

Future Land Use & Character

As part of the Vision 2020 planning process, residents expressed their desire to see investments made in the Downtown and the adjacent historical areas; existing neighborhoods maintained as blight-free; more housing options; provision of quality landscaping; and preservation of recreation and open space opportunities. While there was not a land use element as part of that vision, there were many issues related to land use and development. In the end, there is resident support to translate these small town values into strategies to achieve tangible results and preferred development outcomes. This may be accomplished through a series of recommended programs, ordinances, and capital projects, as well as through implementation of the Future Land Use Plan. In short, this chapter provides the missing link between ideals and action so that the vision of land use expressed by residents can become a reality.

INTRODUCTION

In many ways, residents seek to retain the small city atmosphere that has characterized Ponca City throughout its history. There has always been a sense of “place” associated with Ponca City as a city and a destination. Ponca City residents identify with the City’s historic Downtown and its different neighborhoods. Frequently, cited examples of the Ponca City context include the businesses and architecture along Grand Ave, as well as the scattered assortment of brick streets that add to the local identity. There are many architectural and land use elements that combine to create this perception of Ponca City. Streets with tree canopies and local parks help to complete the picture. Likewise, public institutions assist with “placemaking” by creating destinations that draw residents and visitors alike. Lastly, the large businesses that employ local residents are also landmarks and contribute to the overall impression of the City.

The issues that relate to land use, development and redevelopment, community design and appearance, Downtown, and historic preservation are addressed in this chapter.

Since the last Comprehensive Plan in 1985, Ponca City has periodically considered targeted needs and strategies through special studies and plans prepared for particular districts, corridors, and unique areas of the community. In other cases, there is a need to “raise the bar” of proposed developments so that the future conditions are equal or better than those of the past. There is much hope that future development can respect and support the features of community character that residents value. The challenge for the years ahead is to come to consensus on how best to accomplish the continuing vision of a well-planned and highly attractive community, while balancing private interests and public policies in the process.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the necessary policy guidance that enables the City to plan effectively for its future growth and development, while keeping in mind the context of existing land use. Sound planning is essential to ensure that the community is prepared not only for serving anticipated infrastructure needs, but also for establishing and preserving its character. Ensuring high quality development is of equal importance to providing the requisite streets and infrastructure.

The concepts of land use and local context are integral to other components of this Comprehensive Plan. For instance, the transportation network provides access to land, which influences the type and density of development. The proximity or lack of utilities can also dictate the amount, location, and timing of development. Design and development impact community aesthetics and, thus, the perceptions held by area residents and those considering an economic investment in the community. Proximity to public facilities can impact public health and safety at specific locations and, as a result, impact the development potential of an area.

This chapter is divided into three sections:

- ◆ Existing land use analysis and discussion.
- ◆ Recommended goals and actions for land use issues within the context of Ponca City.
- ◆ Future land use analysis and implementation.

Land Use and Urban Design

By definition, “land use” relates to the use of land, but also incorporates design characteristics that influence the “look and feel” of development. Instead of simply identifying the land use, such as commercial, a determination of an area’s character more distinctly defines the intensity of development and the design features that

contribute to its specific nature and appeal. For instance, Ponca City’s Downtown has a grid street pattern, sidewalks and street furniture, smaller-sized lots, and mature trees, which is distinctly different in character – even though both are commercial in use – from the commercial centers along 14th Street. The latter area is characterized by large parking areas, towering signage aimed at passing automobiles, and smaller, newly planted trees.

It is this combination of land use and the physical characteristics of such use that more accurately determine the compatibility and quality of development. Aesthetic enhancements such as the design of buildings, landscaping and screening, sign control, and site amenities significantly contribute to the perception of Ponca City. Many residents have commented on the appearance of neighborhoods and commercial areas, especially the major corridors. These aesthetic elements are essential to providing residents and visitors alike with a pleasurable impression of the City.

These differences in appearance are visible in the typical range of land use types. Examples include:

- ◆ a single-family home situated on a relatively large lot, with many mature trees and substantial separation from neighboring homes, versus an attached single-family townhome on a small, narrow lot with rear-alley access and minimal yard space or vegetation;
- ◆ a master-planned business park in a campus-like setting versus an office building on a site dominated by surface parking;
- ◆ “storefront” shops and small cafes in a walkable, “neighborhood commercial” setting versus “big box” stores and associated pad-site restaurants and retailers in a large-scale shopping center with extensive surface parking and minimal landscaping;

- ◆ a manufacturing facility that is on a large site accented by mature trees and landscaping versus an intensive industrial operation with significant outdoor activity and unscreened equipment and storage; or
- ◆ a public library or community center that is designed to be compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhood versus a municipal public works maintenance and storage site that is as intensive as most private industrial sites in the community.

Therefore, examined in this chapter is the basic use of land, along with the appearance of neighborhoods, commercial areas and corridors, and undeveloped and rural settings. This includes such factors as density (generally determined by lot and building size), building setbacks, building height, lot coverage, levels of open space, and the amount of vegetation. Equally important to an analysis of existing conditions is the ability to identify options for future development. Since zoning and subdivision regulations direct the design features on an individual site, these ordinances warrant special attention. However, there are many other “levers” that the City can utilize to create appropriate development and encourage attractive redevelopment on existing sites. Looking forward, these tools must be fully utilized so that future development reflects the aspirations of Ponca City residents.

EXISTING LAND USE INVENTORY

Reflected in Map 2.1, Existing Land Use, is the current use of land in and around Ponca City.

The study area captures a two-mile area around the City limits so that adjacent land uses can also be identified. A quantification of this land use map is listed in **Table 2.1, Existing Land Use**.

