



Stone County
2030 Comprehensive Plan

Stone County Comprehensive Plan Fall 2008

Prepared for:
Stone County
Board of Supervisors

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Prepared by:



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Section One: Background, Scope & History



Chapter 1: Introduction

As communities and counties begin to change, leaders and citizens often question how to protect their existing communities while permitting growth. Questions often arise about prioritizing upgrades to existing public facilities or when it is appropriate to build new facilities. One way to guide decision-makers is through the development of a comprehensive plan.

A comprehensive plan is a document that addresses issues concerning the future of the community such as transportation, land use, natural resources and community facilities. It also provides the framework for making physical development and policy decisions in the future. The plan is also a valuable resource for those who wish to know about the history and character of the community. Certain minimum elements are required for a Comprehensive Plan by the Mississippi State Statute of 1972; however, more specialized information may be included.

SCOPE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The county will use the comprehensive plan to evaluate development proposals, to coordinate development at the fringes of incorporated areas or high-density areas, to form the foundation for specific area plans, to project future service and facilities needs and to meet the requirements for federal and state grant programs. Once adopted, the comprehensive plan is most often used as a tool to assist the community's decision-makers in evaluating the appropriateness of land development proposals. The plan allows decision-makers a view of the entire community and can help determine the effects of land use decisions on the community as a whole by whether individual proposals are consistent with the overall goals of the community.

The comprehensive planning process is composed of several steps which result in the final plan. The order of the planning process can be adjusted to fit the needs of the community, but are listed in this section in the most reasonable order of occurrence. They are:

Figure No. 1: Elements Required in Comprehensive Plans

Mississippi State Statute Section 17-1-1 states the plan must contain the following elements:

- Goals and Objectives for the long-range development of the county;
- Land Use Plan in map or policy form;
- Transportation Plan depicting, in map form, the proposed functional classifications for all existing and proposed streets and highways;
- Community Facilities Plan which is the basis for a capitol improvements program.

Source: Mississippi State Statute of 1972

Figure No. 2: The Comprehensive Planning Process



1. Existing Conditions and Issues

During the initial stages of the planning process, research of the existing conditions within the community was conducted which included the following topics

- economic, housing and population trends;
- infrastructure;
- community facilities;
- housing conditions and
- land use.

Previous plans and studies were evaluated and interviews conducted with elected officials, prospective developers and other persons with specialized knowledge of the County and its needs.

2. Public Participation

Public participation events were conducted to allow citizens to express their vision and concerns. These events can accomplish a number of objectives depending on the needs of the community in which they are conducted. Most public participation events are centered around determining the needs of the community as seen by its citizens. As such, the goals of the comprehensive plan reflect the values expressed in the community meetings.

3. Development Alternatives

The comprehensive planning process included the study of development alternatives and researched possible funding sources for improvement.

4. Implementation Strategies

This section includes the capital improvements plan and any additional implementation tools that are specific to the communities needs.

5. Writing the Plan

After evaluating all of the above, the Stone County Plan was written, formatted and illustrated to allow the casual reader an

understanding of the material by a quick review, while presenting the more technical aspects in the text.

6. Adoption

After public meetings and review by the Board of Supervisors, the draft plan will be updated and the Board of Supervisors votes on whether to adopt the Plan in part or in whole.

7. Implementation

Implementation of the plan will be an ongoing endeavor and will be accomplished through ordinances, private development decisions and capital improvement projects.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Stone County's growth within the past 10 years has spurred interest in community planning and development. This development has led to an increased awareness as it relates to community character and quality of life. This section provides a timeline that will elaborate on prior and current community planning-related projects.

2005

- *Stone County Strategic Plan*

The Strategic Plan was prepared for the Board of Supervisors and facilitated by the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) and the Stone County Economic Development Partnership (SCEDP). The plan identified goals, objectives, strategies and action steps to encourage the growth and development of the county.

Approximately one hundred interviews were conducted to generate ideas from stakeholders.

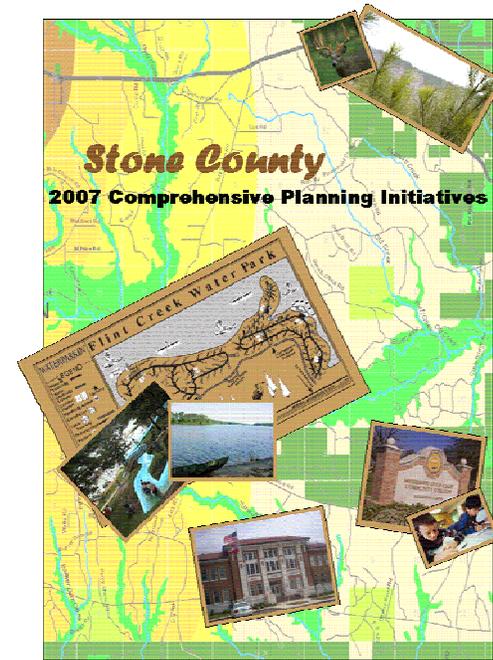
- August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated the Mississippi Gulf Coast

2006

- *USM Needs Assessment*

The Strategic Plan was utilized by a research team from the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) to provide the Board of Supervisors with a near-term needs assessment. This

Figure No. 3: Comprehensive Planning Initiatives, 2007



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

Figure No. 4: Photo of Hurricane Katrina



Source: NASA

assessment identified capital improvement projects necessary to accommodate the anticipated population growth and increased residential development.

- *Existing Land Use Report*

In March 2006, Neel-Schaffer, Inc. representatives presented the Existing Land Use Report to the Board of Supervisors. This report marked the completion of the first of three phases of the comprehensive plan. The report summarized existing land uses and development patterns.

- *Long-Term Community Recovery Plan*

The Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) completed a Long-Term Recovery Plan for the Board of Supervisors in August, 2006 . The purpose of this plan was to provide support to communities that suffered extensive damage by Hurricane Katrina. An interactive process was utilized by the Planning Team to include information from local officials, business owners, civic groups and residents.

- *Hazard Mitigation Plan*

A multi-jurisdictional plan was prepared by Nell Murray, Consultant and Raven James, Emergency Management Official with the assistance of the Stone County Hazard Mitigation Committee. The plan was funded in part by USDA Rural Development through the University of Mississippi.

2007

- *Stone County Comprehensive Planning Initiatives*

In May, Neel-Schaffer, Inc. representatives presented the Board of Supervisors with the Stone County Comprehensive Planning Initiatives. This plan compiled the first two phases of the comprehensive planning process into one document. It consisted of the existing land use, future growth management areas and a capital improvements program.

- *Stone County Comprehensive Plan - Phase III*

The Stone County Board of Supervisors received grant funding

from the MDA and contracted with Neel-Schaffer to prepare a Comprehensive Plan. Public participation and document preparation are the essential components of this phase. An update to the Capital Improvements plan, implementation strategy and digital mapping components are also included.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

The Comprehensive Plan is divided in four major sections: Background and Scope; Existing Conditions; The Built Environment; and The Future.

Section One: Background and Scope

- Chapter 1: Introduction - provides general information about the plan and the planning process.
- Chapter 2: Community Vision - describes the public participation process and summarizes results of the questionnaires, visual preference surveys and other activities.
- Chapter 3: Goals and Objectives - lists goals and objectives captured from the public participation events and interviews with stakeholders in the County.

Section Two: Existing Conditions

- Chapter 4: History of County - describes a detailed history of Stone County and the communities within.
- Chapter 5: Demographics - provides a summary of population and household data; income and poverty data; economic data; and educational achievement of the population and trends.
- Chapter 6: Natural and Cultural Resources - provides a look at the natural and culture resources within the county including geography, climate, historical resources and other assets which identify the area.

Figure No. 5: Attendees Marked Maps to Show Historical and Cultural Resources



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

Section Three: The Built Environment

- Chapter 7: Land Use - this chapter presents information relative to existing and proposed future land use, and gives illustrations of proposed development styles.
- Chapter 8: Transportation - Inventory and maps of existing and proposed road transportation systems, discussion of multi-nodal transportation alternatives.
- Chapter 9: Housing - provides a look census information relative to housing and discusses housing market trends.
- Chapter 10: Community Facilities and Services - includes information on education, recreation, public safety, infrastructure and other public facilities.

Section Four: The Future

- This chapter puts forth practical suggestions for effective implementation of the goals, objectives, and recommendations of the plan.

Appendix

- The appendix contains data gathered during the comprehensive planning process including the results of public participation events.

Chapter 2: Community Vision

The vision for the county comes as a result of input received from citizens and other stakeholders. By capturing the vision of the community, a general consensus on major issues can be reached. This consensus helps the Board in making decisions which represent their constituents. Multiple public participation meetings were held throughout the County during the comprehensive planning process. This chapter will describe those events and the results of the meetings.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION EVENTS

During the Fall of 2007, eight public participation meetings were held at different locations throughout the County to encourage citizen input for the Comprehensive Plan. After a brief presentation by the Neel-Schaffer consulting team, attendees were placed in small work groups. This gave them an opportunity to express what they liked and would like to change about their community and county. Following this small group exercise, a mapping exercise was completed which allowed citizens to identify existing community assets and the preferred location for future developments. Each meeting ended with comments from the small group exercise being placed around the meeting space. This allowed participants to place dots (votes) on those comments they most agreed upon. Surveys were also completed by participants. Refer to Figure No. 6 for meeting dates and locations.

Overview of Break-out Sessions

During the break-out sessions, participants were given four questions to answer.

What do you like best about your community?

What would you like to change about your community?

What do you like best about your county?

What would you like to change about your county?

Figure No. 6: Bookmark-Style Meeting Publicity

Preserving the Past...Capturing the Future

Ways YOU can Participate

Community Meetings:
Attend a meeting listed on the reverse of this card and share your ideas.

Surveys:
Pick up a survey at a community meeting or at the Neel-Schaffer office in downtown Wiggins, 123 East Pine Avenue.

Email:
Send your ideas and opinions to michelle.gill@neel-schaffer.com. In addition, we will add you to our email list and keep you informed on events that you may want to participate in.

Mail :
Michelle Gill
Neel-Schaffer, Inc.
P.O. Box 1487
Hattiesburg, MS
39403

or

Neel-Schaffer, Inc.
123 East Pine Ave
Wiggins, MS 39577

Call:
601-545-1565 or 601-928-0080

Stop By:
Visit Ryan Tice at the Neel-Schaffer office in downtown Wiggins.

Community Meeting Schedule

Perkinston Community
Perkinston Elementary School
Tuesday, September 25, 2007

Big Level Community
Big Level Volunteer Fire Dept.
Thursday, September 27, 2007

McHenry Community
McHenry Public Library
Tuesday, October 2, 2007

Sunflower Community
Sunflower Community Center
Thursday, October 4, 2007

Bond Community & NW Stone Co.
Stone County Fairgrounds
Tuesday, October 9, 2007

Magnolia/Silver Run Communities
Magnolia Volunteer Fire Dept.
Thursday, October 11, 2007

Ramsey Springs
Ramsey Springs Volunteer Fire Dept.
Tuesday, October 16, 2007

City of Wiggins
Senior Citizen Center
Thursday, October 18, 2007

ALL MEETINGS will be from 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. Light refreshments will be served.

Figure No. 7: Photos of Participants at McHenry Community Meeting



Meeting participants working on the small group exercise.



Meeting participants voting on comments generated through small group exercise.

The majority of participants agreed that the best asset of both their community and county are its people. The people of Stone County were said to be friendly and helpful with a true sense of community.

Rural character was the second most popular characteristic of each community and also the of the county. Rural character can be described in many ways, but Stone County residents describe it as being:

- Quiet
- Relaxed
- Scenic
- Not Crowded
- Having a small town or Country Feel
- Agricultural
- Having wildlife and recreation
- No traffic jams
- Peaceful with open spaces
- Unspoiled and serene

Other favorable comments centered around the availability of hunting and fishing, proximity to urban areas, the community college, low crime rates and taxes, positive growth, natural resources and outdoor recreation.

Individual communities varied somewhat in their responses to what they would change about their community or the county. Every community expressed a desire to have improved infrastructure, community centers or parks with recreational facilities and an increase in fire and police protection. While citizens were appreciative of the efforts of volunteer firefighters, there is widespread concern about whether an all-volunteer system will be adequate with the accelerated growth of the county. In addition, a desire to have more visibility from the Sheriff's office was suggested. Citizens also communicated the need for better schools and shopping in the county and better communication between elected officials and community residents.

Community Vision

Results of Survey

Based upon the responses to survey questions were gathered and tabulated. The following is a summary of the comments. The results of additional questions can be found in the Appendix.

Of the people who completed questionnaires:

- Fifty-one percent (51%) have lived in Stone County 15 years or longer;
- Sixty-six percent (66%) plan to retire in the County.

When asked how their community has changed over the past few years:

- Seventy-nine percent (79%) believe their community has either improved or stayed the same;
- Nineteen percent (19%) believe their community has declined;
- Two percent (2%) of the voters were unsure of the direction of the county.

When asked to comment on the public school system:

- Thirty-two percent (32%) felt the quality of education and test scores should be improved,
- In several surveys, written comments provided by residents suggested renovating existing school buildings or constructing new buildings.

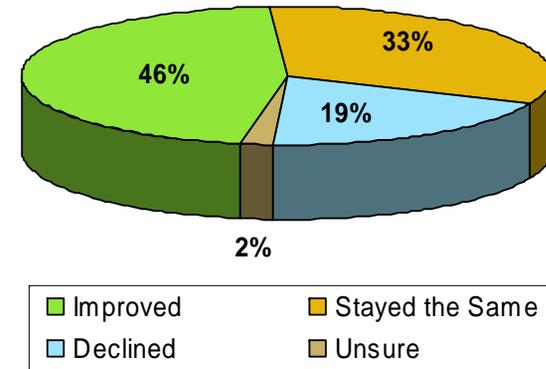
Sixty-six percent (66%) of the respondents rated the existing recreational facilities as being either good or fair. In addition, community centers and new recreational facilities were cited as being a need in individual communities.

When asked which type of business they would like to see in the county:

- Sixty percent (60%) requested clothing, home improvement and grocery stores.
- Seventy-nine percent (79%) said they would support the aforementioned type stores if available.

Figure No. 8: Stone County Survey Responses

How has Stone County changed over the years?



What types of businesses would you like to see in Stone County?

Movie Theater	Coffee Shop
Skating Rink	Florist
Clothing/Shoe Stores	Gyms
Restaurants	Sporting Goods Store
Home Improvement	Mall
Grocery Stores	Medical Offices
Manufacturing	Warehouse Suppliers
Craft Store	Art/Cultural Museums
General Retail	

Community Vision

Figure No. 9: Park Visual Preference Summary



Community Vision

The most frequent type of entertainment venue requested was a movie theatre.

When asked how they would rate the availability of quality housing in their community, 75 % of respondents rated housing as either good or fair.

Visual Preference Survey

A visual preference survey (VPS) uses pictures to gauge a community's ideals. This information can be very useful in developing design concepts and specific improvements in an area. In Stone County, a VPS was conducted at the wrap-up meeting. The pictures presented in the VPS represented concepts and ideas in similar small, and sometimes rural communities around the United States. The meeting attendees were asked to view five pictures under a given topic heading. Once they had viewed all of the pictures, they were asked to identify the pictures that best represented what they would prefer to see in Stone County. They were also asked to identify the picture that best represented something they would prefer not to see in the county. Finally, residents were asked to respond to which picture they considered to be a "minimum standard" for Stone County. The results of the VPS survey can be found in the Appendix. A summary of the responses to some of the topics are as follows:

When asked about **parks** in Stone County

- Sixty-five percent (65%) of residents preferred to see a park featuring multiple activities, including a walking path, playground equipment, open space and a pavilion.
- Twenty-four percent (24%) liked the idea of a general open space which focused on natural features—such as a lake or trees—or one that featured a simple structure—such as a gazebo or small pavilion.
- Thirty-five percent (35%) of residents preferred to not have a spray park for youth.

When asked about **commercial development** along the highway in Stone County

- Seventy-one percent (71%) of residents preferred to see

commercial developed in a strip-style center with landscaping.

- Forty-seven percent (47%) considered the same style strip center without landscaping would be a “minimum standard” for Stone County.
- Fifty-nine percent (59%) of votes tabulated discouraged the development of detached commercial structures.

SUMMARY

The strongest message that emerged from the public participation process is an appeal to citizens and leaders to recognize and protect the rural value and natural assets of the community. Although residents understand that growth is inevitable, all participants gave a resounding message requesting quality, controlled growth. Stone County residents also expressed a need to be more connected to each other and to elected officials.

The results of the public participation events were used to create the goals and objectives component of the Comprehensive as well as the recommendations and implementations sections. It is expected these will help guide policy decisions in future years.

Figure No. 10: Commercial Development Visual Preference Summary



Community Vision

Chapter 3: Goals and Objectives

The Goals and Objectives for the future growth and development of Stone County were written to reflect the comments and opinions of the residents of the County. Goals are broad based statements that state a desired outcome. Objectives give suggestions on how the goals may be achieved. In addition to the Goals and Objectives found in this chapter, most of the chapters contain specific recommendations that will further the Goals and Objectives stated below. The final section of this plan, “The Future,” gives specific information on how the Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations can be accomplished.

GOAL 1: PROTECT AND PROVIDE FOR THE COUNTY’S MOST IMPORTANT ASSET—ITS PEOPLE.

Objectives

- Analyze the adequacy of essential services and facilities; design program for needed improvements.
- Initiate incentives and provide infrastructure needed to attract and retain business and industry.
- Determine the adequacy of transportation and communication networks; provide matching funds for projects.
- Provide facilities and resources needed for police and fire protection.
- Provide the facilities and resources needed to have an excellent educational program for all citizens.
- Encourage citizens to work together within their neighborhoods to facilitate positive change.
- Encourage communications between elected and appointed leaders and the community.
- Establish a systematic program for upgrading and maintaining recreational facilities.
- Provide for the preservation of important cultural and historic places and buildings.

GOAL 2: PROTECT AND MAINTAIN THE RURAL CHARACTER OF THE COUNTY.

Objectives

- Provide for the preservation of important cultural and historic places and buildings.
- Promote and preserve the rural character that is valued by residents.
- Create and utilize regulations and ordinances that better insure protection of rural character.
- Discourage new development that may threaten established communities and rural land
- Protect the environment and peacefulness of the county
- Commemorate the County’s history by identifying and documenting properties with historic value.
- Preserve rural land, open spaces and scenic vistas.
- Protect and conserve the natural resources of the County such as scenic rivers, forested areas, and wetlands.
- Make main arterials and gateways attractive and inviting.

GOAL 3: UTILIZE SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES TO HELP PREPARE FOR GROWTH AND TO INSURE QUALITY COMMUNITIES.

Objectives:

- Utilize land use codes that adhere to Smart Growth Principles.
- Expand infrastructure to support development in appropriate places.
- Prevent undesirable or unsightly development.
- Channel higher density development into existing towns and village centers.
- Require conservation subdivision in rural areas, thereby preserving open space and farmland.
- Utilize existing regulations such as the Subdivision Ordinance to achieve minimum standards.
- Determine appropriate areas for core community areas and locate community centers, parks, and small retail in these areas.
- Make sure housing is available for all income groups by insuring that different types, sizes and prices are being built and maintained.
- Build pedestrian connections between communities.

Figure No. 11:

Smart Growth Principles

Based on the experience of communities around the nation that have used smart growth approaches to create and maintain great neighborhoods, the Smart Growth Network developed a set of ten basic principles:

1. Mix land uses
2. Take advantage of compact building design
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
4. Create walkable neighborhoods
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

Section Two: Existing Conditions



Chapter 4: History of The County

The historical background of a place helps define the culture of the population as well as the natural assets which attracted civilization to that place. This chapter will give a brief chronological history of the county and a special section on the Longleaf Pine forests that once defined South Mississippi.

Charles Sullivan's book, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College: A History was used to supplement additional historical reference documents to create the history portion of this plan.

STONE COUNTY: A CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

In 1812, the Choctaw Indians ceded their land from the Pearl River to the Perdido River to the United States in the Treaty of Mount Dexter. The Perdido is a small river flowing into the gulf between Mobile, Alabama and Pensacola, Florida. These lands entered the Mississippi Territory by statute in May of 1812. The entire area, originally named Mobile County, was quickly broken into three counties: Hancock, Jackson and Mobile Counties. Hancock County was the western most portion of the split and encompasses the modern day counties of Harrison, Hancock, Pearl River and Stone Counties.

Almost 50 years later, in 1861, the first settlers appeared in the northern Harrison County. John Perkins and his family settled an area of land at the fork of Red Creek and Ten Mile Creek that would later be named Perkinston after the settlers. Growth in the northern part of Harrison County continued to steadily increase in and around Perkinston until the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad passed through the settlement in 1896 tipping the scales of change.

Timber and Railroads

William Hardy, who was at the time overseeing the construction of the New Orleans and North Eastern Railroad (NO&NE RR) from New Orleans to Meridian, began planning a railway line to connect the

Figure No. 12: History Time Line

1800	-1812	Treaty of Mount Dexter signed ceding land from the Choctaw Indians to the United States.
	-1812	Land obtained in the Treaty of Mount Dexter entered the Mississippi Territory.
	-1817	Mississippi entered the Union as the 21st state.
	-1861	John Perkins settled the area later to be named Perkinston.
	-1883	First plat of Niles City, later renamed McHenry, was proposed.
	-1886	A settlement 10 miles north of McHenry was established originally called Niles City, this name was changed to Wiggins.
	-1896	The first train of the Gulf & Ship Island Railroad passed through Perkinston.
1900	-1902	Finkbine Paper Company built a mill in Wiggins

Continued next page . .

Wiggins decided to form a new county. McHenry decided to create a second judicial district of Harrison County.

-1905 1900

Second Judicial District of Harrison County created and then deemed null and void in the following months when ballots were not accounted for after the elections for county seat.

-1906

McHenry and Wiggins joined forces to create a county under Senator Bilbo's bill. The bill failed.

-1908

Harrison County Agricultural High School (HCAHS) was established in Perkinston.

-1911

HCAHS opened its doors for the first session.

-1912

Finkbine Lumber Company and Mississippi Farms Company open a pickle plant in Wiggins.

-1912

Senator Andrew Wiggins Bond passed a Stone County bill through legislature. The bill passed but failed to receive the governor's signature of approval.

-1912

Continued next page. . .

History and Culture

Mississippi Gulf Coast to Jackson known as the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad (G&SI RR). These railways would meet at a hub 72 miles from the coast, eventually named Hattiesburg for Hardy's wife. With the establishment of these rail lines, Hattiesburg and Gulfport were born along with many other small sawmill communities along the lines.

Farming and timber were the main staples of north Harrison County. Timber near creeks and rivers was harvested and floated downstream to sawmills for processing. Soon timber areas around these waterways were exhausted and it seemed the timber industry was slowing. With the railway came a boost in the timber industry and the construction of more sawmills, this time along the rail lines. Many settlements grew around these sawmills including McHenry, Bond and Wiggins.

Dummy lines spurred from the main railway into the piney woods to provide easy access to timber. With the explosion of the timber industry in South Mississippi, timber was taken from every viable area and shipped to sawmills along the rail lines. In 1902, one of the largest lumber mills in the South, Finkbine Lumber Company, was built in Wiggins.

Formation of Stone County

In 1883, a plat for Niles City was proposed along the future route of the G&SI RR. The town was eventually renamed McHenry for Dr. George Austin McHenry, one of its more notable citizens. Ten miles north of McHenry, another settlement grew. This settlement also started with the name Niles City but eventually took the name Wiggins in honor of Wiggins Hatten, one of their earlier settlers.

On July 27, 1905, Wiggins settlers held a meeting and voted to form a new county with Wiggins as the county seat. This declaration did not sit well with the other settlements, especially McHenry. Perkinston at the time was vying for the location of the new Harrison County Agricultural School and did not want to participate in any event that took them out of Harrison County. In June 1905, the people of McHenry held a meeting and decided to form a second judicial district within Harrison County. Since creating a second judicial district is easier than creating a new county, the Mississippi state legislature sided with McHenry on September 24, 1906. A special election was held to decide whether

Wiggins or McHenry would be the seat of the Second Judicial District of Harrison County. McHenry won the election by one vote. In the next few months controversy over the election gave rise to investigation. All was lost when the ballots disappeared and the election was deemed null and void. Though this election was over, the battle for selection as the county seat between these two towns would continue for more than ten years.

In January 1908, Mississippi legislature passed a bill creating Forrest County. This bill so angered the people of Wiggins and McHenry, that they joined forces and backed a bill by Mississippi Senator Theodore Bilbo to form a new county. The bill failed.

Talk of the new county was dismissed for the next few years and the leaders in the county worked on establishing a county-wide agricultural high school. Perkinston and Wiggins both contended for the placement of the high school through offerings of land and money. In 1911, Harrison Agricultural High School was established in Perkinston and in September of 1912, the school opened for its first session.

The purpose of the school was to provide practical agricultural education to people in Harrison County. Fear about the future of the timber industry prompted visionaries in the county to plan for an agricultural economy on which to fall back. They believed the vast tracts of timberless land held potential in the agricultural market. As part of this vision, the Finkbine Lumber Co. established a pickle plant in Wiggins in cooperation with Mississippi Farms Company in 1912. Though Wigginites claimed to be the "Pickle Capital of the World", the soil in the area could not produce enough pickles to supply the plants production. The cost of importing pickles from other areas eventually caused the demise of the plant in 1983.

In 1912, with the help of Senator Andrew Wiggins Bond, the Stone County bill was being processed in the legislature to create a new county with Wiggins as the seat. To prevent further rivalry with McHenry for the county seat, A.W. Bond cut McHenry out of the proposed county area. The bill passed through the state Legislature and was awaiting approval by Governor Earl Brewer when Bond corrected some flaws in the bill. Bond was charged with altering a public record and the dream

1900

- 1914 Senator A.W. Bond passed another Stone County bill through the MS legislature. Governor Brewer deemed the bill unconstitutional.
- 1916 Senator Bond passed the final Stone County bill through the legislature. The bill passed, making Stone County the 81st county in Mississippi.
- 1916 HCAHS changed to Harrison-Stone Agricultural High School (HSAHS).
- 1917 Stone County Board of Supervisors contracted the Standard Construction Company of Meridian to build the county courthouse.
- McHenry surrendered its town charter.
- 1918 Stone County Courthouse opened.
- 1924 Bond issued to construct a highway from the Pearl River Co. to George Co. lines, thereby opening a direct highway from New Orleans to Mobile.

Continued next page. . .

Magnolia Route complete and the first non-stop trip made from Gulfport to Chicago in under 41 hours.	-1925	1900
HSAHS added junior college courses into program in May and in September expanded its title to include Jackson County.		
Finkbine Lumber Company in Wiggins closed and moved west.	-1929	
Wiggins Airport dedicated on September 10, 1932.	-1932	
U.S. Highway 49 was paved from Brooklyn to Wiggins.	-1933	
U.S. Highway 49 was paved from Gulfport to Jackson.	-1938	
Television made its debut appearance at the Bessmaid Luncheonette.	-1949	
Wiggins named "Pickle Town U.S.A." by the United Gas Corporation.	-1950	
Stone County Hospital opened with 25 beds.	-1951	
U.S. Highway 49 bypass construction began in July.	-1965	

Continued next page. . .

History and Culture

of Stone County was lost again.

The introduction of another Stone County bill in 1914 had people of Perkinston worried about the fate of their new agricultural high school. Even with opposition, the bill passed through the Mississippi State Senate without a single negative vote. Governor Earl Brewer vetoed the bill shortly thereafter stating it was unconstitutional. The Mississippi State Constitution did not allow the vote on a county to occur more than once every four years.

In 1916, A.W. Bond again brought a bill to create Stone County with Wiggins as the county seat to the state legislature. The bill passed through the legislature and a local election was held. The tally ended with 428 for the county and 329 against. In May, Stone County became the 81st county of Mississippi and was named after Mississippi Governor John Marshall Stone. In June 1917, the Stone County Board of Supervisors let a contract to build the courthouse in Stone County for a little more than \$25,000 to Standard Construction Company of Meridian. The courthouse was completed the following year and is still in use today.

U. S. Highway 49

Transportation has been significant to the development of the County. Railways gave rise to the timber industry and the advent of cars gave way to highways. U.S. Highway 49 started out a dirt path crisscrossing over the G&SI RR and through the piney woods connecting Gulfport to Hattiesburg. The dream of placing gravel on the road connecting Gulfport to Hattiesburg began in 1917, but was crushed with the outbreak of the Great War. The Magnolia Route expanded the original vision for Highway 49 in an effort to connect Gulfport to Chicago, Illinois. On April 20, 1925 a non-stop trip was made from Gulfport to Chicago in under 41 hours. The trip made headlines and the southern portion of the Magnolia Route became U.S. Highway 49. By 1938, the highway was paved with asphalt and in the late 1950s the highway was being transformed from two-lanes into four-lanes.

THE TIMBER INDUSTRY AND SOUTH MISSISSIPPI

The southern portion of the State is known as the "Pine Belt" because

of the original virgin longleaf forest harvested in the early 1900's and the more recent loblolly, slash and short leaf pine forest. The virgin longleaf pine ecosystem stretched from Virginia south to Florida's panhandle and west to Texas and covered approximately ninety million acres.

This vast natural resource attracted loggers to south Mississippi as early as the 1840's. In the late 1800's sawmills, dry kilns and the crosscut saw made harvesting of the pines more efficient and experienced loggers moved to Mississippi to build sawmills. The construction of railroads in the late 1800's made transportation of the lumber easier and the timber industry in South Mississippi thrived between 1904 and 1915.

Many south Mississippi towns such as Hattiesburg, Laurel, Picayune and Wiggins in Stone County either began or grew out of the timber industry. The thriving timber industry began to falter as forests were depleted and commercial operators moved to other areas. The great timber boom in South Mississippi essentially began in the 1880's and was over by the 1930's.

Timber still plays a vital role in Stone County's economy. Lumber mills and wood processing are the core industries in the county. After Hurricane Katrina, county residents began to understand the need to diversify their economy as many of the residents were temporarily without work. Additional concerns arose as the market was flooded with timber from trees that fell during the storm. The Stone County Economic Development Partnership is working closely with existing and potential businesses and industries to assist with diversification of the economy.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Rich in local history, Stone County still retains cultural and historical resources that help shape the existing character and lifestyle of its communities. There are many reasons why preservation of cultural resources are important. They provide a link to the past, help define who we are and contribute to a sense of place. Classic architectural styles and even homes built in the early 1900's offer a balance to more homogeneous "cookie cutter" contemporary housing styles. Because they are of a different architectural style, historic structures are pleasing to the eye and memorable.

1900	-1967	U.S. Highway 49 was four-lane project was completed from Gulfport to Jackson.
	-1969	The agricultural high school and junior college (which had continued to add new members) was renamed Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior College with campuses at Perkinston, Jefferson Davis and Jackson County.
	-1983	The Pickle Plant closed.
	-1987	Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior College renamed to MS Gulf Coast Community College (MGCCC).
	-1990	City of Wiggins annexes for the second time.
	-1999	Stone County Economic Development Partnership formed.
2000	-2005	Hurricane Katrina hit the Mississippi Gulf Coast and affected all 82 counties in the state.
		Comprehensive planning process begins.

Figure 13: Lost Historical Places in Stone County



*Ramsey Springs
Hotel*



*Downtown
McHenry*



McHenry Depot

Source: 2002 Pictorial Memories Historical Calendar for Stone County and Wiggins

History and Culture

Capturing the Historical Legacy

With little written history about Stone County, most of the history lies in the minds of those who live in the county. Other historical information has been passed down from generation to generation in the form of stories.

Today, the Telling Trees project is working to bring these oral histories to life. Telling Trees is a research project to document and present Stone County's culture and heritage through storytelling. Two monuments have been erected in Blaylock Park to commemorate the history of Stone County and Wiggins. A photograph of the second monument can be found in Exhibit 14 on the following page.

Specific Historical and Cultural Assets

The buildings, structures and landscapes including rural vistas that make up each community play a vital role in continuing traditions and history. Several which have been identified include:

- Stone County Courthouse
- Stone County "Jail"
- The "Potato House" in McHenry
- Original building on Mississippi Gulf Coast Community campus
- Several historic cemeteries
- Mid 20th-century neighborhoods in Wiggins
- Downtown Wiggins

Many of the properties that were important to Stone County's past have not survived to the present. These older buildings and structures can not survive the years without maintenance and readily fall into disrepair. The county has already lost many of its historic landmarks, some of these include:

The Ramsey Springs Hotel - Constructed in the early 1920's, this hotel served as a resort to vacationers and gained national

recognition for the healing effects of the natural hot springs found at this locale. The hotel was demolished in 1961.

Downtown McHenry - McHenry was created by the railroad and grew rapidly until it became the largest town in the area. Fire destroyed a large portion of the town in 1903. The town was rebuilt and destroyed again in 1930. By this time, Wiggins was the official county seat and no effort was placed in the restoration of downtown McHenry.

McHenry Depot - The depot was constructed in the early 1900's by the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad. The building was demolished in the late 1940's.

