

## Section 7 Future Land Use

### 7.1 Introduction

The Mid-American Regional Council<sup>1</sup> considers the City of Merriam to be an inner ring suburban community. In other words, Merriam has been surrounded by other suburban cities that prevent growth from occurring by outward expansion. What does this mean from a long-range land use perspective? In the short-term, few major changes in the land use pattern are expected. This is because few undeveloped parcels exist and, in general, established commercial and residential areas exhibit economic and physical stability.

Yet, economic, technological, social, and demographic shifts during the next decade and beyond will bring changes to Merriam. One of the keys to Merriam's future is how it responds to these changes. Section 2 Planning Framework acts as a guide to offer insight and direction in how to plan future development. This section, which identifies the future land use pattern for Merriam, should be used in conjunction with the planning framework set forth in Section 2.

In addition to the future land use map, this section contains a set of land use planning principles and policies. These principles and policies are intended to guide local land use decision making, along with the future land use map. The future land use opportunities are included to identify locations in Merriam where the potential exists for infill development during the life of the plan.

<sup>1</sup> *Metropolitan Kansas City's Urban Core, A Report of the Urban Core Growth Strategies Committee, Mid-America Regional Council, 1993.*

### 7.2 Future Land Use Planning Principles

The following land use planning principles identify the basic development standards guiding the future evolution of Merriam. These principles clarify the desired outcome being sought in the future land use plan. When making local decisions about land use or issues affecting a neighborhood or commercial corridor, these principles should be considered in conjunction with the future land use map, development policies, and planning principles in Section 2.

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- Establish a land use pattern that maintains and supports the stability of existing residential neighborhoods.
- Support commercial, office, and industrial land use mix to provide a diversified tax base.
- Construct new, as well as maintain existing, local infrastructure to prevent community or neighborhood decline.
- Improve traffic flow along major transportation corridors, including greater reliance on public transportation.
- Promote innovative planning concepts or land use regulations to create new housing opportunities that promote efficient use of land and meet the needs of a changing population.
- Encourage reinvestment in older commercial or residential areas based on a strategy of mixed use, human-scale design, pedestrian-movement, and compatible architecture.

### **7.3 Future Land Use Development Policies**

The following policies are provided to assist in future land use development issues. These are to be used in conjunction with the Future Land Use Planning Principles in Section 7.2 and with Section 2 The Planning Framework.

- Residential neighborhoods should be protected from the encroachment of incompatible activities or land uses which may have a negative impact on the residential living environment.
- Commercial—retail/office uses may be located within a residential neighborhood, provided design and functional standards are applied to ensure compatibility.
- Higher residential densities should be distributed throughout the community. Locations near commercial and office centers, employment centers, and along public transit routes are preferable for higher density housing.
- Infill residential development should be encouraged, including introducing mixed-densities or different housing products, provided factors such as neighborhood character, compatibility of nearby land uses and impacts on livability, impacts on services and facilities, and impacts on traffic levels on local, collector, and arterial streets are evaluated.
- Encourage new commercial uses to locate in existing or new shopping centers or in established commercial corridors/nodes. Isolated spot commercial development should be discouraged.
- Encourage new commercial uses/buildings to adhere to “community or commercial

design guidelines” to ensure compatibility with surrounding uses.

## 7.4 Future Land Use Plan Categories

### Low Density Residential

- Single family structures and duplexes.
- 4 dwelling units per acre
- Other examples of low density residential include accessory units, zero-lot line housing and patio homes.

### Moderate-High Density Residential

- Triplex, fourplex, condominium, townhouse
- Mobile home or mobile home park
- Apartments
- Net Density of 14 to 43 dwelling units per acre.