Designation	City (Ac)	% of Total	Study Area (Ac)	% of Total	Total (Ac)	% of Total
Vacant	1,179.5	11.2%	261.3	0.8%	1,440.8	3.3%
Agricultural & Rural	2,451.0	23.2%	26,067.3	78.4%	28,518.3	65.1%
Estate Residential	348.4	3.3%	2,462.4	7.4%	2,810.8	6.4%
Low Density Residential	2,443.4	23.1%	1,951.7	5.9%	4,395.1	10.0%
Attached Residential	195.2	1.8%	0.0	0.0%	195.2	0.4%
General Commercial	525.8	5.0%	348.8	1.0%	874.6	2.0%
Downtown Commercial	107.3	1.0%	0.0	0.0%	107.3	0.2%
Light Industrial	647.9	6.1%	0.0	0.0%	647.9	1.5%
Heavy Industrial	5.5	0.1%	1,566.5	4.7%	1,572.0	3.6%
Public & Institutional	920.0	8.7%	93.0	0.3%	1,013.0	2.3%
Parks and Recreation	971.1	9.2%	45.1	0.1%	1,016.3	2.3%
TOTAL	9,795.0	100%	32,796.3	100%	42,591.3	100%

Table 2.1: Existing Land Use and Character

Findings

- ◆ Ponca City is comprised of approximately 9,795 acres (15.3 square miles), as shown in Map 2.1, Existing Land Use. According to Table 2.1, Existing Land Use, nearly 65 percent of the land within the City and Study Area is “Agricultural and Rural,” which includes unplatted parcels and rights-of-way.
- ◆ The planning area outside of the City limits is predominantly comprised of “Agricultural and Rural” land use (28,518 acres) with a couple pockets of “Estate Residential” (2,810 acres).
- ◆ “Agricultural and Rural” along with “Low-Density Residential” comprise the two largest land use categories, each of which comprise 23 percent of the calculated land area within the City. “Vacant” (11 percent) and “Parks and Recreation” (9 percent) together, account for roughly 20 percent of the total acreage within the City

limits. This consists of land that is vacant or, alternatively, devoted to public parks and other recreational or open space lands.

- ◆ “General Commercial” development contributes five percent of the City’s land use, with most of this development centered on Highways 77 and 60. “Downtown Commercial” land use adds a much smaller fraction (one percent).
- ◆ Even with Ponca City’s significant industrial sector, particularly around ConocoPhillips and the Airport Industrial Park, both “Light Industrial” and “Heavy Industrial” land uses account for about six percent of the City limits.
- ◆ “Public and Institutional” uses, such as City Hall, contribute approximately 920 acres or nine percent of the City’s land area.
- ◆ Recent residential development has only occurred in scattered sites on the fringes of the City. Commercial development has occurred and is expected to continue along the existing commercial corridors of Ponca City: along Highway 77, Hartford Ave., and Prospect Ave. This is in addition to continued redevelopment in Downtown.
- ◆ The rural character surrounding Ponca City on all sides offers a timely opportunity to establish a definable edge to the community, thereby avoiding a proliferation of strip commercial and industrial development outside of the City limits. (Refer to Chapter 3, Growth Capacity.)

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the planning process, a number of issues and concerns were expressed related to urban design, corridor appearance, Downtown redevelopment, and historic preservation efforts in Ponca City. These discussions formed the basis of the following issue statements, along with analysis of existing conditions, review of the current

development ordinances, and examination of the planning and development process – all within the context of recent development patterns. Following the identification of key issues are a series of goals and actions, along with discussion of the necessary implementation steps.

Land Use and Development: Ensuring that Future Growth Reflects Ponca City’s Context

The freestanding form has been reflective of Ponca City’s development pattern over the past 100 years. Ponca City has consisted mainly of a compact network of neighborhoods situated at the crossroads of Highways 77 and 60, as well as the existing railways. Over the years, the City has grown to 15.3 square miles and has a population exceeding 25,000 residents. The economic engines of local business and industry, as well as that in Stillwater and OSU, will continue to spur long-term population growth and the development of new opportunities. An effect of this development will be the change in the once rural landscape. To ensure high-quality development, Ponca City must take a proactive stance to maintain its desirable qualities. Otherwise, the highly valued small-town character will give way to becoming an edgeless city characterized by strip development patterns. Many residents indicated that the small-town character was a critical element in their decision to move to or to continue living in Ponca City, and they want this character to be retained as the City grows.

Through the course of community input, it became clear that residents are willing to embrace growth as long as it does not compromise quality of life. Citizens treasure those features that make Ponca City an attractive living environment, including: a compact community form, smaller-scale development, significant open spaces, access to nearby water recreation opportunities, highly livable neighborhoods, an historic Downtown, and the surrounding rural environs, among others. Therefore, any alteration of these valued

assets is considered a compromise of the City's character.

To ensure effective implementation of core element, code amendments and enhancements must be considered. Perhaps of greatest importance is the need for better standards in both the zoning and subdivision ordinances. These code amendments must position the City to address and encourage:

- ◆ Downtown vitality and mixed use development;
- ◆ Development clustering and conservation design for resource protection purposes;
- ◆ Housing subdivision quality and attractiveness;
- ◆ Development quality and compatibility through the use of site and building design standards, particularly along high-profile corridors; and
- ◆ Use of detailed standards to provide added clarity – and a streamlined special use permit approval process – for applicants who meet the basic standards of the code (consistent with Comprehensive Plan policies and objectives).

GOAL 2.1: Improve future development outcomes through improvements of the land use regulations.

- ◆ Add standards to the existing zoning and subdivision ordinances that directly address urban design and site planning objectives to enable development to conform to the desires of residents, while providing additional clarity to applicants.
 1. Review the zoning district standards to realize better and distinct outcomes. Most of the residential and commercial districts have the same lot setbacks and bulk standards. Likewise, the lists of permitted uses are nearly identical between the residential and

Summary of planning considerations for the enhancement of land use and urban design, as addressed by Goal 2.1, include:

1. *Enhanced standards of design within the development ordinances.*
2. *Improved landscape standards to ensure appropriate landscape designs for neighborhoods and commercial sites.*
3. *Land use and transportation connections within and between neighborhoods so there is adequate connectivity to local destinations (e.g., parks, schools, shopping, etc.).*
4. *Amended subdivision regulations to allow for increased flexibility. Regulations can also provide incentives related to certain development types that are appealing to residents, such as clustered and conservation development types.*

commercial categories. The result is a lack of character and distinctiveness between districts.

2. Allow the agricultural and rural districts to have a high percentage of open space to be used for conservation or clustered subdivisions. Allowing different development options and an equivalent density to that currently allowed inside the City limits may entice development that would otherwise be destined for the surrounding countryside. Since the issue of building outside the City is prevalent, there should be efforts to provide options for developments that offer a similar feeling of isolation and contentment. Conservation development is one such mechanism, while respecting the intent of these districts.
3. Consider reinstatement of the Regional Planning Commission to regulate land development within three miles of the City limits. This endeavor between the City and County would manage proposed development by creating standards where none currently exist. An initial focus may be on the proper development of subdivisions

and protecting key gateways and corridors from sign clutter and unsightly development.

4. Protect commercial and industrial districts from single-family intrusions by



There is little that actually differentiates between the two commercial districts. Scale standards are one mechanism for creating separation between districts in addition to use. However, left unto itself, use alone is a poor proxy for true neighborhood scale development.