During community meetings, residents expressed concern for the need to preserve historical cemeteries throughout the county. Residents could not necessarily provide a definite location for some of the historic cemeteries but were aware of their general location. Historic cemeteries and other historical properties should be identified and mapped so they can be more easily protected in the future.

Only one property in Stone County, the George Austin McHenry House in McHenry is listed on the National Register of Historical Places. There are numerous other structures in the County that would be eligible. In community meetings, Stone County residents identified fifteen historic places within the county. The map on Page 25 shows markers on spots where citizens believed the historic places to be located. The accuracy of these markers should be validated by actual field examination and identification.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Clearly, the history of the county is of great interest to the residents as well as to visitors who seek to understand the settlement patterns and history of the nation. By capturing these events in books, photos, oral recordings and by protection of historic places and buildings, future generations can be more attune to their heritage.

Leaders of Stone County can help preserve its history and culture in various ways, some of which are given below:

- Identify specific locations of historical sites which were identified by citizens, using mapping or geo-referencing.

Figure No. 14: "Telling Tree" Monument in Blaylock Park



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

Figure 15: Timber Pictures



Log Wagon being pulled by horses.

Finkbine Lumber Company



Mules pulling logs outside of Wiggins

Source: 2002 Pictorial Memories Historical Calendar for Stone County and Wiggins

History and Culture

- Establish a database of historic sites and make available to citizens.
- Encourage the formation of a historic preservation society and/or hire a county historian to work with citizens groups and the County.
- Utilize the historical landmarks and assets of the County to enhance community pride and as a destination for day-trippers and those with ties to the County.
- Identify and promote the use of financial incentives for the renovation, maintenance and improvement of historic sites and properties. Examples are Federal and State tax credits and local property tax abatements.
- Pass local ordinances that will offer financial incentives for restoration of historic structures including mid 20th Century housing.
- Consider establishment of local historic districts with architectural guidelines for exterior work to existing structures and new structures within the district.
- Establish conservation districts for areas that do not possess the architectural integrity necessary to be historic districts.
- Establish historic districts in rural areas for significant rural landscapes.
- Require that archaeological resources be referenced on site plans and preserved in open space.
- Promote the history of the county by establishing public displays and a permanent museum of photos and artifacts in the Train Depot.

Stone County Comprehensive Plan: Cultural Resources



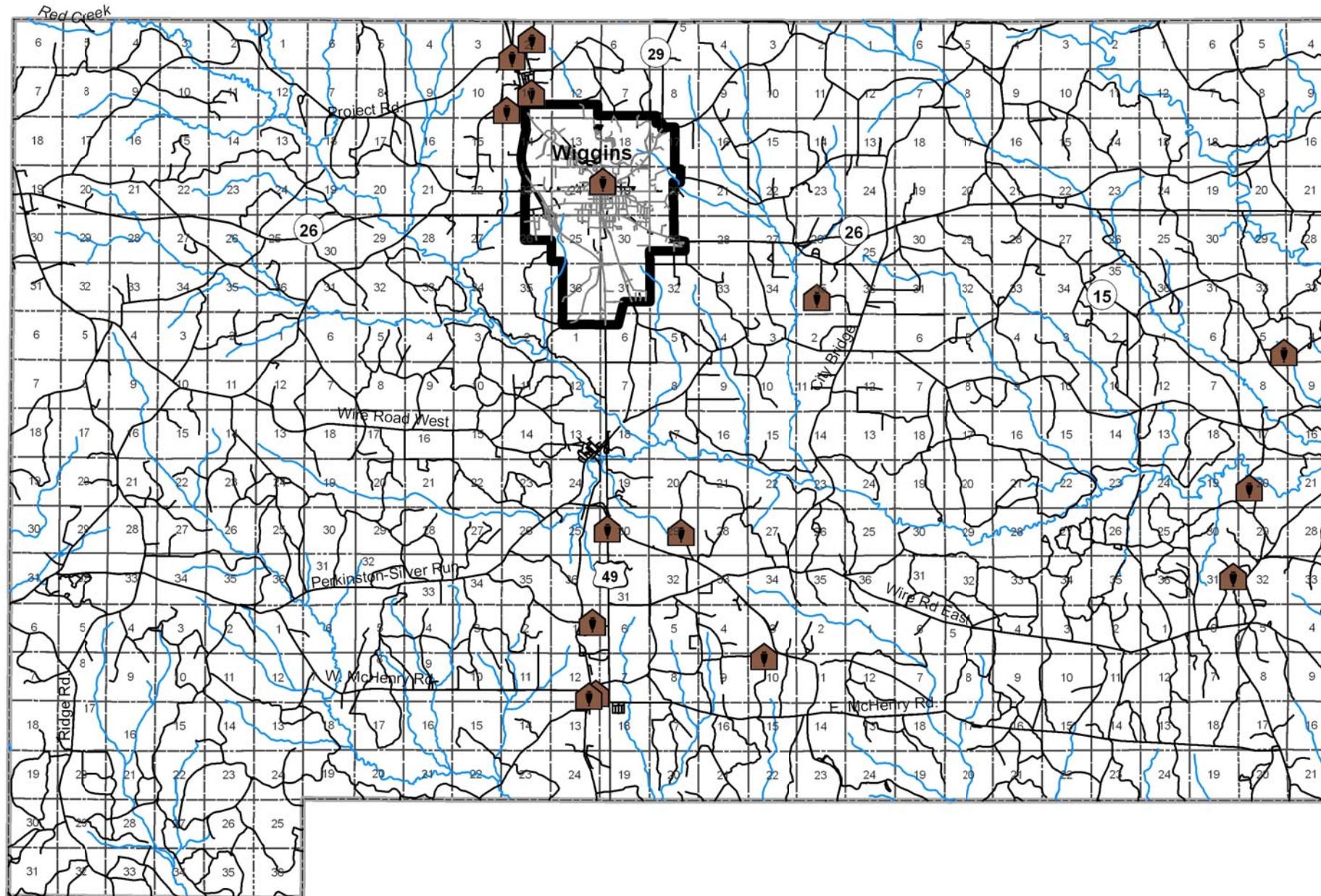
Map No. 1

Legend

-  Resource
-  Roads
-  Roads
-  Streams
-  County



0 10,000 20,000
Feet



Chapter 5: Demographics

An understanding of demographic trends helps counties anticipate and prepare for the future needs of residents. This chapter includes specific information about population, households, educational attainment and economic data. Information from the United States Census Bureau and other reputable sources has been used to provide an analysis of demographic trends affecting the County.

GENERAL FACTORS

Counties and cities generally reflect the pattern of growth of the region of which they are a part. During the last half of the 20th Century, the Southeastern (SE) region of the United States has been very successful in competing for industry and business resulting in positive population growth. Industries are attracted to low energy costs, an abundance of non-union labor and generous financial incentives offered by individual states including Mississippi.

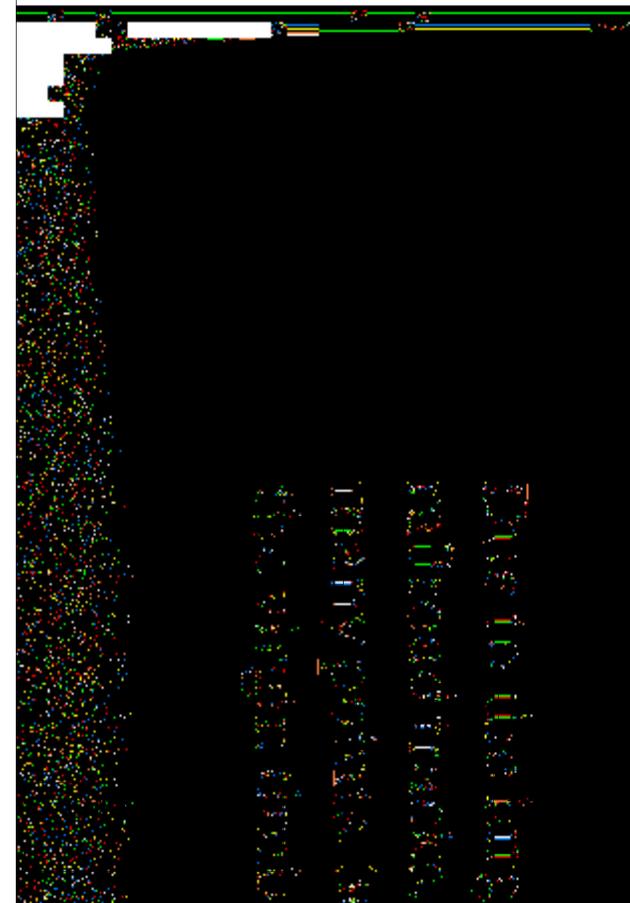
To illustrate this point, one can compare the 1900 Census which reported that the majority of the population or sixty-two percent (62%) lived in either the Northeast or the Midwest where the majority of industry was located at that time. By the end of the 20th century, the majority of the population or fifty-eight percent (58%) resided in either the South or the West. This trend of locating businesses in the “sunbelt” south is expected to continue.

Although Mississippi is located within the fast growing Southeastern region, the population growth in Mississippi has not kept pace with other states within the region. In July, 2007, Mississippi ranked 31st in population with an estimated population of 2,910,540.

Gulfport-Jackson County Metropolitan Statistical Area

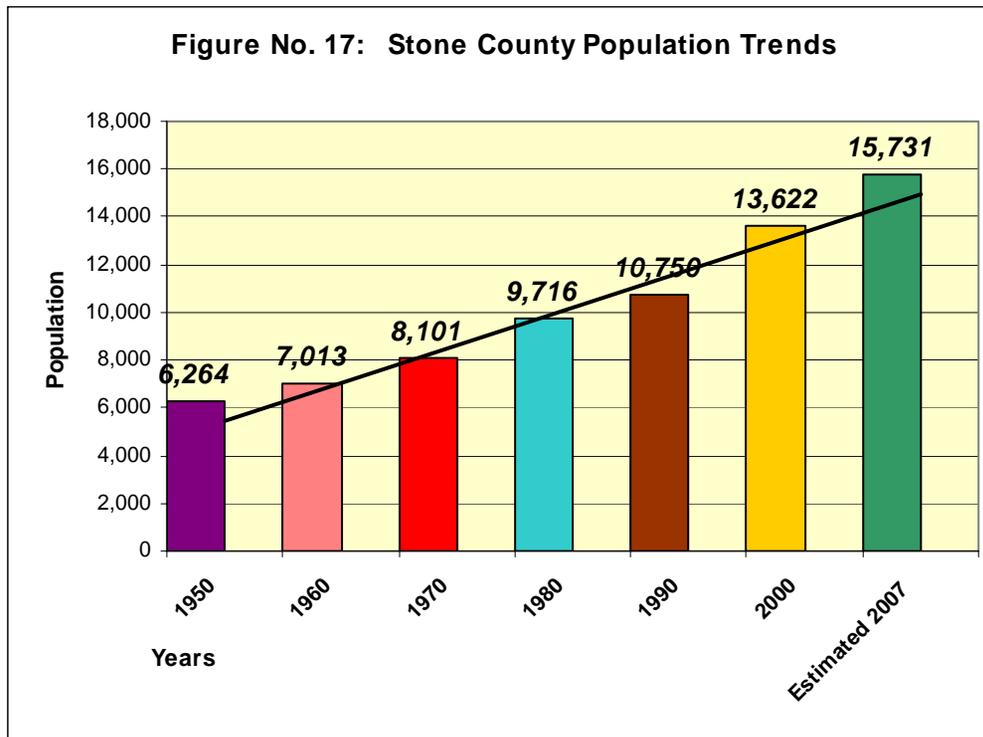
Harrison, Hancock and Stone Counties have been designated by the Census Bureau as being a separate Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and is shown in Figure No. 16. A MSA is defined as a contiguous area of relatively high population density with an urbanized core area known as the central counties. Outlying counties can be included in the MSA if

Figure No. 16: MSA's in the State of Mississippi



Source: Wikipedia Online Dictionary

Demographics



Source: U. S. Census Bureau

Demographics

these counties have strong social and economic ties to the central counties as measured by commuting and employment. The estimated population of the Gulfport-Biloxi MSA in 2007 was 231,523, which was an increase of approximately four percent from the previous year's estimate of 222,515. Counties within the Biloxi-Gulfport MSA are strategically located between the Hattiesburg MSA and the Pascagoula MSA.

The Gulfport-Biloxi MSA and the Pascagoula MSA (Jackson and George Counties) are a combined statistical area (CSA) which is an area with employment and media interchange and overlap. The estimated combined population of the Gulfport-Biloxi-Pascagoula CSA as of 2006 was 380,309. The estimated population of the Gulfport MSA in 2006 was 227,904.

The legalization of gaming in the early 1990's by the Mississippi State Legislature has played an integral role in the economy of the Mississippi Gulf Coast region. Some of this growth was temporarily halted with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, but the rebuilding efforts on the Coast are progressing.

POPULATION

Population growth in Stone County remained somewhat constant from 1950 until the decade between 1990 and 2000 when the rate of growth more than doubled that of preceding decades. The Census Bureau estimated the population of the county increased 15.48% from April 1, 2000 until April 1, 2007. Population estimates for the

county from 2001 until 2007 are presented in Figure No. 17.

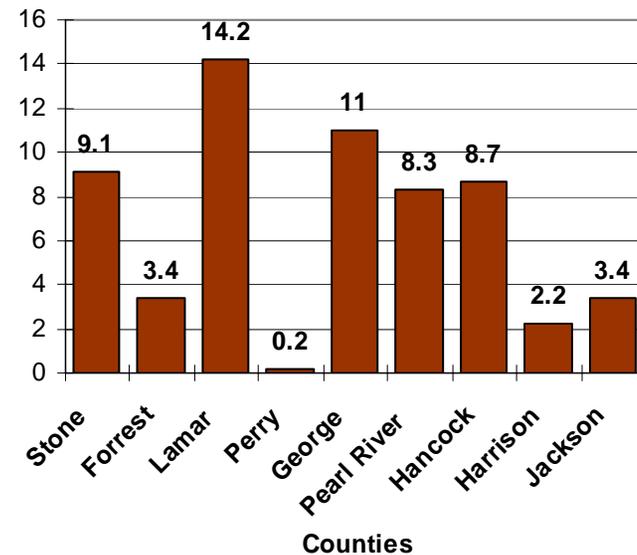
During the decade from 1990 until 2000, Stone County was the sixth fastest growing county in the state showing a net increase of 2,872 people or a growth rate of 26.7 percent. Comparison of the growth of Stone County with counties in the southern portion of the state indicates that only Hancock and Lamar Counties grew faster during the 1990's. During the ten year period between 1990 and 2000, the population of Hancock County increased by 11,207 persons which was a thirty-five percent (35.3%) increase. Within that same period, Lamar County experienced a twenty-eight percent (28.4%) increase and Stone County a twenty-six percent (26.7%) increase in population. During the first half of this decade or the period between 2000 and 2005, Lamar, George and Stone Counties had the largest increase in population among the nine counties located in the southern portion of the state. (See Figure No. 18.)

Effect of Hurricane Katrina on Population

Most of the population growth in Stone County can be attributed to northward immigration trends from coastal counties which accelerated after Hurricane Katrina. This natural disaster severely impacted housing supply and jobs in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson Counties, causing many to move from the coastal counties to areas within reasonable driving distance for work and shopping.

Post Katrina studies show that two population shifts occurred as a result of the Katrina event as people moved into the County to escape the immediate aftereffect of the storm and then as some returned home while others elected to remain rather than return to their previous place of residence. A special study

Figure No. 18: Percentage of Population Change, Select Counties, 1990 - 2005



Source: U. S. Census Bureau

Table No. 1: Stone County Quick Facts, 2005		
	Stone Co.	MS
White Persons	79.1%	61.2%
Black Persons	20.0%	36.9%
Other Races	0.5%	1.1%
Hispanic or Latino origin	1.6%	1.7%
Persons under 5	6.6%	7.3%
Persons under 18	24.3%	25.6%
Persons 65 or older	11.6%	12.3%
Female Persons	49.7%	51.4%
Housing Units	5,603	1.23 million
Source: U. S. Census Bureau		

Demographics

conducted by the Bureau of the Census shows the initial population increase in Stone County was 3,519 and the final population increase was 1,963. These calculated increases are based on estimates of the population in October, 2005 of 14,625 and in October, 2005 of 18,144 people. More recent population estimates indicate the population of the County to be 16,633 in January, 2008.

Population Density

With a land mass of 48,434 square miles, the population density of the state is only 60.7 people per square mile. Thirty one states in the United States have a higher density than that of Mississippi. This attribute of the state is very apparent in counties such as Stone which has a population density of 31 people per square mile.

Race, Ethnicity and Gender

The race and ethnicity composition of Stone County in 1999 was seventy-nine percent (79%) white; nineteen percent (19%) black or African-American and one percent (1.3%) Other. One and one-half percent (1.4%) of the total population was of Hispanic or Latino origin. In Mississippi, the race and ethnicity breakdown was sixty-one (61.4%) white; thirty-six percent (36.3%) black or African-American and over five percent (5.52%) other. Over twelve percent of the total population (12.5%) was of Hispanic or Latino origin.

In terms of gender, fifty percent (50.4%) were females and the remaining forty-nine percent (49.6%) were males. The median age of Stone County and Mississippi residents was 33, compared to the median age of 35 for all U. S. residents.

Age Cohorts

Breaking down the population into discrete age groups or cohorts allows planners to predict the short- and long-term needs of citizens in terms of public facilities and services such as medical, educational, recreational and housing.

The highest age cohort percentage according to the 2005

estimated population of the County is between 5 to 14 years of age. The second highest is between the ages of 45 to 54 and the third highest is between the ages of 25 to 44. It is predicted that the age cohort of 25 to 35 will increase by 2010 to be the highest percentage age group in the county.

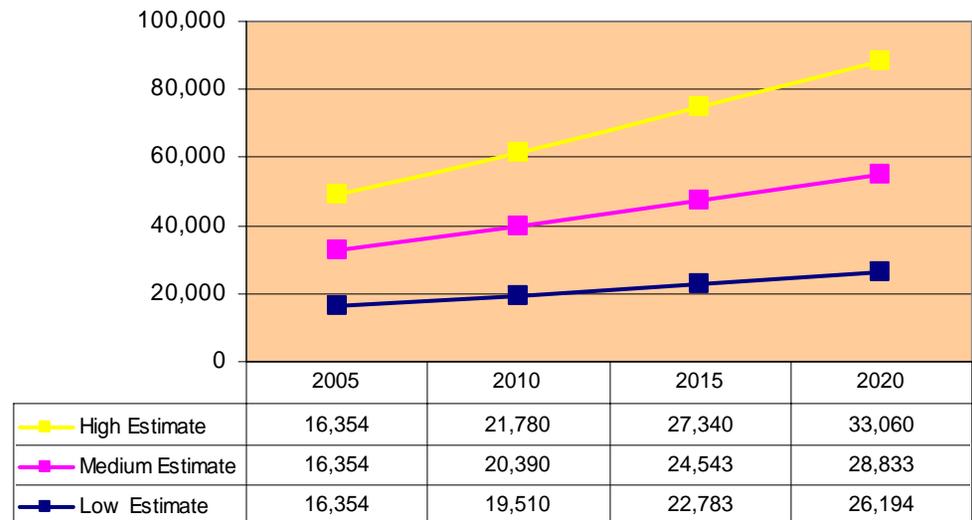
Population Projections

Local area population projections have been completed by a number of entities including a 2007 study by the Economic Development Resource Center of the University of Southern Mississippi (USM). This study projects the population in the year 2020 to be between 26,194 and 33,060 people. The annual growth rates from 2005 until 2020 are projected to be from 3.2% to 4.8%. Other population projection studies have projected a growth rate of 1% per year through 2020 which is similar to recent historic growth rates. Figure No. 19 shows the projected population for the County presented in the USM study.

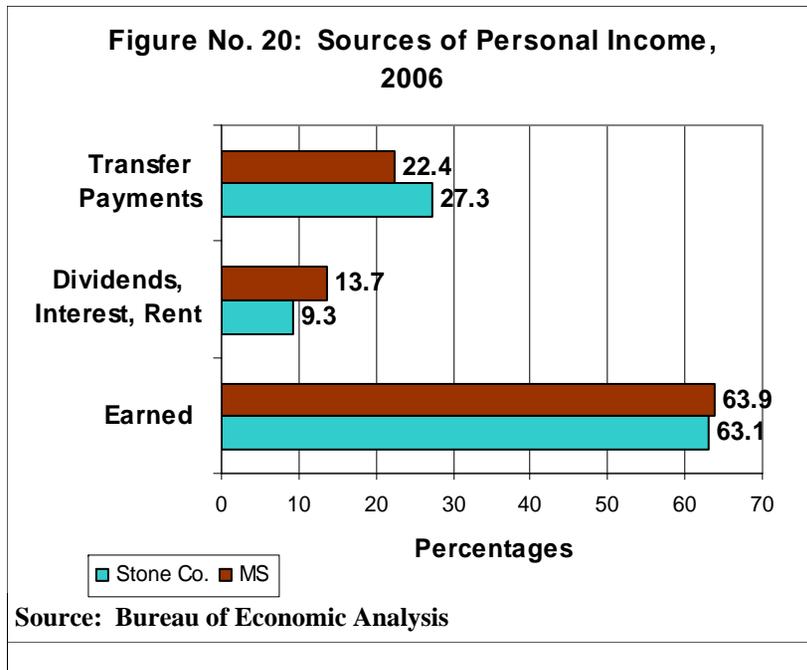
HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

A household includes all the persons (related or unrelated) who occupy a housing unit. A housing unit can be a house, apartment, mobile home, a group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied (or if vacant, is intended for occupancy). The household is the basic unit of analysis used

Figure No. 19: Population Projections, Stone County



Source: University of Southern Mississippi , Economic Development Resource Center



Demographics

in many population related studies. For example, the impact of new homes on total population figures can be calculated by multiplying by the anticipated number of new homes by the most recent figures of average household size.

In 1999, 4,747 households were located in the County and the average household unit size was 2.74 persons. Households occupied by families were 76.4% of total households. Non-family households are defined as a household maintained or occupied by a person living alone or with non-relatives only. There were 3,628 families in Stone County with an average family size of 3.13 persons. Approximately fifty-eight percent (58.8 %) of Stone County households consisted of a married couple and more than forty-one percent (41.8%) of these include children of 18 years of age or younger. By comparing these facts with age cohorts, we can better predict the housing, medical, educational and other needs of the population.

INCOME AND POVERTY

The income of the population relates to the well-being of families, their ability to purchase goods and services and the health of the local economy. This income and poverty analysis will examine per capita, total personal and median income; sources of income, and measurements of poverty.

Per Capita Personal Income

Information published by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) indicates that in 2006 Stone had a per capita personal income (PCPI) of \$26,261. This PCPI ranked 17th in the state and was 97 percent of the state average, \$27,028, and 72 percent of the national average, \$36,714. The 2006 PCPI reflected an increase of 9.5 percent from 2005. The 2005-2006 state change was 6.0 percent and

the national change was 5.6 percent. In 1996 the PCPI of Stone was \$16,042 and ranked 40th in the state. The 1996-2006 average annual growth rate of PCPI was 5.1 percent. The average annual growth rate for the state was 4.3 percent and for the nation was 4.3 percent.

Total Personal Income

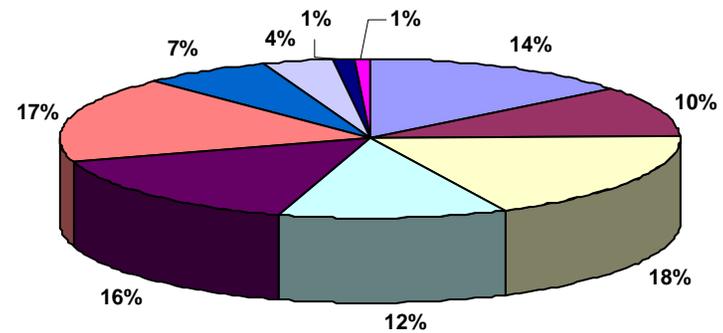
In 2006 Stone had a total personal income (TPI) of \$404,550. Total personal income includes the total net earnings from employment, dividends, interest, rent income, and transfer receipts of all residents of the county. TPI for Stone County ranked 54th in the state and accounted for 0.5 percent of the state total. The majority (63.1%) of TPI in the county in 2006 was earned income. Money received from dividends, interest and rent was over nine percent (9.3%); and transfer receipts were almost thirty percent (27.3%). Transfer payments are defined as payments to individuals by government and business for which no goods or services are currently rendered. Examples of transfer payments include welfare, Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), food stamps, Social Security payments and unemployment payments.

Household Income

Household income is defined by the total amount of annual income generated by the household members in the workforce. Typically, there are one or two members of the household generating income.

The U. S. Census Bureau has broken down income into ten brackets ranging from less than \$10,000 to \$200,000 or more. In 1999, two different income brackets had the highest percentages. Eight hundred and sixty-three (863) households or 18.2% earned between \$15,000 and \$24,000. Eight hundred twenty-seven (827) or 17.4% earned between \$50,000 and \$74,999. The needs of

Figure No.21: Household Income Brackets, 2000



- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000 to \$14,999
- \$15,000 to \$24,999
- \$25,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 to \$199,999
- \$200,000 or more

Source: U. S. Census

Table No.: 2: Business Quick Facts		
	Stone County	Mississippi
Private non-farm establishments, 2005	280	60,542
Private non-farm employment, 2005	3,352	926,952
Private non-farm employment, % change, 2000 to 2005	41.6%	-3.1%
Non-employer establishments, 2005	1,027	163,761
Total number of firms, 2002	1,099	187,602
Retail sales, 2002 (\$1,000)	93,222	25,017,531
Retail sales per capita, 2002	6,602	8,724
Accommodations and foodservices sales, 2002 (\$1,000)	9,474	5,486,105
Building permits, 2006	26	16,618
Federal spending, 2004	101,382	22,337,697
Source: U. S. Census Bureau		

these two very different income level households must be considered when planning for social services.

Median Income

In 1999, the median household income was \$30,495 compared to \$31,330 for Mississippi. In 2004, the median household income in Stone County was estimated to have increased approximately seven percent (7.45%) to \$33,667 while the average household income was estimated to be \$43,640. Desoto County had the highest median household income of \$56,401 and Holmes County had the lowest with \$20,165. More recent estimates in 2007, ranked Stone County 14th in the State with an estimated median household income of \$34,302. This is a twelve percent (12%) increase since Census 2000.

Poverty

The U. S. Census Bureau has predetermined a poverty line which is the minimum annual monetary sum needed to afford basic and essential items such as shelter, clothing and food. The poverty line is adjusted annually for inflation. In 1999, an individual would be considered living in poverty if he/she had less than \$8,501 available for household expenses. A family of four who had income of \$17,029 or less would be “below the poverty level.”

The poverty status of families and individuals living in Stone County in 1999 follows:

- Families living below poverty level — 529 or 14.5%
- Individuals living below poverty level –1,271 or 17.5%
- 43% of families living in poverty had female head of households with no husband present
- 14.3% of persons 65 years of age or older are below the poverty level.

More recent data published by the U. S. Census Bureau, Small Areas Income and Poverty Estimates program, indicates that in

2005, seventeen and one half (17.5%) of the total population of the County was below the poverty level.

ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT DATA

A strong local economy is needed to provide goods, services and employment to residents and to generate tax revenue that support the public services needed by county residents. The following analysis will review key economic indicators. Table No. 2 presents recent business facts relative to the economy in Stone County.

Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment Rate

The labor force is the portion of the population 16 years or older that is employed or unemployed but actively looking for a job. The Mississippi Department of Employment Security estimates that in 2000 the civilian labor force of Stone County was 6,580 with 380 persons or over five percent (5.8%) unemployed. The 2007 estimates show 7,800 persons were in the civilian labor force with 450 or over five (5.6%) unemployed. (See Table No. 3.) Table No. 4 gives labor force numbers for the county and the state for the years of 2001 through 2007.

Employment by Sector

From 2001 to 2007, employment within

Table No. 3: Labor Force and Employment, 2001 – 2007

Year	Civilian labor force	Stone County		MS
		Number Unemployed	Rate	Rate
2001	6,800	330	4.9	5.6
2002	6,700	380	5.7	6.7
2003	6,890	390	5.7	6.4
2004	6,960	400	5.7	6.4
2005	6,880	550	8.0	7.8
2006	7,320	560	7.7	6.7
2007	7,800	450	5.8	6.3

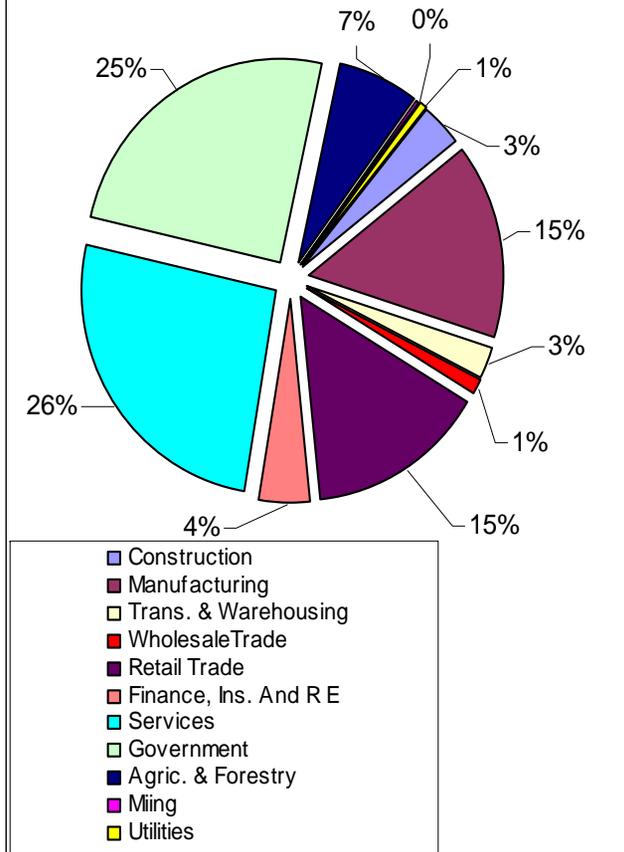
Source of Both Tables:

Bureau of Labor Statistics

Table No. 4: Stone County Employment by Sector

Sector	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	% In-crease	% of total
Construction	100	80	80	80	110	150	160	60	3
Manufacturing	620	600	580	620	640	710	730	18	15
Trans. & Warehousing	120	120	120	130	130	130	130	8	3
Wholesale	40	40	50	60	40	50	50	25	1
Retail	350	510	630	600	610	660	700	100	15
FIRE	150	160	150	160	150	200	200	33	4
Services	690	820	910	1050	1210	1180	1236	79	26
Government	1030	1100	1150	1160	1160	1140	1190	16	25
Agric. & Forestry	280	270	270	280	270	290	310	11	7
Mining	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	0	0
Utilities	20	20	20	30	30	30	30	50	1

Figure No. 22: Employment in Stone County by Industry Sectors



Stone County grew in all employment sectors with the retail trade sector experiencing the largest percentage of growth. During the same period, employment in the service sector increased 79% and employment in the construction sector increased by 60%.

According to recent data published by Mississippi Power, Stone County was home to 392 businesses in the year 2007. The predominant employment sector in Stone County is the service sector, which includes health care services, professional and technical services, legal services, business services, personal services and other types of services. In 2007, 1,290 persons were employed in this sector which represents approximately 27% of all employment in the County. The second largest sector was government which employed 1,190 persons representing 25% of employment in the County. A graphic depiction of employment by industry sectors can be found in Figure No. 22.

Major Industrial or Manufacturer Employers

Major industrial or manufacturing employers in the County are as follows:

- Hood Industries, Inc., 275 employees (Product or Service: Wood Products)
- Cellutissue Holdings/Coastal Paper, 101 employees (Paper Manufacturing)
- ATCO Rubber Products, Inc., 50 employees (Fabricated Metal Product)
- Carpenter’s Pole & Piling Co., 42 employees (Wood Product Manufacturing)
- De Soto Treated Materials, Inc., 40 employees (Wood Product Manufacturing)

Outward Commuting Patterns

The 2000 Census indicate that of the total work force, 3,328 persons both lived and worked in Stone County and 2,477 persons commuted outside of the county to work. The majority or 1,538 persons who commuted outside the county traveled to Harrison County and 230 persons traveled to Jackson County. This means Stone County exports

Demographics

labor to places outside of the County.

Travel time to work is summarized below:

- 873 persons traveled 30 to 44 minutes
- 714 persons traveled 45 to 59 minutes
- 919 persons traveled 60 minutes or longer

The majority of persons who drove to work, traveled in a private vehicle (car, truck or van) and the majority of these drove alone.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Analysis of a community's existing educational attainment is directly related to income earning ability and employment characteristics. The educational attainment level of persons 25 years or older is collected during the decennial census. Table No. 5 compares the education attainment of Stone County residents in 1999 to the educational attainment level of residents of the State and the nation. Twenty-six percent (26.9 %) of Stone County's residents who was 25 years or older had not earned a high school diploma. This compares slightly favorably to the Mississippi percentage of twenty-seven percent (27.1%). During this same census year, only nineteen percent (19.3%) percent of U. S. residents had not earned a high school diploma.

