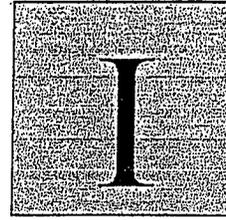


Introduction



INTRODUCTION TO PLANNING

Planning is a basic human activity performed by most citizens every day. Archaeological discoveries reveal evidence of planning by the earliest peoples and in the earliest cities.

In contemporary cities, planning is a responsible way to anticipate and prepare for changes and problems. The planning process relies on the use of intelligent forethought to develop and implement goals and objectives in harmony with a community's social and economic needs.

A comprehensive plan is a tool that provides the framework for present and future development. Without a plan, uncoordinated development decisions may adversely impact many aspects of the community. For example, uncontrolled development may out-pace a community's fiscal ability to provide adequate services, such as roads, public utilities, drainage facilities, schools, fire protection, and parks. On the other hand, a sound development plan helps a community spend its money wisely and effectively. In other words, an effective planning process should enable the community to strike a balance between what it wants and needs and what it is capable--in terms of resources--of providing.

To be considered a legal instrument of policy, the plan must be adopted by the governing body. Once a comprehensive plan has been adopted, the zoning ordinance must be updated so that it is pursuant to the comprehensive plan. This official statement of policy helps guide physical growth; therefore, decisions made over a period of years and by various officials *should* consistently reflect the needs and wants of the community at large.

ABOUT THE PLAN UPDATE

The City of St. Marys contracted with the Department of Landscape Architecture/Regional and Community Planning at Kansas State University to update its comprehensive plan. The city's existing plan was prepared by Kansas State's Plan Preparation class in 1991.

The 1997 update, a product of the Plan Preparation and Landscape Resource Evaluation classes, reflects the changes that have occurred since the 1991 plan was written. This version of the plan

encompasses all facets of the community, and it is organized in the following manner:

- Chapter 1 -- Visioning
- Chapter 2 -- Population
- Chapter 3 -- Economics
- Chapter 4 -- Land Use
- Chapter 5 -- Housing
- Chapter 6 -- Downtown Business District
- Chapter 7 -- Transportation and Parking
- Chapter 8 -- Parks and Recreation
- Chapter 9 -- Strengths and Weaknesses
- Chapter 10 -- Recommendations

A COMMUNITY IN TRANSITION

St. Marys, located near the southeast corner of Pottawatomie County, has experienced unprecedented growth since 1991. The 1990 Census lists St. Marys' population at 1,791, but 1997 data from the Pottawatomie County Appraiser's Office suggests a current population of more than 2,500. Furthermore, projections indicate that the population will reach more than 3,700 by 2015.

The recent and projected growth in population requires community officials to address two critical questions:

- Will St. Marys have sufficient housing for its growing population?
- Will the community be able to attract enough jobs to employ its residents?

The second question, in particular, is a concern of many residents, as indicated by comments at focus-group sessions. The answer to this question depends upon the actions of community officials and citizens of St. Marys. Residents must decide if the community will move forward, remain where it is, or fall backward.

Given the challenges facing the community, it first should focus on sustaining what it has. Residents should recognize that St. Marys has the foundation on which to build a successful city, but continued neglect puts the city's assets in jeopardy.

For example, the traditional architecture of downtown buildings, a feature on which many communities are capitalizing, is covered with metal facades. Also, the city is experiencing the movement of commercial establishments toward its eastern boundary, fragmenting

an already tenuous business district. Furthermore, one major employer recently has left the city, citing difficulties in expanding the operation. In this case, the business moved just a few miles away and, therefore, likely did not cause residents to lose their jobs or relocate. How will the city fare if another employer leaves the community? Have sufficient efforts been made to retain local businesses? Is there an appropriate balance between zoning and entrepreneurship?

