

**Frequently Asked Questions**  
**Proposed Greene County Comprehensive Plan**  
**Revised Oct. 29, 2007**

**Q: Why does the county need a comprehensive plan?**

A: A comprehensive plan helps guide decisions impacting growth and development in the unincorporated portions of Greene County. The plan helps the county to grow while coordinating with other cities and state agencies and helps make efficient use of tax-funded resources. Also, state law requires any jurisdiction with Planning & Zoning authority to have a comprehensive plan. Greene County voters approved the county's Planning & Zoning authority in 1971. Planning & Zoning law is detailed in Missouri Revised Statutes, Chapter 64.

**Q: Why is a new plan needed?**

A: Greene County's last comprehensive plan was approved in 1981 and, since then, has been in constant use. While the 1981 Comprehensive Plan has been an important and valuable tool, much has changed in Greene County since its adoption. An updated plan would better address issues related to the unprecedented growth the county has experienced since the 1990s as well as today's emerging issues, like water protection and preservation of valuable agricultural land.

One of the most important issues addressed in the new plan is population growth. Greene County's diverse economy, low cost of living, temperate seasons and beautiful setting help make it a very attractive place to live, and the county's population has skyrocketed in the last two decades. From 1990 to 2000, the county, including the cities within it, grew from 205,000 to 240,000 residents, adding more new people than the entire population of Webster County at the time. U.S. Census estimates show another 15,000 have moved to Greene County since then, but county planners believe that number to be closer to 20,000, based upon the rate of development in the county. Based on current projections, Greene County's population is expected to reach 300,000 by 2010, and could hit 500,000 within the next 25 to 35 years.

With thousands of new people moving to Greene County every year, land is being developed at a comparable rate. Every year, an average of 800 acres of Greene County farmland is converted into new residential neighborhoods. This rate of growth — coupled with the fact that agribusiness is a major factor in Greene County's economy — necessitates long-range planning, insuring adequate land remains available for steady growth while protecting valuable farmland.

**Q: Would this plan change my property's zoning?**

A: No. The plan would not change any existing zoning. The plan is intended only as a guide for future zoning requests. To change your property's zoning, an application must be made to the Greene County Planning & Zoning Office, and the Greene County Planning & Zoning Board and Greene County Commission must hold public hearings before rendering a decision.

**Q: How do I find out how my property is presently zoned?**

A: All property in unincorporated Greene County is zoned. Zoning maps are available at the Greene County Planning & Zoning Office, Greene County Historic Courthouse, Room 306, 940 N. Boonville, Springfield. The county encourages residents with questions to call the Planning & Zoning Office at 868-4005 or to come in and visit with a staff member. Please note: Greene County zoning applies only to properties in the unincorporated portions of the county, **not properties located within city limits** of Springfield or any other municipality. For zoning information inside city limits, contact your city hall.

**Q: How do I change my zoning?**

A: You must submit an application to the Greene County Planning & Zoning Office, along with applicable documentation and fees. Applications for rezoning are reviewed by county planning staff for appropriateness based upon availability of water, wastewater and other utility services, compatibility with surrounding land use and environmental factors like sinkholes and floodplains.

Planning staff makes a recommendation for approval or denial and prepares a report for review by the Greene County Planning & Zoning Board. The board holds public hearings on the third Tuesday of each month to and takes public testimony on each current zoning proposal. After considering the report and public testimony, the board makes a recommendation to the Greene County Commission. On the first Monday of the following month, the commission holds a second public hearing where citizen are allowed to give their input. Final decisions on rezoning cases are made by the Greene County Commission.

**Q: How do I divide my land into lots for sale?**

Subdivision of property in the unincorporated portions of the county is governed by the Greene County Subdivision Regulations, copies of which are at the Greene County Planning & Zoning Office or online at [www.greencountymo.org/web/P&Z/](http://www.greencountymo.org/web/P&Z/).

The manner in which land can be subdivided depends largely on its zoning. If you are subdividing property into more than three lots, an application for proper zoning must be approved by the Greene County Commission (unless lots are 10 acres or larger.) After zoning is granted, a subdivisions plat map must be prepared by a registered surveyor and submitted to the Greene County Planning Department for review. Planning staff determines if the proposed subdivision conforms to the zoning for the property and to the subdivision regulations. The plat is then forwarded to the Greene County Planning & Zoning Board for a single public hearing. Plat proposals are **not** reviewed by the County Commission.

No matter how many lots, state statute allows property owners to subdivide land into parcels of 10 acres or larger without preparing a subdivision plat or making rezoning request.

**Q: How can I currently subdivide my land if it's zoned A-1 Agricultural?**

A: Based upon Zoning and Subdivision Regulations the county adopted in 1978, several options are already available:

- No matter how many new lots are created, state statute allows property owners to subdivide land into parcels of 10 acres or larger **without** making a rezoning request or submitting a subdivisions plat map, unless a new public road is dedicated in the process. Deeds, however, must always be prepared and recorded by the Greene County Recorder of Deeds.
- If you own 20 acres or more, you may subdivide that into two 5-acre tracts without rezoning, **on a one-time basis**. You do this by submitting an Administrative Subdivision Request to the Planning & Zoning Office for review. This type of request helps family farmers to deed smaller tracts of land to their children without rezoning. Administrative Subdivisions are recorded by the Planning & Zoning Office, and **will not be allowed on the same tract of land more than once**, even if the property is sold.
- You may apply to rezone all or a portion of your property to A-R Agriculture-Residential, which allows subdividing of property into 5-acre tracts or larger. The Greene County Commission's final decision takes into account sinkholes, floodplains, soils, septic suitability and other factors.