### Commercial—Retail/Office

- Offices, personal services
- Medical clinics
- Retail stores, shopping centers
- Automobile dealerships
- Restaurants, bars, night clubs, dinner theaters
- Banks, financial institutions

- Hotels, motels
- Building supply, garden centers
- Warehouse, storage
- Entertainment facilities, theaters

### Light Industrial

- Industrial
- Manufacturing
- Warehousing
- Automobile Service & Repair

### Public, Quasi-Public, & Institutional

- Government offices and facilities
- Hospitals, nursing homes
- Cemetery
- Day care centers
- Schools
- Places of worship, community organizations
- Social services
- Cultural facilities, museums, libraries

### Parks and Open Space

- Parks, recreational facilities

## Interpretation of Land Uses Categories

The intent of this section is to clarify how specific land use categories of the future land use map are to be interpreted, both for planning and rezoning purposes. Low density residential is intended to include a range of housing opportunities and not be restricted to detached single family dwelling structures. Low density residential, as depicted on the future land use plan, can include duplex structures, accessory units or granny flats, patio homes, zero-lot line housing, or other housing products seeking to respond to the needs of a changing population. Likewise, the future land use plan uses a commercial—retail/office category to describe a range of general commercial activities. Merriam has a variety of residential and commercial zoning districts and each district is crafted to meet specific circumstances and planning purposes. The Planning Staff and Planning Commission shall judge each rezoning application to determine the zoning classification that they believe is best suited, based on the nearby existing and planned development.

## **7.5 Future Land Use Plan**

### **Introduction**

There are two major land use planning issues which will face Merriam during the life of this plan. The first issue is maintaining the strength of existing residential neighborhoods and commercial activities. With the continued outward growth of Johnson County to the west and south, it is important that Merriam retains its ability to attract homeowners to its housing market and businesses to its commercial centers and corridors. The second major issue is allowing successful regeneration of established neighborhoods or commercial centers to respond to new housing needs, changing lifestyles, and shifting demographic/shopping patterns.

Presented below is a brief overview of land use issues that are intended to provide an explanation of how Merriam can plan for the regeneration of established neighborhoods and commercial centers or corridors.

### **Infill Development and Mixed Use**

There are certain areas within Merriam that offer an opportunity to create or recreate a unique living or working environment. A complete overview on infill sites is presented in the section "Future Land Use Opportunities". The term urban village was advanced in Section 2 to promote the concept that a variety of innovative, mixed land uses or a mix of different housing products should be encouraged. The intent is to accommodate infill development on vacant sites and redevelopment of existing neighborhoods or shopping centers so that Merriam's future neighborhoods contain compact, mixed-use development connected by safe, convenient, interesting network of streets, sidewalks and trails.

The goal is to create neighborhoods of cohesive and interactive land uses where people can safely walk to a nearby school, shopping center, park, or civic uses. Another goal is to encourage varying housing types and densities within a neighborhood to allow young, old, singles, and families, and those of varying economic ability to remain or move to Merriam.

Since the physical layout of streets and land uses throughout Merriam is already established, the challenge lies in retrofitting established areas and blending new development into a cohesive and connected urban fabric. This is why it is recommended to prepare design principles to offer a comprehensive set of guidelines addressing human-scale design, architectural compatibility, pedestrian paths and sidewalks, and other elements to contribute to creating cohesive neighborhoods or urban villages.

### **Downtown Districts and Improvements**

Extensive analysis and planning by the Downtown Merriam Partnership, HyettPalma, and PGAV has identified strategies to revitalize Downtown Merriam and Merriam Drive. The recommendations presented in these previous studies have been incorporated into the comprehensive plan. The future land use plan shows Historic Downtown Merriam as primarily commercial retail/office and the Vehicle Service District and Northside District as

primarily light industrial. The future land plan shows the lowering of land use intensification in the Downtown area by removing land previously contemplated industrial and now is planned as commercial retail/office. The following text is reproduced from the 1998 Merriam Downtown Economic Enhancement Strategy prepared by HyettPalma.

Vehicle Service District A cluster of vehicle service and repair businesses currently exists—and has been formed naturally—within the southern portion of the Downtown project area. And, this is the largest concentration of such uses found in the metroplex. The enhancement goal for this Downtown district should be to retain and augment its current uses, improve the districts appearance, and market the district as a single unit that offers consumers “multi-stop” variety and convenience in a single location.

