



# *Little Blue Valley Comprehensive Plan Amendment: “An Economic Development Strategy for Eastern Independence”*

## *Executive Summary*

### **Plan Area**

The Little Blue Valley Comprehensive Plan Area is bounded by 24 Highway on the north, the eastern City Limits to the east and south to Pink Hill Road, following Pink Hill Road and 39<sup>th</sup> Street on the south, and the previously planned alignment of Jackson Drive on the west. This area is approximately 48 percent of the City of Independence. The Little Blue Valley area consists of wide low lands of the river valley that rise sharply developing into rolling hills and pasture lands. The area is primarily used for agriculture at this time. A limited amount of residential and industrial development has begun in the area.

### **Plan Preparation**

The Plan was prepared by the Community Development Department with assistance from LDR International, planning consultants, and Development Strategies Inc., market analysts and economists. In addition to the professional participation many members of the public assisted with their time, ideas, review and comment on the plan as it developed. The public made up both the Steering Committee and Citizens Advisory Committee. The planning process also used a Technical Advisory Committee to utilize specific expertise from City and regional agencies including representatives from three school districts, Jackson County (parks and planning), Missouri Department of Transportation, Mid America Regional Council, City departments, and City utilities, to evaluate and respond to proposals effecting particular jurisdictions and interests.



The Little Blue Parkway about to become reality

*I think that the Little Blue Valley will be the center-piece of Eastern Jackson County. The Little Blue Valley will be the catalyst that will allow Eastern Jackson County to develop to its fullest potential*

**Mayor Ron Stewart**

The Plan was developed using a planning process that included:

1. professional market research to determine future land use demand;
2. development of goals and objectives;
3. development and analysis of alternatives;
4. technical and public review of those alternatives and selection of a preferred development alternative; and
5. development of implementation measures.

*Completing a comprehensive development plan for the Little Blue Valley is a once in a lifetime opportunity to ensure the City's future prosperity through quality planned growth*

**Charles Degenfelder**  
**Chairman, Independence City**  
**Planning Commission**

### **Strategic Questions**

1. Why Does the City of Independence need to expand in this area?
2. How can development be allowed and still keep rural character?
3. How can the interests of the existing City be balanced with the Little Blue Valley
4. How can the image/role of Independence be improved within the region?
5. What is the timing, alignment and design of the Little Blue Parkway?
6. What is the most cost-effective way to extend streets, sewer, water and other services?

### **Public Involvement**

Utilization of the general public through the Steering and Citizen Advisory Committees, public forums and public hearings gave the plan specific directives. Two of the most powerful directives included preventing the new Little Blue Parkway and other major streets from becoming strip commercial centers, and making sure that future development of the Little Blue Valley does not take away resources from the current needs of the City.

The public also contributed to answering the Plan's strategic questions.

The public as well as the Independence City Planning Commission and the Independence City Council identified many issues and goals for the planning process. The goals and issues were divided into the following categories:

1. land use;
2. transportation;
3. community facilities and services;
4. utilities and infrastructure;
5. environmental and cultural resources; and
6. economic development.

The plan carries these themes, each of which has several sub points, throughout the alternative analysis, selection of a preferred land use plan and implementation strategies.

## Primary Recommendations

The primary recommendations of the Plan are related to the physical development of the Valley. The Implementation portion of the Plan (Chapter 7) then addresses how to make those recommendations a reality.

- Development of three primary aesthetically pleasing roadway corridors are recommended in the Plan; the Little Blue Parkway, Truman Boulevard (currently Truman Road) and Jackson Drive, as well as an adequately designed supporting roadway network.
- Preservation of existing and development of additional natural and open space resources is an important feature of the Plan. The natural beauty of the Little Blue Valley is one of its most valuable resources. A significant amount of new development is planned without destroying the area's beauty.
- The Plan also addresses the types of land uses to be developed and how they ought to relate to each other. Balanced growth requires development of both residential and employment uses to complement each other.
- This balance is enhanced by a superior parks and open space network. Integration of land uses in planned mixed use areas such as mixed use districts is also a key feature of the Plan. A town center, and village centers will also lead to high quality planned developments. Mixed use areas combine multiple land uses such as various densities and types of housing with open space, public uses and employment uses such as office, business and limited retail areas. One critical element of the Valley's development is to provide areas for as many styles and types of residential, business and office development as possible to attract a wide market segment. Attracting a wide market will help to encourage growth in the Valley.