Contrary to current practice, the CBD should require that suburban or auto-oriented uses, such as drive-throughs, are not permitted or permitted with a list of specified conditions. Permitting many uses and options by right to the extent that a detrimental development could impact the entire Downtown is not respecting the many other efforts aimed at rejuvenating that area.

removing single-family development as a permitted use in these districts. The economic future of these districts is at risk by allowing single-family development. Future conflicts will also be avoided, thereby reducing conflicts between businesses and residents.

5. Support the Downtown through amendments to the CBD District that provide specific standards for "urban" development. The current guidelines are limited as to their effectiveness.
6. Reduce the number of special uses required by the zoning ordinance. Instead, incorporate better standards to achieve the intended outcomes. This will increase the surety of approval and reduce the workload for staff and the Planning Commission. Retain those special uses that warrant discretionary decisions.
7. Create standards for office development within the R-3 district. There should be guidance as to their scale and bulk, height, appearance, site design, access, and parking so as to ensure compatibility within the district and with adjacent districts.
8. Establish neighborhood commercial design standards for the C-1 district. The C-1 and C-2 districts have different intents, yet they are largely similar as to their uses and bulk standards. Necessary standards include scale limitations, increased landscaping surface area and buffering, pitched roofs, comparable building heights, site access and parking lighting, and the placement of service areas.
9. Adopt bufferyard provisions that vary according to the intensities of the abutting uses. Rather than a six-foot fence as a separation, a bufferyard is defined by its width, the types and densities of landscape materials, and the use of berms and walls.

10. Amend the residential district standards to disallow metal as an acceptable carport material. The effect upon neighborhoods is significant once several adjoining properties install metal carports. Further, enforcement is difficult since a carport can be erected in the span of a weekend.
11. Consider adopting design standards for big-box commercial and/or large-scale industrial buildings exceeding 60,000 square feet. Standards should address the building size, roof, and skyline; materials and design elements; loading and storage placement and screening; open space and streetscape areas; landscaping; and signage.
12. Refine the industrial standards to provide greater separation between districts. Currently, the industrial districts are largely the same with only slight differences in the use and lot standards. Light and heavy industrial areas warrant different standards suitable to their scale and intensity.
13. Establish industrial development standards that differentiate between those on the periphery that are in public view and those within the interior of an industrial park. Standards relating to building façade enhancements, blank walls, building materials, and screening of outdoor storage areas should apply to those within public view, with lesser standards for those generally out of the public view.
14. Rewrite the sign regulations to restrict the number of signs; require a master sign plan for multi-tenant developments; establish permitted, prohibited, and exempted signs, and restrict or prohibit temporary and portable signs.
15. Require a minimum open space requirement for industrial developments in a manner similar to the Hospital-Medical Complex District. The proposed

addition of a business/research park would have an increased open space requirement, along with added building and site design standards.

16. Strengthen and clarify enforcement language in the zoning code in relation to issues such as signs, landscaping, and unsafe structures. Emphasize neighborhood integrity and protection more than ever as both residential structures and streets and other local infrastructure continue to age.
- ◆ Update existing landscape and screening standards in the ordinances to ensure that new development contributes to the local



Sign clutter has overtaken the 14th Street corridor by the many permitted and unpermitted signs. Critical issues include sign size, spacing, and location. Temporary signage poses a specific threat to corridors since it can be especially unsightly and difficult to enforce. Regulations pertaining to temporary signs should be updated and enforced.



An aging housing stock should be maintained in a manner such that it will not be lost to neglect or neighborhood decay. This protection not only implies a diligent oversight of the uses allowed in existing neighborhoods, but also needs to be an enforcement effort that addresses local nuisances and blighting impacts.

context and does not negatively impact adjacent developments.

1. Require street trees in all new subdivisions, which must be coordinated with utility placement. These trees would be in addition to those required per lot, as well as those required for open spaces and parking lots associated with high-density development. Also, it is advisable to increase the size of newly planted trees to two- or three-inch caliper.
2. Require plantings along all parking and vehicular use areas with frontage on public street rights-of-way and major entrance drives. This screening may include shrubbery, earthen berms, walls, or a combination. Newly planted landscaping material should be larger than currently mandated so that the new development blends in better with existing uses.
3. Amend the zoning ordinance to require that walls and "sight-proof" fences be complemented by landscaping to soften the buffer between adjacent uses. In some instances, fences may be replaced by berms and a landscape buffer, which will enhance their effectiveness and appearance.



Nearby destinations should have sidewalk connections so that residents can conveniently access on foot (or by bike) a nearby school, adjoining subdivision, park, or business.

4. Revise the requirements for raised islands within parking areas (requires one island within 59' of each parking space) to include specifications for canopy trees, shrubbery, and groundcover. Adjust the standards to one landscape island (minimum area, 162 sq. feet) for each 12 to 15 parking spaces. This is much easier to administer.
 5. Require site design and planning standards for temporary uses. Specify the percentage of site area that may be used for these uses and the display of outdoor merchandise, as well as their location on the site, means of defining the space, and the height of stacked materials, among other applicable requirements.
- ◆ Promote multi-modal circulation options and create connectivity within and between subdivisions.
 1. Promote development practices that result in highly walkable and bicycle-friendly neighborhoods. This may be accomplished by allowing a mixture of uses within a convenient distance, making walking a more viable option. To do so, site design and performance standards must be added to the zoning ordinance to ensure design cohesiveness and compatibility.
 2. Continue to require sidewalks in new developments as a means for pedestrian connections to neighboring developments. Perform a review of the existing sidewalk system to identify gaps and improvements needed to connect each neighborhood with parks and business areas. Seek to tie in the developing trail system.
 3. Add a street cross section to the subdivision ordinance to include designated bicycle lanes within the right-of-way. Identify connections between the on-street bicycle lanes and the off-street trail and sidewalk systems.

4. Ensure adequate infrastructure and capital budget support of multi-modal projects. An example of a strategic multi-modal investment is the ongoing reconstruction and bicycle lane improvements along 5th Street.

Improving Urban Design, Appearance, and Gateways

The appearance of Ponca City is the single most evident glimpse of its economic vitality, resident pro-activeness, and civic pride. The initial impression is formed by the quality of development, property upkeep, condition of public facilities, amount and quality of open spaces, and the design of roadways and other public buildings and infrastructure. Visual appeal reinforces the quality of life for those who reside in the community, as well as the experience of those making their first visit to Ponca City. The idea of “curb appeal” matters, both to prospective residents looking for housing and to future employers and employees considering an investment in the community. Many residents believe that the quality of corridors and neighborhoods can and should be improved.

