

BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENT II – LAND USE PLAN
ADOPTED FEBRUARY 3, 2003

I. BACKGROUND

The Land Use Plan represents Element 2 of the Bartholomew County Comprehensive Plan. This second phase of the plan was conceived in tandem with Element 1: Goals and Policies, adopted by the Bartholomew County Commissioners in September 1999. The first phase of the comprehensive plan process was developed with significant public input representing a variety of interests.

A committee of the Plan Commission compiled information over the last several months that led to a Draft Land Use Map, four proposed Land Use Districts, and recommended Land Use Principles.

II. GENERAL LAND USE PRINCIPLES

Preserve productive farmland for farming.

The committee found that over half of the land in county planning jurisdiction is prime farmland according to a definition developed by the committee (see “Area Definitions,” below). Farming is an important part of Bartholomew County’s history and economy. Farmland preservation is becoming a greater concern in the county, and in the state overall, as more and more prime farmland is lost to development. The committee found that the county should develop a plan for preserving prime farmland.

Make decisions that will direct growth to areas that are suitable for growth.

Element 1 of the plan includes many policies that are intended to direct growth to appropriate areas. Improvements relating to utilities, roads, and other infrastructure should be made if necessary for public health and safety, in areas where growth is desired, and to revitalize existing towns and villages. Extensive development may not be appropriate in prime farmland districts, significant natural areas, and significant historic areas.

Make land use decisions that protect and improve community resources and the environment. Land use decisions and construction planning should consider impacts on county resources including, but not limited to, drainage systems, environmentally sensitive areas, surface and groundwater resources, significant forested areas, natural habitats, and historic resources.

Intergovernmental cooperation should be encouraged.

Projects that are inter-jurisdiction or regional in nature will require cooperation of several government agencies. These may be large construction projects, or regional concerns such as watershed restoration or highway projects. Throughout the comprehensive plan process, the City of Columbus and Bartholomew County have made an effort to coordinate their efforts. The city and county should continue existing cooperative processes, and develop new processes as needed. The county should also take advantage of opportunities to work with other counties on projects or issues of regional or statewide concern.

III. LAND USE DISTRICTS

The land use districts should not be considered zoning districts, but, rather, the vision of the people of Bartholomew County for the best use of land in the county. The districts defined as part of the land use plan are not rigid. From time to time, there may be reason to amend the plan by adjusting boundaries and/or descriptions.

Agricultural Preferred

The Agricultural Preferred district includes prime farmland in Bartholomew County outside developed areas. Prime farmland in our county includes most of the eastern and northern parts of the county. There are a few areas of prime farmland in the south and west. Element 1 of the comprehensive plan includes the goal of preserving productive farmland, as well as 18 policies directly relating to farmland preservation (Goal 1, Policies 1-A through 1-R).

Natural Resource/Recreation

This district includes environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains, rivers and streams, aquifers/other water supply areas, wetlands, environmentally important forests and other natural habitats, and parks and recreational areas. It should be noted that some of these areas have not been identified or need to be updated, including, but not limited to, wetlands and floodway areas. Element 1 of the comprehensive plan includes several goals and policies relating to conservation of such resources, including the following overall goal: "Goal 2: Protect open space such as woodlands, floodplains, and wetlands for environmental, recreational, scenic and life-style benefits."

General Rural

The General Rural district is viewed as less restrictive than the preferred and natural resource districts. Intensive development would be discouraged here. The area proposed as General Rural is now a mix of farmland, woodlands, residential, some institutional (such as schools, churches and fire stations), and limited commercial (such as small stores). These uses are appropriate. Most of the area proposed for this district is south and west of the City of Columbus jurisdiction. The general character here is hilly and wooded, with many areas of steep slopes and scenic beauty. There are environmentally important forests in this area. There may be other natural areas within this district, though not specifically designated at this time.

Much of the district may not be suitable for septic systems. Residential development is appropriate if served by public sewer and water, and if designed with drainage systems that address the development and do not contribute to drainage problems elsewhere. Cluster development and smaller lot sizes should be encouraged to maintain open space and natural areas.