Over thirty percent (30%) of Stone County residents had attained a high school degree, while twenty-two percent (22%) had some college, ten percent (10%) had an Associate degree and eight (8%) had a Bachelor's degree. Over four percent (4%) had a graduate or professional degree. While the percentage of persons receiving an associate degree is almost double that of the state, the percentage of persons receiving a Bachelor's degree is lower than

Table No 5: Educational Attainment of Stone County and Mississippi Residents, 1999					
Educational Attainment	Stone County		Mississippi		U. S.
	Population	%	Population	%	%
(25 years and over)					
Less than 9th Grade	692	8.4	169,178	9.6	7.4
9th to 12th Grade, no diploma	1,390	16.8	307,852	17.5	11.9
High school graduate (or GED)	2,491	30.2	516,091	29.4	29.6
Some college, no degree	1,813	22.0	366,744	20.9	21.5
Associate degree	845	10.2	100,561	5.7	6.8
Bachelors' degree	668	8.1	194,325	11.1	15.0
Graduate or professional degree	359	4.3	102,766	5.8	7.8
Source: U. S. Census Bureau, 2000					

both the state and national percentages.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

The population of the County is projected to grow rapidly during the next 20 year period which has huge implications on the need for public facilities. While the income sources are similar to the State, it is expected that personal income will increase as higher paying jobs become available within the coastal counties and in Stone County. Major employment centers will remain in the more urbanized counties along the Mississippi Gulf Coast; however, as new retailers are attracted to the County, retail job opportunities will increase.

County leaders must be prepared to deal with the increased demand for public facilities and services the population increase will create. The following recommendations should be considered:

- Identify growth management principles and appropriate and effective implementation tools to protect the rural character and integrity of existing neighborhoods.
- Utilize sound building and subdivision standards to protect the overall public health and welfare.
- Actively pursue higher paying industrial and commercial businesses to increase tax revenues and to have higher paying jobs within the county.
- Conduct periodic population studies to help the county better prepare for anticipated growth.
- Update the Capital Improvements Plan annually and include input from all county department heads and elected leaders.
- Coordinate and facilitate regular communication between all County departments, the City of Wiggins and surrounding county governments.
- Prepare and implement an economic development plan.
- Secure land and build infrastructure for a larger industrial park using attractive site layout and design and entrance signs.
- Promote economic development through consistent slogans, brands

Table No. 6: Recent Annual Estimates of the Population		
Date	Stone County	MSA
July 1, 2001	14,065	248,184
July 1, 2002	14,016	249,849
July 1, 2003	14,142	250,044
July 1, 2004	14,303	254,492
July 1, 2005	14,703	256,793
January 1, 2006* (Post Katrina estimate)	14,211	
July 1, 2006	15,405	227,515
July 1, 2007	15,731	231,523
Source: U. S. Census Bureau		

Demographics

and advertising.

- Enhance workforce training with MGCCC.
- Design and promote enhanced educational opportunities such as GED, workforce and adult education.
- Provide or encourage the building of assisted living and adult day care facilities for seniors and disabled individuals who are unable to live independently.

Chapter 6: Natural Resources

Natural resources are comprised of air, water and land which are essential to the very existence of human development. They influence every aspect of the quality of life including local climate, availability of safe drinking water, flood control, drainage patterns, recreational opportunities and the habitat we share with plants and animals.

Stone County is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and which not only help define a majority of the land mass, but provide year-round opportunities for recreation, hunting and fishing.

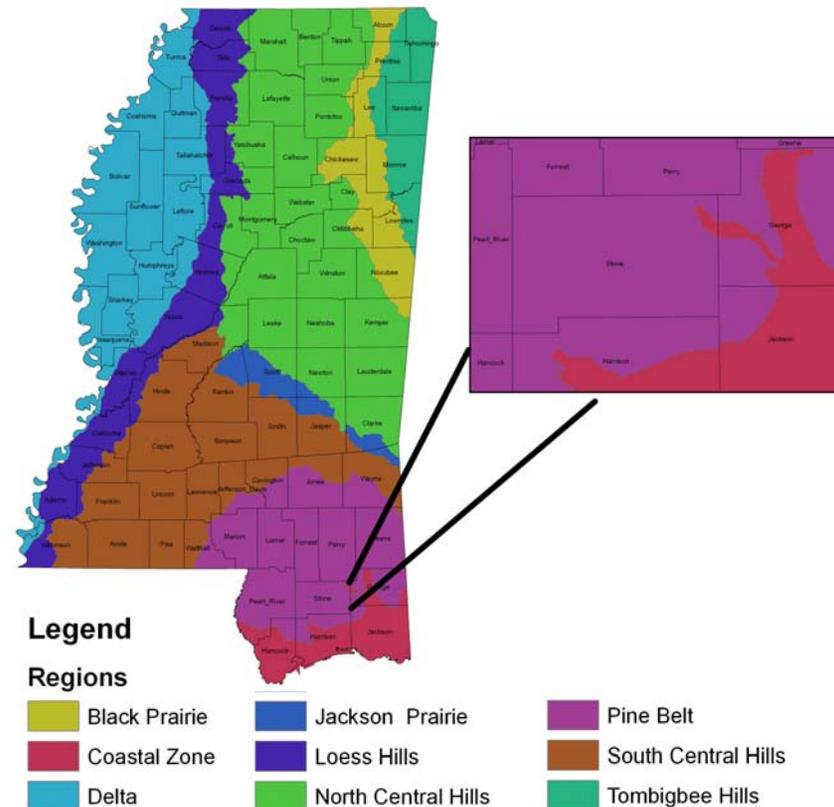
This chapter provides specific information relative to the preservation and conservation of these resources and makes specific recommendations relative to the future development of land, general land use and planning goals.

CLIMATE AND TOPOGRAPHY

Stone County is located in the humid subtropical climate region which provides for long, hot summers and short, mild winters. Compared to the state averages, Stone County has some of the hottest summers, mildest winters receives more precipitation than the remainder of the state. Temperatures in the state range from 42°F (4°C) to 50°F (10°C) in January and sometimes exceed 95°F (35°C) in the hot, humid summer months.

Stone County belongs in the Pine Belt Coastal Zone physiographic region of Mississippi which indicates topography of rolling hills to steep-sided ridges and valleys. The physiographic regions of the State are shown in Figure No. 23. It is 448 square miles of predominately rural farmland and forestland. Many of the

Figure No. 23: State of Mississippi Physiographic Regions



Source: Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS)

Natural Resources

Figure No.24: Sweet Bay Bog Plants



Southern Butterwort

Source: Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection



Grass-of-Parnassus

Source: The Mississippi Nature Conservatory

Natural Resources

farms located within the county are family tracts that have been passed down from generation to generation. There are also large tracts of national forest land. Some of the large forested tracts once owned by timber companies have been sold and are being developed.

LAND RESOURCES

Land resources are those resources that are provided by the land in its natural or semi-natural state. These resources include, but are not limited to, protected forestland for preservation and conservation and parks and recreation areas.

Stone County contains a diverse mixture of natural forestland, parks and open spaces. Of the county's 448 square miles, approximately fifty-eight percent (58%) is classified as Vacant /Agricultural which recognizes the land as being undeveloped and being used primarily for forestry or agricultural purposes

Sweet Bay Bog Preserve

The Sweet Bay Bog Preserve is located nine miles west of Wiggins near Red Creek. The 194 acre site was the first purchase of the Mississippi Chapter of the Nature Conservancy and is home to many rare species of plant and animals including the gopher tortoise, southern butterwort, pineland bog button, and the bog spicebush among others. Rarely found this far south, bogs are a part of the vanishing ecosystem of the longleaf pine. The Sweet Bay Bog Preserve is an extremely sensitive habitat and is considered one of the most critical natural communities in the state by biologists.

Protected Forestland

Protected forestland includes national forests, state forests, county and city preserved park land and wildlife management areas. Wildlife and wildlife habitat are vital to a community's natural resource base. These areas protect and provide recreational opportunities with little to no cost to the public and the county. They provide a wealth of outdoor entertainment including hunting, bird watching and hiking.

The following list includes a brief description of the protected forestland in Stone County along with the benefits the land offers county residents and visitors.

De Soto National Forest

Established in 1936, the De Soto Ranger District is the largest district in Mississippi at 378,538 acres. This national forest provides year-round recreational opportunities to all its visitors including hiking, biking, camping, canoeing, ATV trails, horse trails, hunting, fishing and bird watching. Also available are picnic facilities and group shelters for large gatherings. Eight-eight square miles of Stone County is occupied by the De Soto National Forest.

Flint Creek Water Park

Flint Creek Water Park is part of the Pat Harrison Waterway District, a district responsible for managing rivers and their tributaries in the Pascagoula River Basin of Southeastern and East Central Mississippi. The park features 156 fully developed campsites, 34 cabins, 12 camp houses, 2 pavilions and an enclosed lodge hall on 1,900 acres. The park also boasts a 600-acre lake for skiing, boating or fishing and a recreation area with waterslides and a kiddie pool. The lake is stocked with bass, bream, crappie and catfish.

Red Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA)

Red Creek Management Area is 91,139 acres of land spread across Harrison and Stone Counties. The area features hunting, fishing, swimming and camping. The Red Creek WMA is completely contained within the De Soto National Forest and is owned by the U. S. Forest Service.

Little Biloxi Wildlife Management Area (WMA)

Comprised of 15,622 acres, this wildlife management area is located in both Harrison and Stone Counties and features hunting, fishing and hiking. Little Biloxi also features a handicap accessible area in the northwest corner. The Little Biloxi is partially contained within the De Soto National Forest and that portion within the national forest is owned by the U. S. Forest Service.

Recreation Areas within National Forest and Wildlife Management Areas.

Parks and recreation areas provide an instrumental link to community values. These areas provide locations for the community to come

Figure No. 25: Photo of Pine Needles



Beautiful Pine forests cover much of the rural landscape in the County
Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

Figure No. 26: De Soto National Forest Trail Head



Hiking Trails are abundant in the National Forest and Wildlife Management Areas

Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

together and work and play together in teams or just to enjoy the richness of their community. Stone County affords many recreation opportunities due to the dominance of the De Soto National Forest and the Wildlife Management Areas in the county. Many of these areas provide services without a fee. Additionally, the county has more mainstream parks and recreation areas for organized sports and public enjoyment including parks and ball fields which are discussed in the Community Facilities Chapter.

The following list includes a brief description of the park and recreation areas within national and wildlife areas

Bethel ATV Trail

The Bethel ATV Trail is a 37-mile trail located within the beautiful De Soto National Forest dedicated to all terrain vehicles (ATVs). This trail provides ATV users with a variety of terrains and topographies.

Bethel Mountain Biking Trail

This trail features 19-miles of varied terrains that are specifically geared toward mountain bikers.

Black Creek Wilderness Hiking Trail

There are forty-one miles of hiking in the De Soto National Forest along the Pascagoula River, the only federally-designated wild and scenic river in Mississippi. Boardwalks and foot bridges span tributaries of Black Creek as the trail makes its path through the woods and along the banks of Black Creek.

Black Creek Scenic River and Float Trip

Black Creek affords up to 100-miles of scenic wilderness located in the De Soto National Forest. Stone County has two landings, Cypress Creek and Fairley Bridge. Additional landings are located in Perry County that are used as the beginning of various length float trips, many that end in Stone County. Float trips down Black Creek have become a viable business and offer a chance for Stone County to benefit from these adventurers who enter the county.

Cypress Creek Landing

Located in the De Soto National Forest, this landing offers quick access

to Black Creek along with a picnic area, fishing and swimming.

De Soto National Forest

This nationally-designated forestland offers hiking, biking, camping, canoeing, ATV trails, horse trails, hunting, fishing and bird watching.

Fairley Bridge Landing

Located in the De Soto National Forest, this landing offers quick access to Black Creek along with a picnic area, hiking, fishing and swimming.

Water resources are those resources provided by water bodies. Similar to land resources, these resources also use their natural beauty, physical properties and location to provide economic benefits with minimal effort. Water resources can include lakes, reservoirs and streams. Lakes and streams are necessary to promote a healthy and growing ecosystem. If properly maintained, these water bodies can continue to serve Stone County in a variety of functions. The following list includes a brief description of the major water bodies in Stone County.

Black Creek

Black Creek is a tributary of the Pascagoula River and is the only Wild and Scenic River designation in Mississippi. The twenty-one miles of Black Creek, from Moody's Landing (Perry County) to Fairley Bridge Landing (Stone County), is designated in this manner. Black Creek begins near the town of Bassfield in Jefferson Davis County and travels southeast through Lamar, Forrest, Perry, Stone and George Counties. The creek is joined by Red Creek and merges into the Pascagoula River soon after it crosses into Jackson County. Stone County is host to only a small portion of the creek, which is found in the northeast corner.

Red Creek

Red Creek is a tributary of Big Black Creek. The creek has a very high tannic acid content that gives the water a red appearance as it flows over the white sand bottom. Red Creek begins northwest of Lumberton in Lamar County and travels southeast cutting through the corners of Pearl River and Forrest Counties. The Creek enters Stone County in the northwest corner and almost divides the county horizontally in half. Red Creek leaves Stone County and enters George County on the east

Figure 27: Water Resources in Stone County



Red Creek as it passes under U.S. Highway 49 at Perk Beach.



Flint Creek Water Park Public Swimming Area.

Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

side just north of Old Highway 26, where it travels southeast into Jackson County. The creek joins Black Creek and then flows into the Pascagoula River. Red Creek provides that largest threat of flooding to Stone County residents.

Flint Creek Reservoir

Constructed in 1966, the original purpose for the 600-acre lake was to supply water for industrial use and for recreation.

Additional Stone County Streams

The following list contains many of the named streams found in Stone County. The streams have been broken up into their respective basins to make them easier to identify and study.

Pascagoula River Basin:

Abbot Branch	Double Branch	Near Prong
Ball Hill	Flint Creek	Old Creek
Barney Branch	Fourmile Creek	Pump Branch
Beaver Dam Branch	Gully Branch	Red Branch
Black Branch	Hassis Creek	Red Creek
Black Creek	Hunts Creek	Reed Brake
Bluff Creek	Hurricane Creek	Rester Creek
Boggy Branch	Indian Branch	Run Branch
Bridge Creek	Indian Camp Branch	Sandy Creek
Caney Creek	Kirby Creek	Schoolhouse Branch
Chaney Creek	Little Creek	Spring Branch
Church House Branch	Little Mill Creek	Sugar Creek
Clear Creek	Little Red Creek	Sweetwater Creek
Cypress Creek	Martin Creek	Ten Mile Creek
Deep Branch	Mill Creek	Tuxanchie Creek

Coastal Streams Basin:

Andrew Branch	Crooked Creek	Mill Creek
Bay Branch	Crow Creek	Race Path Branch
Beaver Dam Branch	Cypress Creek	Rattlesnake Branch
Beetree Branch	Ditch Branch	Saucier Creek
Bigfoot Creek	E. Rattlesnake Branch	
RiverHassis Creek	Silver Run	Ship Branch Biloxi
Boggy Branch	Horse Creek	Turner Branch

Burned Weed Brake
Byrd Reed Brake
Branch
Caney Branch
Cowpen Creek

Hurricane Creek
Little Biloxi River
Little Railroad Creek
McHenry Branch

Tuxanchie Creek
West McHenry

Wolf Branch

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Agricultural resources are found in the ability to grow or cultivate a crop for economic gain. Agricultural resources can be found through crop farming, tree farming or aquaculture. These resources, unlike land and water, rely more on external components, such as weather, to produce quality products.

Crop Farming

From the time cotton was king to the present, Mississippi has remained one of the leading farming states. Unlike many other areas of the state, Stone County does not contribute to crop farming in Mississippi. Stone County allots very few of its agricultural acreages to commercial crops, such as cotton, rice, soybeans and corn.

Tree Farming

A majority of the farming done in Stone County centers around tree farming. Tree farming was born in 1941 in a nationwide volunteer effort to conserve forest. Mississippi has been the number one tree farming state since 1955. A Tree Farmer is a landowner who voluntarily manages their woodlands for commercial purposes while protecting environmental benefits. The American Forest Foundation nationally sponsors tree farming, while the Mississippi Forestry Association sponsors the Mississippi program.

While tree farming is not a traditional crop that requires intensive cultivation, certain practices must be done to keep a high growth rate and quality. The basic requirements for a Tree Farm are: land must be in continuous ownership for one year; idle acres are used to plant trees; land should be protected from wildfire, insects, disease and overgrazing; and the land should be managed for continuous crops of useful forest products.

Figure No. 28: Logo for Tree Farming



Source: Mississippi Forestry Association

Table No. 7: Endangered or Threatened Species in Stone County

Plants:	Biological Name	Category
Louisiana Quillward	<i>(Isoetes Louisianensis)</i>	Endangered
Animals:		
Gopher Tortoise	<i>(Gopherus Polyphemus)</i>	Threatened
Red-cocked Woodpecker	<i>(Picoides Borealis)</i>	Endangered
Louisiana Black Bear	<i>(Ursus Americanus Luteolus)</i>	Threatened
Source: Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks		

Aquaculture

In 2005, Mississippi ranked second in the nation for the number of aquaculture farms and made almost \$250 million is the sale of aquaculture products. The major areas of aquaculture in Mississippi are located in the Delta and in East Central Mississippi. Stone County has one catfish farm located off of State Highway 26.

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Threatened species are those that are likely to become endangered in the future if no action is taken to prevent further loss of the species. Endangered species are those that are in danger of extinction. Threatened and endangered species are determined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Mississippi has 33 endangered and threatened species listed.

The Museum of Natural Science was used for this plan to determine endangered and threatened species within Stone County. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides a listing of species by state, but does not determine species by county. According to the Natural Heritage Program that is part of the Museum of Natural Science, Stone County has numerous plants and animals listed for special concern. While these plants and animals are not listed as endangered or threatened, they should be watched to ensure their protection for future generations. The Natural Heritage Program has listed the plants and animals in Table 7 as being endangered or threatened in Stone County.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The unspoiled natural environment of the County not only defines the rural sense of place that most residents value, it provides places for sportsmen to hunt and fish and families to recreate. The pristine land, forests and streams of the County are assets that are essential to the continued prosperity of the County. Current development pressures have the potential of jeopardizing the natural environment resulting in loss of wildlife habitat, trees and eco-systems.

Protection and conservation of natural and cultural resources can be accomplished by using financial incentives, ordinances and policies. The following recommendations should be considered:

-
- Clearly identify and define the types of areas which should be protected to include fish and wildlife habitat, wetlands, floodplains, and valuable agricultural resources.
 - Evaluate existing local, state and federal regulations to determine the level of protection in place.
 - Update local regulations and ordinances and provide incentive programs for the protection and conservation of environmentally critical areas.
 - Identify wildlife corridors and instigate policies and standards to protect larger blocks, corridors or interconnected areas of forests and rural land.
 - Protect groundwater and surface water as a resource by: minimizing the amount of impervious areas created by developers; promoting the use of non-toxic pesticides and fertilizers; providing stream bank erosion control using appropriate plant material, and providing stormwater management services as specified in the Community Facilities Chapter.
 - Prohibit development in floodways and control development in floodplains.
 - Educate property owners, developers, Realtors and other community members about the advantages of protection of natural resources.
 - Promote development styles which will help preserve large portions of the land as wildlife habitat.
 - Encourage partnerships with established land trusts and other organizations to protect the natural resources of the region.

Section Three: The Built Environment



Chapter 7: Land Use

The purpose of the Land Use Element is to evaluate and map existing land uses in the County, their relationship with one another and the transportation system. A future land use strategy is presented that will help allow growth while protecting the existing positive attributes of the County.

Land use policies and various types of development ordinances can help guide the future development of the County in a positive way. This section will describe methods for achieving successful land development by identification of compatible land uses and proven development styles.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Although the southern boundary of Stone County is only 25 miles north of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, it has remained rural. Commercial uses are concentrated along Highway 49 and in the City of Wiggins. During the past ten years, the most accessible rural areas have begun a transition from forested and agricultural land to suburban style residential subdivisions.

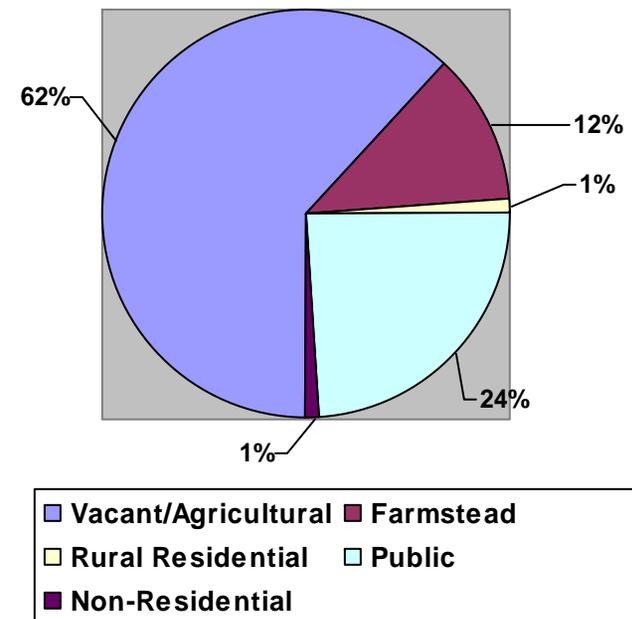
Prior Land Use Studies

A county-wide existing land use study was conducted in the spring of 2006 to categorize the land in the County by both use and development density. At the time the survey was conducted, sixty-two percent (62%) of land in the county was either agricultural or vacant, twelve percent (12%) was farmstead, one percent (1%) was rural residential, twenty-four percent (24%) was public land one percent (1) was non-residential. Single family land use, defined as land with one acre or less being used as residential, constituted less than one percentage (1%) of the total land in the county.

Existing Land Use Survey and Map

An existing land use map was created following a detailed

Figure No. 29: Existing Land Use Percentages, 2006



Source: Stone County, 2007 Comprehensive Planning Initiatives

Land Use

Figure No. 30: General Agricultural Land and Single Family Residential



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

windshield survey of properties in the county. Land use survey teams traveled highways, streets and roads to inventory the use of the land and to record the number and type of dwellings and other structures. In addition to the field survey, property lines were superimposed on aerial photographs and separate Geographical Information System (GIS) electronic maps were created for each separate category of land.

Land being used for residential was further classified by parcel size to provide a visual representation of density concentrations within the county. Vacant lands under ten acres in area were given a separate classification from larger vacant parcels.

The existing land use classification system was a combination of land use and ownership and is as follows:

Vacant/Open Space/Agricultural—undeveloped and land used primarily for forestry or agricultural purposes. These include forested lands, farmlands without residences and pasture lands.

Vacant land/General—undeveloped lands not primarily used for forestry or agricultural purposes and /or having an area of less than ten acres.

General Agricultural/Farmstead—sparsely populated agricultural, forestlands and farmlands used as primary homesteads. Includes tracts of land containing 10 or more acres with an average density of less than or equal to one dwelling unit per ten acres.

Agricultural/Residential—very low density with tracts between one and ten acres in size, having an average density of one or less dwelling units per three acres.

Rural Residential—low density residential land between one and three acres in size, having an average density of one or less dwellings per acre.

Single-family Residential—low density residential land between one and three acres in size, having an average density of less than one dwelling per acre.

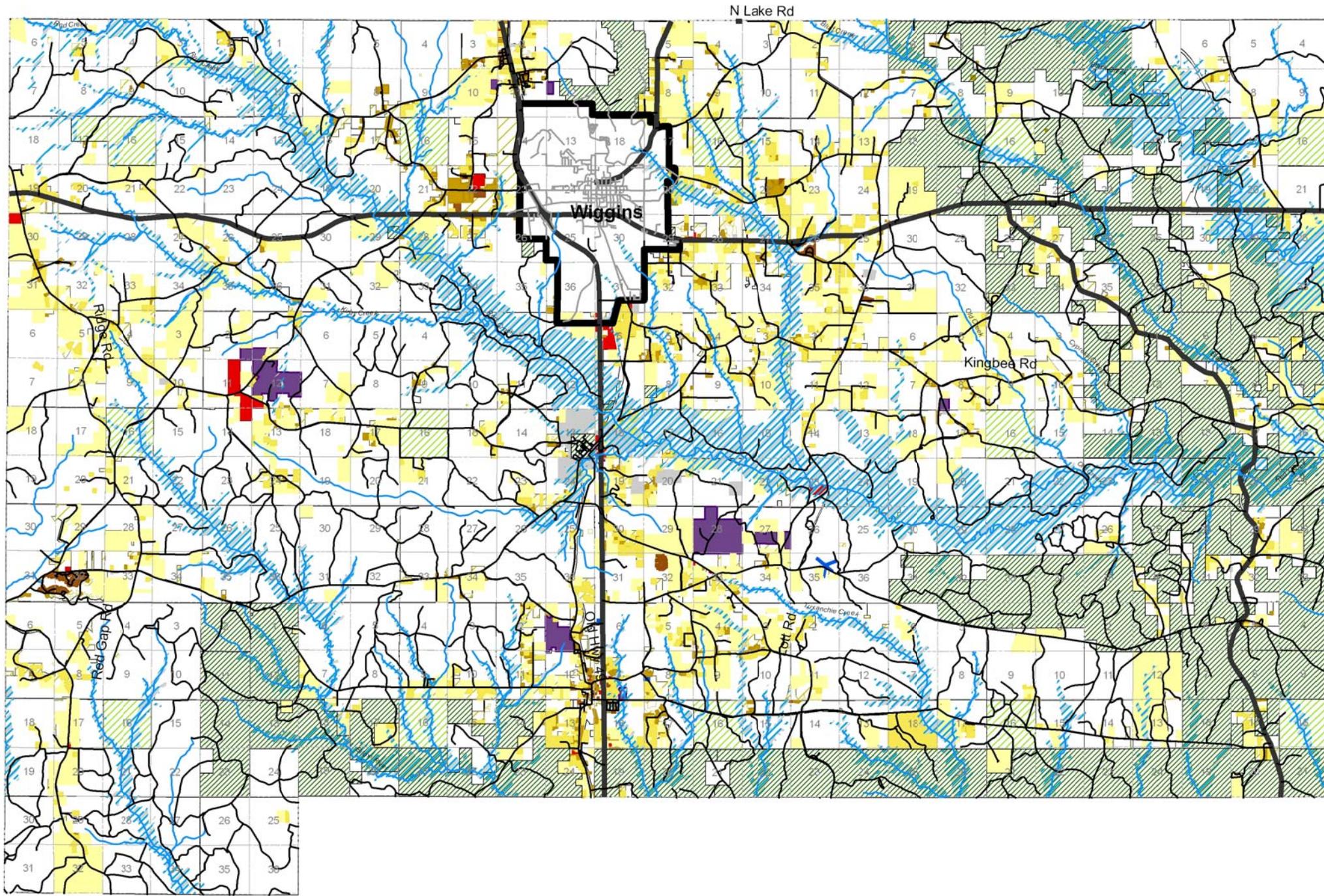
Multi-family Residential—higher density residential properties containing two or more attached dwellings.

Public or Semi-Public—educational, governmental facilities, land used or owned by federal, state, or local units of government. Churches,

Stone County Comprehensive Plan: *Existing Land Use*



Map No. 2



Legend

- Roads
- Streams
- Major Roads
- Sec/Township/Range
- County Boundary
- Federal Property
- State Property
- Flood Hazard Areas
- County Property
- Agriculture/Residential
- Commercial
- General Agricultural/Farmstead
- Industrial
- Public/Semi-Public
- Rural Residential
- Single Family Residential
- Utility Property
- Vacant/General
- Vacant /Open Space/Agricultural



For Planning Purposes Only.
Data Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc. Field Study
Map Created by: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

cemeteries, lodge halls or similar uses, not including public parks.

Commercial—developed land containing office, retail, or service uses and structures.

Industrial—land used for any type of industrial activity, including mining, mineral extraction, sawmills, lumber yards, manufacturing operations, salvage yards, indoor warehousing and outdoor equipment storage facilities.

County Property—public parks or open space owned by Stone County and undeveloped 16th section school land

State Property—Public parks or open space owned by the State of Mississippi including Flint Creek Water Park.

Federal Property—Public Parks or open space owned by the U. S. Government including De Soto National Forest.

Utility—land owned or used by utility companies for the purpose of providing water, sewer, electrical, natural gas, telephone or telecommunications services.

GROWTH STRATEGY

The most highly valued attribute of the County according to residents is its rural character. An effective multi-dimensional growth strategy will be necessary in order to perpetuate this important characteristic. Growth strategies attempt to minimize the negative effects of rapid development by controlling the timing, location, amount and density of new commercial buildings, residences, and roads. They also seek to protect and conserve important natural features of the land while allowing reasonable growth. Since the natural and built environment consists of many dimensions, growth strategy methods must consider each of these. The following are recognized methods whereby each dimension can be enhanced:

The Natural Environment

Preservation of the natural environment usually involves methods to minimize the disturbance of natural habitats or landscapes. Logging, conversion of forests into agricultural areas, urbanization, road building and other human activities tend to fragment wildlife habitats resulting in

Figure No. 31: Fence and Rural Landscape



Rural land is an integral part of the Stone County landscape

Source: Neel-Schaffer Inc.

Figure No. 32: Elements of a Sustainable Development Strategy

1. **Create and preserve compact urban areas.**
2. **Preserve the natural habitats of plants and animals.**
3. **Create adequate corridors to connect habitat patches.**
4. **Do not build in floodplain or wetland areas.**
5. **Monitor success of environmental preservation.**

Source: Charles Hoch, Linda Dalton and Frank So, Editors, The Practice of Local Government Planning, (ICMA, 2000)

patches which no longer support many wildlife species. Air and water pollution must be controlled, and there must be safe disposal of wastes. Uncontrolled disturbance of soil can negatively impact the environment and waterways many miles away.

The Rural Environment

Rural environments are those areas which have been typically used as farms and very-low density housing. Preservation of wildlife, fish and plant habitat and large land areas for open space must be accomplished to retain the qualities that make these areas seem rural. At the same time, urban services must be provided to residents.

The Urban Environment

These are the areas that can ideally accommodate new households and resultant service needs. The urban environment also has natural elements including landscaped streets and parks. By allowing higher density uses which are situated closer together in urban areas, the natural and rural environments can be preserved for hunting, fishing and recreation.

Growth Management Plan

A growth management plan seeks to identify discrete areas where various types of growth is desired, stage the building of infrastructure to these specific growth areas, and control negative consequences of growth through the application of environmental and land development policies and ordinances.

Subsequent to the existing land use study conducted in 2006, a growth management map was formulated which categorized lands according to the most advantageous use taking into consideration constraints such as public ownership, environmentally sensitive land and existing land uses. This map reflects sound growth management strategies and those which are consistent with smart growth principals. The categories are:

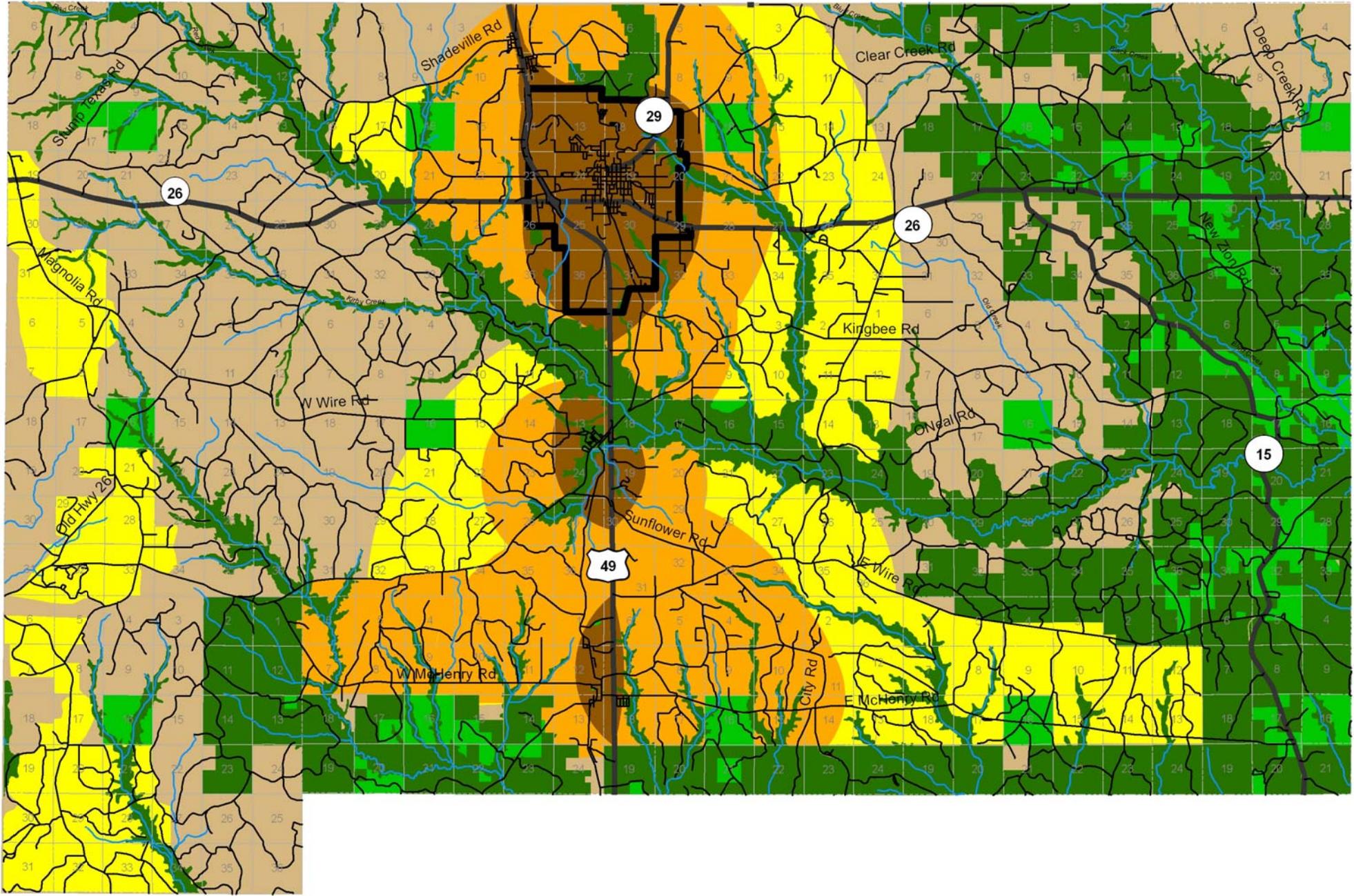
Protected Lands—Land to be protected from development; these lands include state-owned properties, federal lands, and lands within floodways or environmentally sensitive areas.