The City can enact policies and standards that influence the quality of the natural and built environments. Without a plan to accentuate the individuality of corridors, special districts, neighborhoods, and open spaces, there tends to be a sense of “sameness” in the community, with little to distinguish it from other communities. This concern was voiced by residents as they spoke about their impressions of Ponca City and their desires to see enhancement of the community’s entranceways and corridors. There is a general sentiment that the standards for open space and corridor design should be raised to embrace and strengthen Ponca City’s attractive, welcoming environment.

GOAL 2.2: Improved urban design and aesthetics along major corridors and at gateways.

- ◆ Create signature gateways in key locations in the community to introduce and create identities for Downtown, neighborhoods, and special districts corridors.
1. Consider the design and phased construction of signature gateways in the following locations:
 - a. Downtown entry points along Grand Avenue at Sixth Street and First Street;
 - b. U.S. Highway 77 at the north and south City limits (considering future annexations);
 - c. at the intersection of I-35 and U.S. 60 and every three to five miles; and
 - d. along U.S. Highway 60, at the east and west City limits (including the Ranch Road intersection outside the study area).
 2. Consider embellished gateway treatments with more significant monuments, landscaping, and lighting at the locations with the greatest visibility, such as the gateways to Downtown and at the interchange with I-35. These may be sponsored by local businesses and civic clubs or coordinated with the adjacent development.
 3. Integrate gateway and other street enhancements such as lighting, signage, landscaping, street furniture, and paths into capital improvement projects. Enhancements may include pavement colors and patterns at intersections, crosswalk textures (particularly in Downtown), ornamental street fixtures (signal poles and mast arms), unique signage, added green space, land contouring, street trees, and pedestrian paths and amenities. Coordination with ODOT will be required along state routes.

4. Initiate redevelopment and enhancement projects at entrances to the community and major corridors leading to the Downtown (notably Waverly Street, South Avenue, Grand Avenue, 14th Street, Harding Road, and Highland/Lake Avenue), including public infrastructure improvements and strict enforcement of code violations. Map 2.3, Gateways and Connectors, illustrates the relationship between key corridors and gateways. The City may consider a grant or low-interest loan program for qualifying private enhancement projects.



Gateways are not necessarily limited to signs and monuments. A landmark building or public facility such as the YMCA can provide the necessary placemaking.

- ◆ Prepare corridor and small area enhancement plans focusing on beautification, streetscape, and signage improvements.
 1. Identify commercial and residential properties that are experiencing, or at risk for experiencing, disinvestment and decline. Special emphasis should be placed on the corridors and entrances to Downtown, such as along Grand

Avenue between Waverly and 14th Street. Other priority areas include along BR 60 as it leads to the Downtown and U.S. 77 where it crosses Harding Avenue and South Avenue.

2. Establish a targeted infrastructure improvement program with identified funding incentives and administrative assistance to aid in their redevelopment and aesthetic improvement. In strategic locations, public acquisition may be warrant consideration. A good example is the new YMCA at the corner of Waverly Street and Grand Avenue. This building will serve as a local landmark and gateway for this area.
3. Adopt and enforce provisions that reduce blighting influences on corridors and in neighborhoods, including:
 - a. Unsecured vacant structures that are open to vandals and the elements.
 - b. Removal of abandoned vehicles and other derelict items from yards and alleys.
 - c. Frequent parking of cars, boats, trailers, and recreational vehicles in front of side yards.
 - d. Illegal dumping and trash accumulation.
 - e. Illegal placement of temporary signs on public and private property.
4. Create a pro-active program for handling the condemnation, demolition, and rehabilitation of substandard structures and underdeveloped property. Add municipal staff, as needed, to oversee the process for addressing unsafe or dilapidated structures and other health and safety risks such as inoperable vehicles, weeds and heavy trash, overgrown sites, and run-down structures used for criminal activity.

Rejuvenate Downtown

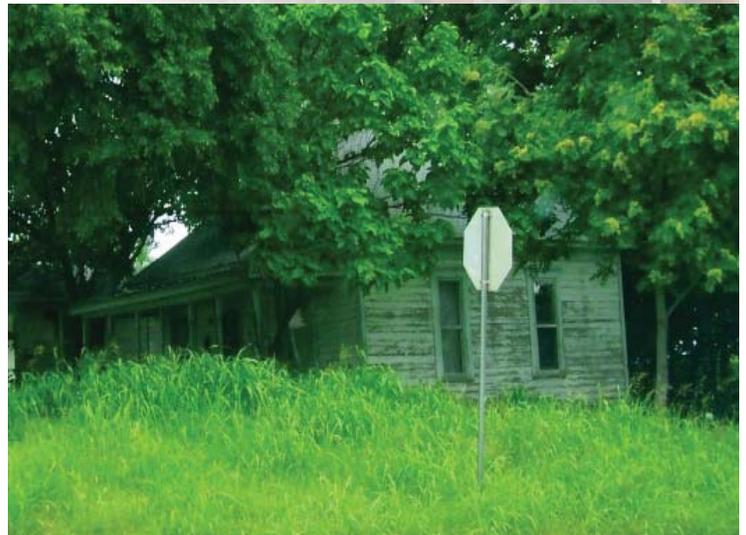
The historical “Main Street” of Ponca City is at a point of decision regarding its future. It is home to most of the cultural and governmental institutions of the City, yet is challenged to maintain its retail commercial vitality. City Hall, the library, Post Office, and the Ponca Theatre all front on this “urban-style” corridor. The decline of retail along Grand Avenue (“Main Street”) is largely due to competing retail developments along 14th Street and at the community’s fringes (particularly to the north). It is difficult for “Main Street” to compete with “greenfield” developments. Instead, Downtown must draw on its unique, historic character and both repurpose and reposition its market to clearly differentiate itself from commercial centers, as well as other regional communities.

A key element of Main Street is an incredibly intact set of buildings that date back to 1900, with many structures from the 1920s and 1930s. These buildings frame a downtown street environment that provides a significant asset for this community. The urban fabric of Downtown must be sustained through good planning and appropriate -- and reasonable -- standards. Furthermore, it is essential to maintain its historical integrity. This will require good leadership and planning to redefine and reinvigorate Downtown.

Downtown also provides an opportunity to create a highly sustainable environment. Its mix of uses, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, and proximity to adjacent neighborhoods is an ideal setting for lifestyles oriented around walking rather than the automobile.

GOAL 2.3: Downtown as a vibrant center of business and community activity

- ◆ Enhance Downtown to create a small-town urban center, both as a community focal point and a local and regional destination.