Development District

The Development District has initially been drawn to include existing population/commercial centers with public sewer and water systems. These are: Taylorsville, and the unincorporated fringes near Hope, Hartsville, and Elizabethtown. (The towns themselves are separately incorporated and hence not addressed in this plan.) The area around the intersection of State Roads 7 and 9, and U.S. 31 has also been designated as a development district. Development in this area is appropriate only on non-flood hazard land, where drainage issues may be adequately addressed,

and only if public sewer and water connections are possible. Element 1 of the comprehensive plan encourages new development to take place in and around existing developed areas, where public utilities are available.

Other areas could be designated for development where it is feasible to extend public utilities. New development areas should avoid prime agricultural or environmentally sensitive areas. Expansion of existing developed areas has the potential to result in the loss of land in prime farmland and natural resource. Every effort should be made to balance development with the land preservation goals of the comprehensive plan.

Element 1 of the comprehensive plan includes the following goal related to Commerce and Industry: "Goal 18: Promote economic growth in the county by encouraging the location and expansion of businesses and industries that are compatible with their surroundings and provided with adequate services."

IV. AREA DEFINITIONS

The Land Use Plan should include definitions of the major areas identified in the plan. Such definitions will assist in implementation of the plan.

Prime Farmland

Prime farmland consists of land with soil types that are capable of producing crops efficiently and sustainably. This would include pasture land and soils with the potential of producing crops economically and sustainably with irrigation. Prime farmland is located in areas where agriculture production is the principle land use and would be expected to remain as its best and most practical use. Prime farmland would also be located where public water and sewer is not available or practical to provide.

Prime farmland has soils with the potential to produce productive yields of the commercial and specialty crops grown in this area. Drought prone soils with or without the potential of irrigation may also qualify as prime ag land.

The topography is level to greatly rolling land which is not conducive to erosion problems with proper crop production practices. Land more subject to erosion may qualify as prime when Best Management Practices are used in crop production or where ground cover exists such as permanent pasture, hay, or timber.

The location is where agriculture production is the principal land use and would be expected to remain as its best and most practical use; where public water and sewer service are not available or practical; and where a sufficient base of agricultural land, open space, and natural areas are maintained within the county.

Historic Resources

Historic Resources of Bartholomew County include those resources listed in the National Register of Historic Places or the Indiana State Register of Historic Sites and Structures. Resources identified as eligible for the State or National Registers in the Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory also qualify as historic resources. The Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory was conducted in Bartholomew County in 1978. A survey update for Sand Creek Township, as well as parts of Columbus and Wayne Townships, was completed in 2002. An updated survey for other areas of the county should be encouraged. Bartholomew County should implement a policy for protection of historic resources under its ownership or within its planning jurisdiction.

Owners of properties that are identified as historic should retain their individual property rights.