Restricted Development Areas—Land with development restrictions which prevent them from being intended growth areas; these lands include privately-owned properties with the DeSoto National Forest, wetlands and

Stone County Comprehensive Plan: Growth Management Areas

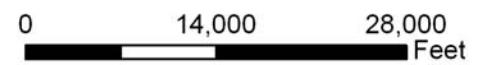


Map No. 3



Legend

- Roads
- Streams
- Major Roads
- City of Wiggins
- Sec/Township/range
- Protected Land
- State Property
- Flood Hazard Areas
- Restricted Development Area
- Sixteenth Section Land
- Existing Community Infill Area
- Intended Growth Area
- Rural Community Infill Area
- Rural Land



For Planning Purposes Only.

Data Source: Stone County Board of Supervisors
Map Created by: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

lands designated as flood hazard areas.

Sixteenth Section Lands—Land under the control of the Stone County school Board.

Existing Community Infill Areas—Land in and around existing communities –Wiggins, Bond, Perkinston, McHenry and Sunflower—where there is existing development and infill growth is encouraged.

Intended Growth Areas—Land where growth is currently planned or where development is encouraged. This includes lands along major transportation corridors where existing resources may be utilized, and growth corridors adjacent to existing communities.

Rural Community Infill Areas— Land where low-density or very low-density development is expected to occur in and around existing communities.

Rural Lands— Agricultural, forestry or farmstead lands; land where moderate-density or high-density development is not encouraged due to the lack of accessible infrastructure, transportation access and distance from existing communities and intended growth areas.

FUTURE LAND USE STRATEGY

In terms of development, county leaders are faced with the challenge of protecting the rural character of the land while accommodating new development. New residential and commercial development will increase tax revenues but may negatively impact the rural character of the countryside.

The future land use strategy in this plan is based on three fundamental principles that will accommodate new development while protecting valued attributes of the land. They are as follows:

- New growth should be targeted to specific areas and should follow a specific predetermined development model, so that growth takes place in a controlled manner.
- The protection of the rural character of the County is essential to preserving the heritage and unique character of Stone County.
- Conservation and protection of waterways, wetlands, agricultural and forest land will result in both economic growth and the quality of life for residents and visitors.

General Land Use Guidelines

The following are general guidelines that should be used to help shape County policy regarding new development.

Rural Areas:

- Remote rural and forested areas of the county should be protected from inappropriate land use and high density development.

Land Use

Figure No. 33: Floodplains and Floodways

Floodplains are defined and delineated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to include all areas subject to flooding at 100-year intervals. This definition encompasses areas along rivers and streams in the County. In addition to the wildlife habitat and hydraulic functions the floodplains serve because of their location, building limitations in these areas help limit damage to property when flooding occurs. The map on the following page shows the 100 year interval floodplain areas as well as the floodways in the County.

- Historic sites, including farmhouses, outbuildings and barns should be incorporated into new developments.
- Scenic vistas should be protected by strategic placement of buildings and roads.
- River and stream corridors, especially floodplains and wetlands, should remain undeveloped. (See Map on Page 61).

Existing Communities and Towns:

- New development surrounding Wiggins, McHenry, and Perkinston and infill development within those communities should be consistent with historic patterns of development.
- Development that encourages sprawl should be discouraged.

High Intensity Commercial and Industrial:

- Strip linear commercial development with massive parking lots, multiple access points and large signs should be discouraged. Clustering of commercial is desirable with cross-access and shared parking.
- Commercial development which is not located on Hwy 49 should be limited in building height and size and parking areas should have perimeter landscaping to buffer uses in rural communities.
- Commercial uses along Hwy 49 should have attractive architectural design and landscaped which will give a positive message about the County.
- New industrial development should be located in areas where it will not be obtrusive or constitute a nuisance to near-by residential neighborhoods.

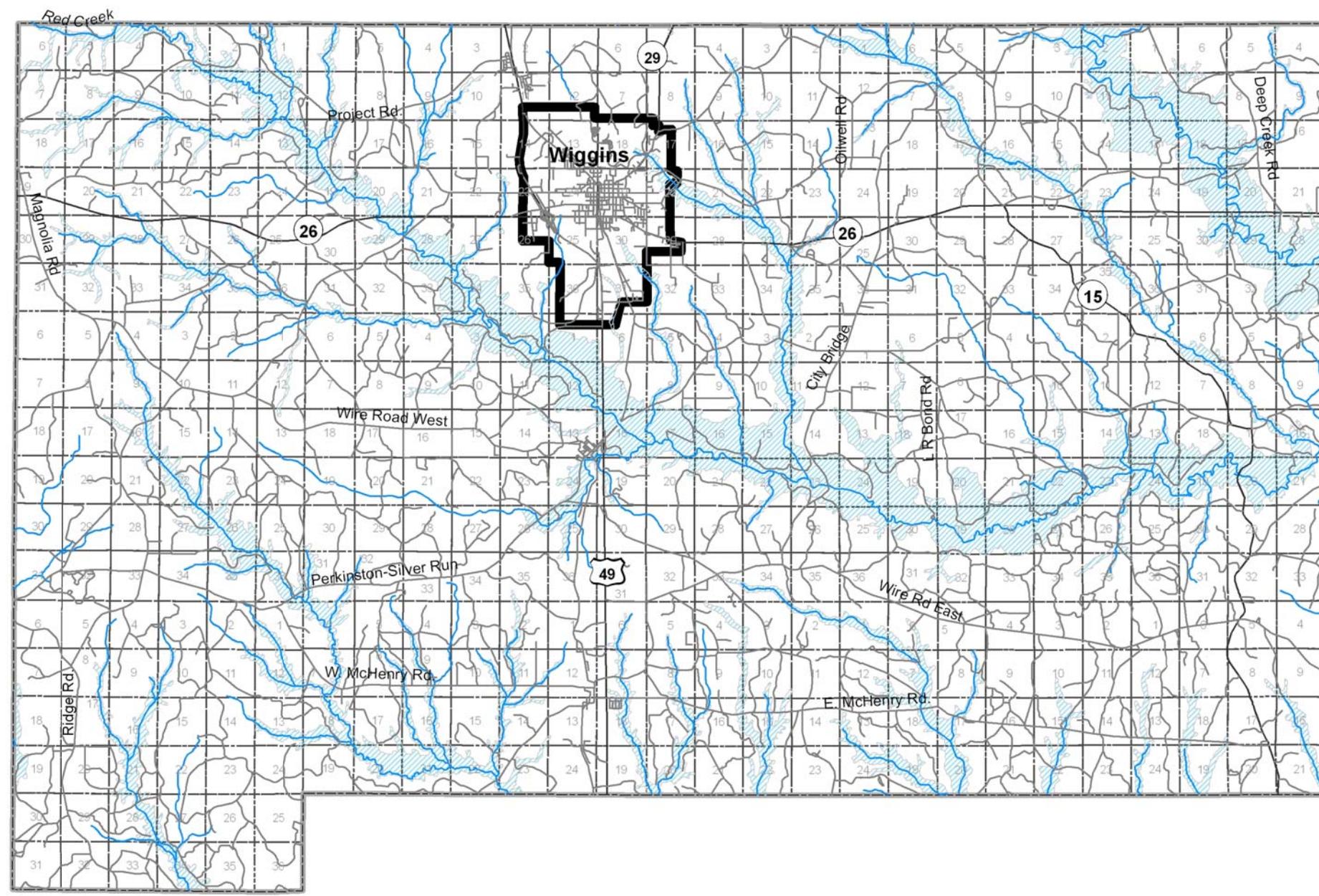
Future Land Use Plan

The Future Land Use Plan consists of specific land use classifications are presented in map form on page 65. The Future Land Use Map was developed using the Growth Management Plan as a guide. Additional field studies were conducted and development styles were identified which would be appropriate for Stone County. The follow items were considered when designating future land categories to Stone County:

Stone County Comprehensive Plan: Floodplain



Map No. 4



Legend

- Roads
- Streams
- ▭ County
- ▨ Flood Hazard Areas



For Planning Purposes Only.
Data Source: Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS)
Map Created by: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

- Existing land uses
- Classification of roadways and accessibility
- Adjoining land use
- Building scale and type required for that particular type of use
- Normal density requirements for specific uses
- Proximity and convenience for shoppers
- Nuisance factors such as noise, fumes, negative environmental impact
- “Externalities” (unintended consequences) which might accrue to adjoining properties as a result of inappropriate land use
- Natural resource protection and conservation
- Access to available water/sewer infrastructure

Future Land Use Classifications

Land Uses on the Future Land Use Map are color coded and categorized as follows:

Conservation — Land which should be preserved as natural habitats including national forests and wildlife habitats.

Agricultural — Land which should be preserved as rural land with appropriate uses.

Development — Areas where most new development should occur

Transitional — Land which serve as developed buffers between more urbanized development and Agricultural areas

Commercial, High intensity — Land accessible to major arterials and placed at strategic highway exits intended to serve the needs of travelers as well as local residents.

Industrial — Areas where existing industrial uses are located and which are appropriate for new, stand alone manufacturing or industrial uses.

Crossroads Center — Areas where existing commercial or community centers are located and which are appropriate for continued development.

Village Center — Core mixed-use areas which serve as the hub for

Figure No 34: Perkinston Community



Perkinston is considered a Village Center.

Land Use

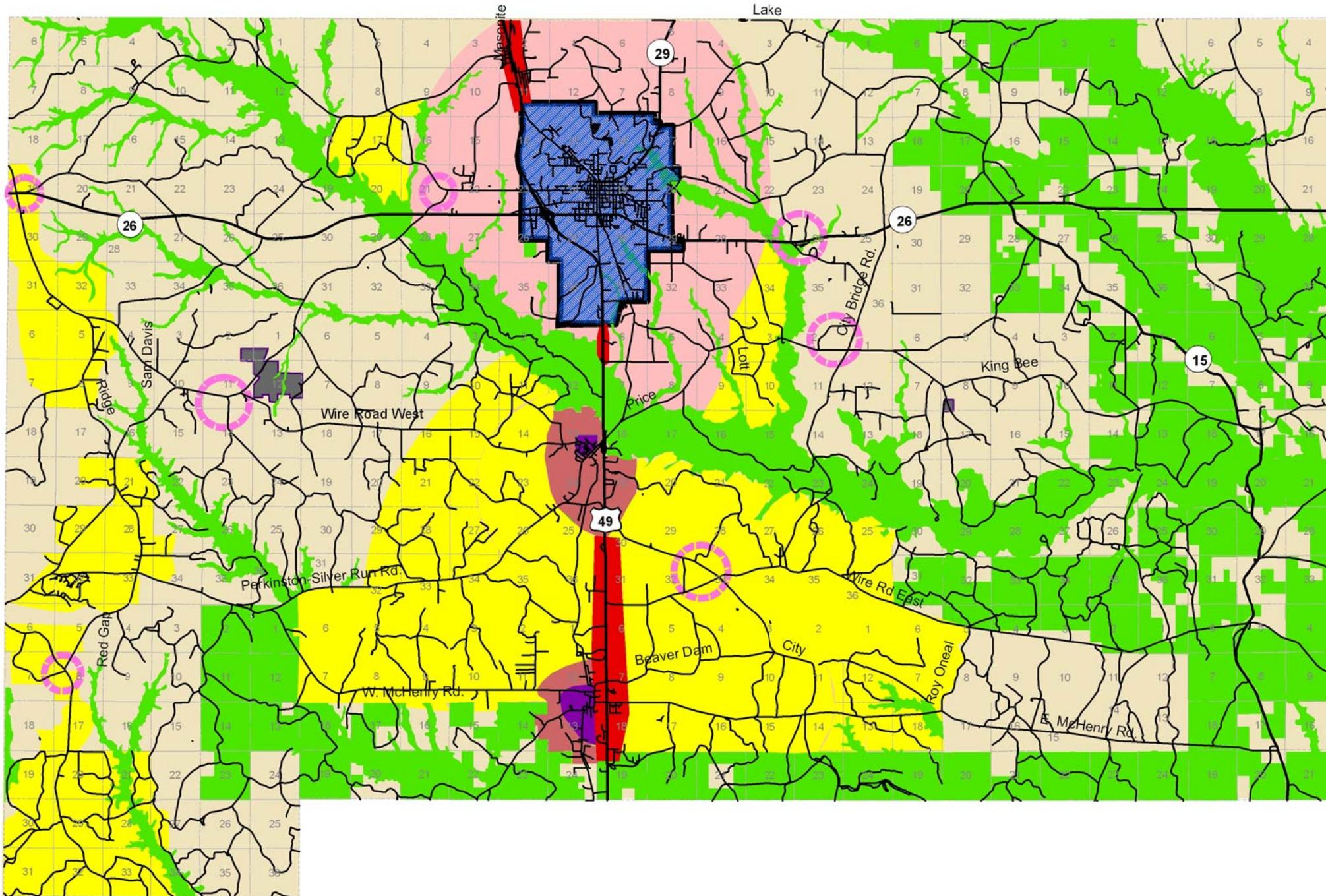
Table No. 8: Land Use Categories with Recommended Uses, Street Patterns and Development Styles

Land Use Category	Appropriate Uses	Recommended Street Pattern	Recommended New Development Style(s)
Conservation	Greenways, walking trails, or limited recreation. Land managed by the State or National Park Service. Passive recreational sites, greenways, rural walking trails, boat launches, dispersed cabins along rivers or streams.	Rural roads	Conservation Recreational
Agricultural	Single-family detached residential averaging a gross density of one unit per 10 acres or less Agriculture uses including livestock, crop production, tree farms, farms and farm-related businesses Institutional uses such as libraries and places of worship. Recreational uses such as country clubs, golf courses and similar uses serving the rural population.	Rural roads and curvilinear in new subdivisions	Conservation subdivisions and large-lot subdivisions
Development	Single family detached residential averaging a gross density of two units per acre. Institutional uses as libraries and medium size to large places of worship Neighborhood to Community scaled commercial uses such as grocery stores Parks with active recreational activities such as tennis, swimming, and community centers. Recreational uses such as country clubs, golf courses, parks with tennis, swimming pools, walking trails, picnic areas and benches	Rural roads, grid patterns and curvilinear in new subdivisions	Conservation, large-lot and low density subdivisions
Transitional	Low to medium density residential; community facilities, commercial, and light industrial uses	Rural roads, grid patterns and curvilinear	Low- to medium-density residential
Commercial, High Intensity	All types of commercial including big box and service retail; high-density residential; light industrial	Highways, Arterials and frontage roads	N/A
Industrial	Heavy industrial uses such as strip mining	Linear and loop street patterns	N/A
Crossroads Center	Low intensity service and retail businesses; residential; public facilities, small parks	Linear street pattern	Low to medium density, TND
Village Center	All uses in Development Areas plus - Medium to High density residential Institutional uses such as large places of worship and elementary schools	Neo-traditional or grid pattern streets	Low to medium-density residential, TND
Town Center	All uses in Village Center plus – Big box retail (on Highways and major arterials)	Neo-traditional or grid pattern streets.	Low to medium-density residential, TND

Stone County Comprehensive Plan: Future Land Use



Map No. 5



Legend

- Roads
- Future Land Use**
- Agricultural
- Town Center
- Crossroads
- Commercial-High Intensity
- Village Center
- Development
- Transitional
- Sec/Township/range
- City of Wiggins
- Conservation
- Industrial



For Planning Purposes Only.

Data Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.
and Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS)
Map Created by: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

commercial, institutional and residential neighborhoods. Usually located at a crossroads or very close to major highways or arterials.

Town Center—Existing towns or cities with core downtown areas and which have a concentration of commercial, institutional, public uses and residential uses of varied types and sizes.

Table No. 8 found on page 64 gives land use categories with recommended uses, street patterns and development styles.

DEVELOPMENT MODELS

The historic development pattern reflects a time when commercial and higher density residential uses were concentrated in the town centers with surrounding residential neighborhoods containing a mixture of housing styles and sizes. Victorian, ranch, bungalow and cottage homes are found in proximity to one another even though they were built in vastly different times. Home occupations or small offices could be found within residential neighborhoods. The communities of Wiggins, McHenry and Perkinston grew organically with building scale and uses determined by need and availability. Street layouts were typically grid pattern and interconnected with one another and with the town center. This type of development easily accommodates a variety of households including persons of different ages, incomes, gender and race.

The more recently platted residential developments are very different. The street patterns are curvilinear and homes are homogeneous in size, price and amenities. These developments are usually separated from one another with one or two entrances off a main thoroughfare or rural road. There is no variety in terms of uses with all of the structures built for low density, residential use. Very large developments may contain recreational amenities such as swimming pools, tennis courts, or community centers for the exclusive use of residents.

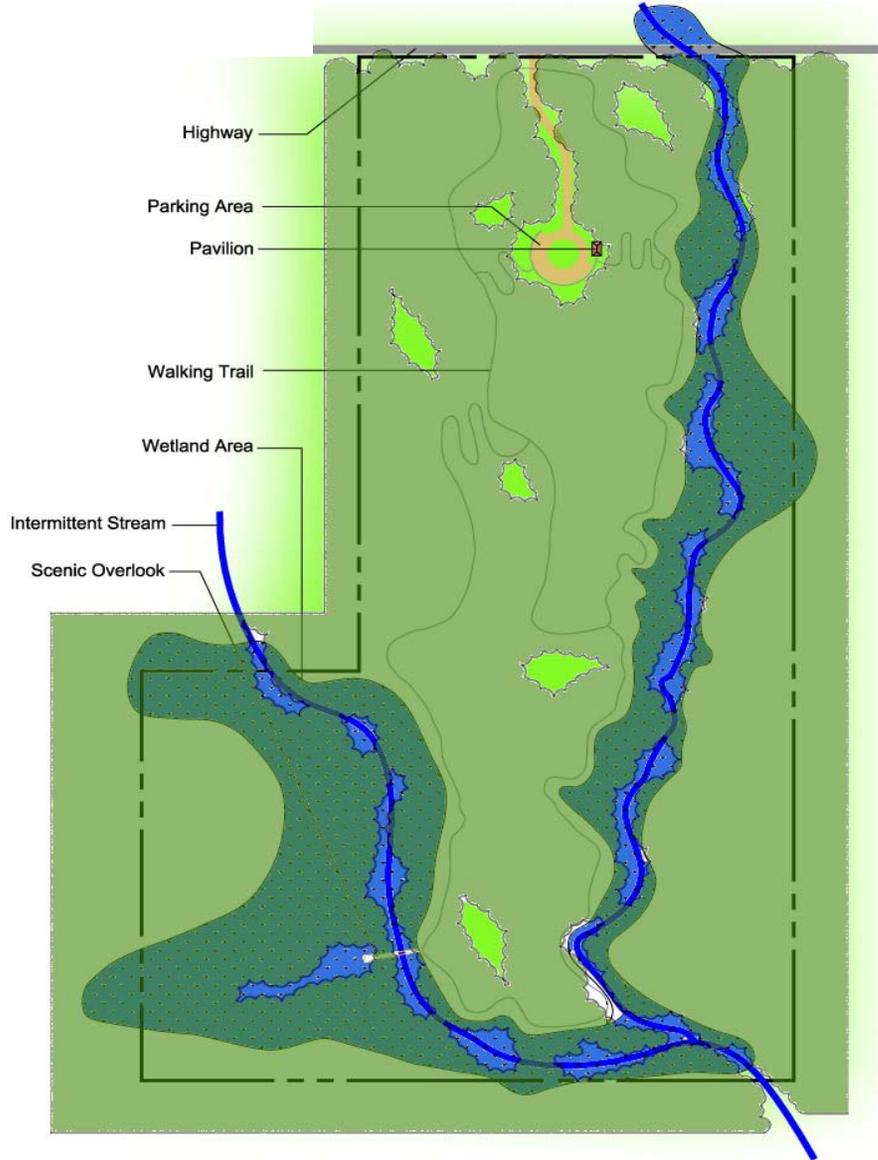
In keeping with smart growth principles, ten development models have been developed for Stone County each of which is suitable for specific land use areas. The models are designed for the purpose of preserving the overall rural character of the County while encouraging contemporary styles of development. Each development model describes certain attributes such as appropriate areas, desirable

Figure No. 35: Conservation Neighborhood



Conservation neighborhoods cluster homes and conserve valuable natural resources such as trees, lakes and vistas.
Source: Internet image

Exhibit No. 1



Development Model No. 1:
Conservation Recreational Area

FLU Area where appropriated:

Conservation and Agricultural and environmentally sensitive area within other districts.

Residential and commercial development is discouraged in conservation and agricultural areas but passive parks may be introduced if they are designed to be non-intrusive.

Desirable:

Preservation of existing landscapes, streams, and water bodies is essential. Man-made features should be minimal. Walking trails, picnic pavilions, scenic overlooks and non-intrusive monuments can be used. If new landscaping is used, plant material should be indigenous to the region and non-invasive

Streets and Amenities:

Very limited paved areas are allowed. Short narrow unpaved streets with natural drainage are preferred.

Amenities may include covered picnic areas, benches and tables which are made of natural material and to not detract from the surrounding areas.

Development Model No. 2:
Conservation Subdivision

FLU Areas where appropriate:

Agricultural, Development and Transitional

Desirable:

Conservation or Cluster Subdivisions preserve existing natural areas and help protect the character of rural land. Exhibit No. 2 shows the contrast between a traditional and a conservation subdivision.

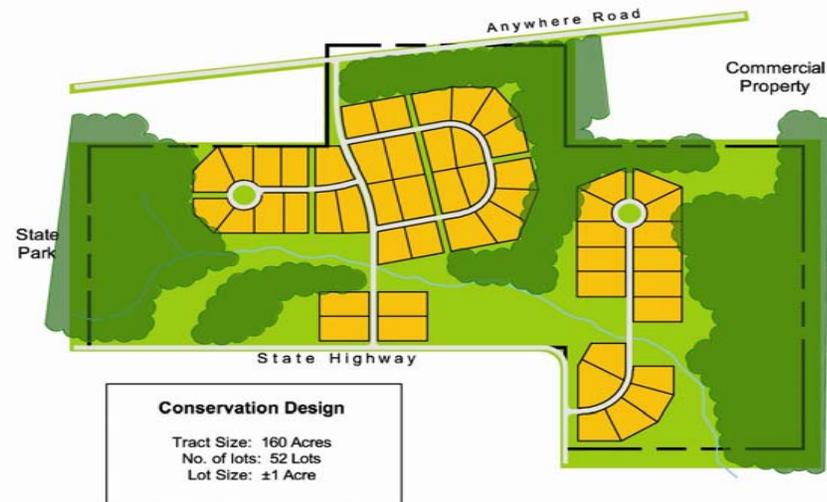
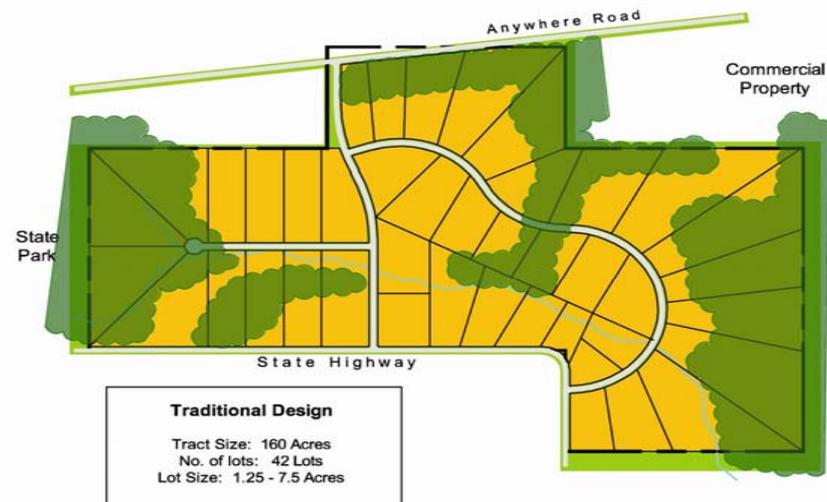
Corridors of existing vegetative allow wildlife to travel between residential areas and larger tracts of woods.

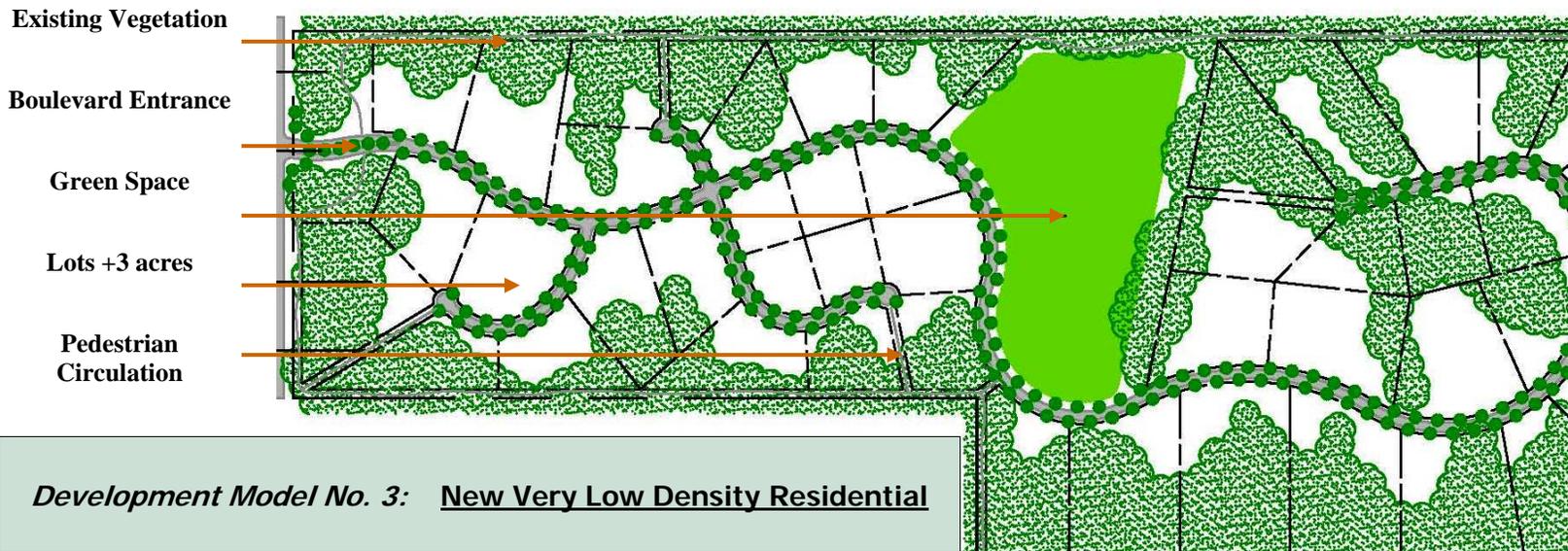
Homes should be clustered along short streets with the majority of the land within the subdivision preserved as common open space.

Streets and Amenities:

Short loop, and cul-de-sac streets should be used to eliminate disturbance of natural areas. Greenways, lakes, and natural parks are used as amenities.

Exhibit No. 2





FLU Areas where appropriate:

Agricultural and Development or any FLU area where new development is adjacent to undeveloped rural land.

Desirable:

Subdivisions which have very large lots and set aside a portion of the site to be preserved in its natural state can be effective in preservation of wildlife and natural vegetation

Streets and Amenities :

New subdivisions should feature one main street off of existing rural roads. New homes should be placed along short streets with the majority of the land within the subdivision preserved as common open space. Having the open space areas contiguous to adjacent undeveloped land is desirable.

Churches, Schools, Daycare and other non residential uses should be at the entrance to the subdivision or along existing rural roads.

Large stands of existing trees should be preserved and new trees planted on each residential lot. Streets should be narrow and natural drainage should be used.

**Development Model No. 4 :
New Low Density Residential**

FLU Areas where appropriate:
Agricultural and Development

Desirable:

- Subdivisions which have large lots and which set or preserve a portion of the site for passive recreation and natural areas.
- Locating small scale services and retail may be desirable to serve residents of the neighborhood.
- Backyards should face natural areas or another back yard and not the street.

Streets and Amenities:

Main street leading into development with loop or short streets for housing units.

Attractive entrances with divided street to channel traffic. Suitable entrance signs, streetscapes.

More intensive recreational activities, schools, and commercial located close to the entrance of the subdivision.

Open space areas preserved as natural areas and with passive park activities such as walking trails. Water features including swimming pools or lakes

Large stands of trees should be preserved and trees planted on each lot or along streets.