The City averages 25 demolitions per year in an effort to address unsafe structures. A collective effort of City and CDBG grant funds directs \$40,000 for tackling substandard housing. However, the number of homes falling into a state of disrepair has steadily increased since 2000 and continues to grow. The City currently has a list of approximately 90 homes that are at risk of being demolished.

1. Develop a comprehensive Downtown Master Plan to reposition the area to promote tourism and economic growth. The Master Plan should address redevelopment opportunities, rehabilitation funding, market research, and transportation options. It can build upon the actions from this Plan and create a specific vision for the Downtown.
2. Enhance the urban character of Downtown by maintaining a zero setback along the streets and requiring a minimum height of new structures of no less than two stories. Continue this urban pattern to the defined boundaries indicated in **Figure 2.1, Downtown Boundaries**.
3. Motivate potential shoppers to patronize Downtown through Downtown district programming. This may include shopping fairs, special events,

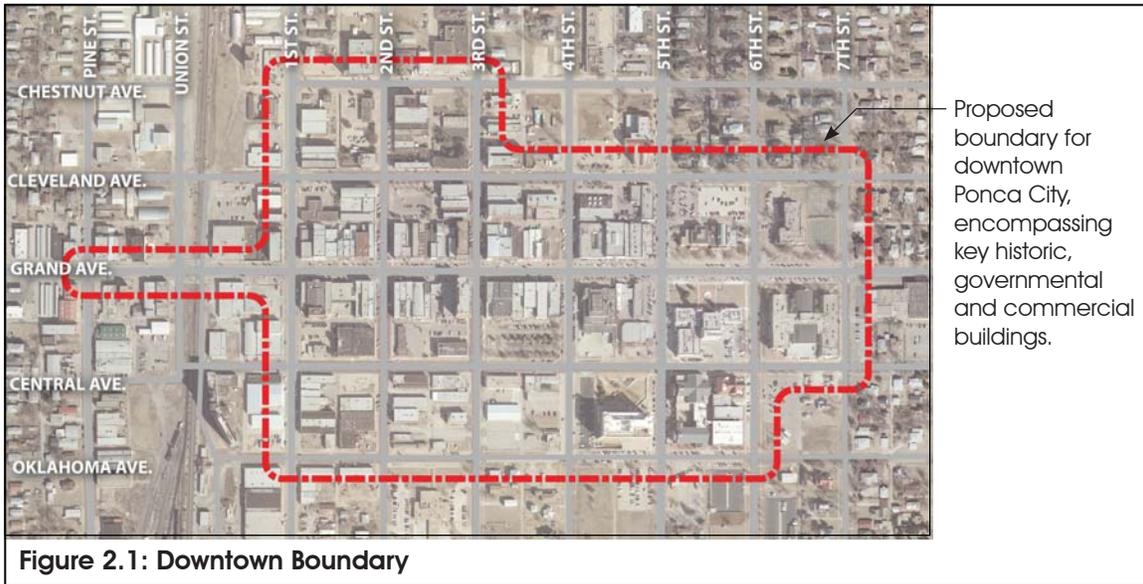


Figure 2.1: Downtown Boundary



Active storefront window displays encourage pedestrian activity and increase retail business. Use of clear (non-black or mirrored) glass is important for creating first floor building transparency.



Awnings and trees help to shade pedestrians from the elements near the storefront display windows. These relatively inexpensive elements can help to transform the downtown area.

promotions, cultural celebrations, Ponca Theater events, and ribbon-cutting ceremonies.

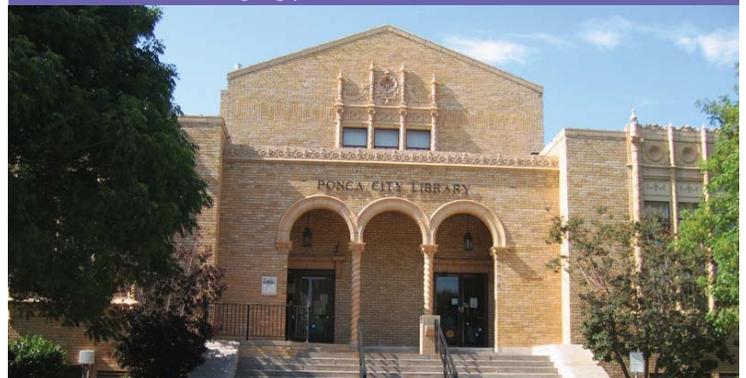
4. Incorporate nighttime shopping events and historic programming that can bring life to Downtown after 5:00 p.m. and encourage a more vibrant "24/7" lifestyle. This type of activity will be particularly attractive to younger residents who seek such amenities and cultural attractions in their community.
5. Utilize awnings and overhangs to form a pedestrian scale and to encourage activities such as art displays, sidewalk cafes, and permitted street vendors.
6. Use street trees, building design techniques, covered walkways, and other treatments to provide for pedestrians protection from inclement weather.
7. Improve the pedestrian experience with active storefront displays, kiosks, public seating, pedestrian lighting, landscaped planters, and points of historical reference.
8. Retain the existing on-street and off-street parking in the Downtown area.

Allow new businesses, institutions, and residents to use the underutilized parking resources to fill vacant buildings and encourage redevelopment of Downtown buildings.

9. Consider a parking district to provide parking management in Downtown. The district may provide for funding of improvements, signage, wayfinding, patrol, and the allocation of space for individual uses. Maintain existing service access alleyways to the back of buildings. See **Figure 2.2, Parking and Service Access**.
10. Reconnect the adjacent neighborhoods to Downtown by way of bicycle paths, sidewalk repair and replacement, and improvement of lots with transitional uses.
11. Maintain a government presence in Downtown, which reflects the City's commitment to its Downtown. This also gives stability to Downtown and helps draw both residents and visitors to this special area.
12. Identify Downtown redevelopment opportunities including vacant



The Federal Courthouse is significant governmental anchor bringing jobs and visitors to the downtown area.



The Ponca City library is significant cultural hot spot that can serve to bring more visitors to downtown. It also serves a role as a location for community meetings and other cultural events.