*The Little Blue Valley offers the type of quality development potential and investment protection that prospective business executives investigate when locating sites for business expansion*

**Tom Reiderer**  
**Director Independence Council**  
**for Economic Development**

## 2020 Balanced Growth Market Projections

**20,000** new residents

**3,050,000** square feet of business  
development

*source: Development Strategies 1998*

Development of mixed use areas also enhances the Little Blue Valley's balance of residential and non-residential growth.

### **Quality Development and Market Demand**

*Creation of a balanced growth pattern ensures that the City will provide places for existing and future residents to live, work and play. Creating this tie to the City builds pride, awareness, and concern for the community's well being*

**Bruce Hahl**  
**Community Development Director**

Quality development is required to attract the development forecast for the Little Blue Valley. Quality development is measured by the quality of the actual land use, the physical appearance of that use, how various uses relate to each other, provision of adequate public facilities and a quality parks and recreation system. Economists forecast the Valley can attract approximately 20,000 persons and more than three million square feet of nonresidential uses over the next twenty years. The plan is designed to accommodate this development and development well beyond the twenty-year planning horizon. The analyst was very clear in stating that these types of growth numbers are only possible if all future development in the valley is of a very high quality.

### **Balanced Mixed Use Development**

Balanced development principles include issues of development types (residential, commercial, industrial, public and varieties of each), environmental preservation, public expenses and revenues, infrastructure provision as well as market potential. Achieving a well-balanced development mix in the Valley will require careful implementation of the land use plan through progressive extension of utilities and attracting quality developments (residential and nonresidential). The true test of achieving a quality balance in the future growth of the Valley will be if many of the persons moving into the valley will do so because they find quality jobs proximate to their homes or quality homes near their job. This balance also translates into a positive revenue flow exceeding the area's public expenses for the City of Independence provided development pays for its own roads and infrastructure. This will allow the City to use excess revenues for improvements in other portions of the City. Another aspect of balanced development is creating an environment that is a desirable place to live work and play. This necessitates quality street scapes, parks, public amenities and open spaces.



Quality new executive housing in the *Saddle Ridge* Development

Mixed use areas combine multiple land uses such as various densities and types of housing with open space, public uses and employment uses such as office and limited retail areas. One critical element of the Valley's development is to provide areas for as many styles and types of residential, business and office development as possible to attract a wide market segment. Attracting a wide market will help to encourage growth in the Valley. The Little Blue Valley Plan calls for three types of mixed use development.

### **Little Blue Parkway**

The Little Blue Parkway is perhaps the key to most significant development in the Valley. Although the Parkway has been discussed since the late 1960's, with the current level of environmental documentation, alignment study, potential funding strategies and eminent completion of its interchange with I-70 (phases 1, 2 and 3), the Little Blue Parkway's future is bright. The Parkway will be designed to carry traffic projected in the valley at adequate speeds to assure good access to Interstate 70. In addition to adequate traffic design, the Parkway will be highly landscaped. Wide cross sections will be used to create pleasing entrance ways to the Little Blue Valley.

### **Implementation**

The plan is nearly complete; however, the planning process is still in its early stages. The next stage of the planning process is implementation. The plan outlines many tasks necessary to achieve the plan goals. These implementation measures are critical to the success of the plan. Many implementation strategies involve modifications to the Zoning Code and Official Zoning Map. New zoning districts will also be required. The one resource the area is truly lacking is a quality transportation network. This plan identifies a Major Street Plan that adequately meets the needs of the future development in the Little Blue Valley. The road system will require an investment of over \$150 million (in 1999 dollars) over the implementation period of this plan.

*One of the Chamber's top priorities is to encourage and support the quality development of the Little Blue Valley.*

**Rick Hemmingsen, President  
Independence Chamber of  
Commerce**



The Little Blue Parkway Intersection with 39<sup>th</sup> Street under construction (looking north)

Developing this network will require two primary efforts. The first will be to develop an adequate funding strategy. The second effort will be to plan and design each road.

The plan addresses nearly every aspect of developing the Little Blue Valley from agriculture to zoning. The plan is however only the first step in what will be a long journey to implementation.



The natural beauty of the Little Blue Valley is one of its most significant assets