Existing Vegetation

Residential Lot- 1/2 to one 1 acre

Pedestrian Circulation

Green space

Boulevard Entry

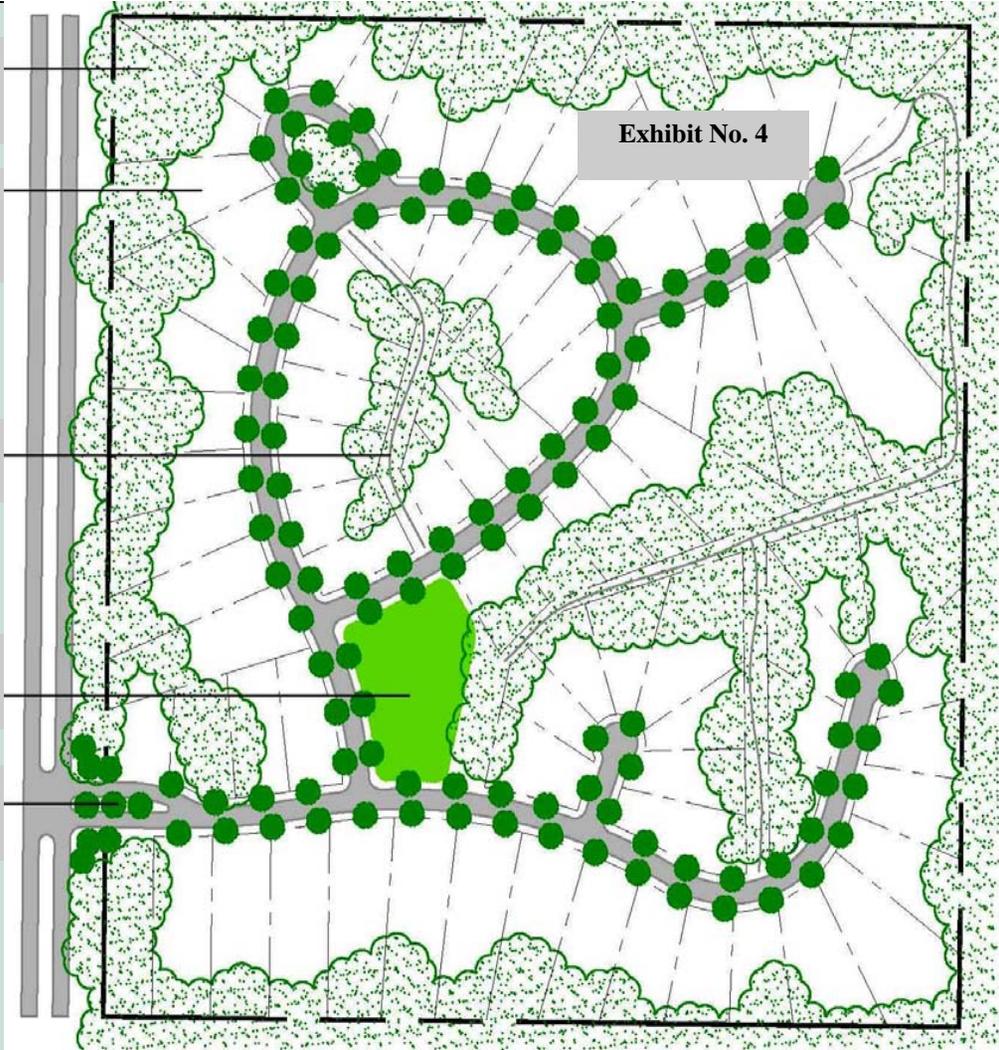
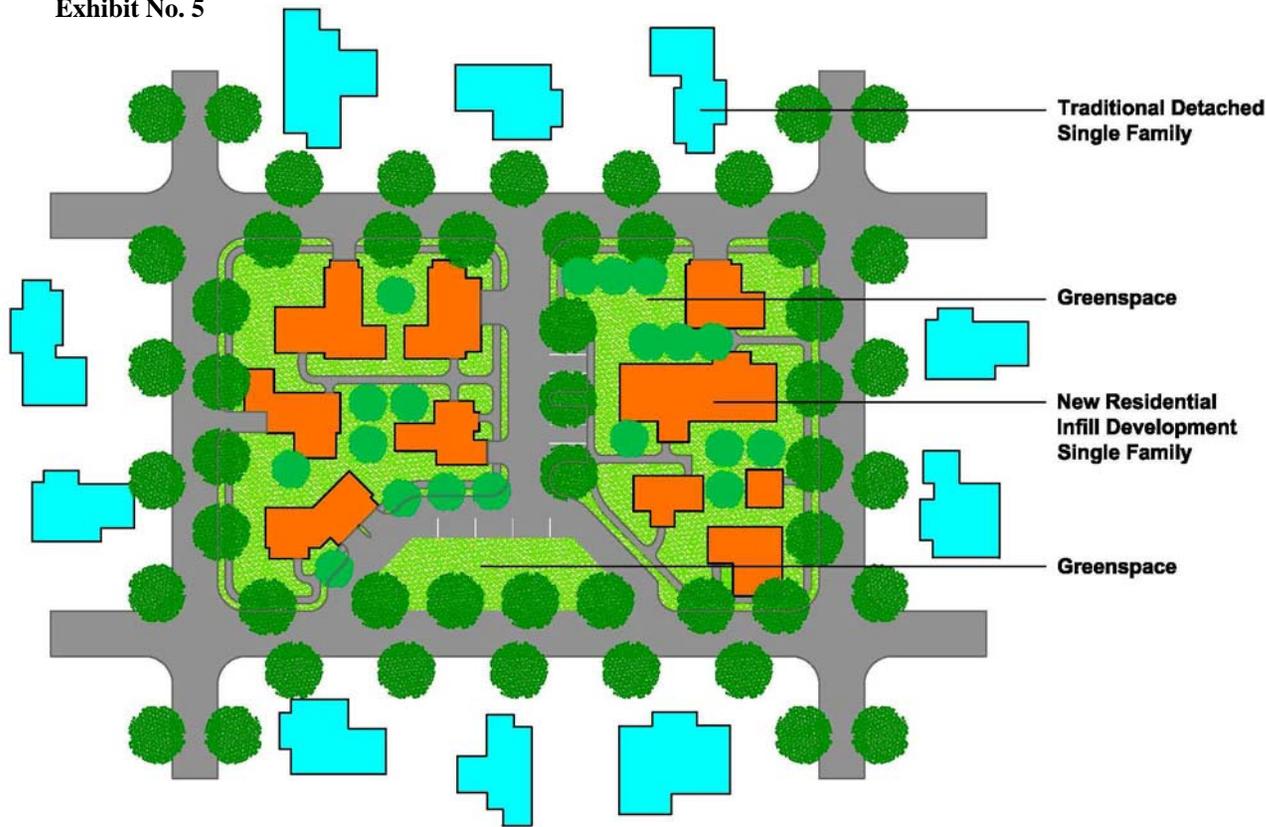


Exhibit No. 5



**Development Model
No. 5:
New Residential
Infill**

**FLU Areas where
appropriate:**

Development, Village
Centers and Town
Centers

Desirable:

- A mixture of housing styles and sizes which fit contextually within the existing neighborhood pattern.
- New homes should have front, rear and side setbacks (yards) to correspond with existing homes.

- Small churches and civic uses may be appropriate.
- New homes and other uses should respect the footprint and size of existing structures.
- Pedestrian connectivity should be stressed with sidewalks, walking paths or bike trails.
- A mixture of housing styles and sizes is desirable.

Streets and Amenities:

New streets should be integrated into existing street pattern, although traffic calming can be introduced in the form of curved or narrow streets. Street trees and lights are encouraged.

Exhibit No. 6

Development Model No. 6:

New Medium Density Residential

FLU Areas where appropriate:

Development, Village Centers and Town Centers

Desirable:

- Mixture of housing styles, sizes and prices
- Interconnectivity between uses and other developments
- Pedestrian accessibility
- Courtyards and open spaces to encourage community recreation and events
- Small scaled churches, elementary schools and shopping on the periphery if located on major arterial

Streets and Amenities:

Interconnectivity of streets is desired. Streets should be narrow enough to discourage through traffic.

Tennis courts, swimming pools, clubhouses, walking trails, picnic areas and benches.



Connectivity of local streets is an important aspect of this type of neighborhoods. Note the commercial and community uses are located on the periphery of the development on a non-local street. Small parks are interspersed throughout.

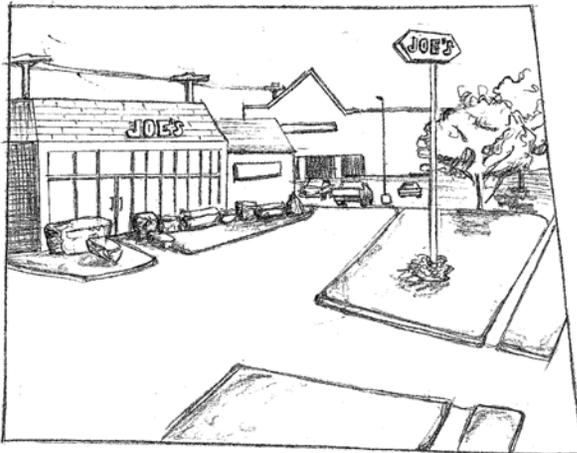
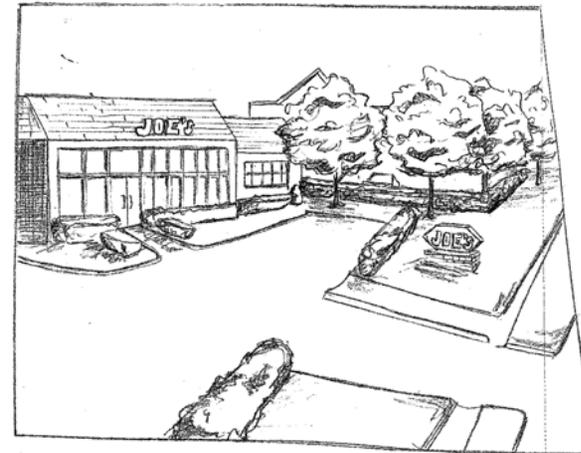


Exhibit No7

Convenience Stores and other commercial uses located at Crossroads Centers usually feature front-loaded parking, pole signs, and little landscaping (left). They can be redesigned to include monument signs and landscaping to humanize their scale (right).



Development Model No. 7:

Crossroads Center

Characteristics: Areas where community facilities and retail stores are concentrated including existing commercial, community centers, volunteer fire stations, parks and walking trails. Should be located at existing crossroads which are usually local roads.

Desirable Development Patterns: Surrounding residential areas should be respected and protected through the use of landscaping and tree buffering and pedestrian lighting. Buildings should be 5,000 square ft or less and compatible with surrounding buildings. This development style does not usually have interior streets, but rather sidewalks or trails. Off-road parking and lighting should be provided.

Best Uses for these areas:

- Local grocery store with gasoline pumps.
- Recreational uses such as community centers, parks, walking trails.
- Institutional uses such as fire stations, libraries, and churches.
- Home based commercial such as beauty shops, daycare and after-school care.

Exhibit No. 8

Description of Development Model No. 8:

Existing Village Center

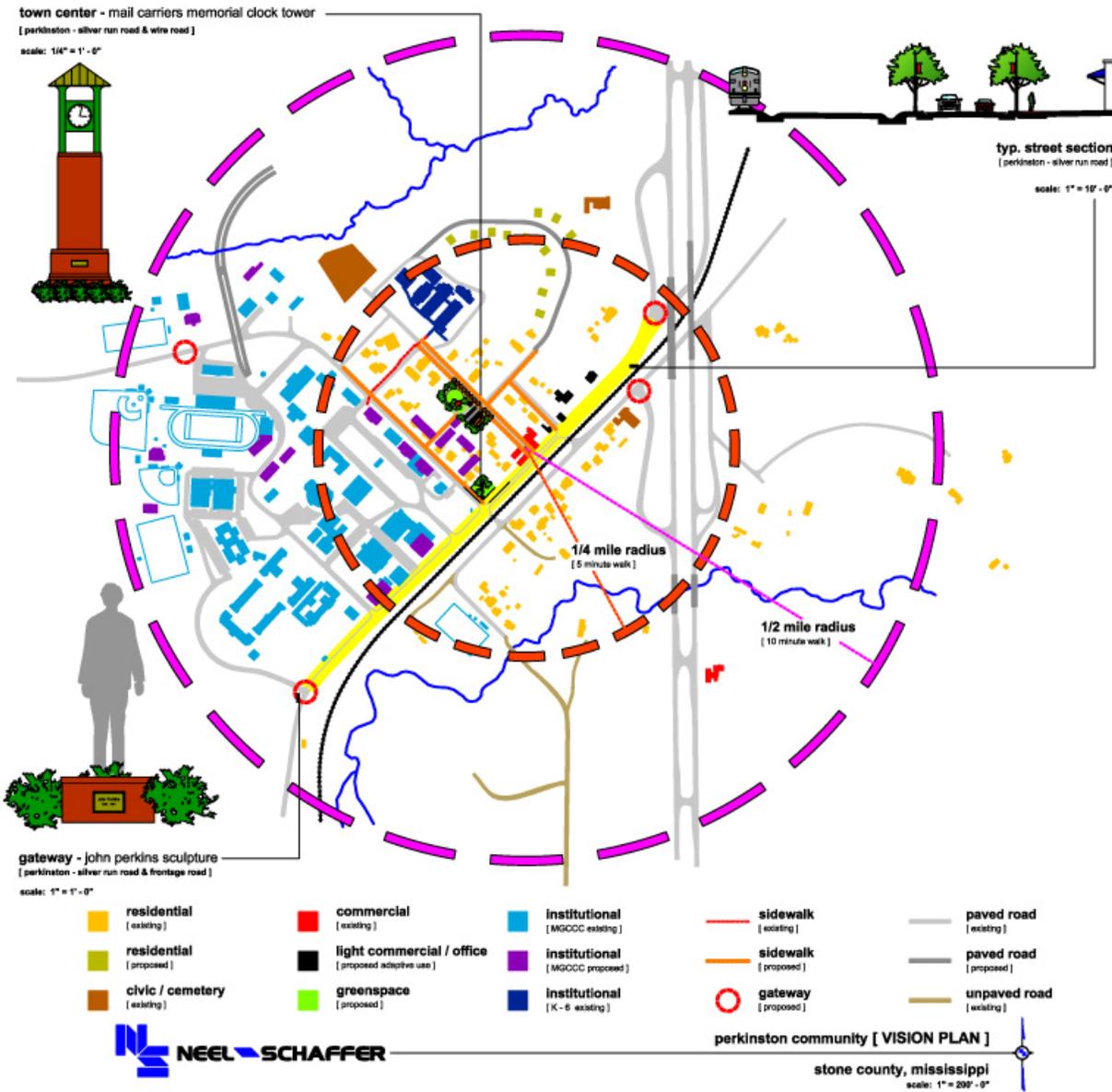
Existing Characteristics: An area which serves as the commercial and institutional focal point of surrounding rural residential and farming uses. Historic village centers with a congregation of residential and mixed uses; locations situated at crossroads and served by rural arterials or collectors.

Desirable Development Patterns: Neo-traditional street patterns are preferred to complement existing street patterns. Non-residential uses should be located within the existing village center. Convenience retail may be located on existing arterial and/or collector roads.

Best Uses for these areas:

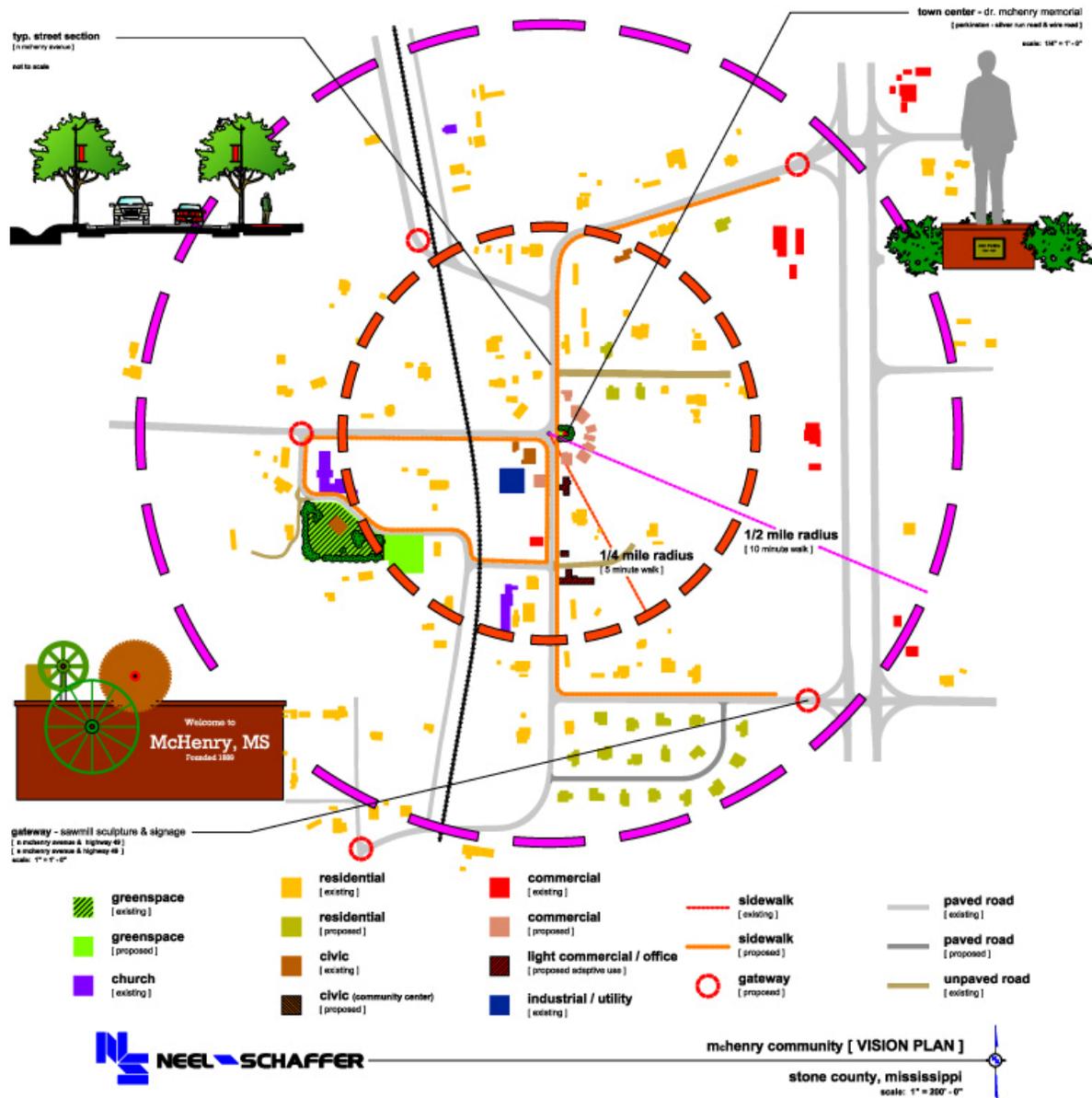
- Convenience and specialty retail shops providing goods and services to surrounding communities and rural areas.
- Elementary and middle schools, preschool and after-school facilities
- Recreational uses such as community centers, parks, walking trails that serve the surrounding rural residents.
- Low-Density Single-family Residential and Medium-Density Single-family of the same density as existing homes.
- Townhouses, in very limited quality, when built no more than four (4) units in a section (on major thoroughfares only).

Examples of a Village Center can be found on the following two pages.



Development Plan for Perkinston

Exhibit No. 10



Development Plan for McHenry

features and streets and amenities. Development models can be found on the following pages.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The land use study conducted in the county indicates that the majority of the land can be classified as rural or agricultural. There are existing concentrations of residential uses in the City of Wiggins and the communities of Perkingston and McHenry. Scattered new residential development is occurring in the general vicinity of Perkingston and McHenry both east and west of Hwy 49. The county does not have any form of land use control but does impose subdivision regulations and flood plain regulations. In addition, building code regulations are being used to protect home buyers. A county-wide utility authority has been organized which will coordinate infrastructure needs. The following recommendations are put forth to help guide land development:

- Establish guidelines for development to protect the character of existing neighborhoods and communities and to insure quality new development.
- Use the Future Land Use Map as a guide for development and extension of infrastructure.
- Use the development models to evaluate new development and as a guide for any future land use ordinances.
- Incorporate “conservation and/or cluster subdivision development” as a by-right option in the Subdivision Ordinance.
- Write and adopt a landscaping ordinance which requires landscaping on commercial and industrial sites and buffering for uses which are intrusive such as junk yards.
- Update the existing Subdivision Ordinance to reflect the recommendations of this chapter as well as other acceptable industry standards.
- Consider the adoption of a land development ordinance which would include zoning and other appropriate land use regulations.
- Utilize smart growth principles in all land development ordinances and policies.
- Maintain the electronic version of the existing land use map and periodically verify through field surveys.

Chapter 8: Transportation

Transportation networks—including highways, roads, sidewalks, railroads, airports and walking and bike paths—are the links between regions, communities, cities and neighborhoods. As such, they provide vital connections between destination within the county and beyond. The efficient circulation of people, materials, and products all depend upon a system of transportation routes.

This Chapter describes the existing transportation systems; in textual and map form. It includes the road classifications, current traffic counts, planned upgrades and makes recommendations for dealing with the future transportation planning issues.

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

The primary vehicular roadways in the County are U. S. Highway 49, and State Highways 26 and 15. Other major thoroughfares within the county include East McHenry, Wire Road, King Bee Road, Project Road, Perkinston-Silver Run Road and City Bridge Road.

Pedestrian & Bike Trail Facilities

Sidewalks are not commonly found except within the City of Wiggins and on the Mississippi Gulf Community College campus. New subdivisions are not required to build sidewalks under the current Subdivision Ordinance. New Bike Trails are planned for certain areas in the County.

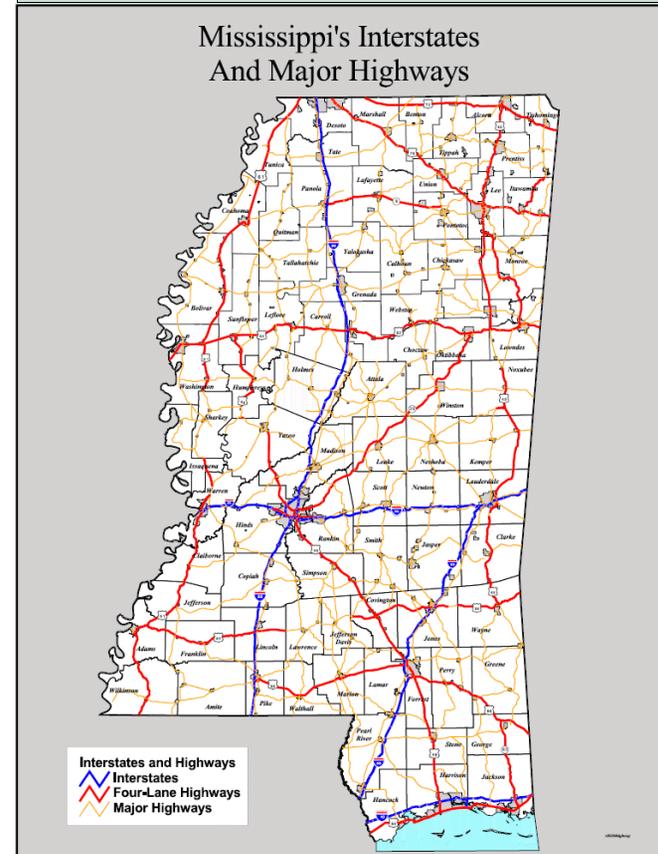
Mass Transit & Freight

Greyhound Lines, Inc. maintains a bus route on Highway 49 and has connecting routes in Jackson and Gulfport, MS. The Kansas City Southern Railroad line runs north and south through the heart of the county from Gulfport to Hattiesburg hauling commercial freight.

Air Travel Facilities

The Gulfport International and Hattiesburg–Laurel Regional Airports provide commercial service and the Dean Griffin Memorial Airport provides local service.

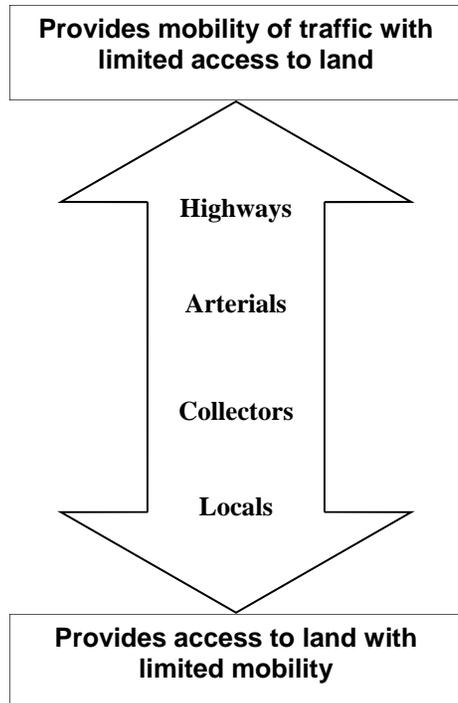
Figure No. 36: Major Mississippi Highways



Source: MDOT

Transportation

Figure No. 37: Hierarchy of Road System



IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Improving roads and transportation systems involves much more than widening, paving and adding traffic signals. A systematic approach must be utilized which identifies traffic generators, the accurate classification of streets, land use controls, a pre-determined access management plan, and programming for future needs.

Planning for Efficient Roadways

The first step in planning for an efficient roadway system is to categorize existing roads into classifications. Major traffic generators and changes in land use must be considered in terms of the possible impact on the level of service of roadways.

Function Classifications

Roads within the county are assigned functional classifications by the Mississippi Department of Transportation after reviewing their primary function and the amount of traffic they sustain. The standards given below for each functional classification give additional information about road classifications. The map on page 81 shows the road classification system of the county road system.

Principal Arterial

- Serves corridor movements of substantial statewide or interstate travel;
- Serves all urban areas of 50,000 and over population and a majority of those over 25,000 people;
- Provides an integrated network without stub connections;
- Primary function is the movement of traffic, access for individual properties is a secondary consideration.

Minor Arterial

- Links cities and large towns
- Provides service to corridors with trip lengths and travel density greater than those served by rural collectors of local systems;
- Design should be expected to provide for relatively high overall speeds with minimum interference to through movement;

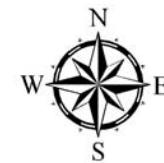
Stone County Comprehensive Plan: Functional Classification System



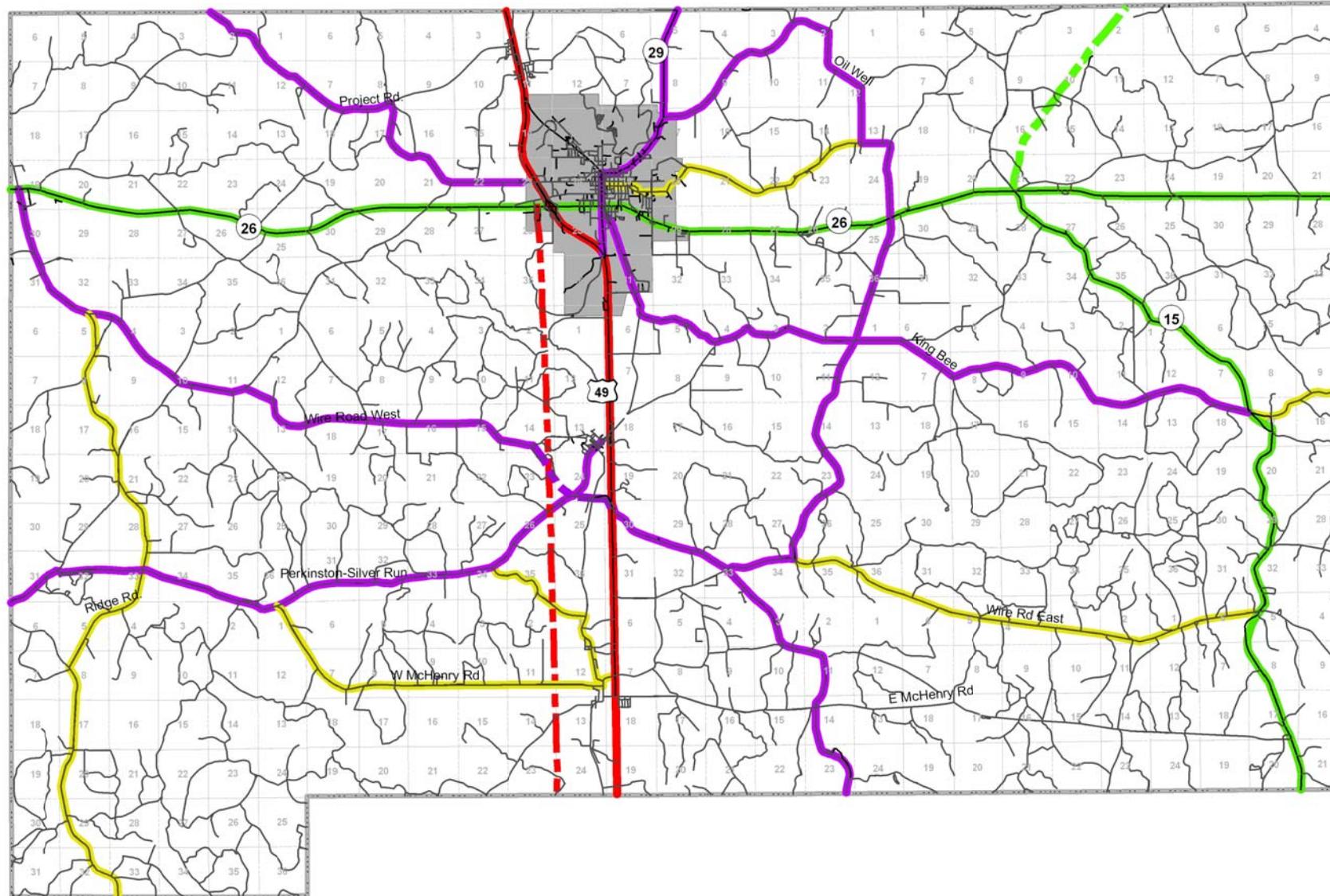
Map No. 6

Legend

- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Minor Arterial
- Other Principal Arterial
- Projected Minor Arterial
- - - Projected Principal Arterial
- - - Projected Major Collector
- City of Wiggins
- County



For Planning Purposes Only.
Data Sources: MS Dept. of Transportation
and Stone County Engineer
Map Created by: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.



-
- Direct access to individual property owners is discouraged.

Major Collector

- Provides service to larger towns not directly served by higher systems;
- Links the larger towns to nearby larger towns or routes of higher classifications;
- Serves the more important intra-country travel corridors
- Entrance controls (such as turn lanes, signals, signs, combined access points, etc.) should be utilized.

Minor Collector

- Spaced at intervals consistent with population density;
- Collects traffic from local roads and brings all developer areas within a reasonable distance of a collector road;
- Provides service to the remaining smaller communities.

Local

- Serves primarily to provide access to adjacent land;
- Provides service to travel over relatively short distances as compared to collectors or other higher systems;
- Includes all facilities not on one of the higher systems.

Average Daily Traffic Counts

Average daily traffic counts (ADT) are calculated by the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) and are shown on the map on page 83. As more development occurs, causing more trips to be generated on the roadway, the average daily trips increase. Once these trips have increased to certain thresholds, the level of service declines for persons traveling sometimes to the point that roadways must be widened or new routes must be built. Controlling this requires coordination between land use and transportation planning. By studying various types of traffic generators and being able to calculate the additional traffic they will produce, transportation planners can anticipate increased demand upon roadways.

Traffic Generators

The following general categories of traffic generators are relevant to Stone County.

Commuter Traffic to/from Places of Employment

The most common means of commuting in Stone County and from Stone County to other places is by individual car trips. County-to-County Worker Flow Files reveal that 3,328 or fifty-seven percent (57%) of the 5,805 total workers in the county live and work in Stone County. Of those who travel outside the county to work, 1,535 or twenty-six percent (26%) worked in Harrison County, and 203 worked in Jackson County. The remainder worked in numerous other places.

Employment centers in Stone County include existing major employers, county and city government offices and schools.

Residential Developments

Traffic studies completed by traffic engineers and planners have determined that different types of housing types created different degrees of traffic. Single-family detached houses generate an average of 10 one way peak hour trips per day per household, while other types of residential households only generate 8.5 trips per day per household. As new developments are built, traffic impact studies will reveal the impact of the new households on the existing roadways.

Existing communities which will be most affected by a concentration of new homes are McHenry, Perkinson and Sunflower. As development occurs, the two-lane rural roads will experience the cumulative affect of additional traffic and level of service will diminish.

School Traffic

Schools generating traffic in Stone County include Stone High School, Stone Middle School, Stone Elementary School, Perkinson Elementary School, MGCCC in Perkinson, and HeadStart on Project Road.

While all schools are major traffic generators, high schools and colleges generate more traffic during the day since teachers and sometimes students may leave the campus during the school day. All schools have peak traffic hours one hour prior and one hour after school begins and ends.

Extracurricular activities may generate heavy traffic loads after peak hours.

Traffic to and from Retail Stores or Nodes

Retail and office uses which are concentrated such as downtown Wiggins and Highway 49 generate high traffic during business hours. Local roads which are not designed to carry high traffic volume can quickly be overloaded.

Through Traffic

Through traffic are those trips which have a starting point and a destination beyond the boundaries of the county. This traffic is largely confined to Highways 49 and 26. If through traffic reaches a certain level, it greatly affects the ability of the road system to adequately provide for local traffic. Because through traffic speeds are higher and the needs are different from local traffic, it is better to devise a system of frontage roads to separate local traffic from through traffic.

Figure No. 38: Institutional Traffic Generator



Institutional uses have the potential of becoming traffic generators

Source: Internet image

Table No. 9: Suggested Land Uses Appropriate for Roads	
Functional Street Classification	Future Land Uses
Major Arterial	Transitional, Commercial, Industrial, Village Center, Town Center
Minor Arterial	Transitional, Commercial, Village Center, Town Center Crossroad Center; Development (high intensity uses such as strip centers)
Major Collector	Transitional, Commercial; Development (moderate to high intensity uses such as medium size commercial)
Minor Collector	Conservation, Agricultural, Crossroads Center, Development (moderate intensity uses such as small commercial),
Rural and Local	Conservation, Agricultural, Development (low intensity uses such as residential)
Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.	

Future Traffic Generators

- Large-scale residential developments.
- Concentrations of residential development within a relatively small area.
- New or expanded school facilities
- Expansion of existing or creation of new industrial park
- Retail strip centers or big box stores

Balancing Land Use with Roads

The primary road network of the county not only provides circulation between inter-county destinations, it also exerts tremendous influence on adjacent land use. After a functional street classification has been assigned to each roadway within the County, the county should institute a policy framework for balancing adjacent land use categories for each of these functional street classifications. The idea behind this practice is to ensure that inadequate roads, or roads that were never intended to handle large traffic volumes, are not overtaxed.

When land uses adjacent to existing roadways are not well coordinated with roadway capacity, excessive traffic and delays occur. One way to avoid this situation is to incrementally upgrade existing roadways or sections of roadways as more intense development occurs. Access to new development should also be controlled by using short frontage roads with strategic access points at existing intersections and/or highway exits.

Table 9 suggests land uses which are considered appropriate for each type of roadway in the county. In the first column are the County's functional classifications. The second column contains the County's various land use designations that are recommended as being appropriate to be located on this type of street. This is intended as a guide and should be adjusted to meet local standards and common sense judgment. The land use designations are used to identify areas around the county where similar land use activities occur, and are used in conjunction with the Future Land Use Guide which is a part of this

Comprehensive Plan.

When it is determined that existing roadways are not adequate to provide the level of service desired, either the County and/ or the developer must come up with realistic solutions to improve capacity of the road to carry the projected traffic. There are various ways to improve accessibility and desirable traffic flow including escalation and de-escalation lanes, adding additional lanes including center turning lanes, adding stop signs and street lights. Traffic calming devices may be appropriate for internal streets within large residential subdivisions.