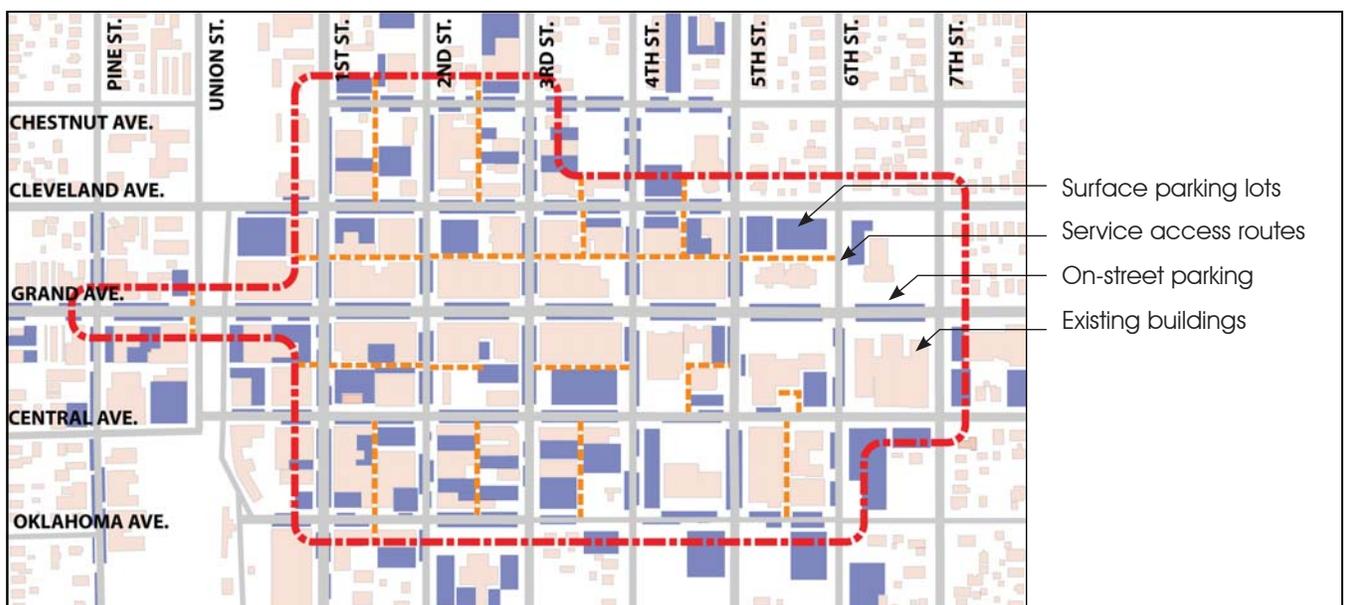


Figure 2.2: Parking and Service Access

- Surface parking lots
- Service access routes
- On-street parking
- Existing buildings

buildings, vacant sites, and properties that do not fit with the evolving vision for Downtown. See **Figure 2.3, Redevelopment Opportunities.**

- ◆ Attract additional retail, office, and associated businesses to the Downtown district.
 1. Create attractive incentive packages to entice retailers and employers to locate within the Downtown district. This may be to fill vacant space, redevelop deteriorating sites, or infill on vacant or underutilized sites.
 2. Establish a policy for the use of tax abatement for business start-ups that locate in Downtown and commit to pre-established lease terms.
 3. Consider the formation of a tax increment financing (TIF) district. Tax increment funds may be used as subsidy to lower Downtown lease rates to make them favorable. These funds may also be used for improvement projects.
 4. Develop a business incubator in a vacant Downtown building to support entrepreneurial investments in small business start-ups.
- 5. Identify opportunities for infill commercial development on vacant or underutilized properties within the Downtown district and create incentives for their development.
- 6. Review and amend the permitted uses within the CBD, Central Business District, to modify the focus for retail employment, and upper floor residential uses. Restrict undesirable uses within the Downtown, such as farm equipment sales and service, repair services, and automotive sales and service.
- 7. Develop design standards for the construction of new and improvement of existing buildings to ensure architectural compatibility and cohesiveness with the historic character of Downtown.
 - ◆ Promote Downtown as a viable and attractive, alternative residential living environment.
 1. Consider creating a Downtown urban residential district with specific standards relating to building design and articulation, orientation, height,

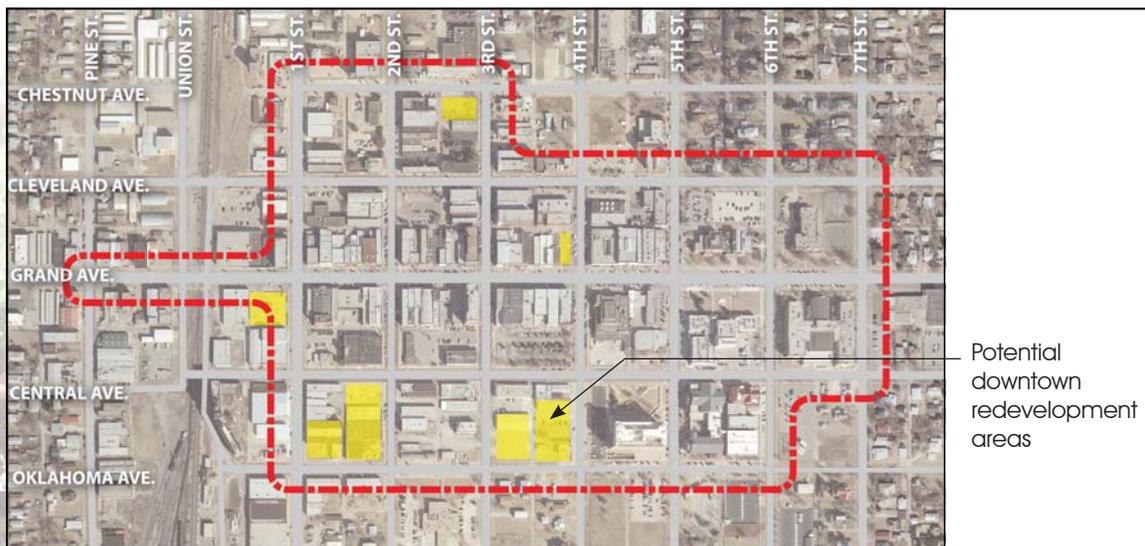


Figure 2.3: Redevelopment Opportunities

zero setbacks, and parking to blend into the intended urban character of Downtown.

2. Introduce housing targeted to mature residents in Downtown as a means to increase the Downtown population and offer them convenient access to services and community amenities.
3. Rezone the fringes of the immediate Downtown area for more intensive urban residential use with provisions for minimum (rather than maximum) heights, densities, and floor area ratios.

◆ Develop a focus on entertainment and civic activity.

1. Amend the zoning ordinance provisions within the CBD, Central Business District, to allow street displays and outdoor entertainment uses, subject to certain restrictions and performance standards.
2. Develop a public art program, particularly in Downtown (and also City-wide). Solicit competitive entries for projects that may include visual exhibits (sculptures, murals, etc.) displays, and performances.
3. Create a fundraising campaign to generate sufficient revenue to paint the proposed murals of the Robin Hood Flour grain elevator.
4. Adopt standards and operating parameters for entertainment uses in Downtown to prevent nuisances and ensure compatibility with existing uses.