Historic Downtown Merriam Historic Downtown Merriam is very important to the entire city since: It presents the only realistic opportunity the community has to fill the gap identified by local residents—for a pedestrian-oriented, traditional Downtown. It is located at the crossroads of two highly traveled roads, making it the highly visible “image maker” of the entire City of Merriam.

Northside District This district is comprised of a mixture of warehouse, light manufacturing, and miscellaneous commercial/office uses. This district has the potential to become an area of great economic opportunity due to the district's proximity to the new Antioch Interchange; consumer traffic which Merriam Town Center generates; and, the existence of a number of parcels within the district which are now underutilized, given their current land use.

### **Commercial Retail/Office Corridors**

As discussed in Section 5 Commercial & Industrial Development, the development pattern of Merriam has been influenced by I-35 and its interchanges. The future land plan shows these commercial nodes and corridors as retaining their commercial function.

While the land use of the corridors is planned to continue as commercial, it is a goal of this plan to improve the function of the corridors through enhancements to the public right-of-way. The goal is to provide a positive community image for Merriam along its heavily traveled commercial arterials and highways. A second goal is improving the visual appearance of commercial businesses by encouraging the upgrading signage, architecture, landscaping when new construction or significant additions or remodeling occurs. When feasible along the commercial corridors, another goal is to re-introduce pedestrian access within the corridors and between shopping centers.

An important land use issue associated with each of these commercial corridors or nodes is the ability of the commercial land use pattern to expand into nearby residential areas. Generally, the goal is to prevent the introduction of commercial land uses in established residential areas. An exception can be considered when a development proposal demonstrates how new commercial activity contributes to the creation of the urban village concept.

## 7.6 Future Land Use Opportunities

Presented below is review of sites or locations in Merriam identified as potential infill or land use intensification areas. These areas are depicted with a specific baseline land use category on the future land use map. However, these areas have the potential to support creative land use arrangements of greater density or intensity. The responsibility rests with the developer/landowner to demonstrate to the Planning Commission, and nearby property owners, that their development proposal achieves the planning principles expressed throughout this plan. All infill development proposals should be subject to site and architectural plan review.

### Residential Infill Development in Northwest

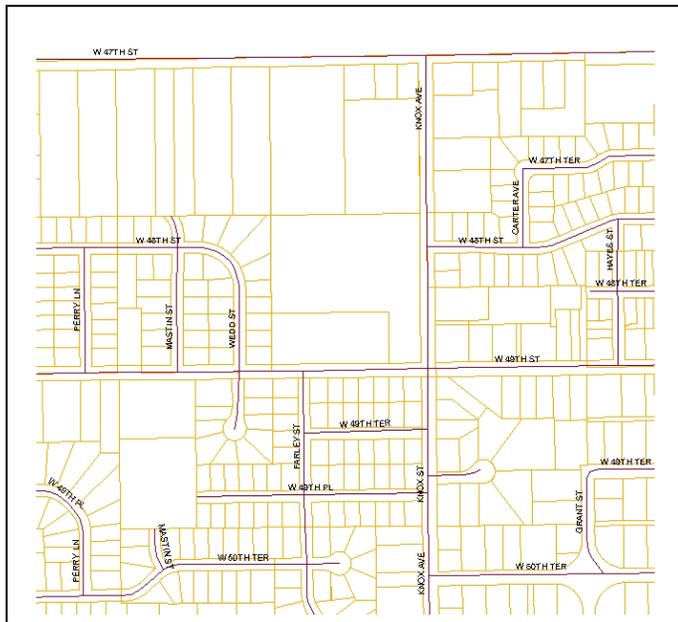


Figure 7-1 Boundary Description: Generally 47th Street on the north; 51st Street on the south; Knox Ave. on the east; and, Switzer Road on the west.

There are several tracts or parcels in the northwest area that are suitable for potential infill development. Some of these tracts are vacant, except for a few structures. The City of Merriam previously experienced the conversion of large residential tracts into smaller platted lots. This occurred near Goodman Road and 57<sup>th</sup> Street when several large tracts were replatted to accommodate several small cul-de-sacs fronting on Goodman Road. Today, however, vacant parcels for new development or infill development are a scarce community resource. To best utilize Merriam's resources, it is important that potential infill sites develop at an appropriate density, and if

necessary discourage the platting of large lot housing.