Access Management

Access management is a means of controlling the ways in which vehicles can access major roadways, using appropriate techniques in accordance with the hierarchy of the road. Examples include limiting curb cuts and intersections on busy arterials and building frontage roads along highways. According to the National Highway Institute, an effective access management program can reduce crashes, travel time and delay and increase roadway capacity. In Stone County, access management can be achieved by creating a classification system for local roads, planning adjacent land uses carefully and requiring appropriate access to roadways as development occurs. The Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) is responsible for controlling access to state highways.

PROPOSED TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

The following transportation improvements include MDOT projects, State Aid projects, or projects being funded from a variety of grants and/or local funds.

State Route 601 from Interstate 10 to Wiggins

MDOT is proposing a four-lane divided, full control of access facility between Gulfport and Wiggins, Mississippi. This north-south roadway identified as SR 601 (Canal Road) will begin at a proposed fully-directional interchange at Interstate 10 / Canal Road in Harrison County and extend approximately 35 miles northward to SR 26 near Wiggins. Acquisition of right of way for the 30 mile phase south of Interstate 10 has begun.

Several routes were analyzed for feasibility and public comments were considered. Most citizens preferred a route which would be within the general vicinity of the existing route of Highway 49. Frontage roads would be built adjacent to the highway to accommodate local traffic. An environmental study is currently in progress and a public hearing is expected in the Fall of 2008.

State Highway 15

Highway 15 is a two-lane state highway that runs from Interstate 10 in Jackson County north to State Highway 26 in Stone County. It meanders through National Forest lands and other rural communities in Stone County and is used by commuters. During Hurricane Katrina it was an evacuation route and was used by persons fleeing the Gulf Coast. Recommendations have been made to widen this roadway; however, concerns have been express about destroying the scenic/ rural character

Figure No. 39: Highway 26 and Local Roads in Wiggins



When busy highways and local roads intersect, traffic signals are usually needed.
Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

of the road.

MDOT has purchased ROW in the past with the intention of widening this road to four lanes and extending it to North Highway 15. Since this project has not progressed beyond this stage, a new feasibility study will be completed. If the project is cancelled the ROW already purchased will be sold.

State Highway 26

Highway 26 is the major east-west corridor in Stone County. It is a major highway for commercial traffic and begins at Highway 98 and Bogalusa, Louisiana. It not only serves through traffic but carries local traffic within the City of Wiggins where it intersects with several heavily traveled roadways including State Highway 49. MDOT has determined that the following improvements are needed: additional through capacity, signals at Hall, First and U. S. Highway 49 and the southwest ramp at the intersection of State Highway 26 and Magnolia Drive should be relocated. Access management is also a key issue with Highway 26 especially in areas close to and within the City of Wiggins.

Interchange at Highway 49 and Perkinston Community

A grade separation bridge on Highway 49 over the Kansas City Southern Rail Road has resulted in both positive and negative effects. The off and on ramps are non-typical and inefficient due to complicated loops and curves and the Highway 49 bridge is somewhat steeper than a typical state highway bridge. On the positive side, a more typical at-grade state highway could lead to intrusive commercial businesses.

Another exit off of the highway at Perkinston could be accomplished or a re-configuration of the existing railroad lines and the exchange should be considered.

County & Local Roads

Many of Stone County's roads which are classified as local roads by MDOT serve as collectors or arterials for local traffic. Some of these roads will not be able to adequately serve additional traffic resulting from new development. The following roads need improvements to

upgrade capacity and condition: East McHenry, West McHenry, Wire, King Bee, Project, Perkinson-Silver Run, City Road and City Bridge. The County has a small annual fund which is used to upgrade roads on a priority basis; however, this is inadequate to deal with current and future needs.

MDOT maintains a State Aid Program which can help to construct roads that connect to state designated and state maintained highways and to other State Aid routes. The program is governed on the local level by the local Board of Supervisors.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Bicycle and pedestrian paths are recognized as valid modes of transportation in the 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA) passed by Congress. Considered as both transportation and recreational facilities, these facilities serve to provide linkage between communities and attract persons wishing to recreate.

The Stone County Parks and Recreation Board has recommended a seventy (70) mile track which would run from East Wire Road in McHenry, north along Old Highway 26, extend west along State Highway 26, continue south along State Highway 15 and then run east along Perkinson-Silver Run Road and E. Wire Road. When completed this loop would connect all community centers together as well as downtown and existing recreational facilities.

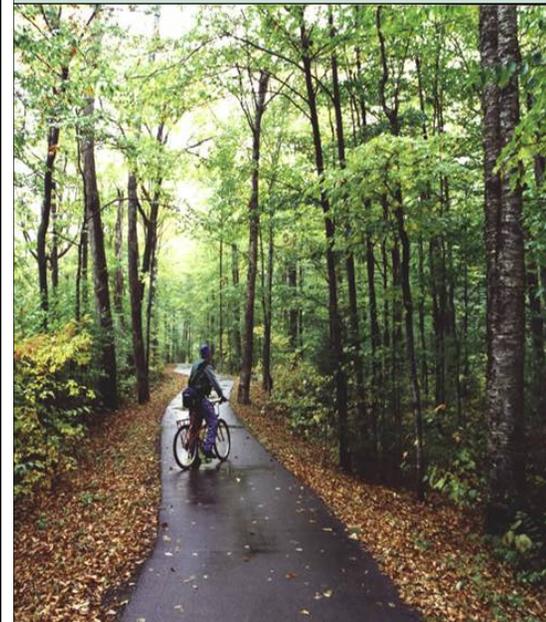
Another proposed bike trail is planned along the Old Wire Road Trail which is a part of the original 1848 New York to New Orleans telegraph line. Portions of this line run across south Stone County in the vicinity of East and West Wire Road crossing Highway 15, U. S. Highway 49 and Old Highway 26 for a distance of 30 miles. The initial phase would be a fourteen (14) mile bike trail.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The current roadway system including State Highway 49 serves as the primary transportation system for both through traffic and as circulation between destinations. Most of these are classified as being rural roads and provide an adequate level of service although some need improvements to deal with local traffic generators such as schools and places of employment.

U. S. Highway 49 is considered one of the most dangerous roads in the state due to numerous access points provided. State and county officials are attempting to change this by building of frontage roads in concentrated

Figure No. 40: Wooded bike path.



This photo provides a good model for Stone County's bike path.

Source: Internet image

population areas such as Wiggins. A new state limited access road may be built which will begin in Gulfport and end in Wiggins. It is possible the route of this highway will be the existing U. S. Highway 49 corridor improved with frontage roads for local traffic.

The level of service of local roadways such as East McHenry Road will quickly diminish as concentrations of new residential development occur. Several roadways listed in the “County and Local Roadways” section need immediate work and improvements to deal with the increased demand.

The widening of roads and the building of new highways give immediate relief to pent up demand, but can also destroy the character of existing communities. The preservation of the Perkinston and McHenry communities is of vital importance to the county as new roads are built and other roads are widened.

Mass Transit systems do not exist within the county. This has the potential of negatively impacting the quality of life for elderly, handicapped and disenfranchised population groups who lack the resources to provide for their own transportation. Transportation recommendations are as follows:

- Balance adjacent land use with the current road classification or upgrade the roadways to provide for the new demand.
- Require traffic impact studies when the anticipated development exceeds a pre-determined number of new trips per day.
- Require developers to pay for the proposed transportation improvements recommended by the traffic impact study.
- Utilize creative financing mechanisms such as tax incremental financing to alleviate a portion of the upgrades.
- Aggressively pursue state and federal funding for roads, bridges and pedestrian trails and walkways.
- Inventory adequacy and condition of all roads in the county, prioritize immediate and long range needs and set up a capital budgeting process whereby funds are incrementally set aside for the purpose of paving and maintaining roads.
- Seek funds to purchase a van with the equipment needed to transport handicapped persons. Service should be provided during working hours on a call-in basis.
- Create park and drive spots for those who wish to travel in car-pools to other counties for employment.
- Find alternative funding sources for paving and bridge improvements.
- Consider a north-south corridor to ease traffic on roads on the west side of the county, such as T. E. Breland Road.

Chapter 9: Housing

The location, adequacy and quality of housing are factors which affect the quality of life for residents. Although the construction of housing is primarily a function of private developers, the County regulates the subdivision of land for the purpose of constructing housing units. The County recently adopted Building Codes to insure that all new housing be constructed in a safe and consistent manner.

The purpose of the section is to provide information about the type, condition, availability and affordability of the county's housing stock and to present future growth trends. This information can be used to help determine the location and type of infrastructure and community facilities which will be needed to support these development.

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Basic housing characteristics was established using decennial census data, annual census estimates and market data from local and regional real estate professionals and other professional associations.

Number and Type of Housing Units

At the time of the 2000 Census, there were 5,343 housing units in the county. The majority or seventy percent (70.3%) were categorized as being one unit, detached (single-family, detached). A relatively small percentage (1.0%) were one-unit, attached and twenty-nine percent (29%) contained two or more units. Over twenty-two percent (22.6%) were mobile homes. By 2006, the total number of housing units was estimated to have increased by 552 units or ten percent (10.3%) for a total number of 5,895 units.

Vacancy and Ownership

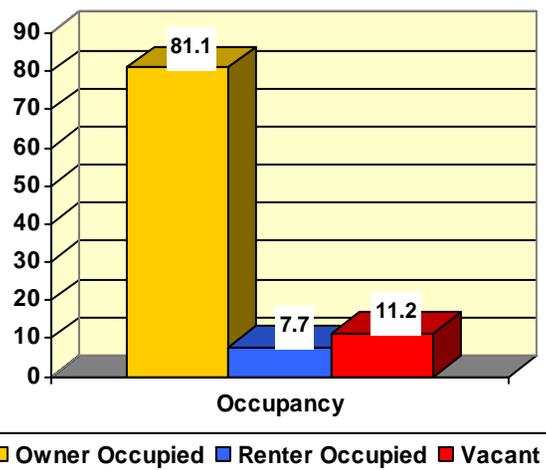
A low vacancy rate and a high ownership rate are considered positive factors when evaluating community and neighborhood stability. At the time of the 2000 Census 88.8% of the total housing units were occupied and 11.2% were vacant. Approximately two percent (2.2%) of the

Figure No. 41: Well maintained Home located in Stone County



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

Figure No. 42: Stone County Housing Characteristics



Source: U. S. Census, 2000

Housing

vacant units or 115 units were for seasonal, recreational or occasional use. During the same census period, the Gulfport-Biloxi MSA had a 10.7% vacancy rate and the State of Mississippi had a 9.9% percent vacancy rate.

The homeownership rate of over eighty percent (81.1%) in Stone County was higher than that of Mississippi and the nation. The state rate was 72.3% and the U. S. rate was 66.2%. Although the county does not have a large number of multi-family units, the rental vacancies was relatively high at 11.8% percent. This number indicated a market that had a significant total of rental units available at that time and was larger than the state percentage of 9.9%. The relatively high rental vacancy rate in the county can be attributed to the affordability of single-family homes and consumer preference. Vacancy rates of rental properties can fluctuate drastically in a relatively short period of time, depending upon supply and demand factors.

A relatively large number of units (78.2%) of owner-occupied units are occupied by families and 64.2% of these families are classified as being married. Only thirteen percent (13%) of the family households had persons 65 years of age or older and sixty-five percent (65.1%) had persons between the ages of 15 and 64 years of age. Ten percent (10%) of the owner-occupied housing units were female households with no husband present. The majority (68.8%) of renter-occupied housing units are also occupied by family households; but almost thirty (27.7%) of these were female households with no husband present.

Age, Characteristics and Condition

By examining the age of the housing stock, a determination can be made as to when the growth surges occurred. The 2000 Census data indicates that a large percentage (42.5%) of homes was built in the 1970's and 1980's with the highest percentage (23.4%) built between the years of 1970 to 1979. Table No.10 gives a breakdown of housing age through March 2000. Ten percent of the housing stock dates back to 1939 or earlier. Many of the older homes are located in the areas which were first settled such as the Perkinston, McHenry, and Bond communities and the City of Wiggins.

At the time of the 2000 Census, the majority (56.7%) of the housing

stock had three bedrooms and twenty-five percent (25.3%) had two bedrooms. Eleven percent (11.0%) had four bedrooms. Only 103 or one percent (1%) lacked complete plumbing facilities and slightly over one percent (1.8%) lacked complete kitchen facilities.

Housing condition is related to housing age. In the absence of maintenance, older homes deteriorate, lose value and may pose unsafe living conditions. Field surveys do not indicate a high concentration of deteriorated housing in the county; however, in order for older neighborhoods to remain stable, the quality and desirability of the neighborhood itself must remain constant. The high percentage of home ownership is a positive factor since owners usually display a certain pride of ownership; whereas renters are more transient and may be reluctant to invest additional money into repairs and improvements.

HOUSING COSTS

The cost of housing is generally the deciding factor when and where people relocate. While it is attractive to have low cost housing available, it is equally important to have a variety of housing types to accommodate various ages and types of households. The “trickle-down” effect, a process whereby less expensive housing becomes available for lower-income families as higher income families move to more newer and more expensive housing, only works when there are newer or more expensive homes available.

An informal study of market value indicates that newer homes for sale in McHenry, Silver Run and Sunflower communities are listed from \$159,900 to \$249,000. These units typically have three to four bedroom, two baths or two plus baths, and are located on one to three acre lots. Older homes on lots of three acres or less located within or close to Wiggins are listed between \$132,000 and \$199,000. According to local real estate brokers, homes are selling for 95 to 98 percent of list price.

In 1999, the majority (61.6%) of homeowners in the County estimated the value of their home to be between \$50,000 and \$99,000. Over twelve percent (12.8%) estimated their home to be valued between \$100,000 and \$150,000. The median value of homes according to the 2000 census was \$71,100.

Table No. 10: Age of housing stock, by Decade, 1999

Year Structure Built	#	% of Total
1999-March 2000	238	4.5
1995 to 1998	547	10.2
1990 to 1994	592	11.1
1980 to 1989	1,023	19.1
1970 to 1979	1,249	23.4
1960 to 1969	652	12.2
1940 to 1959	509	9.5
1939 or earlier	533	10.0
Totals	5,343	100%

Source: U. S. Census, 2000

Table No. 11: Household Income Categories and Affordable Housing Cost		
Income Category	Maximum Income	Maximum Affordable Housing Cost
Very Low Income (<30% of Median)	\$14,700	\$368
Low Income (<50% of Median)	\$24,500	\$613
Moderate Income (<80% of Median)	\$39,200	\$980
Middle Income (<120% of Median)	\$58,800	\$1,450
2008 HH Median Income	\$49,000	\$1,225
2008 Renter Median HH Income	\$25,012	\$625
Source: National Low Income Housing Corp.		

AFFORDABILITY

Median income amounts and housing costs are the main factors affecting the affordability of housing for residents in a community. The amount of an individual's income determines the size and type of housing they seek. In areas where income levels are low, households must spend a higher percentage on housing cost thereby affecting disposable income available for other household needs.

Cost to Income Ratio

Lenders and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) indicate that a family should pay no more than thirty percent (30%) of their income for housing including certain related costs. The market for homeownership is self-regulating, meaning that lenders are hesitant to risk a mortgage loan on households whose income is too low to afford housing costs that exceed lending guidelines. Rental housing, however, does not have this regulating feature, and a percentage of families, usually those with low to moderate income levels, must spend a greater than acceptable share of their income on housing.

Approximately fifty-eight percent (58.7%) of the owner-occupied units in Stone County were mortgaged at the time of the 2000 Census. The median owner cost for mortgage units was \$712. Forty percent (40.8%) of homeowners were paying fifteen (15%) or less for a mortgage and select related housing costs and thirty-seven percent (37.2%) paid thirty-four percent (34%) or less. Only fifteen percent (15.9%) paid thirty-five percent (35%).

The median gross rent for renter-occupied units was \$429. Thirty-three percent (33.5%) had rents of or below \$499; twenty-four percent (24.7%) had rents between \$500 and \$749 and eighteen percent (18.6%) had no cash rent. More recent data from the National Low Income Housing Corporation (NLIHC) indicates that market rents have increased over 50% from the NLIHC 2000 base rent calculations. Fair market rent in 2008 is estimated to be \$695 for a one bedroom housing unit and \$811 for a two bedroom unit. Annual income needed to afford fair market rent for a one-bedroom unit would be \$27,800 and for a two bedroom unit \$32,400. Table No. 11 gives additional housing affordability information. Any household that is required to pay more than the maximum

affordable housing costs or more than 30% of their annual income on housing is considered rent burdened.

HOUSING CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

Approximately 6,000 acres have been targeted for residential development in Stone County. If all of the proposed developments are built as planned, approximately 8,300 new homes will be built. The Imminent Development Map on page 99 shows the approximate location of known developments. Several developments shown on the map have phases which have been platted and contain new homes for sale or presently occupied. Most will contain single-family detached housing on large lots; however, a mixed use townhouse development is planned in the City of Wiggins.

The City of Wiggins will also contain a new affordable housing development with approximately forty (43) three and four bedroom single-family homes that will be offered on a lease/purchase basis. The owner/developer of will use low income housing tax credits (LIHTC) allocated through the Mississippi Home Corporation and syndicated through the National Equity Fund. Housing units must be leased for fifteen years and then sold to renters for a reduced amount.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Housing stock in the county primarily consists of single family homes, most of which are concentrated within the City of Wiggins, and communities of McHenry and Perkinston. Concentrations of homes are also located in communities such as Big Level and Sunflower. As accessible, vacant land becomes available, developers are buying the land and platting new subdivisions.

Population projections and positive economic growth along the Mississippi Gulf Coast and counties immediately to the north of the three coastal counties indicate the housing market will continue to prosper long into the future. While most of the existing houses were built during the 1970's, the number of homes expected to be built in the immediate future will far exceed previous growth periods. It is anticipated that the highest growth rate decade in the County's history will be between 2010 and 2020.

Figure No. 43: Examples of Housing Types



Multi-family; Single-family, detached and attached can all be attractively built.
Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

Housing

Figure No 44: Neighborhood Amenities



Sidewalks, street trees and attractive lighting add value to residential neighborhoods

Source: Internet images

The County utilizes subdivision and floodplain regulations and building codes to help regulate housing and housing developments. The existing subdivision regulations require that lots are a minimum of one acre unless public water and sewer facilities are available in which case the minimum lot size must be 7,500 square feet.

Field research has not revealed any large concentration of substandard housing; however, as homes begin to age maintenance becomes an ongoing issue. Based on current market rents, it is probable that very low, low and middle income households are paying more than the recommended 30% for housing costs.

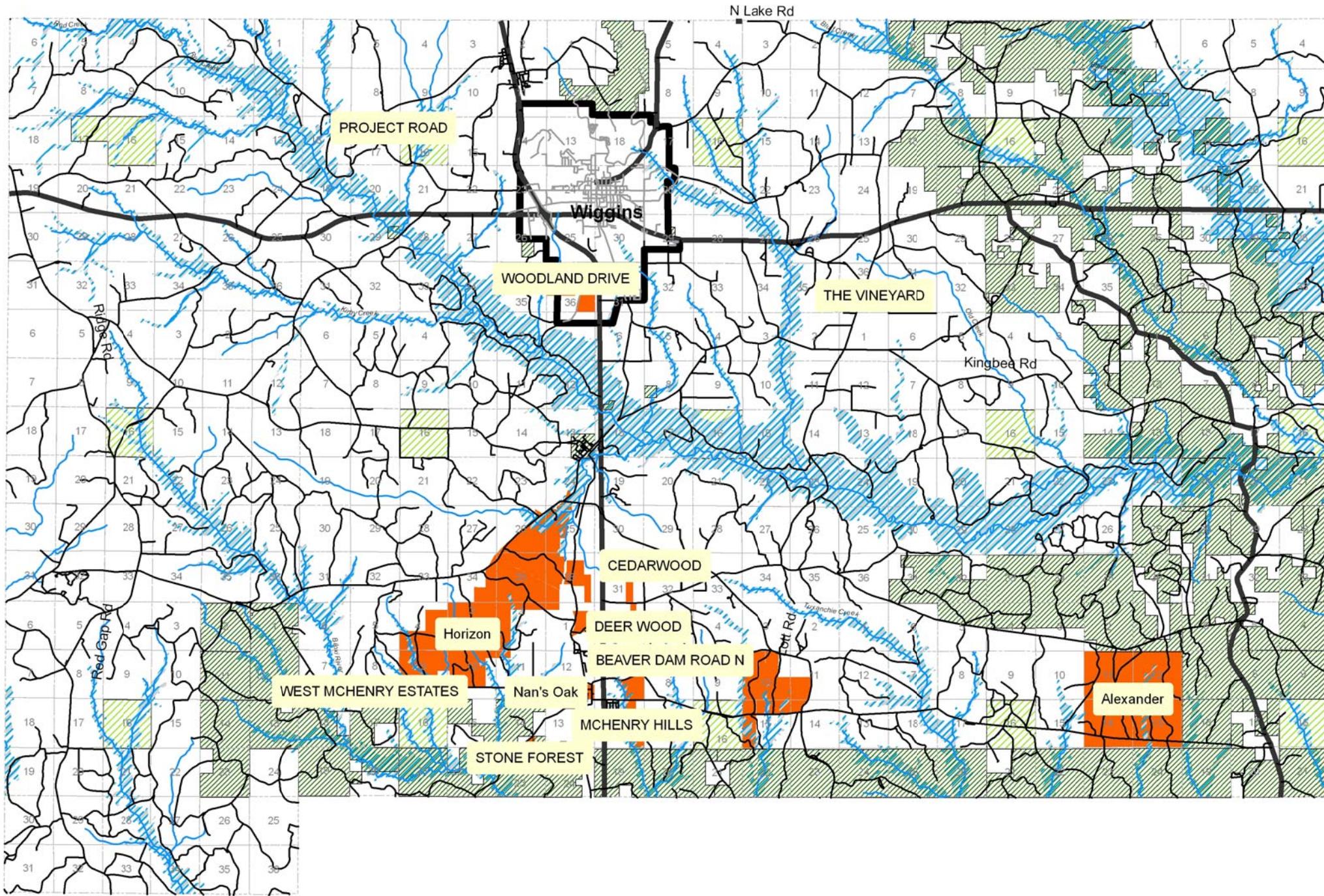
The following are recommendations which will help guide housing policy and development:

- Encourage mixed housing styles and prices within developments which are to be located close to existing new or existing residential and commercial development in order to provide sound, clean and affordable housing for all families in the County.
- Seek sources of funds to establish revolving loans and grants for up-keep on homes belonging to low- to moderate-income households including weatherization funds.
- Encourage the formation of neighborhood organizations to disseminate information from county leaders to households and to establish communication networks between communities.
- Encourage infill housing that fits in contextually with existing communities.
- Establish local preservation neighborhoods and enforce guidelines in older communities.
- Encourage a variety of amenities in new developments which encourage recreational activities such as walking trails, fishing lakes, greenways, sidewalks and playgrounds.
- Require street trees, landscaped entrances and open space for recreation and gatherings in new developments.
- Incorporate conservation development styles into existing Subdivision Ordinance and encourage this type of development in

Stone County Comprehensive Plan: *Imminent Subdivisions*



Map No. 8



Legend

- Roads
- Streams
- Major Roads
- Sec/Township/range
- County Boundary
- Federal Property
- State Property
- Flood Hazard Areas
- County Property
- Imminent Subdivisions (Approx.)



For Planning Purposes Only.
Data Source: Stone County Engineer
Map Created by: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

rural portions of the county.

- Incorporate traditional neighborhood development styles into existing Subdivision Ordinance and encourage this style within and adjacent to Wiggins and village centers.
- Update Building Codes as needed. These will help to insure quality construction and protect homeowners and renters. It will also provide valuable information regarding emerging trends.
- Enforce all codes in order to help maintain the integrity of established neighborhoods.
- Stage the building of new community facilities and infrastructure to serve the needs of emerging population centers and within proximity of new housing developments.
- Establish pedestrian and bike pathways from new communities to community facilities.

Chapter 10: Community Facilities and Services

Community facilities and related services are the basic manner whereby the public sector provides support to citizens and private development. A community cannot sustain itself without properly addressing these needs. Mississippi Code of 1972 (Section 17-1-1) requires that the community facilities plan be used as a basis for the capital improvements program. Information about housing; schools; parks and recreation; and community facilities is required. Several of these topics are discussed in this Chapter and housing is addressed in Chapter 9.

EDUCATION

Stone County has one public school district and offers instruction from kindergarten through 12th grade. All public school facilities including the Administrative offices are located in the City of Wiggins except for the elementary school located at Perkinston. Facilities are listed below:

- Perkinston Elementary School
- Stone Elementary School
- Stone Middle School
- Stone High School
- Administrative Offices (owned by Stone County)

Accountability statistics for the 2005-2006 school year indicated that three Stone County schools were considered Level 4 (Exemplary) in terms of performance standards. The remaining school was ranked Level 3 (Successful). The rankings show improvement during the three years preceding the 2005-2006 school year.

Enrollment has increased from 2,626 in the 2002-03 school year to 2,803 during the 2006-2007 school year. A break-down of enrollment by grades, gender and race for the 2006-2007 school year can be found in Tables 12-13.

Table No. 12: Pubic School Enrollment, 2006-2007

Grade	Enrollment
Pre-Kindergarten	0
Special Education Pre-K	6
Kindergarten	234
Special Education Elementary	56
Grades 1—6	1,338
Grades 7 & 8	423
Grades 9-12	679
Secondary Special Education	58
Secondary GED	9
Total Enrollment	2,803

Table No. 13: Enrollment by Sub-Group, 2006—2007

Female	1363	49%
Male	1440	51%
Asian	12	0%
Black	684	25%
Hispanic	11	.09%
Native American	6	.09%
White	2090	75%

Source: Mississippi Department of Education

Table No. 14 QUICK FACTS Stone County School District	
# Full Time Teachers	169
ADA/per Teacher	15.20
Average Teacher Salary	\$40,393
Average Daily Attendance	2,562
ADA as % of Enrollment	95.77
Expenditures per pupil	\$8,730
# Advanced Placement Classes	4
Source: Mississippi Department of Education, 2006—07 School Year	

Community Facilities

The primary source of revenue for the school district are property taxes, Mississippi Adequate Education Program, and bonds.

Anticipated School Needs

At the request of Stone County School District, the JBHM Education Group completed a study in March, 2007. The study provides an overview of the issues, an estimate of the costs involved in providing for the anticipated increased student enrollment, an estimate of sources of revenue, and an assessment of new facilities that will be needed within the next ten years.

Enrollment Projections

Using the information provided by the primary developer of new homes in the County, Horizon Development, it is estimated that enrollment increases will be between 4,500 and 9,000 students by the year 2014. This would be an annual student increase of approximately 600 students per year if this development is built as planned. The cumulative effect of other scattered developments in the southern portion of the County will be as great as that of the Horizon Development.

The enrollment projection was based on the existing demographic data which indicates there are 0.5 students per household or about 500 students for every 1,000 homes. By reviewing the projected number of new homes to be built and the time frame within which they are expected to be built, the increase in student enrollment can be predicted. Obviously these increases will depend upon the success and anticipated build out of the proposed residential developments.

Anticipated School Facilities

The most immediate priority for the District is the need for new and improved school facilities to accommodate anticipated enrollment.

According to the study, the following new school facilities will be needed:

- Three (3) K-6 elementary schools for 600 students with infrastructure for up to 1,000 students. Anticipated initial cost—Total of \$59 million (\$15.4 million for each school).
- One (1) middle school for grades 7—9 for 400 students. Anticipated initial cost —\$21 million

- One (1) high school for 1,200 students with infrastructure for up to 2,000 students. Anticipated initial cost \$57.3 million.

School Siting and Multi-Use Potential

Most of the anticipated residential growth is occurring in the southern portion of the County, where at least one new elementary and middle School will be needed. Several factors should be considered when choosing a school site in addition to the number of acres the facility will required.

While new and refurbished schools can serve as a stabilizing influence on surrounding neighborhoods; large campus school sites in rural areas change the character of surrounding land uses forever and introduce a large amount of vehicular traffic. It is expected that more dense development will occur surrounding new school sites. New facilities should be designed for multi-use and can be used for community meetings, sports events and passive recreational activities.

College Level Facilities

Other educational facilities within the county or in proximity include:

- Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Perkinston campus
- University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg
- William Carey College, Hattiesburg
- Pearl River Community College, Hattiesburg

Library System

The two public libraries which are operational are a part of the Pine Forest Regional Library System which serves four counties including Covington, Perry, Greene, and Stone and has 12 facilities.

Figure No. 45: Photos of Stone County Schools



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

Figure No. 46: McHenry and Wiggins Libraries



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

Community Facilities

The Stone County Library was constructed in 1975 and is located in the City of Wiggins. The immediate service area includes all residents within Stone County. The facility has one full-time librarian, one part-time librarian and an assistant. The library has collections in the areas of fiction, non-fiction, reference, non-courted paperback, historical and science fiction. VHS and audio tapes are also available for use by patrons. The Stone County Library also has a meeting space for local residents. The library is an active agent in the community due to the numerous programs aimed at encouraging youth participation. Several of these are: a summer reading program, Children's Book Week (April), National Library Week (November) and programs for offered at First Baptist Church of Wiggins and the local HeadStart facility. There are eight computers which are internet accessible and made available to library users. There is no cost for residents of the county to acquire a library card. Residents from surrounding counties can also obtain a card at no cost. Those that live out-of-state are charged a nominal fee to use the facility.

The McHenry Library

The McHenry Library opened in 2005. Various programs are offered for youth such as a summer reading program, and story time hours. Resources include a computer for public use that is internet accessible, public printer and a reference collection on history of the McHenry community. This facility functions as an ancillary community center and is adjacent to the McHenry walking trail.

Anticipated Needs and Planned Projects

The need for additional library facilities will be dependent upon and proportional to the population growth of the county. It is anticipated that an expansion to the McHenry Library or a new branch will be needed to serve the needs of new residents in the southern portion of the County. The western portion of the county is not well served and it is recommended that a permanent facility be put in operation in this portion of the county.

An expansion to the facility located in Wiggins has been approved with an anticipated cost of approximately \$629,000.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Stone-Wiggins Recreation Association

The Stone-Wiggins Recreation Association (SWRA) is an all-volunteer staff of parents, coaches and community leaders that is responsible for organized league activities for citizens and youth throughout Stone County. Currently, the association has organized leagues for baseball, softball, t-ball, basketball, football, cheerleading and soccer.

The City of Wiggins, Stone County and private donations pay the salary of a Recreational Director who works with the Recreation Association Board to organize, fund and maintain the current recreation system.

Recreational Facilities

The public recreational facilities of the County are primarily located in the northern portion of the County and are maintained by the governing bodies in which they are located. Facilities located within the city limits are funded and maintained by the City of Wiggins. Facilities that are found outside the city limits are funded and maintained by Stone County. Facilities are as follows :

Big Level Ball Fields

The Big Level Ball Fields are located behind the Big Level Community Center, also known as the Old Home Vocational School, on City Bridge Road. This field is used by the Recreation Association for organized softball, baseball and t-ball practices. No official SWRA games are held at this venue.

Blaylock Park

Blaylock Park is located on the corner of Second Street and College Avenue inside the city limits of Wiggins, this park provides a quarter-mile walking trail, two tennis courts, a playground for children, pavilions and an outdoor stage.

Flint Creek Water Park

Flint Creek Water Park can be found on State Highway 29 inside the City of Wiggins. This state-designated park offers camping, hiking, swimming, skiing, boating and fishing. Flint Creek Water Park also offers *Water Town* which features water slides and a kiddy pool.

Figure 47: Stone-Wiggins Recreation Association Organized Leagues

Basketball Gender: Girls Ages: 7-15 Season: Jan.-March	T-Ball Gender: Boys Ages: 5-6 Season: April-May
Soccer Gender: Boys & Girls Ages: 4-16 Season: Feb.-March	Football Gender: Boys Ages: 7-12 Season: Sept.-Nov.
Baseball Gender: Boys Ages: 7-15 Season: April-May	Cheerleading Gender: Girls Ages: 7-12 Season: Sept.-Nov.
Softball Gender: Girls Ages: 7-16 Season: April-June	

Source: Parks and Recreation Department

Figure No. 48: Park and Recreational Facilities



*R.F. & Fletcher
Blaylock Park in
Wiggins, MS.*

*Water Town from
across the
reservoir at Flint
Creek Water Park.*



*Concession Stand
and Fields at Hood
Fields.*

*Jerry J. Fairley
Recreation and
Sports Complex
practice fields.*



Hood Fields

Hood Fields can be located on First Street just outside the city limits. This facility contain four fields dedicated to baseball and softball and one field for t-ball. The sports complex includes concessions and restrooms for use during official game times.

Jerry J Fairley Recreation and Sports Complex

This sports complex is located on Project Road. The complex features several lighted fields, including practice fields and three soccer game fields. The complex also features a lighted basketball courts, a concession stand, restrooms and a pavilion with picnic tables.

McHenry Ball Fields

The McHenry Fields are located in the McHenry Community and are used by the Recreation Association for organized softball, baseball and t-ball practices. No official SWRA games are held at this venue.

Magnolia Ball Fields

The Magnolia Fields are located in the Magnolia Community and are used by the Recreation Association for organized softball, baseball and t-ball practices. No official SWRA games are held at this venue.