◆ Create a distinctive identity for the Downtown district with expanded aesthetic enhancements and beautification.

1. Form a distinguishable edge to the district with monuments and gateway treatments at the entries from each



This antique fountain is a one-of-a-kind object that helps to give downtown its unique interest and character. This kind of element should be integrated with improve streetscape improvements.



An artist's bench is another object that connotes the vitality of arts and culture in downtown.



As an improvement to the downtown gateway, add a mural to the Robin Hood Flour grain elevator.

direction (particularly at each end of Grand Avenue), along with unifying design elements such as vegetated wall segments, decorative lighting, street and sidewalk patterns, and other unique urban design treatments. By defining the boundaries with gateways and identifying public open plaza spaces and interconnection of pathways with the rest of Ponca City, Downtown's unique urban identity will be enhanced. See **Figure 2.4, Gateways, Pathways and Open Space**.

2. Extend the streetscape improvements -- lighting, landscaping, and crosswalks -- beyond Grand Avenue throughout the entire district. Stage the improvements one Downtown street at a time as follows: widen the sidewalks by narrowing the street; install special paver crosswalks; install new vehicular/pedestrian lighting; and install new sidewalk paving, street trees, planters, wayfinding signage, and street furniture such as benches and waste receptacles. [insert Master Plan graphic – not yet produced]
3. Embed decorative street paving patterns at key intersections, such as Grand Avenue and 2nd Street near the Ponca Theater.

4. Create a unique design for the street signage throughout Downtown to distinguish it from the adjacent areas.
5. Consider options to reduce the width of Grand Avenue. Its current width of over 70 feet makes it difficult for pedestrian crossing, effectively serving as a barrier to pedestrian activity. Existing sidewalks are somewhat narrower than ideal for planting street trees. Modest existing traffic counts do not warrant four lanes of traffic. Therefore, the street cross section may be narrowed, thereby providing for either wider sidewalks or a landscaped center island. Wider sidewalks would enable and accommodate outdoor cafes and displays. A center island would provide for beautification and serve as a pedestrian refuge for street crossings. These concepts are illustrated in exhibit Options A and B. See **Figures 2.5, Existing Grand Avenue Streetscape, Figure 2.6, Existing Grand Avenue Plan, Figure 2.7, Option A Streetscape, Figure 2.8, Option A Plan, Figure 2.9, Option B Streetscape, and Figure 2.10, Option B Plan**.



Figure 2.4: Gateways, Pathways and Open Space

Occasional street trees
 Sidewalk is modest width
 Older building with boarded-up windows

Four-lane 70 foot wide street with diagonal parking
 Historic Ponca Theatre building
 Advertising bench



Figure 2.5: Existing Grand Avenue Streetscape



Only a few street widely spaced street trees on sidewalk that is too narrow
 30 degree angled parking
 Four lanes of roadway and low traffic counts. Curb to curb on Grand Avenue is over 70 feet in width, making it difficult for pedestrians to cross

Figure 2.6: Existing Grand Avenue Plan

Antique street lights with banners

Wide sidewalks, street trees and landscaped planters with historic markers

Pedestrian-oriented signs

Outdoor dining area

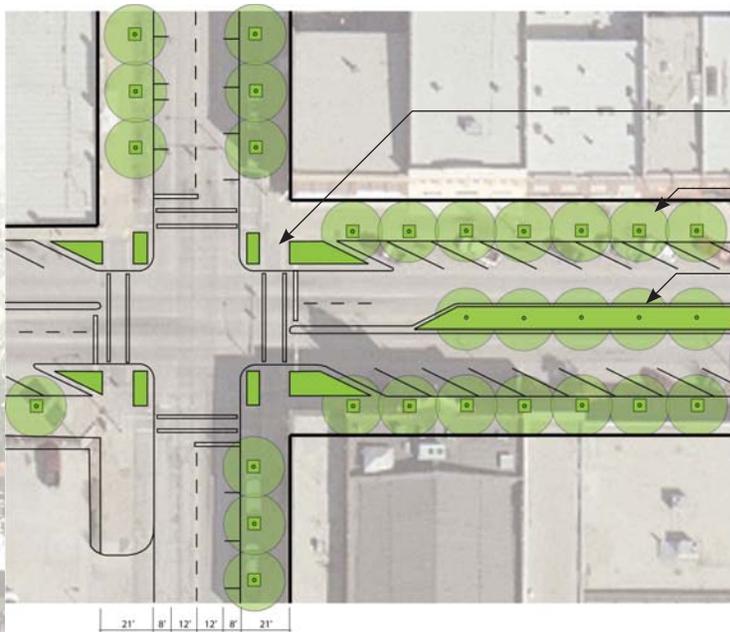
Row of trees in street median

Narrower street reduces speed of traffic

Crosswalk with special paving



Figure 2.7: Option A Streetscape



Bump-outs at crosswalks reduce length of crosswalks to 35'

New street trees with landscaped planters at 20' spacings

Landscaped median with left hand turn lane at intersections

Figure 2.8: Option A Plan

Antique street lights with banners

Street trees and landscaped planters

Outdoor dining

Narrower street reduces speed of traffic

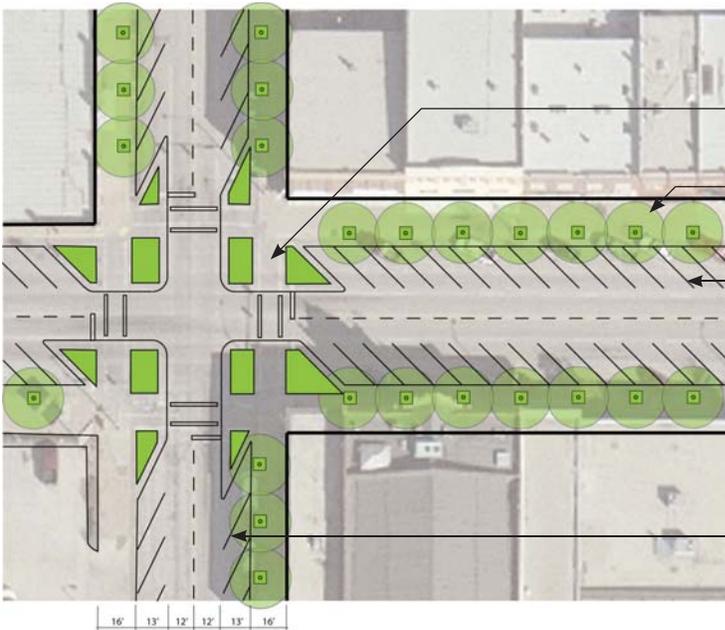
Crosswalk with special paving

Pedestrian scaled signs

Additional building awnings



Figure 2.9: Option B Streetscape



Bump-outs at crosswalks reduce length of sidewalk to only 24'

New street trees at 20' spacings

45 degree diagonal parking increases number of on-street parking spaces

Diagonal parking at cross street increases number of parking spaces over parallel spaces

Figure 2.10: Option B Plan

Preserve and Enhance Historic Resources

Ponca City has been proactive in identifying its historic resources, as evidenced by the Historic Preservation Plan completed in September 2007. This report identifies 64 historic structures, many of which are in Downtown. The Zoning Ordinance (Section 11-11-2) contains provisions for an Historical Preservation District, although, presently, there is only one designated historic district. An additional effort is underway to identify additional districts appropriate for historic district designation.