Since these infill lots are contiguous, a unique situation exists allowing a developer to amass the tracts, thereby affording an opportunity for creative site design and the potential for mixed-housing densities. The future land use plan shows these infill sites as low-density residential. However, mixed housing densities, cluster housing and creative single-family site design techniques can be considered as an alternative to traditional single-family lots for infill residential development, subject to a site and architectural design review. See Figure 7-1.

*Brown Park Creek runs through the heart of this residential infill opportunity connecting*

*Turner Park in Kansas City, Kansas with Brown Memorial Park, Waterfall Park and the Turkey Creek Streamway Trail in Merriam. Because of its location, Brown Park Creek would make a natural northwest extension of the Turkey Creek Streamway Trail system. As infill development occurs in this area, special considerations should be made in order to accommodate the extension of the Turkey Creek Streamway Trail system along Brown Park Creek.*

**Site Design Factors for Residential Infill Development in the Northwest**

- Brown Creek runs through the area. This could create an opportunity for addressing storm water management and preservation of open space. The vacant land is also an opportunity to provide a neighborhood park in this area.
- Create pedestrian connection with the neighborhood retail center at Switzer Road and 47<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Create pedestrian and vehicular connection with the existing street network.
- Maintain existing street connections to nearby residential areas.

**Antioch Interchange Land Use and South Park Sub-Area Plan**

*South Park Elementary closed following the 2006-2007 school year. Due to its historic and community significance, the City of Merriam set out to develop a public process which would allow the community of South Park to establish parameters for future*



Figure 7-2 Boundary Description: Generally west of Antioch Road; east of Grant Street; south of W 49<sup>th</sup> Street; and north of W 52<sup>nd</sup> Street.

*redevelopment of this area. The resulting design charrette was adopted as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan by the City Council in June, 2007. The South Park Sub-Area Plan encompasses an area that includes the South Park Elementary site, surrounding South Park Subdivision, and the Antioch – Merriam Drive intersection.*

The opening of a full interchange at I-35 and Antioch Road offers an opportunity to take advantage of interstate highway access and visibility. The existing land use pattern near the interchange is a mixture of residential, commercial, and industrial. In addition to a mixed land use

pattern, multi-ownership of small lots and tracts also characterizes the area. Over the next 20 years the city should anticipate and accommodate changes in the current land use pattern. The current configuration of land uses is not maximizing the location adjacent to I-35 and the Antioch Road interchange. See Figure 7-2 to review the area where a transition to new land uses is anticipated.

The future land use plan shows this area as light industrial. However, the area could also accommodate commercial – retail/office activity. New light industrial or commercial development is envisioned to be based on a developer acquiring sufficient land to create an organized and coordinated business park or retail development.

#### Site Design Factors for Antioch Interchange

- The triangular shape of the area presents a challenge.
- Consider concerns regarding public safety for pedestrian traffic along Merriam Drive and Antioch Road. The traffic capacity of Merriam Drive and the intersection configuration at Antioch Road should be closely studied.

#### Residential Infill Development Near W 55<sup>th</sup> Street and Hayes Street



Figure 7-6 Boundary Description: Generally south of W 55<sup>th</sup> Street along Hayes Street.

A potential infill development exists south of 55<sup>th</sup> Street and Hayes Street where there is a grouping of older homes on smaller lots. This location is unique because of the higher elevation and views towards to east and Downtown Merriam. The relative isolation of the area, which is created by hillside and existing vegetation, makes this an interesting site in Merriam.

Since these infill lots are contiguous, a unique situation exists allowing a developer to amass the tracts, thereby affording an opportunity for creative site design and the potential for mixed-housing densities. The future land use plan shows this area as low-density residential. However, mixed housing densities, cluster housing and creative single-family

site design techniques can be considered as an alternative to traditional single-family lots for infill residential development, subject to a site and architectural design review.