McHenry Walking & Exercise Park

Located next to the McHenry Public Library on McHenry School Road, this park provides a walking trail and fitness stations.

Reynolds Field

E.M. "Buck" Reynolds Field, also known as Pickle Field, is located at the corner of Davis Avenue and Fourth Street. This field currently contains a lighted practice area that can be used for any field sport. A few bleachers are provided for spectators. This field is used by the Recreation Association for organized team practices. No official SWRA games are held at this venue.

Stone County Fairgrounds

The county maintains the Stone County Fairgrounds which is used for special events. This facility includes a large building for indoor events and fenced grounds for outdoor activities.

Community Facilities

Private Facilities

The Pine Burr Golf Club is a semi-private 18 hole golf course open to the public and is located in Wiggins.

Anticipated Needs and Planned Improvements

Reynolds Field has received grant funding for improvements which will convert the open field into designated areas. The conceptual design includes a skate park, children's play area, pee wee practice field, walking track and pavilion into the park. The improved Reynolds Field will connect into the City of Wiggins bike and walking path and serve as a destination for city and county residents. Space will also provided for future park expansion.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Public safety is provided by the Volunteer Fire Departments, the Sheriff's Department, the Emergency Operations Center and 911 Communications. Information regarding each of these follows.

Volunteer Fire Departments

Stone County provides fire service to residents in the unincorporated areas and assists the City of Wiggins on an occasional basis.

Staffing, Facilities and Equipment

There are approximately 79 volunteer firefighters in Stone County, in addition to the full-time Wiggins staff. Eight volunteer fire departments (VFD), located throughout the county, store firefighting equipment and function as staging areas for emergency related services. The VFD facilities are Big Level, Silver Run, Perkinston, McHenry, Magnolia, Sunflower and Northwest (see Table 15.) Volunteer fire departments are funded by the county, various state grants and the support of local citizens. Citizen support is in the form of contributions on utility bills and other fundraising efforts

Fire Ratings for Insurance Purposes

The McHenry Fire Department is the only volunteer department which is rated Class 8 by the State Fire Rating Bureau. The Bureau uses the following criteria to rate districts: legally defined areas, communications, code enforcement, fire equipment and water supply.

Table No. 15: Location of Volunteer Fire Departments

Station Name	Location
Big Level VFD	1414 King Bee Rd.
Silver Run VFD	1071 Ridge Rd.
Perkinston VFD	2442 Perkinston-Silver Run Rd.
Sunflower VFD	1447 Wire Rd.
Ramsey Springs VFD	
Northwest VFD	266 Project Rd.
Magnolia VFD	350 Magnolia Rd.
McHenry VFD	95 McHenry Ave.

Source: Stone County Chancery Clerk and Stone County Emergency Management Office.

Community Facilities

Anticipated Needs and Planned Improvements

According to the Long Term Recovery Plan (LTRP) completed in August, 2006, approximately \$876,000 of equipment was needed which included:

1. Two (2) Vehicle pumper/tankers
2. Twenty (20) Self Containing Breathing Apparatus
3. Thirty (30) hoses
4. Seven (7) Infrared Heat Sensors
5. Seven (7) Thermal Imaging Cameras
6. Propane fired Water System Generators
7. Satellite Telephones

Funding for several of these items have been obtained including generators, and one pumper truck purchased in 2007. A grant has been submitted which will fund the costs to retrofit VFD buildings in order to house first responders to emergencies.

Sheriff's Department

The Sheriff is the chief safety officer of the County and provides protection for the unincorporated areas of the County as well as providing back-up assistance if requested in the City of Wiggins.

The most frequent incident reported to the Sheriff is that of domestic burglary. With only two deputies per shift to patrol the entire county, the officers average 400 to 500 miles per shift.

Training opportunities for officers include a nine-week training course at the University of Southern Mississippi and other places in the State.

Staffing, Equipment and Facilities

The Sheriff has eight road deputies, two school resource officers, two criminal investigation officers and two narcotics investigators. Although the fleet of cars was upgraded in FY 2006-07, back-up vehicles are needed to effectively rotate out vehicles. The officers are using low-band frequency radios. Offices are maintained at the Regional Correctional Facility, located at 1420 Industrial Park Road.

A Public Safety Grant was recently obtained for officers, vehicles and equipment in the amount of \$284,000. Additional funding for "Driving While Intoxicated (DUI)" enforcement and education for the Department has been implemented.

Anticipated Needs and Planned Improvements

The Sheriff and his staff play an crucial role in protection of life and property for the citizens of the County. In order to deal adequately with current calls and simultaneously patrol all rural areas, at least two more officers are needed immediately.

Community Facilities

Additional officers will be needed as the population increases. Pay rates for existing officers is not comparable with other counties in the State. This issue should be addressed in the near future to prevent loss of officers to other law enforcement agencies.

The existing low-band communication system should be upgraded to high-band and every effort should be made to coordinate all communications systems with other safety related departments both within the county and in surrounding counties.

In addition, a new facility is needed to exclusively house this Department. This facility should include safe storage for vehicles and other emergency equipment. County land is available adjacent to Regional Correctional Facilities on Industrial Park Road.

Emergency Operations Center/911 Communications

The Emergency Operations Center coordinates the dispatch of emergency services including fire, police and medical response.

The LTRP recommended relocating of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to the old National Guard Amory which will needs rehabilitation and retrofitting. Additional satellite phones and a reverse 911 system were also recommended. Efforts are underway to obtain funding for these needs.

Other Emergency Needs

The Board of Supervisors selects a medical response provider in accordance with state statute. Warning sirens to give the public notice of imminent dangerous weather situations are needed at strategic locations and grants to improve this system are being pursued.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

Public Utilities are considered to be a basic service local governments are expected to provide and control.

Water and Wastewater

Stone County currently has two publicly-owned water systems, the City of Wiggins Utility System and the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College Utility System. The boundary of these centralized water systems encompass approximately 139 square miles. These systems leave approximately 221 square miles of Stone County where water is supplied by individual well systems or by one of 13 rural water associations. The areas served by rural water associations are shown on the map on the following page.

The Master Plan estimated that 4,629 water connections existed in Stone County with the capacity to service 10,498 equivalent residential customers. At that time, it was determined that the current systems are sufficient to meet the current water demand.

Figure No. 49: Silt fencing at a construction site



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

Community Facilities

The County has two active centralized wastewater treatment systems. One is located in the City of Wiggins and consists of two lagoons. The second is located on the campus of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and consists of a single lagoon. These two centralized wastewater treatment systems have 1,380 connections that can serve 1,965 equivalent residential customers.

Sewer service is provided to residents within the City of Wiggins but most of the residents living within the county treat wastewater through on-site septic systems. Five of Stone County's larger subdivisions are currently permitted by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to privately offer centralized wastewater services to their residents. Some commercial businesses also use individual lagoons to treat wastewater.

It is estimated that less than 12 of Stone County's 260 square miles of available, developable land is serviced through these centralized wastewater systems. That leaves 348 square miles of Stone County without any centralized wastewater treatment.

Stormwater & Drainage

Stormwater is water that accumulates on land as a result of a storm event. Examples of this water accumulation can be found on roads and roofs. Stormwater can cause stress on local water bodies through increased nutrient deposits or pollution and even pose a threat to county residents if not monitored. As development occurs, impervious surfaces increase resulting in more rapid runoff with pollutants. More serious problems associated with stormwater are listed below:

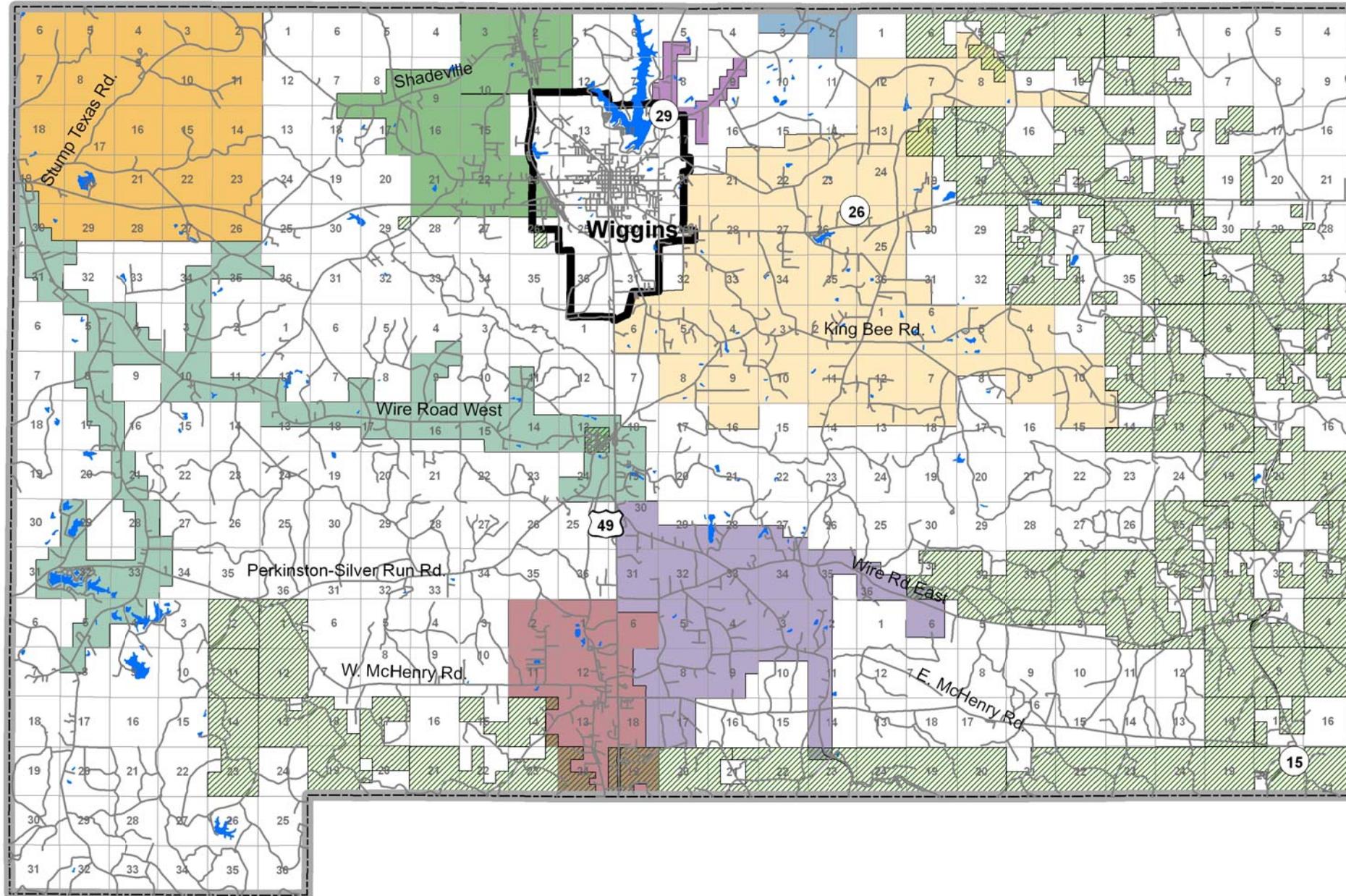
- Stormwater pollution can kill plants and animals that live in the water due to sediment, oxygen depletion, and toxicity caused by litter.
- Stormwater can affect humans when bacteria and viruses in stormwater feed into local waterways used for potable drinking water and recreational purposes.
- Debris carried into local streams and creeks disrupts the visual aesthetics of the water and the immediate area.

According to the MDEQ Water/Wastewater Plan, projected run-off from

Stone County Comprehensive Plan: *Rural Water Associations*



Map No. 9



Legend

- County
- Federal Property
- Water
- Association Names**
- Big Level Utility Assn.
- Flint Creek Utility Assn.
- Hillsdale Area Public Water Authority
- Janice Water Assn.
- McHenry Utility Assn.
- New Zion Utilities
- Stone Utility Assn.
- Sunflower Utility Assn.



For Planning Purposes Only.
Data Source: Mississippi Automated Resource
Information Service (M.A.R.I.S.)

construction sites will almost double for a 100-year design storm by the year 2025. The pre-Katrina estimations of stormwater run-off were projected at 2,200 acre-feet and are expected to reach 4,000 acre-feet by 2025. This increase in stormwater run-off will affect the local waterways if not properly treated on-site.

Although Stone County is not required to participate in a stormwater management program at this time, it has placed restrictive guidelines on stormwater discharges in the local Subdivision and Flood Damage Prevention Ordinances. These ordinances provide protection of waterways through responsible stormwater management and further protect stormwater through proper drainage techniques.

Utilities

Utilities are provided by private companies who work closely with local government entities to provide basic and necessary services to residents. These private companies use public right-of-way and private easements to access residential areas. Without these services many rural residents would feel disconnected and be living in conditions considered to be below normal. Some of the utilities that provide this quality of life include electricity, gas, cable television, telephone and telecommunication/internet services.

Electricity

Electrical services are provided to Stone County through private companies. Mississippi Power Company and Pearl River Valley Electric Power Association provide the electrical services throughout the entire county. Pearl River Valley Electrical Power Association is found mostly in the rural areas of the county, with Mississippi Power servicing areas in and around the City of Wiggins and along the Hwy 49 corridor.

Gas

Natural Gas is provided to Stone County residents through private companies located in the area. Blossman Gas and CenterPoint Energy are the major natural gas providers in Stone County. CenterPoint Energy focuses its service in the rural areas of the county. Blossman Gas provides natural gas service to the City of Wiggins and outlying communities.

Cable/Satellite

As a rural county, Stone County residents living in the outlying areas of the county do not have the ability to access cable television. Many of the residents in Stone County rely on satellite television to serve as their window to the world. Direct TV satellite services are available throughout the entire county. Residents within the City of Wiggins and those that live in outlying areas around the City can receive cable television services from Mediacom and StarVision.

Telephone and Telecommunication Services

Telecommunications is an expanding market. With the introduction of telephones in every household to the portable and ever shrinking cell phones, telecommunications is constantly changing.

In Stone County, telecommunications is expanding at a slower rate. Basic telephone services are provided to residential

Figure No. 50: Solid Waste Disposal



Community Facilities

homes by private companies, such as BellSouth. Cellular telephone services can be obtained from a number of local providers such as Cellular South, Nextel and Cingular. Internet providers are available locally and in Hattiesburg and along the Mississippi Gulf Coast that provide services for a reasonable price.

Wireless Internet (Wi-Fi) Zones are the newest way of providing internet services to a community. Many larger cities are providing wireless internet zones in public venues to improve the quality of life of its residents. It is expected that as new businesses located in the County Wi-Fi zones will become more commonplace.

Solid Waste

Stone County is a member of the Pine Belt Regional Solid Waste Management Authority. As a member, the county defers all county waste to the landfill located in Perry County. The county has a small fleet of garbage trucks that provide pick-up service to residential customers on a regular basis. Commercial garbage pick-up is negotiated and contracted through private haulers.

The county also runs a waste tire collection site, located in the City of Wiggins, for residents to dispose of unwanted tires at no cost. The collection site is funded through a solid waste assistance grant from the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). The county also provides for white goods collection at the same site for the disposal of large appliances. This project is also funded through MDEQ. Both programs are designed to help reduce illegal dumping in the county.

Stone County contracts disposal of rubbish to Diamond Disposal. Diamond Disposal is a class I rubbish facility located on the west side of Stone County. The facility is permitted through MDEQ and accepts the following wastes:

- construction and demolition debris;
- brick, mortar, concrete, stone, and asphalt;
- cardboard boxes;
- natural vegetation, such as tree limbs, stumps, and leaves;
- appliances which have had the motor removed, except for

refrigerators;

- furniture;
- plastic, glass, crockery, and metal, except containers;
- sawdust, wood shavings, and wood chips.

A recycling effort has recently begun in Stone County through a monthly recycling drop-off sponsored by the Stone County Economic Development Partnership (EDP), Wal-Mart, Salvation Army and Allied Waste. The “Go-Green” Recycling drop-off location is available on the first Saturday of every month in the Wal-Mart parking lot. The drop-off location accepts plastic drink bottles, milk jugs, mixed paper, newspaper, cardboard and aluminum cans for recycling.

Stone County Utility Authority

Senate Bill 2943, as signed by Governor Haley Barbour on April 18, 2007, created a Gulf Region Utility Board and six county utility associations— including the Stone County Utility Authority.

“The authority [Stone County Utility Authority] is composed of the geographic area of Stone County as defined in Section 19-1-131, Mississippi Code of 1972, for the planning, acquisition, construction, maintenance, operation and coordination of water, wastewater and storm water systems in order to ensure the delivery of water, wastewater and storm water services to citizens residing within the boundaries of Stone County” (SB 2943).

The Stone County Utility Authority is comprised of five volunteers appointed by local elected officials. Three volunteer members are appointed by the Stone County Board of Supervisors and the remaining two volunteers are appointed by City of Wiggins’ Board of Aldermen. The Utility Authority has adopted by-laws and work has begun on the rules and regulations to be adopted.

Anticipated Needs and Proposed Improvements

In 2006, the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and the Mississippi Engineering Group, Inc. prepared the Mississippi Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan. The purpose of the plan was to identify the most critical water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure needs in the lower six counties. Needs were prioritized for the purpose of funding allocation. The improvements funded through this plan are intended to support existing and future growth patterns and to promote economic development. This plan was used extensively in determining future infrastructure needs for Stone County.

Stone County has identified near-term and long-term needs through their Master Utility Plan. This plan focuses on needs supported by the Mississippi Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan. The near-term water needs identified in both plans include improvements to the fire flow in the City of Wiggins, provide water service along the U.S. Highway 49 corridor and to the fastest growing areas of the county. The total construction cost for the projected near-term needs was set at 10 million dollars.

Table No. 16: Prioritized Water Needs

Total Near-Term Project Costs and Needs: \$10,000,000

City of Wiggins Water System Improvements
 New Water Well
 New Elevated Storage Tank
 2 Miles of New Water Mains

U.S. Highway 49 Corridor Improvements
 2 New Water Wells
 2 New Elevated Storage Tanks
 10 Miles of New Water Mains

McHenry and Sunflower Water Improvements
 2 New Water Wells
 2 New Elevated Storage Tanks
 15 Miles of New Water Mains

Total Long-Term Project Costs and Needs: \$35,000,000

Southwest Stone County Water Improvements
 New Water Well
 New Elevated Storage Tank
 3 Miles of New Water Mains

West Stone County Water Improvements
 New Elevated Storage Tank

Sunflower, McHenry and Stone Water Association Imp.
 6 New Water Wells
 6 New Elevated Storage Tanks
 24 Miles of New Water Mains to Service Growth
 36 Miles of New Water Mains to Loop Dead End Lines

**Source: 2006 Master Utility Plan and
 O’Neal—Bond Engineering, Inc.**

Community Facilities

The purpose of the long-term water plan is to improve fire flow in the City of Wiggins through upgraded water lines and to provide water services to the unincorporated areas of Stone County. The long-term water needs identified in both plans includes water improvements in southwest and west Stone County and improvements to the local water association systems. The total cost of the improvements identified in the long-term plan is 35 million dollars. Tables 16 and 17 lists the near-term and long-term needs in order of priority, and also identifies components of the projected needs.

OTHER FACILITIES

Stone County Hospital and Clinic is a twenty-five bed facility, which offers in-patient and out-patient care. Stone County Hospital has been designated as a Level IV Trauma Center by the Mississippi Trauma Care System Hospitals which provides for rapid access and transport to larger medical centers.

Medical centers which are also located in Hattiesburg include Forrest General Hospital, a 537 bed accredited hospital which offers short-term care and Wesley Medical Center, a 211 bed facility. Additional medical facilities are available in Harrison County.

The Stone County Health Department provides basic medical services and testing. The building of a new improved facility has recently been funding through several grants and with matching funds from the County.

Several private facilities have been licensed by the State of Mississippi as either personal care homes, assisted living facilities or nursing homes. All are located in the City of Wiggins.

The Stone County Department of Health and Human Services, located in Wiggins offers assistance to low income families.

The newly created Building Code office located in proximity to the Courthouse provides space for the Building Official who coordinates planning and building code services to developers, builders and citizens.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The County has established functional departments and elected officials to oversee the delivery of services to citizens and to provide for certain needed facilities. Most of these are adequate to deal with current demand. As population increases, the demands on all of these services will increase requiring funding for capital improvement projects and operating budgets. In order to prioritize needs, the county must establish an effective procedure and process to identify departments and services needing additional resources. The following are recommendations to consider:

- Update the county’s water and stormwater drainage to address future needs.
- Identify and provide sewer services to high-density areas.
- Support county-wide recycling programs and household hazardous clean-up events.
- Divert water and sewer lines away from environmentally sensitive areas.
- Work with existing utility providers to enhance services offered to residents.
- Periodically update the Emergency Operations Plan.
- Develop public awareness campaigns to ensure disaster preparedness.
- Seek funds for placement of emergency warning sirens at strategic locations throughout the county.
- Update all existing radio and communications equipment.
- Seek funding sources to purchase new fire trucks and equipment.
- Fund and hire additional staff for the Sheriff’s department.
- Design a geographic information systems (G.I.S.) to

Table No. 17: Prioritized Wastewater Needs

Near-Term Project Needs and Costs: \$24,500,000

- Central Stone County Wastewater System Improvements
 - Church House Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant
 - Bond Wastewater Interceptor
 - Church House Creek Gravity Interceptor
- Southeast Stone County Wastewater System Improvements
 - Saucier Interim Wastewater Treatment Plant
 - Tuxachanie Pump Station and Force Main
 - Beaver Creek Gravity Interceptor
 - Beaver Creek Pump Station and Force Main
 - Saucier Gravity Interceptor
- Southwest Stone County Wastewater System Improvements
 - Biloxi River Interim Wastewater Treatment Plant
 - Biloxi River Gravity Interceptor
 - Beaver Creek Pump Station and Force Main
 - Saucier Gravity Interceptor
 - Perkinston Pump Station and Force Main

Long-Term Needs

Expansion of near-term facilities and collectors

Total Wastewater Improvement Costs: \$47,464,000

Source: 2006 Master Utility Plan

-
- assist emergency service personnel in analysis of response times, location of crimes and service area.
- Utilize current grant funds to create a GIS mapping system in the Tax Assessor's Office.
 - Pursue funding from federal and state sources to add full-time staff at each volunteer fire department.
 - Obtain funds to expand the Stone County Jail to prevent overcrowding.
 - Construct and expand school facilities to accommodate future growth.
 - Promote and support the school system by ensuring existing facilities are adequate.
 - Improve existing traffic conditions by reducing congestion along major corridors.
 - Implement pedestrian oriented design standards into new transportation projects.
 - Adopt and implement alternative transportation systems such as sidewalks, bike paths and greenways
 - Expand existing libraries to accommodate for future growth.
 - Improve access to technology of citizens through utilization of wireless zones and access to computer terminals at strategic locations.
 - Identify a location, obtain funding and construction of a multi-purpose facility.
 - Develop linear parks and greenbelts that connect to developments.
 - Promote recreational activities that utilize the County's access to natural resources.
 - Identify and expand the existing system of parks and recreational facilities.
 - Develop mini-parks in densely populated communities.
 - Attract and retain specialized medical care to serve Stone County residents.

Community Facilities

Section Four: The Future



Implementation Strategy

The Implementation Strategy Section will concentrate on specific tools the county can use to assist in implementation of the goals, objectives and recommendations found in previous section. The following items are presented in this section:

- A matrix of Goals, Objectives and Recommendations along with specific policies, procedures and ordinances which will help achieve the stated goals .
- A table presenting capital improvement projects which were identified by county leaders and staff.
- Suggested re-organizational diagrams for Parks and Recreational Board
- Toolbox of resources which can be accessed for information on model ordinances, standards, best practices and implementation techniques from other communities.

Table No. 18: Implementation for Goals and Objectives

Goal No. 1—Protect and Provide for the Most Important Asset of the County—Its People.

Objectives	Recommendations	Implementation Tools
Analyze adequacy of essential services and facilities and program for needed improvements.	Review all existing studies. Prepare evaluations of all facilities and services the County provides and prioritize the improvement that are needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine staging and funding of improvements. • Obtain funding. • Systematically begin improvements.
Initiate incentives and provide infrastructure needed to attract and retain businesses and industry.	Determine what financial incentives local communities can provide for local business and industry. Determine which would be feasible for Stone County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass appropriate ordinances to permit incentives to occur.
Determine the adequacy of transportation and communication networks.	Work with MDOT, the county engineer and road manager to prioritize transportation needs and possible sources of revenue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize projects and systematically fund and complete.
Provide facilities and resources needed for police and fire protection.	Evaluate the current resources in terms of staffing, equipment and facilities. Estimate cost involved in improving services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize projects and systematically fund and complete.
Provide facilities and resources needed for an excellent school system.	Evaluate alternatives and possible scenarios should anticipated growth occur. Obtain estimates for improving current facilities. Search for appropriate land for new schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize projects. • Assist in school bond issue, • Locate source for gap financing for facilities.
Provide facilities and resources needed for excellent recreational opportunities.	Fund a study to evaluate existing facilities. Investigate alternatives for administration of recreational facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund master recreation facilities plan. • Prioritize projects . • Set up a more efficient park board.
Determine the highest and best use of all county owned land and buildings.	Improve buildings which are functional, while constructing new facilities that will promote economic development and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize projects. • Fund improvements.

Continued on following page . . .

Implementation Strategy

Goal No. 2: Protect and Maintain the Rural Character of the County

Objectives	Recommendations	Implementation Tools
Provide for the preservation of important cultural and historic places and buildings.	Utilize any appropriate means to recognize and protect the cultural resources of the county.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Historic Preservation Ordinances and Districts. • Landmark designations.
Promote and preserve the rural character valued by citizens.	Utilize any appropriate means to protect the natural resources of the county.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood Zone Ordinance. • Stormwater Ordinance. • Growth Management tools.
Create and utilize regulations and ordinances that better insure protection of rural character.	Evaluate the feasibility and suitability of land development ordinances and adopt those which are appropriate at this time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subdivision Ordinance. • Zoning Ordinance. • Smart Code Ordinance.
Discourage new development that may threaten established communities.	Utilize legal and existing ordinances to guide land use decisions being made by developers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoning and Subdivision Regulations. • Density incentives.
Protect and conserve the environment and peacefulness of the countryside.	<p align="center">Deal with stray animals and litter Provide adequate police, fire and medical services. Protect watersheds and environmentally sensitive areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build an animal shelter. • Improve medical facilities, fire and police facilities. • Adopt ordinances protecting certain areas.
Make main arterials and gateways attractive and inviting.	Create guidelines for gateways into the county and into villages and Wiggins.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Streets guidelines. • Sign and Landscaping Ordinances.

Continued on following page . . .

Implementation Strategy

Goal No. 3: Utilize Smart Growth Principles to Help Prepare for Growth and to Insure Quality Communities.

Objectives	Recommendations	Implementation Tools
Utilize land use codes that adhere to Smart Growth Principles	Review appropriateness of using either Smartcode, county-wide zoning or partial-county zoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt an appropriate land use code.
Expand infrastructure to support development in appropriate places	Determine exact boundaries of areas where development should occur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand infrastructure to these boundaries only.
Prevent undesirable or unsightly development	Investigate various types of ordinances and incentives that will help guide development such as landscaping and sign requirements for commercial.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt ordinances and enforce.
Channel high density development into existing towns and centers	Provide tax incentives to developers who wish to use infill development in existing centers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt ordinance and promote to builders.
Use conservation subdivisions and large-lot design in rural areas	Evaluate the advantages of using this type of development to protect rural areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise Subdivision Ordinance to recommend in rural areas. • Educate developers on advantages.
Endeavor to provide adequate housing for all citizens.	Identify any substandard housing and funding sources such as CDBG for repairs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify available funding sources. • Obtain grants and repair houses. • Establish revolving loan fund
Build pedestrian connections between communities	Determine the types of pedestrian connections appropriate and needed in certain areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and build bike paths and greenways. • Require sidewalks in new developments.

Implementation Strategy

Capital Improvements Plan

The following Capital Improvements projects have been identified through interviews with Stone County Department personnel and auxiliary organizations. Prior plans such as the Educational Impact Report by JBHM Education Group and the Long-Term Recovery Plan prepared by State and Federal agencies were also used. Many of the projects in the Long-Term Recovery Plan have been funded. For the purpose of this plan, a Capital Improvements Project is considered to have a cost of \$50,000 or more and have a useful life of five (5) years or longer.

Table No. 19: Capital Improvements Plan

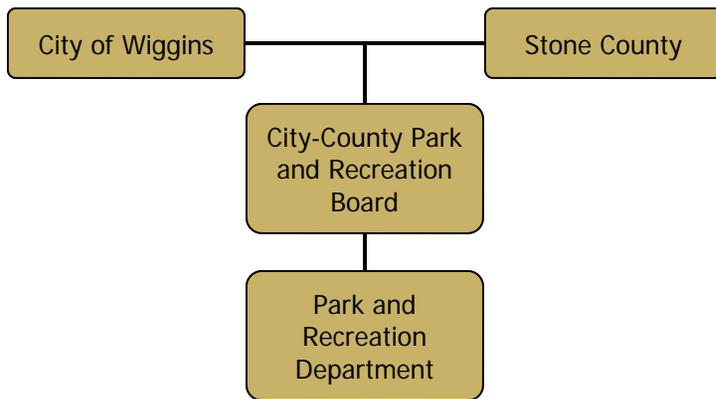
Description	Programming	Estimated Costs	Possible Funding Sources
Animal Control Shelter with one full-time staff person	Land acquisition, design and construction	\$750,000 year 1 \$350,000 /year	TBD
Community Center/Voting Precinct at Bond	Design and Construction	\$192,000	TBD
Community Center, Walking Trail at Sunflower	Design and Construction	TBD	SCRA & USDA
County Gravel Road Paving Projects	Design and Construction	\$10—\$12 Million	BOS
Elementary School, New	Land Acquisition, Design and Construction	\$15.4 million	School Bonds & Private Sources
Elementary Schools, Existing	Assessment of needs, design and upgrades	TBD	School Bonds
Emergency Operations Center	Land Acquisition, Design and Construction	\$1.4 million	SCEMA/MEMA/Homeland Security/Federal Grants
Equipment and Vehicle for Recreational Department	Assessment of Needs and purchase	TBD	SCRA, EDP, General Fund, Private Sources
Equipment and Vehicles for Sheriff's Department	Assessment of Needs and purchase	TBD	SCEMA/MEMA/Homeland Security/Federal Grants

Capital Improvements Plan

Description	Programming	Estimated Costs	Possible Funding Sources
Fire Equipment	As Identified in Recovery Plan	\$876,000	SCEMA, MEMA
High School, Existing	Assessment of Needs, design and Construction	TBD	School Bonds
High School, New	As identified in Educational Impact Report, 2007	\$57.3 Million	School Bonds, Private Sources
Industrial Park, New	Land Acquisition, Design and installation of infrastructure	TBD	EDP, MDA Grants
Inter-Community Walking and Bike Trail	Land Acquisition, Design and Construction	\$400,000 per phase	SCRA, NPS, USDA, TE
Library, New	Land Acquisition, Design and Construction	TBD	Grants, Bonds
Middle School, New	As identified in Educational Impact Report, 2007	\$21 Million	School Bonds, Private Sources
Multi-purpose Fairgrounds Facility,	Design and Construction	TBD	General Bonds, Grants
Public School Administrative Office	Rehabilitation	\$2.3 Million	Grants, School Bonds
Sheriff's Office Operations Center and Communication System	Design and Construction of Facility	\$150,000	Dept. of Homeland Security, General Fund
Sports Facility, multi-use in centralized location	Land Acquisition, Design and Construction	\$2.5 Million	SCRA, EDP, General Fund, Private
Van, equipped to transport handicapped persons and driver	Establish routes or call to ride program	\$50,000 + personnel costs	MDOT, Federal Transit Authority

Park and Recreation Department Organization

Figure No. 51: Single County-Wide Department



The following analysis is given for further analysis in determining the best organizational structure for future boards or for the re-organization of the existing recreational board.

1. A single county-wide department

This organizational structure provides a single park and recreation department serving all residents of the city and county. This organizational structure implies that the City turn over all operation and funding responsibility to the County. There are various ways to establish a county-wide parks and recreation department, but this plan will only discuss one, a joint city/county park and recreation board/commission. This structure provides a board or commission, appointed by the city and the county, to control the parks and recreation department. An organizational chart is provided in Figure 53.

Advantages

- One responsible agency
- Avoid duplication of services by the city and county
- Cost would most likely be less than that of two separate departments
- Staff would be concentrated on one public to serve
- Citizens could easily see where tax dollars are spent as opposed to separate budgets for separate agencies
- Both the City and County would retain local control and identity through appointments to the Commission

Disadvantages

- An appointed policy-making board may not be as responsive to the people as elected officials.
- Having all authority under one structure could lead to power conflicts with interest groups.
- The City would feel less willing to financially support the

Implementation Strategy

program

- Total funding needs would be likely seen as a county duty.
- County would have to accept the change to provide park and recreation services inside the city limits

2. A contractual Agreement for Services

This organizational structure promotes a contractual agreement with the City for the provision of specific services and facilities as they relate to parks and recreation. This organizational structure implies that the City will provide, as outlined in the contract, services for a negotiated fee. The extent of the contracted services could range from the development to new parks or recreation centers to the maintenance and operation of facilities. An organizational chart is provided in Figure No. 54.

