

**HOW TO USE THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS  
IN THE FUTURE LAND USE PLAN  
OF THE BELFAST COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
ADOPTED FUTURE LAND USE PLAN – 10/27/09**

The Future Land Use Plan of the Belfast Comprehensive Plan offers recommendations regarding how land use should occur through-out the City, particularly for the next ten years. These recommendations are *'policy'* statements. These *'policy'* statements are intended to serve as the foundation for zoning and other land use regulations, *'laws'* identified in the City Code of Ordinances, that the City may adopt to implement the Plan's *'policy'* statements. That said, all should recognize that *'policy'* statements are not the *'law'* or the City Code. As such, while the *'policies'* identified in this Plan are often very descriptive, persons should expect that some of the specifics or details contained in the land use area descriptions **may change** as the City moves forward in implementing the Plan through the process of preparing Ordinance proposals and amendments, conducting public hearings on these amendments, and choosing to adopt or not adopt the proposals.

Continuing, the purpose of a Comprehensive Plan is to provide overall *'policy'* direction to the community and its elected and appointed officials regarding issues such as land use. The preparation and adoption of this Plan involved considerable work and multiple opportunities for obtaining public comment and involvement regarding proposals in the Plan; reference timeline for preparing Plan, pages 3-4. Now that the Council adopted the Future Land Use Plan on October 27, 2009, the City will embark on the second stage of the public process which is to prepare, discuss and adopt amendments or new provisions to the City Code of Ordinances (*'the laws'*) to implement *'policy'* identified in the Plan. Examples of the *'laws'* which may be subject to amendment are the City Zoning Ordinance, Site Plan Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance.

Further, the public process associated with the second stage, preparing Ordinance amendments, is quite extensive. There will be future public hearings associated with this work, and the process will provide multiple future opportunities for the public, the Planning Board, and the City Council to consider the desirability of adopting specific amendments; including amendments which may differ from some of specific *'policy'* details included in this Future Land Use Plan. Also, when the City pursues amendments to its *'laws'*, the City usually will target a limited area of the community at any single time, such as the downtown and waterfront area, rather than seeking public comment on all areas through-out the City at the same time as occurred through the Comprehensive Planning process. And, consistent with current City practice, the City will send notification to all affected property owners regarding the public hearings for any proposed amendments so persons are aware of their opportunity to come forward and to be heard. The City believes that the process to adopt the *'laws'* (Zoning Ordinances) for the key elements of this Future Land Use Plan could take 3 years; 2010 – 2012.

In short, the preparation and adoption of a Future Land Use Plan is an important and critical step. This step, however, does not represent the final public opportunity to consider how land use

should occur. It is recognized that there is flexibility regarding the specifics of this Plan that may be reconsidered when ‘laws’ are prepared, and it is anticipated that changes may occur.

Overall, future users of this document should consider the following when preparing Ordinances (‘laws’) to implement the ‘Policy’ direction provided in this Plan.

- 1) This Future Land Use Plan provides solid ‘policy’ direction regarding the main purposes of each of the identified 20 Land Use Areas, but it should be recognized that there is flexibility in preparing Ordinance language to implement this ‘policy’.
- 2) This flexibility would apply but is not necessarily limited to ‘policies’ such as the boundaries of proposed land use areas, the range of uses allowed, and recommended lot size, density and setback requirements. It will, however, be critical that the ‘laws’ that are adopted are **consistent and harmonious** with the main theme of each land use area. For example, the theme for the Residential 1 Area is --- “To retain and support traditional urban residential living patterns so that long established neighborhoods can prosper.” As such, it likely would be inconsistent for the City to allow retail or industrial uses in this Area. However, it likely would be consistent if the proposed minimum lot size was adjusted from the recommendation of 10,000 square feet to 7,500 square feet; both of which are small sized lots in Belfast.
- 3) The public process associated with preparing these ‘policy’ recommendations was quite extensive, however, it is recognized that additional public comment will be forthcoming as Ordinances (‘laws’) are prepared. It is critical that the City be open to considering future public comment in helping to shape any final proposal. Also, events may unfold which may cause the City to re-think proposals in this Plan. Thus, it is understood that this ongoing public process and debate may result in changes being made to the specific recommendations in this Plan.