

Rutherford County's Vision for the Future

Rutherford County is a special place. Set amidst a location with beauty, abundant natural resources and a rich history, the county joins its people and the land in a way that makes it unique within Middle Tennessee. Recognition of this uniqueness is the reason why this Comprehensive Plan has been prepared. County citizens and political leadership have set out a path to retain and enhance the values, culture, landscape and opportunities that define Rutherford County. The way forward begins with the common purpose and shared understanding of our desired future. This is the vision statement that lays the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Values Statement

Rutherford County is a unique place in Middle Tennessee. Our values reflect who we are and what we believe in. These values and beliefs will guide our actions as we pursue our goals and aspirations. We are committed to maintaining the best qualities of Rutherford County for future generations while we recognize the inherent rights of current property owners and we will wisely manage our resources to achieve our goals.

Our land is our most precious resource. It defines who we are and is the driving force in the shape and character of our many communities. Our communities are set amid compelling historic and scenic resources. Our pastures, streams, forests and caves add beauty and economic value to our communities. Our sense of place is defined by our resources, and we will administer responsible policies to protect and enhance our resources.

Growth that is consistent with our stated values is critical to our future and our economic prosperity. Development in Rutherford County will be guided to suitable areas where services can be efficiently provided. We will support growth that is sustainable, provides employment opportunities and economic stability, and reflects the character and scale of our communities. We are committed to a responsive local government, transparent decision making and an engaged citizenry.

Writing a vision statement is a key milestone in development of the Comprehensive Plan. Both the process of developing the vision statement and the statement that has been created through a collaborative process are valuable steps. In developing the vision statement, the community has identified the values of Rutherford County and strives to articulate them in clear, understandable language. Our vision statement will describe what we believe is important; what should remain unchanged and what should change; and how we will collectively pursue our vision.

Vision Statement

Rutherford County seeks sustainable growth that protects our natural and historic resources, while preserving our values, qualities and culture.

Rutherford County's Vision for the Future is the product of an extensive outreach and public engagement process. County citizens have participated in a variety of ways to inform the visioning process. Public engagement was initiated with media outreach to inform citizens of the upcoming planning process and informing them how and when they might become engaged in the process. Key stakeholders were interviewed to better understand their views and needs. Open houses at four geographically dispersed locations were held to provide citizens a time and place to make comments and insights on issues and opportunities facing the county. Throughout the planning process, activities and materials were routinely posted on the county website and opinion surveys were completed both on-line and at various public meetings. A blog was initiated and updated to facilitate sharing of views and opinions.

Public civic engagement uncovered divergent opinions and beliefs on what the way forward for Rutherford County should be – and we believe these differences should be valued and respected. More importantly, the process revealed a deep appreciation of what Rutherford County embodies in its communities of distinction and strong agreement of what goals and values county residents hold dear. These are articulated in the Vision Statement. The Vision Statement and related strategies will be reviewed by the public and the Steering Committee and then forwarded to the County Commission for review and adoption. When adopted, the Vision, Principles and Strategies will be the guiding framework for the Comprehensive Plan.

Goals and Objectives

Ensure growth policies that recognize land is a limited resource and that growth should occur where suitable land use and public services can be economically provided:

- Revise the county's growth management tools, including zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations;
- Guide development to create commercial and residential nodes rather than residential sprawl;
- Analyze cost, benefit and policy implications of development impact fees;
- Discourage development in areas with marginal soils, inadequate public services or inadequate transportation;
- Maintain the traditional rural character of Rutherford County and guide development to areas identified as suitable for higher densities;
- Work with the School Board to locate new schools closer to existing and planned housing;
- Where feasible, locate new community services and facilities, such as recreational facilities, in concert with school sites to create anchors and connections for new and existing communities; and
- Establish growth and development policies that respect individual property owner's rights while seeking consensus on future development goals.

Cultivate an environment attractive to new business investment and retention and expansion of existing businesses:

- Adopt economic development policies that contribute to broader county goals of economic stability, resource protection and that define and encourage a high quality of life;



- Coordinate with the Chamber of Commerce to ensure appropriate land and resources for recruitment and retention of businesses;
- Cooperate with adjacent jurisdictions in securing land, access to transportation and infrastructure to attract employers;
- Provide good schools, community facilities, housing choices and a high quality of life to attract employers;
- Build on the excellent reputation of Rutherford County Schools and partner with Middle Tennessee State University to identify skill sets for existing and emerging job markets that create

employment opportunities within the County;

- Designate and reserve optimal employment areas from inappropriate development using the comprehensive plan; and
- Adopt appropriate design standards for commercial, office and related uses to promote attractive, functional and sustainable development.

Goals and Objectives

Strengthen rural communities:

- Recognize the history and importance of rural communities in planning and zoning documents;
- Adopt zoning and development controls requirements, via overlay districts, to encourage redevelopment of rural communities; and
- Minimize sprawl adjacent rural communities that effectively diminishes their intactness and the entryway experience.

Protect and enhance open spaces in a connected network of parks, trees and stream corridors in creating a healthy environment:

- Investigate the feasibility of establishing a county land trust;
- Encourage dedication of conservation easements for irreplaceable resources;
- Develop a pilot scenic corridor management plan on one or more high quality corridors; and
- Integrate county greenways into a consolidated Murfreesboro and Rutherford County system.

Provide neighborhoods that create a sense of community and connectedness

- Provide on and off street bike and pedestrian connections between development areas;
- Discourage development that functions to create isolated islands in the rural landscape;
- Allow for a mixture of uses that compliments existing and planned community character; and
- Encourage land to be reserved for schools within or adjacent to subdivisions in high growth areas.

Conserve and enhance significant natural landscapes and historic and cultural resources:

- Adopt guidelines for identification, evaluation and protection of irreplaceable resources as part of the land development process;
- Create an overlay district to protect sensitive natural areas from development;
- Create a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program; and
- Adopt "right to farm" protection in development regulations.



Goals and Objectives

Provide transportation options:

- Expand the non-motorized transportation routes in all county municipalities and other parts of the county;
- Participate in efforts to evaluate commuter rail between the county and downtown Nashville;
- Expand bus service to population centers within the county;
- Continue to administer policies to ensure adequate right-of-way is dedicated when development takes place adjacent routes to be upgraded;
- Review right-of-way policies to facilitate all appropriate modes of transportation;
- Limit development along roads with an inadequate level of service until funds or improvements to roads are in place; and
- Select major transportation corridors for development as Gateway Districts into communities.



Provide infrastructure that efficiently delivers necessary service in designated growth areas:

- Adopt facility service requirements to apportion the cost of growth appropriately;
- Investigate feasibility of establishing county-wide sanitary sewer system;
- Implement water-saving requirements in zoning and building codes; and
- Review the use of on-site sanitary systems such as STEP systems to ensure their use in appropriate locations for the type and density of development supported.

Maintain and enhance community and regional partnerships:

- Formalize cooperative land use and development planning discussions with county municipalities;
- Seek opportunities to consolidate services through intergovernmental agreements;

Goals and Objectives

- Seek a more collaborative working relationship between the School Board and the County Commission, and other municipalities; and
- Collaborate with county municipalities in planning for development within urban growth boundaries.

Ensure county development-decision making is transparent, fair and accountable to residents and taxpayers:

- Expand use of internet-based tools for robust civic engagement; and
- Establish continuing education for Planning Commission members, Board of Zoning Appeals members, and County Commissioners.