Advantages

- County would not have to operate a department, but would be able to provide services to county residents.
- County would have direct accountability over the services provided.

Disadvantages

- Services provided to county residents would be limited to those established in the contract agreement.
- City property owners would be paying additional tax for services designed for county residents.
- There would be difficulty in determining the “true” costs of providing such contract services.
- Contracting services does not promote good long-range planning.
- Quality of service is not easily measured and can therefore be difficult to establish a gauge in the contractual agreement.

3. County Parks Department and City Recreation Department

This organizational structure promotes the development of separate departments for the City and County that focus on different objectives. The county could direct its efforts into

Figure No. 52: Contractual Agreement for Services

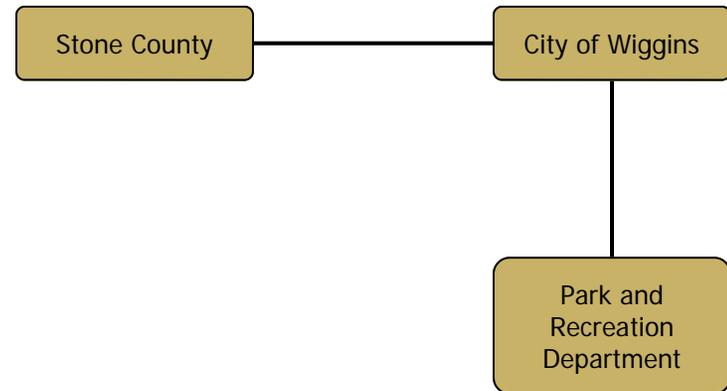
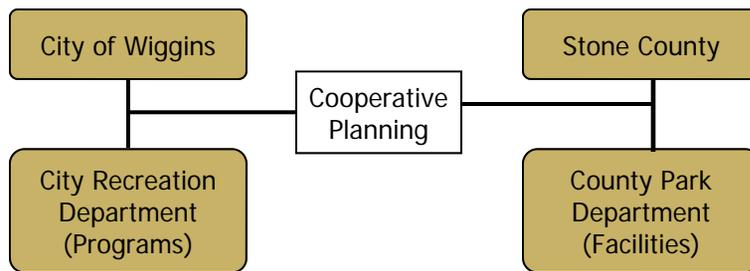


Figure No. 53: Separate City and County Departments



acquiring and developing major park areas, greenways and natural areas. The county would make these areas available to the city recreation department in exchange for the city expanding recreation program services into the entire county. Funding for these separate departments could come from general appropriations or a special recreation tax. An organizational chart is provided in Figure No. 55.

Advantages

- More recreational opportunities for the City and County residents.
- Goals of each department would be different, eliminating the duplication of efforts, while still maintaining the context of recreation outlets and leisure opportunities.
- With careful joint planning by both departments, a well designed system of parks and recreation could be developed.

Disadvantages

- Separation of functions could lead to competition for available funds.
- Funding competition could lead to deterioration of programs, facilities and efforts by the staffs in providing recreational opportunities to the other's residents.
- City and County residents may resent paying taxes for facilities in rural areas that few people utilize.
- Coordination of recreation schedules and maintenance of park areas becomes most difficult with the complete separation of responsibilities.
- Adjustments to looking at jurisdictional boundaries in a different manner. County would maintain their primary focus on unincorporated areas, while the city would maintain their primary focus within the city limits.
- Doesn't lend itself to smooth expansion, should other cities be established in the future.

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Resource Toolbox

Conservation, Watershed Protection

- NEMO (Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials) University of Connecticut. Available for download from the Internet at <http://nemo.uconn.edu/index.htm> —offers brief fact sheets such as “Open Space Developments,” “Carving Up the Landscape: Habitat Fragmentation and What to do about it.”

Historic Preservation

- National Trust for Historic Preservation. Resources for homeowners, policy makers, and other interested in using historic preservation as a tool to enhance communities. Internet site: <http://www.preservationnation.org/>.

Housing and Community Development

- Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Online Resource Center. Links to organizations that offer funding for housing programs including HUD, Housing Assistance Council, Lowe’s Charitable and Educational Foundation, Rural Housing Service, and Rural Local Initiatives Support Corporation. Internet address: <http://www.arc.gov/index.do?nodeId=1077>.
- Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Information about housing programs and funding sources available online at: <http://www.hud.gov/>

Smart Growth Codes

- APA (American Planning Association). Smart Growth Model Codes—Available for download from the Internet at: <http://www.planning.org/smartgrowthcodes/>. Some of the model codes available include: Model Cluster Development Ordinance, Model On-site Access, Parking and Circulation Ordinance, Model Street Connectivity Standards Ordinance.
- Smart Communities Network. Green Development Conservation Subdivision Design—Articles, codes and ordinances, and Case Studies available for viewing on the Internet at: <http://www.smartcommunities.ncat.org/greendev/subdivision.shtml>.

General Resources

- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Community Development Resources online library of resources. Available online at: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/>.
- United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Resources available online at: <http://www.epa.gov/>.
- Mississippi Development Authority. Resources for economic development available online at: <http://www.mississippi.org/>

Appendix—Public Participation Results



Community Survey Responses

The following community survey was provided to Stone County residents at community meetings and made available at the local Neel-Schaffer, Inc. office in downtown Wiggins. Information gathered in response to this survey has been tallied and a percentage of the total responses have been provided. Questions 1-4 were asked of each resident in a verbal exercise during each community meeting as well as on the community survey. Since the responses were duplicated in both the survey and the meeting exercise, only the meeting exercise responses will be used to provide an estimation of community feelings and beliefs.

The phrase "community" was used to break Stone County into smaller, more manageable parts. Communities identified in Stone County were Big Level, Bond, Magnolia, McHenry, Perkinston, Ramsey Springs, Silver Run and Sunflower. Residents who lived within the City of Wiggins were asked to concentrate on the county as a whole instead of an individual community.

1. What do you like most about your community?

- 22.8% - Rural setting
- 20.2% - People-friendly/watchful/caring
- 11.9% - Quiet/Peaceful
- 8.2% - Fire protection
- 5.7% - Beauty/Nature/Environment
- 4.7% - Sense of belonging/community
- 3.6% - Unrestricted/Freedom to use land
 - Churches
 - Low crime rate
 - Small town feel

- 2.6% - Location—rural but close to urban areas
- 2.1% - Education
- 1.6% - Privacy
 - Just like it like it is
 - Family-oriented
- 1.0% - Police patrol
- 0.5% - Low tax rates
 - Change/Planning/A new beginning
 - No traffic jams
 - Unique shops
 - No snow
 - Good roads
 - Unspoiled
 - Inherited land
 - Ambience—"Rip Van Winkle Community"

2. What would you change about your community?

- 14.7% - Roads
- 10.1% - Community/Recreation/Senior Center
- 7.8% - Fire Department - Infrastructure/Funding
 - Police Department—Law Enforcement/Protection
- 4.9% - Walking trail (lighted)
- 4.3% - Wastewater system
- 3.5% - Need parks/playgrounds
- 2.9% - Litter/Property Maintenance
- 2.3% - Hard to get off/on Hwy 49
 - Additional grocery store
- 2.0% - Need voting precinct
 - Need pharmacy
 - ATV trails
- 1.7% - Water lines that support fire flow
 - Quality job opportunities
 - Road access to Henley Parks

- 1.4% - Unknown new development (Horizons)
 - Paving - N. end of Old Hwy 49 & N. McHenry Dr.
 - Need community-based recreation facilities
 - Boat ramps on Red Creek
- 1.2% - Building codes
 - Need youth/kids activities
 - Neighborhood Watch
 - Need more communication within communities
 - Transportation for Seniors
- 0.9% - New school buildings
 - Natural gas system
 - Elementary schools for east and west Stone Co.
 - Community involvement/awareness
 - Slow down/pay attention to development
 - First responder training
 - Community water system
- 0.6% - Drainage plans-show how the community will impact the local area
 - Animal control
 - Utilities
 - Emergency services are too slow
 - Environmental concerns—mining, timber, MDEQ inspections, Red Creek
 - Railroads have no hazard evacuation plans
 - Require developers to include recreation plans
- 0.3% - Greater access to activities and technology
 - Need more attention from Supervisors in Bond
 - Need another exit off of Hwy 49 or a frontage road on east side of Hwy 49
 - Inappropriate uses next door
 - Too crowded
 - Need more fish in Red Creek

- Underground utilities
- Work on McHenry ball fields
- Need better use of funds
- Accountability
- Need industries with high paying jobs
- Stop foul language on busses
- Mall
- More businesses
- No county support
- Develop entrepreneurship
- Activities for college students—coffee shops, cyber café
- Strengthen Perkinston's identity
- More communication with county after disasters
- Junkyard– Unwanted development

3. What do you like most about your county?

- 13.2% - Central location
- 10.3% - People/Neighbors
- 9.2% - Small-town atmosphere
- 6.3% - Education/School systems
- 5.7% - Sportsman's county
 - Garbage collection/rubbish site
- 5.2% - Peaceful
- 4.6% - No land use restrictions
- 4.0% - Small, rural, dry county
- 3.4% - Waterways
 - Natural Resources
- 2.9% - Country setting
 - Country living
- 2.3% - Christian county
 - Close-knit community
- 1.7% - Safe

- Doctors/Clinics
- Hospitality/Friendliness
- 1.1% - Family-oriented; great place to raise kids
- Home
- Open spaces
- County growth
- 0.6% - Laid-back atmosphere
- Lower taxes
- One red light on main road
- Geographic make-up
- Skill set of the people; work ethic
- Small population
- Commercial partnerships
- Increased economic development
- Personal recognition
- Connector roads to Keesler Air Force Base
- Responsive to citizen needs/emergency facilities
- Low unemployment
- Not crowded
- Good place to own a business
- Easy to get around in the county

4. What would you change about your county?

- 7.5% - Improve roads and drainage
- 6.8% - Better shopping/retail
- 5.9% - Improve school buildings/administration/staff
- 5.5% - Education
- 5.2% - Board of Supervisors spending of tax dollars
 - Board needs to be more responsive to the needs of citizens and provide more information to citizens
- 3.9% - Litter—roadways and waterways
- 3.3% - Jobs/Employment opportunities
 - Increase trash/debris pick-ups

- 2.9% - Emergency response
 - Upgrade hospital
 - Recreation facilities
- 2.0% - No billboards
 - Increase traffic patrols and law enforcement
- 1.6% - Better pay for public service officials (i.e. law enforcement)
 - Police sub-stations
 - School drop-out rate
 - Stone County parks and recreation board
 - Facilities for kids to hang-out
 - Clean up dump sites
- 1.3% - Consolidated government
 - Lower taxes
 - Community involvement
 - Community centers/facilities
 - Fire protection
 - Need solid leadership
 - Emergency response plan
 - Building codes and inspector
 - Animal control
 - Animal shelter
 - Library in McHenry open on Saturdays
 - Property maintenance
- 1.0% - Inter-governmental cooperation between fire departments
 - More honest and reliable county officials
 - Transportation for seniors
 - More non-timber industries
 - Zoning
 - Regular community/town meetings with supervisors from each district
 - Better welcome signs
- 0.7% - City/County cooperation

- Better maintenance of county-owned facilities
- Insects—ants, love bugs and mosquitoes
- Finances equally proportioned
- Slow to have economic development
- Green industries
 - DSL on library computers in McHenry
- 0.3% - Prevent small businesses from leaving county
- Annex Bond into Wiggins
- Annex Project Road into Wiggins
- Soccer fields
- County officials should use local contractors
- Standard support for recreation (earmark tax money)
- Water/Sewer upgrades
- What's best for the current citizens and prospective citizens
 - Emphasize the county's history and culture
 - Control growth
 - Drugs
 - Fire Department in northeast Stone County
 - Quality healthcare
 - Farmer's Market
 - Don't overlook the airport
 - Need more law enforcement officers for the Sherriff's department
 - Wolfe River accessibility (not in Stone County)
 - Dead animal pick-up
 - Lower homeowners insurance
 - Another elementary school (east side-upper Hwy 15)
 - Shooting range
 - Cell tower strobe lights are a nuisance

- Wayfinding sign on Hwy 49 for McHenry library

5. What community do you live in?

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| 8.3% - Big Level | 9.5% - Bond/Northwest Stone Co. |
| 6.0% - Magnolia | 38.1% - McHenry |
| 17.9% - Perkinston | 9.5% - Ramsey Springs |
| 3.6% - Silver Run | 2.4% - Sunflower |
| 4.8% - Wiggins | |

6. How long have you lived in Stone County?

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 21.3% - Less than 5 years | 16.3% - 5-10 years |
| 12.5% - 11-15 years | 50.0% - 15 years or more |

7. Do you plan to retire in Stone County?

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 64.6% - Yes | 11.0% - No |
| 4.9% - Not Sure | 19.5% - Currently Retired |

8. How would you grade Stone County as a place to live?

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 34.6% - Excellent | 42.3% - Good |
| 21.8% - Fair | 1.3% - Poor |

9. Over the past few years, do you think your community has...

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| 45.7% - Improved | 33.3% - Stayed the same |
| 18.5% - Declined | 2.5% - Not sure |

10. How would you rate the public school system?

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 11.4% - Excellent | 45.7% - Good |
| 30.0% - Fair | 12.9% - Poor |

11. Do you have any comments about the public

school system?

- 30.8% - Improve quality of education and test scores
- 17.3% - Renovate/Build new schools
- 11.5% - Pleased with school and teachers
- 3.8% - Location
 - Need additional books
 - Need more teachers
 - Need to promote schools to prospective businesses and industries
 - Need more funding/better use of funding
 - Need additional courses offered
- 1.9% - Need prayer in school
 - Need more discipline
 - Need school disciplinary board
 - Need new school administration/officials
 - Need more special programs
 - Need to use 16th section land for parks
 - Too crowded
 - Improve management of schools
 - Improve maintenance of local schools

12. How would you rate the recreational opportunities in your community?

- 7.6% - Excellent
- 32.9% - Good
- 34.2% - Fair
- 25.3% - Poor

13. What additional recreation facilities would you like to have access to in your community?

- 18.1% - Walking Trails
- 8.5% - Parks/Playgrounds
- 7.4% - Bike Trails
 - Activities for youth and children
- 6.4% - Baseball/Softball fields
 - Community centers

- 5.3% - Tennis courts
- 3.2% - Boat launches
 - Basketball courts
 - Public swimming pools
- 2.1% - Picnic areas
 - Shooting range
 - Skateboard park
 - Railroad for travel
 - 4-wheeler/ATV trails
 - Fishing/Improving fishing in existing areas
 - Need support for existing facilities
 - YMCA
 - Bike lanes along major roadways
- 1.1% - Senior Citizen Center
 - Soccer fields
 - Football fields
 - Green spaces
 - Paintball
 - Horse trails
 - Gyms
 - Need a joint city/county Recreation Office
 - Vehicular access to Henley Lakes (not in Stone County)
 - Any recreation facilities would be good
 - Art walks

14. How satisfied are you with the condition of roads in your community?

- 2.5% - Very satisfied
- 30.9% - Satisfied
- 43.2% - Not satisfied
- 23.5% - Very unsatisfied

15. How satisfied are you with the condition of the public facilities in your community?

3.8% - Very satisfied
26.9% - Not satisfied
unsatisfied

57.7% - Satisfied
11.5% - Very

16. What additional public facilities would you like to have access to in your community?

48.8% - Community centers
7.0% - Recreation facilities
- No new facilities; repair/maintain existing facilities
- Walking trails
4.7% - Library
- Parks/playgrounds
2.3% - Walking trails
- County-owned auditorium
- Public swimming pool
- Code enforcement office
- Picnic areas
- Tennis courts
- County civic center or multi-purpose center
- Rebuild the depot
- Voting precinct
- YMCA/YWCA

17. Do you feel there are sufficient commercial businesses close to your community?

42.0% - Yes
8.7% - Not Sure
49.3% - No

18. What type of businesses would you like to see in your community (grocery stores, clothing stores, etc.)?

31.5% - Grocery store
11.0% - Home Improvement
8.2% - Clothing Store

5.5% - Restaurants
4.1% - Shopping Mall/Strip Mall
- Small retail/no major commercial
- No community business needed
2.7% - Ice cream parlor
- Gas station
- Dollar store
- Electronics/Technology store
1.4% - Movie theater
- Skating rink
- Craft store
- Office spaces
- Any type of commercial
- Auto parts store
- Sporting goods store
- Coffee shop
- Shoe store
- Post office
- Bar
- Drug store

19. What type of businesses would you like to see in the county (grocery stores, clothing stores, etc.)?

25.4% - Home Improvement
19.0% - Grocery store
15.9% - Clothing/Shoe Store
7.9% - Restaurants
6.3% - General retail
4.8% - Movie theater
3.2% - Coffee shop
1.6% - Skating rink
- Craft store
- Gyms
- Shopping mall
- Art/Cultural museum
- Warehouse supplier (Sam's Club)
- Manufacturing
- Florist
- Sporting goods
- Medical facilities
- Liquor store

20. Would you support a community-based business if it were available?

77.6% - Yes
20.9% - Not Sure
35.8% - Fair
1.5% - No
13.4% - Poor

21. How often do you travel out of Stone County to shop?

38.0% - 1-3 times a week 15.9% - Once a week
12.2% - Every two weeks 12.2% - Once a month
13.4% - Seldom 0.0% - Never

22. How would you grade the level of health care in Stone County?

2.6% - Excellent 33.8% - Good
33.8% - Fair 29.9% - Poor

23. What other types of health care facilities would you like to have access to in Stone County?

32.1% - Upgrade/Improve existing hospital
21.4% - Urgent care
14.3% - Specialists
10.7% - Additional hospital
7.1% - No additional facilities needed
3.6% - VA clinic
- Orthodontist
- Chiropractor
- Prevention programs

24. How would you grade the arts and entertainment opportunities in Stone County?

3.1% - Excellent 18.5% - Good
26.2% - Fair 52.3% - Poor

25. What other arts and entertainment opportunities would you like to have access to in Stone County?

42.1% - Movie Theater/Theatre
5.3% - Skating Rink
- Restaurants
- Music/Art classes

- All available
- Bars
- Art galleries
- Improve library
2.6% - Dances
- Trail rides for horses
- Educational classes for seniors
- Shops
- Reading/Book club
- Need a monthly art walk
- Wood products museum
- No additional entertainment options needed

26. How would you rate the availability of quality housing in your community?

10.4% - Excellent 40.3% - Good
35.8% - Fair 13.4% - Poor

27. Do you feel that your community has adequate walking trails and bike paths?

16.9% - Yes 76.1% - No
7.0% - Not Sure

28. Where would you like to see bike paths and walking trails in your community?

15.4% - Around community centers/voting precincts
12.8% - In my community
10.3% - Along major roads; walkable communities
- On government land (16th section, U.S. Forest Service land)
7.7% - In a central location
- Along East McHenry Road
5.1% - Along Wire Road
- In a safe place

- 2.6% - Along waterways (i.e. Red Creek)
- At MGCCC
- In proximity to large subdivisions
- Downtown Wiggins
- End of 2nd Street in Perkinston
- From Wiggins extending west
- East and West of Highway 49
- In McHenry
- Near the library in McHenry
- Around the golf course

29. How would you grade the level of fire protection in your community?

24.6% - Excellent 42.0% - Good
 21.7% - Fair 11.6% - Poor

30. Do you have any comments about the fire protection in your community?

- 17.4% - Need more support from county officials
 - Need more volunteers
 - Good job/people
- 10.9% - Need paid, full-time firefighters in the county
- 8.7% - Need more funding
 - Need more/better equipment
- 4.3% - Need to improve fire rating
- 2.2% - First responders needed in rural communities
 - Stay up-to-date on finances and equipment
 - Use facilities for work not socializing
 - Need better building design
 - Need a sub-station
 - Wildlife Urban Interface is expanding
 - Improve water supply to increase fire protection capabilities

31. How would you grade the level of police protection in your community?

11.3% - Excellent 45.1% - Good
 25.4% - Fair 18.3% - Poor

32. Do you have any comments about the police protection in your community?

- 34.3% - Need more patrol
- 14.3% - Great job
- 8.6% - Need more officers
- 5.7% - More support
 - Increase pay
 - Improve response time
 - Speeding
- 2.9% - Need more follow-up
 - MGCCC provides great support
 - Should provide better protection
 - Funding
 - Need better equipment
 - Need sub-station
 - Narcotics is a major problem being overlooked

33. Which issues do you feel need attention or improvement in your community?

- 7.2% - Traffic
- 12.3% - Control speeding
- 7.7% - Access to Utilities
- 3.8% - Promote tourism
- 5.5% - Improve private property maintenance
- 15.3% - Crime prevention/public safety
- 8.5% - Small business opportunity
- 11.5% - Expand job opportunities
- 12.8% - Attract higher-paying jobs
- 11.9% - Attract business and industry

3.4% - Other

Of the 3.4% that selected other...

25.0% - County road improvements

12.5% - Education

- Recreation
- Zoning Controls
- Litter
- Control Hunting
- Support for Senior Citizen Center

34. Are there areas in your community that should be restricted from development? If so, please list these places being as specific as possible.

20.0% - Red Creek area

11.4% - Rural areas

5.7% - Around large industries

- Forestland
- Limit development in the county
- King Bee Road

2.9% - Personal property

- Downtown Perkinson
- City Bridge Road
- Hwy 49 from Wire Road to Sunflower Road
- Wetlands
- De Soto National Forest
- Wildlife Management Areas
- Existing residential areas
- Environmentally sensitive areas
- Lot size minimum of 2.5 acres
- Limit low-income mixing with high-end housing
- Around Flint Creek Water Park
- Northeast quadrant of Hwy 26 and 49 intersection
- Residential areas

- Commercial development along East McHenry Rd.

- Houses on lots greater than five acres

35. Do you have any other community ideas, issues or concerns that were not addressed in this survey?

5.6% - Community centers

- Drug problem
- Limit development in the county
- Keep it spacious/country
- Need underground utilities
- Community sewer
- Keep rural tranquility
- Littering
- More trash pick-up
- Child safety through seat belt law enforcement

2.8% - Walking track

- Police patrol
- Full-time firefighters
- Zones to protect existing land owners
- Elder property owners selling to developers
- Keep recreation clean for youth
- Need mass transportation to the coast
- Need building codes
- Timeline for Stone County Utility Authority
- Cable television
- GIS mapping
- Developers should provide facilities
- Community marquee/sign to announce community events
- Support for the Senior Citizen Center
- County needs to host a triathlon
- Improve infrastructure

-
- Consolidate commercial concerns
 - Keep commercial and residential separate
 - Maintain zoning restrictions
 - Improve roads
 - Expand library system to include satellite or community libraries
 - Need a voting precinct
 - Animal control
 - Minimum lot sizes of 0.5 acres

Highway Commercial Visual Preference Survey Results



Prefer 0 %
Prefer Not 59 %
 Minimum Standard 0 %



Prefer 71 %
 Prefer Not 6 %
 Minimum Standard 29 %



Prefer 24 %
 Prefer Not 6 %
 Minimum Standard 6 %



Prefer 6 %
 Prefer Not 6 %
Minimum Standard 47 %



Prefer 6 %
 Prefer Not 29 %
 Minimum Standard 6 %

Highway Signs Visual Preference Results



Prefer	0 %
Prefer Not	53 %
Minimum Standard	0 %



Prefer	35 %
Prefer Not	0 %
Minimum Standard	41 %



Prefer	35 %
Prefer Not	12 %
Minimum Standard	12 %



Prefer	0 %
Prefer Not	53 %
Minimum Standard	6 %



Prefer	6 %
Prefer Not	12 %
Minimum Standard	24 %



Prefer	12 %
Prefer Not	0 %
Minimum Standard	18 %

Community Centers Visual Preference Results



Prefer	18 %
Prefer Not	0 %
Minimum Standard	12 %



Prefer	47 %
Prefer Not	0 %
Minimum Standard	47 %



Prefer	29 %
Prefer Not	6 %
Minimum Standard	12 %



Prefer	0 %
Prefer Not	94 %
Minimum Standard	0 %



Prefer	47 %
Prefer Not	6 %
Minimum Standard	29 %

Parks Visual Preference Results



Prefer	29 %
Prefer Not	6 %
Minimum Standard	12 %



Prefer	6 %
Prefer Not	29 %
Minimum Standard	18 %



Prefer	12 %
Prefer Not	24 %
Minimum Standard	35 %



Prefer	18 %
Prefer Not	6 %
Minimum Standard	29 %



Prefer	65 %
Prefer Not	0 %
Minimum Standard	35 %

Single-Family Residential Development Visual Preference Results



Prefer	12 %
Prefer Not	18 %
Minimum Standard	12 %



Prefer	12 %
Prefer Not	41 %
Minimum Standard	29 %



Prefer	71 %
Prefer Not	0 %
Minimum Standard	6 %



Prefer	29 %
Prefer Not	29 %
Minimum Standard	24 %



Prefer	6 %
Prefer Not	6 %
Minimum Standard	24 %

High-Density Residential Development Visual Preference Results



Prefer	12 %
Prefer Not	41 %
Minimum Standard	18 %



Prefer	35 %
Prefer Not	0 %
Minimum Standard	29 %



Prefer	18 %
Prefer Not	29 %
Minimum Standard	6 %



Prefer	29 %
Prefer Not	0 %
Minimum Standard	29 %



Prefer	35 %
Prefer Not	29 %
Minimum Standard	12 %

Roadways Visual Preference Results



Prefer	0 %
Prefer Not	12 %
Minimum Standard	24 %



Prefer	6 %
Prefer Not	71 %
Minimum Standard	0 %



Prefer	18 %
Prefer Not	12 %
Minimum Standard	18 %



Prefer	18 %
Prefer Not	0 %
Minimum Standard	47 %



Prefer	53 %
Prefer Not	0 %
Minimum Standard	12 %

Village Retail Visual Preference Results



Prefer	41 %
Prefer Not	0 %
Minimum Standard	12 %



Prefer	24 %
Prefer Not	35 %
Minimum Standard	6 %



Prefer	18 %
Prefer Not	12 %
Minimum Standard	18 %



Prefer	12 %
Prefer Not	35 %
Minimum Standard	29 %



Prefer	65 %
Prefer Not	6 %
Minimum Standard	24 %

Village Commercial Signs Visual Preference Results



Prefer	12 %
Prefer Not	82 %
Minimum Standard	0 %



Prefer	24 %
Prefer Not	6 %
Minimum Standard	12 %



Prefer	59 %
Prefer Not	6 %
Minimum Standard	24 %



Prefer	0 %
Prefer Not	12 %
Minimum Standard	29 %



Prefer	41 %
Prefer Not	0 %
Minimum Standard	29 %

Village Centers Visual Preference Results



Prefer	59 %
Prefer Not	0 %
Minimum Standard	12 %



Prefer	6 %
Prefer Not	47 %
Minimum Standard	0 %



Prefer	18 %
Prefer Not	29 %
Minimum Standard	35 %



Prefer	12 %
Prefer Not	0 %
Minimum Standard	12 %



Prefer	35 %
Prefer Not	18 %
Minimum Standard	35 %

Wrap-Up Meeting Vote Results

Land Use

<i>Goal, Objective or Strategy</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
Amend the existing Subdivision Regulation to encourage cluster development in rural areas (i.e. preserve open/green space and natural features).	7	8
Adopt a landscaping ordinance applicable to non-residential development with landscape buffers and/or fencing in between incompatible adjacent uses (i.e. junk yard located next to a residence).	13	5
Improve the Flood Ordinance to include stronger requirements for development (i.e. preventing development in the floodplain).	12	3
Adopt a Stormwater Management Ordinance to protect local streams and waterways.	14	2
Discourage new developments that contradict existing development patterns in established communities.	9	5
Adopt county-wide zoning which establishes very lenient requirements for agricultural areas and more structured requirements for McHenry, Perkinson, the unincorporated area surrounding the City of Wiggins and land along major highways.	8	12
Establish a site plan review committee—made up of local officials and a citizen representative—to assess development plans.	14	3
Promote the establishment of home-based businesses within densely populated areas.	12	1

Transportation

Assess the condition of local roads in Stone County and repair those in poor condition.	19	0
Establish a transit system to provide transportation to senior citizens, disabled and other members of the under-served community.	17	1
Establish a road and highway network which will adequately accommodate new residential development in southern Stone County.	7	5
Assess the condition of local bridges in Stone County and repair those found to be in poor condition.	17	0
Seek funds to initiate the construction of a county-wide bike path to connect individual communities within Stone County	9	5

Transportation *(continued)*

Goal, Objective or Strategy	Agree	Disagree
Construct a sidewalk and/or path system within certain village centers, such as Perkinston and McHenry, and within community centers.	6	7
Require developers to make improvements or upgrades to the existing road system in order to accommodate increases in traffic flow caused by the new development.	7	4
Control access of Hwy 49 by building frontage roads for new development.	12	4
Seek to alleviate congestion at the intersection of First Street and Hwy 26 by installing traffic control devices and/or redesigning the intersection.	19	0

Community Character

Promote and preserve the rural character that is valued by residents (i.e. small town atmosphere and family-friendly atmosphere).	14	1
Commemorate the County's history by identifying and documenting properties with historic value.	12	1
Protect historic properties which communicate the county's heritage.	13	1
Encourage the establishment of a historic preservation committee to preserve the written, oral and build history of the County (i.e. recordkeeping, historic preservation and cultural events).	12	2
Promote the construction of a museum to display historic artifacts from Stone County's history.	10	5
Protect and conserve the natural resources of Stone County (i.e. Red and Black Creeks and National/State Forest Lands).	17	1
Identify and protect open spaces and scenic views within the county.	12	2

Community Facilities

Identify locations and build additional recreation facilities for organized youth sports activities.	17	0
Maintain existing recreational facilities in good repair to reduce capital costs and extend the useful life of existing facilities.	15	2
Identify locations for community parks and trails for active recreation (i.e. flag football, frisbee).	15	0

Community Facilities *(continued)*

<i>Goal, Objective or Strategy</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
Expand and improve the Pine Forest Regional Library System within Stone County.	17	0
Establish a satellite or mobile library program to provide services to the rural areas of the county.	8	6
Construct additional community centers in the county.	4	11
Assess the condition of schools facilities and repair facilities in poor condition.	19	0
Seek an affiliation with YMCA or a related organization.	12	1
Provide more funding for the Senior Center	18	1

Housing

Increase the availability of work-force housing, utilizing different housing styles in appropriate areas.	12	14
Seek CDBG or other government funds to help repair dilapidated housing.	11	2
Develop Neighborhood Associations to increase a sense of community.	14	1
Record and preserve historic homes in the county.	15	1
Promote mixed-use housing in villages—Perkinston and McHenry.	4	9
Use restrictive covenants in existing neighborhoods to preserve their integrity.	7	6
Require new housing neighborhoods to have sidewalks and lighting.	8	7
Ensure new development in villages—Perkinston and McHenry—conforms to the historic characteristics of neighboring houses—including set backs, house size, material and architecture.	6	9

Public Safety

Provide continued professional training for police and fire personnel.	17	0
Seek funds to better support local volunteer fire fighting efforts within the county.	14	0

Public Safety *(continued)*

<i>Goal, Objective or Strategy</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
Upgrade community volunteer fire stations located throughout the county.	3	1
Phase in full-time fire personnel throughout the county.	14	1
Increase police patrols in rural Stone County to ensure the safety and well-being of local residents.	13	1
Establish satellite police stations in densely populated areas within the county.	8	4
Offer comparable salaries for all emergency response personnel.	13	1
Ensure first responders can provide medical attention on emergency calls.	11	1
Increase communication between local officials, first responders and the general public before and after emergency situations.	13	0
Build or relocate the emergency operation center/911 call center to a location that can accommodate all facility functions.	11	3
Improve the services provided by the local hospital and medical clinics by attracting specialist doctors to these facilities.	13	2
Establish satellite medical stations or after hour clinics in densely populated areas within the county.	9	6

Economic Development

Promote Stone County through consistent slogans, brands and advertising.	12	2
Create and adopt an economic development plan.	6	6
Promote downtown Wiggins and local businesses.	10	6
Offer financial assistance to prospective employers.	5	6
Seek funding for infrastructure in industrial parks and in retail centers.	9	3
Attract specialized medical care.	11	2
Establish a partnership with MGCCC-Perkinston to promote work-force development.	14	0
Enhance and promote quality of life with housing, retail and schools.	9	2
Promote industrial development in order to create better jobs.	16	0

Infrastructure

<i>Goal, Objective or Strategy</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
Improvements to public water/sewer should be staged to provide new services to those areas on the fringe of existing development first and along Hwy 49.	6	8
Adequate water service supply should be provided to rural areas in order to improve fire protection and to serve rural customers.	17	1
Place utilities underground in villages and densely populated areas of the county	6	0

Additional Comments

Encourage greater coordination of services between the City and the County.	17	0
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