Downtown is a key potential historic district due to its many historic resources. It has a uniformity of character with very few missing buildings that make it a good candidate for designation. It has also suffered a long-term loss of retail business activity due to development along 14th Street and elsewhere since the 1970's. Coupling the unique Downtown character with an historic designation would help to reposition Downtown both within the community and in the regional marketplace.

GOAL 2.4: Expanded opportunities for redevelopment and economic growth by leveraging the City's impressive collection of historic properties.

- ◆ Identify local, state, or national historical designations that may allow for grants and preservation design assistance.
 1. Continue pursuit of a Federal- and/or State-registered historic district designation. The boundaries of the district should be consistent with the CBD district, as shown in Map 2.4, Downtown Boundary. See **Figure 2.11, Historic Structures**.
 2. Designate additional local historical districts with boundaries that capture contributing buildings identified in the historical survey. These local historical districts must be further protected through enhanced provisions and standards in the zoning ordinance.
 3. Continue to offer financial assistance for property owners through a façade rehabilitation program to facilitate



Figure 2.11: Historic Structures

Source: Derived from Ponca City Historic Preservation Plan

improvement of historic buildings. This program may involve, but not be limited to, low-interest loans, grants, technical assistance, and/or expedited approval for façade and/or sign improvements. Such projects should also be recognized in press notices and marketing materials, as well as on the City's website.

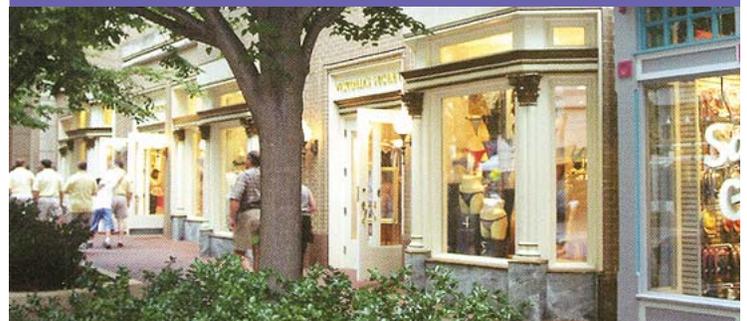
4. Strengthen the standards and guidelines for the Historic Preservation Advisory Panel that relate to development, reconstruction, and additions to buildings within the boundaries of the districts.
- ◆ Support mandatory development standards that compliment the historic integrity of Downtown.
 1. Revise the current approach of the Ponca City Main Street Authority administering the design guidelines for the Central Business District to their review of conformance with more special standards. This will increase the certainty of outcomes and improve the process.



These buildings are good examples of zero front and side yard setbacks. When one building is set right next to another and they front directly on the public sidewalk, the opportunity is present for creating a set of continuous display windows. Continuous display windows are the foundation for most successful retail commercial streets.



Building entries that front directly on the public sidewalk allow easy access to the retail establishment. These also allow for tasteful pedestrian-oriented signage.



There should be enough space between the street curb and building to allow for landscaped planters that are at least 6 feet in width, as well as 8-10 foot width for the sidewalk.



The Ponca Theatre is a historic structure that has a special place in the collective consciousness of residents that grew up in Ponca City. It is both an architectural and cultural landmark for downtown.

2. Amend the CBD standards to require:
 - a. zero front and side yard setbacks;
 - b. a minimum building height of two stories, which may include a one-story building with a two-story parapet wall (retain maximum of six stories);
 - c. entrances and architecture focused on the street front;
 - d. compatible architectural style, scale, and rhythm of buildings;
 - e. street trees and landscaped planters in wide sidewalks;
 - f. street and pedestrian-scale site lighting; and
 - g. pedestrian-scale signs and awnings.
3. Direct non-retail, office, institutional, and residential uses on upper floors, with incentives for vertical mixed use.
4. Encourage the development of additional historic monuments, such as the Oklahoma Vietnam Memorial, to supplement and give identity to Downtown. Such monuments may act as a catalyst for attracting tourists and supporting Downtown economic development.

FUTURE LAND USE AND URBAN DESIGN: PLAN AND POLICIES

The essence of land use planning is a recognition that Ponca City does not have to wait and react to growth and development. Rather, it can determine where growth will occur and what character this new development will reflect. Through active community support, this Plan will ensure that development meets certain standards and, thus, contributes to achieving the desired pattern of development and community character.

Ponca City Future Land Use Plan

As a guide for land development and public improvements, the Plan depicted in Map 2.2, Future Land Use & Character Plan, captures and incorporates into the City's policies the community's values regarding how, when, and where the City will grow over the course of the next two decades. This is significant since the findings and recommendations contained in this Plan provide the basis for the City's development ordinances as the primary tools to implement this Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION: PRUDENT USE OF DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Directly associated with the implementation of this Plan is the enactment of appropriate incentives, standards, and regulations to ensure compliance with the City's policies and overall community vision. While regulations impose certain restrictions on the use of land, in the interest of all persons and the community as a whole, they are an essential component for realizing many of the values and priorities expressed by individuals and groups during this planning process. Regulations that are enacted must be reasonable, fair, and equally applied – and effective in achieving a specific public purpose. There must also be diligence in their enforcement so as to “maintain a level playing field” and protect the interests of all persons and not just those who are nearby or adjacent to the use.

There are a variety of methods available to enact control and, thus, manage development in a responsible manner. The approach taken is fully in the hands of the community and its leadership. While there are traditional means that are common among other communities, there are also creative variations that can be



customized to address the specific issues and desired outcomes of Ponca City. The content of this chapter establishes a firm foundation and policy framework to support whichever implementation strategy the community chooses to pursue.

