific kinds of development. Many of the documents currently used in Dothan are already in existence and will require rewriting to include new thoughts, concepts and processes to produce better development. The City should not delay beginning this process as soon as possible.

Capital Improvements Plan

The Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) is typically organized in five-year increments and serves as the link between the goals and objectives of the Long Range Development Plan and the City's annual budget. Typically, the CIP is the outline or schedule of capital improvements to the City infrastructure or other assets and may include items such as:

- Major roads;
- Bridges;
- Large park projects; and
- Government buildings and/or facilities.

The CIP attempts to balance the City's needs with a modicum of fiscal responsibility and constraint.

Specific Plans

Specific plans are often produced to evaluate and recommend actions to address a single topic. They can take the form of a single document on a discrete topic (open space plan, parks and recreation plan, etc.) or can be a series of plans similarly constructed but applied to different geographies (Neighborhood Plans).

The City has a concerted history of developing and implementing these kinds of plans. Three of the most notable of these plans is the Master Plan for Parks and Recreation (2006), The Beaver Creek Drainage Basin Study (2007) and the Long Range Plan for the Dothan Water System (2001). These plans are not part of this document and are available separately.

Adoption

To be adopted, the LRDP must go through a formal public hearing process. The LRDP will be reviewed and adopted by resolution by the Planning Commission. The resolution will then be presented to the City Commission during a regularly-scheduled meeting, along with the LRDP document, for ratification by the City Commission. Certain components of the

LRDP such as a Major Arterial and Collector Plan and any other ordinances or amendments to existing ordinances developed as a result of the LRDP process must receive City Commission approval to become effective.

The natural tendency is to presume that the LRDP or any other Plan as adopted will be applied in its entirety with minimal changes throughout the course of its scheduled timeframe. Such a rigid interpretation and application would not be responsive to the natural changes in market conditions as well as any unforeseen opportunities that may arise. Making long range decisions means that issues need to be periodically readdressed to reflect new or emerging circumstances. Each succeeding Planning Commission and City Commission may choose to revisit the Plan and reconsider any previous long range policy decisions and could then elect to modify the LRDP, but a concerted effort should be made to thoroughly evaluate the Plan at least once every five years.

This LRDP is designed to be a broad and flexible document that changes in response to the community's needs, conditions and directions of change. The Long Range Development Plan was formulated and adopted with full consideration of the character of the City as well as the balance of its land uses.