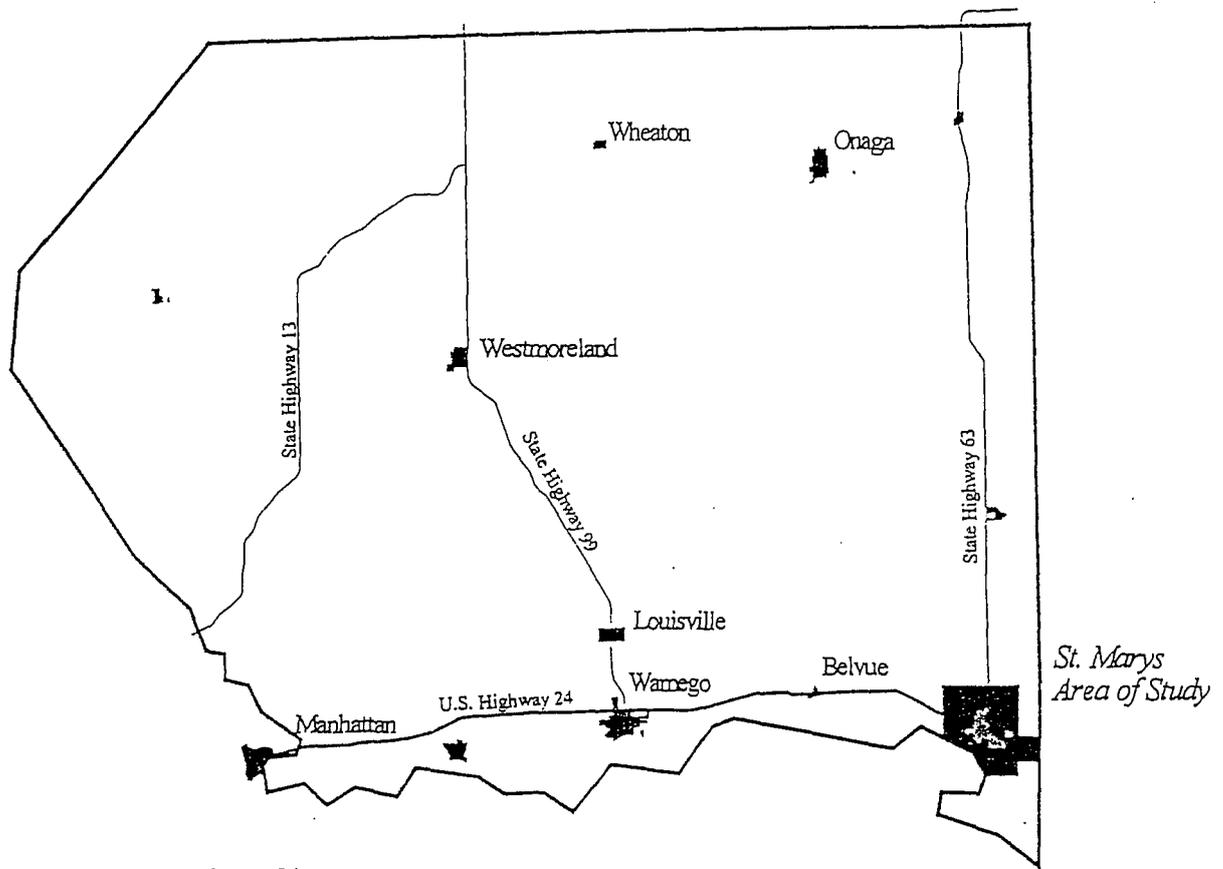
Community officials face important decisions in the coming years, and those decisions will influence the community well into the future. In particular, the Kansas State University Planning Team identifies four critical issues that officials should address.

1. **Revitalization of Downtown.** For downtown to remain the heart of St. Marys, attention should be given to the promotion and attraction of businesses and to improving its appearance.
2. **Provision of Adequate and Affordable Housing.** Overall, the housing stock is in sound structural condition, but it is dominated by single-family dwelling units. Given the growing population and the number of residents living at or below poverty level, the city must encourage the development of a variety of housing types to meet the needs of all income groups.
3. **Job Opportunities.** The need to attract new jobs to St. Marys is a common issue raised by residents. Recent and projected population growth makes this issue even more important. The community and a strengthened Chamber of Commerce should develop and lead a coordinated effort to attract businesses to St. Marys.
4. **Community Identity.** The community should identify a representative theme around which to focus promotions. The city's historic structures, original downtown buildings, history as the site of a Mission, and location along the Oregon Trail suggest that the community should capitalize on its past to improve its future.

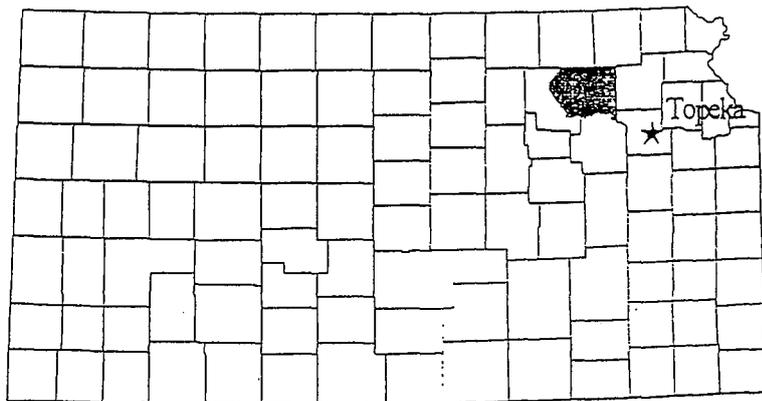
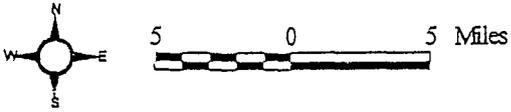
This plan addresses these and several other issues and, hopefully, provides insights that will help officials make judgments that will be beneficial to the City of St. Marys.

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Pottawatomie County



State of Kansas