- You may apply to rezone all or a portion of your property to RR-1 Rural-Residential, which allows subdivide of property into 3 acres or larger. Again, the Greene County Commission's final decision takes into account sinkholes, floodplains, soils, septic suitability and other factors.

- You may apply to rezone and plat your property as a Conservation Development District. This allows lots as small as 2-acres, and may give the same total number of lots you could sell if you subdivided the same property as RR-1. But this also requires that 40% of the land area be conserved as either agricultural land or open space. Final approval of a Conservation Development District is, once again, determined by taking into account sinkholes, floodplains, soils, septic suitability and other factors. The conserved area remains in private ownership — either yours or a property owners' association, if you elect to create one with your subdivision plat. The conserved area does not become owned or maintained by the County or Missouri Conservation Department.

- If municipal water and sewer is already available on your property, you may apply to rezone for various levels of higher density residential development.

**Q: What's the difference between white, brown and grey areas on the attached Greene County Land Use Plan Overview map?**

A: The white, brown and grey areas correspond to details outlined in the proposed Comprehensive Plan. The following provides a description of each area depicted:

In the **white areas**, Greene County staff is likely to make zoning and subdivision plat recommendations allowing property to remain in large lots for agriculture or open space. Property in the white area may still be divided as A-1, an Administrative Subdivision or a Conservation Development District, but would generally not be recommended for rezoning to A-R or RR-1, unless factors specific to that property indicate that such a rezoning would be appropriate.

The **brown areas** are where most of the county's 3- and 5-acre lots are currently located. Greene County staff believe it is logical in these areas to continue that style of residential use and zoning requests would be processed accordingly. Also, conservation developments may be encouraged, if the soils are adequate. Because municipal water and sewer is not planned for these areas, higher density development would not be encouraged.

The **grey areas** show the Urban Growth Areas, as defined by the City of Springfield and other municipalities. This is where these cities plan to eventually extend their municipal sewer and water services, as well as other utilities, allowing for higher-density development. For rezoning requests, the same rules apply here as the white area. In the grey area, however, the undeveloped property held in Conservation Development Districts may later be developed at a high density when water and sewer services become available. If municipal water and sewer are already available, higher density residential development would likely be recommended for approval.

**None of these areas are defined by hard and fast boundaries. The map is to be used as a general guide only.** Again, zoning changes and development depend upon the landowner. Your current zoning and land use will not change unless you request it.

**Q: How would this plan impact my ability to subdivide or develop land in the white, grey or brown zones?**

A: If the Comprehensive Plan is adopted, the only thing that would change is Greene County Planning & Zoning staff would typically recommend against proposals to rezone land in the **white and grey area** as A-R and RR-1 (3- to 5-acre lots) However, depending upon the particular setting of a property (for example, if it is already surrounded by 3- to 5-acre lots) it may be possible for staff to recommend approval for rezoning certain properties as A-R or RR-1. This would be determined on a case-by-case basis. In the **brown areas**, there would be no change from current policy and practice.

**Q: What's the link between development and sewers/water?**

A: Greene County currently requires all urban-style development to be on public water and sewer, including 10,000-square-foot lots and smaller, along with urban commercial and industrial development. Also, state law requires wells to be located 100 feet away from septic systems.

**Q: When and where will municipal sewers and water be extended to the Urban Growth Area, and who pays for it?**

A: Sewers are owned by municipalities. If sewers are installed for new development, they are generally paid for by developers. Each city has a maximum sewage treatment capacity regulated by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. When land is developed, part of the developer's cost is extension and installation of municipal sewer and water supply. Sewer and water availability depends upon both a municipality's plan for large water mains and sewage trunk lines and the rate of development in a particular area.

**Q: How would this plan impact property values in the county?**

A: Currently, property in unincorporated Greene County is valued for its residential development potential. This plan is designed to maintain those property values by encouraging efficient development now while ensuring sufficient land is available for future residential development.

**Q. How would this plan impact property tax assessment in the county?**

A: This plan, on its own, will have no impact upon property tax assessments. Property tax assessment in Missouri is based upon property use, not zoning. Only a change in land use would impact property tax assessments.

**Q: What other communities have successfully implemented similar comprehensive plans?**

A: This plan is comparable to Springfield's Vision 20/20 Plan, and is similar to plans in use in Ft. Collins, Colo.; Stillwater, Minn.; Montgomery County, Md. and St. Charles County, Mo.

**Q: When and how would this plan be finalized?**

A: This plan is still in draft form, and there is no timetable outlined for adoption. Comments made or written on yellow cards at public meetings, or otherwise submitted to county officials, will be taken into consideration before a final draft is written. In addition, formal public hearings will be taken when the plan goes before the Greene County Planning & Zoning Board and the Greene County Commission, which is anticipated some time in 2008. If the plan is adopted, the Board and Commission may amend it at any time, after holding additional public hearings.

**Q: Where can I get more information?**

A: A copy of the plan is posted on the Greene County website: [www.greenecountymo.org](http://www.greenecountymo.org), and copies are also available by contacting the Planning & Zoning Office. Staff members and county officials are also happy to discuss your concerns with you. Call 868-4005 or visit the office in the Greene County Historic Courthouse, 940 Boonville, Room 306, Springfield, MO 65802.