Forest Legacy Area

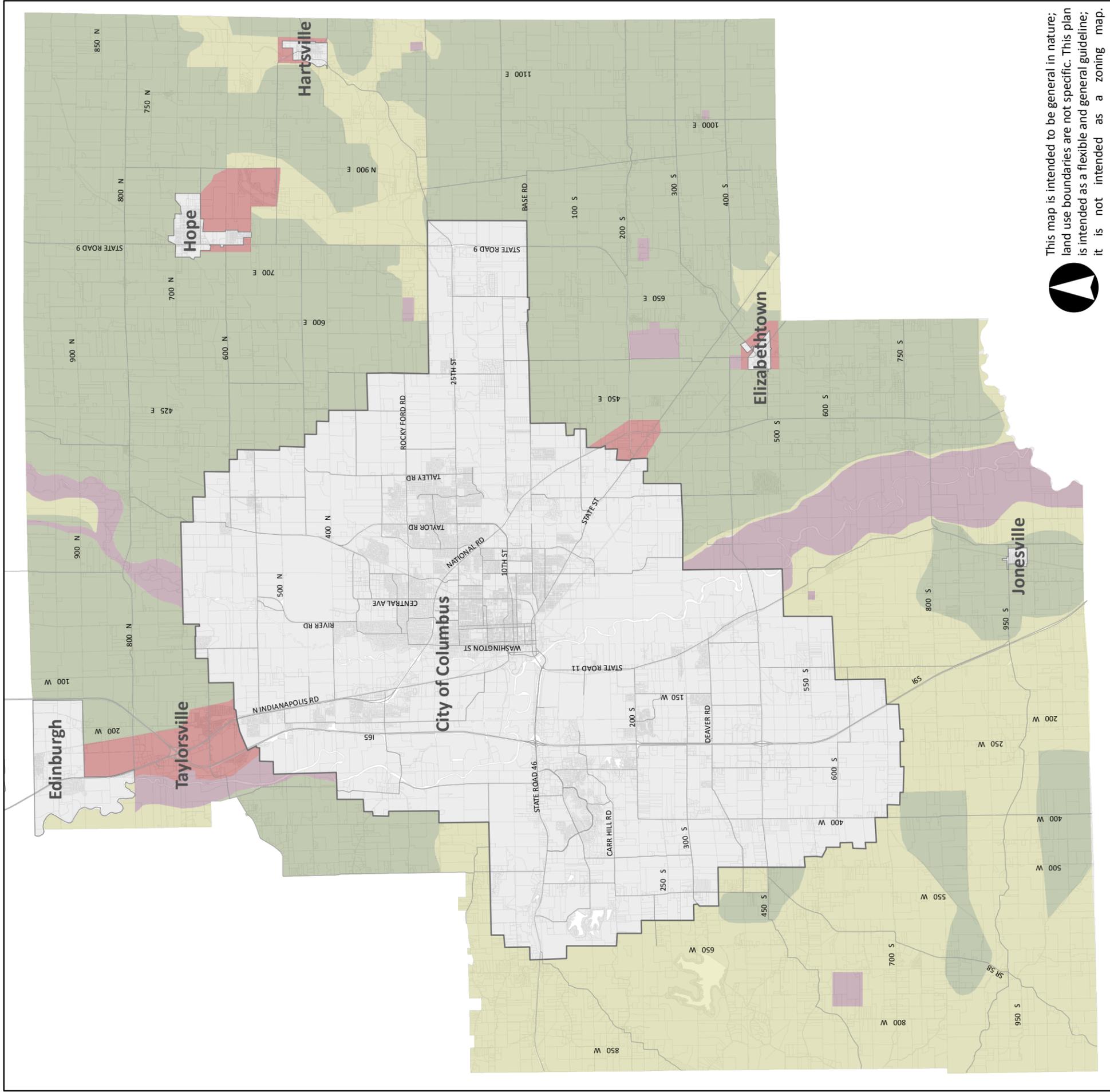
Much of the western third of Bartholomew County was identified as a “Forest Legacy Area” by the Indiana Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee in 1998. The Forest Legacy program was established by Congress as part of the 1990 Farm Bill to identify and protect environmentally important forest lands. In Indiana, the program would operate by purchasing development rights from willing sellers, although it is not available at this time. The owners would retain all other rights, including the right to harvest timber and sell or bequest the remaining rights.

Bartholomew County should encourage programs that offer incentives to property owners who voluntarily protect important forested areas.

Development

Development is defined as commercial, industrial, institutional, or housing development; except for developments of a necessary and low-impact character such as single neighborhood stores, small churches, necessary services such as fire stations, single-family houses, and small residential subdivisions.

Small subdivisions are defined as 4 lots or fewer. Subdivisions of 5-9 lots are defined as medium subdivisions, and subdivisions of 10 or more lots are defined as large subdivisions. Small subdivisions would be appropriate in Agriculture Preferred, General Rural, and Development districts. Medium subdivisions would be appropriate in Development districts, and, under suitable conditions, in General Rural districts. Large subdivisions would be appropriate only in Development districts. Farms of any size are not considered developments for the purpose of this definition.



This map is intended to be general in nature; land use boundaries are not specific. This plan is intended as a flexible and general guideline; it is not intended as a zoning map.

Future Land Use Map Bartholomew County Comprehensive Plan

- Agricultural Preferred District
- Development District
- General Rural District
- Natural Resource / Recreation District
- Other Jurisdiction