

Lonoke

Planning Data Report

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Introduction

This report contains the initial analysis of the study data compiled for the Lonoke General Plan. The findings of this report will serve as a base around which the recommendations and policies of the general plan will be built. The following text represents observations from technical data and does not constitute any formal policy recommendations.

Context

History

Civil War through Reconstruction

In 1858, the Memphis and Little Rock Railroad was building its tracks through Brownsville, then the county seat of Prairie County, located three miles north of the future town of Lonoke. Five years later, during the Civil War, the tracks were destroyed during a skirmish at Brownsville. After the war, the company decided to take a more direct route and bypass Brownsville, resulting in its eventual demise and the birth of the town of Lonoke.

Lonoke was named by one Major Rombaugh, a civil engineer who surveyed the Memphis and Little Rock Railroad right-of-way, and another man named Robinson. The two men had a contract with the railroad to relocate the depot from Hick's Station, established around 1868, which was approximately two miles east of the town. They suggested naming the town for a massive lone red oak tree that stood isolated on the prairie. Rombaugh spelled the word to give it, as he thought, a Native American sound of "Lo-no-kah," but everyone else pronounced it "Lone-oak."

Isaac C. Hicks and Hamilton Reynolds surveyed the site and completed the town-lot plan in 1869. The first business in Lonoke was the general store W. K. Hocker and Company, which moved from Hick's Station to the new town site in 1868, before it was laid out. In 1869, T. C. Beard and William Goodrum opened a general store.

Lonoke was incorporated as a town on January 22, 1872, and elected its first officials, headed by Mayor Isaac C. Hicks. On April 16, 1873, Lonoke County was created from portions of Prairie and Pulaski counties, with Lonoke the county seat. Within three years, the population had grown to almost 500 people, as most of the citizens of Brownsville moved south with the railroad.

The first courthouse was the building formerly used as the Prairie County Courthouse in Brownsville that was dismantled, moved to Lonoke, and reassembled. In 1928, the town built a new three-story brick courthouse, with the county jail located on the top floor. This building still serves as the current courthouse, though the jail has moved to another site.

Post-Reconstruction through the Gilded Age

In April 1875, the first fire department, known as the Fire Hook and Ladder Company, was organized with J. F. Clement as foreman. In 1927, a water and sewer system was installed through passage of a bond issue.

By 1879, the need for free public education became apparent. To supplement meager state funds set aside for this purpose, the citizens of Lonoke privately subscribed a total of \$10,000 which, added to the state funds, enabled them to inaugurate a free ten-month public school. In 1900, a colossal school building (reputed to be the largest wooden-frame structure in Arkansas, with its two stories and three wings) was built. It burned in 1931, and a brick school was built that continues today as the high school. The Lonoke Colored School began around 1878 with classes through the eighth grade. In 1945, the name changed to George Washington Carver School when it expanded its curriculum through high school. The schools integrated in 1970, with Carver school continuing as the middle school. In 2004, a bond issue was passed to build a new middle school and gymnasium.

Originally, Lonoke was cattle and lumber country, but later, the prairie lands were converted to farmlands. Cotton, corn, and hay were grown and shipped out on its railways. In the spring of 1897, W. H. Fuller planted the first rice crop in Lonoke County. The flat land, with its abundance of water, was ideal for this new crop, and soon, rice rivaled cotton as the area's most profitable harvest. Around 1940, soybeans joined the agricultural mix, and today it is also a crop of economic importance to the area.

Early Twentieth Century

In 1928, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission built what was then the world's largest fish hatchery on the south edge of town. Today named the Joe Hogan Fish Hatchery, its fifty-seven ponds cover 267 acres and comprise the largest state-owned fish hatchery. Farmers developed much of the flat land around Lonoke into their own fish and minnow farms, creating another large part of the local economy.

During World War I, Lonoke was adjacent to Ebert's Field, the second largest training center for Army aviators (maintained by the government in the United States and France). At its peak, the 960-acre base, just west of town, housed approximately 1,500 enlisted men and officers and thousands of planes. The armistice ending the war was signed on November 11, 1918, a short time before the first class could be graduated. In 1986, as part of the Arkansas Sesquicentennial Celebration, a historical marker was installed to commemorate the location of the field, which closed in 1919.

Modern Era

Despite its reputation for agriculture and aquaculture, Lonoke has attracted industries such as MKT Fastening, Remington Arms, Ammonia Hold, Inc., and LLC Industries. The population of Lonoke has grown steadily, in part due to an abundance of industrial, agricultural, retail, healthcare, and educational employment opportunities. Lonoke continues to attract new citizens, businesses, and industries to this centrally located town on the Grand Prairie of Arkansas.

Adapted from the "Encyclopedia of Arkansas"

Regional Setting

Lonoke is located in the central portion of Arkansas in the Grand Prairie. It is the county seat of its namesake county. The city is about 25 miles east of Little Rock, 110 miles west of Memphis, 40 miles northwest of Stuttgart, and 20 miles south of Cabot. Other nearby communities include: Carlisle, Furlow, Kerr, South Bend, and Woodlawn.

Lonoke is connected to the rest of the state via U.S. and State Highways such as Arkansas Highways 31 and 89. These connections include Interstate 40 that runs through the northern portion of the city. Interstate 40 serves as a vitally important Trans-American corridor connecting the East coast to the West coast. Access to this major thoroughfare has helped the city enjoy continued and steady growth, and should continue to serve as an economic boon to Lonoke.

Downtown rests along U.S. Highway 70 and a vacated line of the Rock Island railroad. Although the city is not located along a navigable waterway, and not served by rail; it is located only 16 miles from the Little Rock port, a major multi-modal port facility.

Trends

Population

TABLE 1
POPULATION HISTORY
LONOKE, ARKANSAS

Year	Population
1940	1,715
1950	1,556
1960	2,359
1970	3,140
1980	4,128
1990	4,022
2000	4,287
2010*	4,720

*: Estimated population, U.S. Census

TABLE 2
 RACIAL CHARACTERISTICS, 2000
 LONOKE AND SELECTED ENTITIES

	Lonoke	Lonoke County	Arkansas
White	73.3 %	91.0 %	80.0%
African American or Black	23.4 %	6.4 %	15.7%
American Indian	0.8 %	0.5 %	0.7%
Asian	0.3 %	0.4 %	0.8%
Hispanic (of any race)	1.8 %	1.7 %	3.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

TABLE 3
 AGE CHARACTERISTICS, 2000
 LONOKE AND SELECTED ENTITIES

	Lonoke	Lonoke County	Arkansas
Under 5 years	7.6 %	7.1 %	6.8%
5 to 9 years	7.2 %	7.9 %	7.0%
10 to 14 years	7.4 %	8.6 %	7.2%
15 to 19 years	6.7 %	7.7 %	7.4%
18 years and over	73.7 %	71.3 %	74.6%
20 to 24 years	6.1 %	5.4 %	6.8%
25 to 34 years	12.0 %	13.7 %	13.2%
35 to 44 years	13.8 %	17.2 %	14.9%
45 to 54 years	11.9 %	12.9 %	13.1%
55 to 59 years	5.3 %	5.0 %	5.2%
60 to 64 years	4.3 %	4.1 %	4.4%
65 years and over	17.7 %	10.4 %	14.0%
65 to 74 years	7.3 %	5.6 %	7.4%
75 to 84 years	6.5 %	3.4 %	4.8%
85 years and over	3.9 %	1.4 %	1.7%
Median Age	37.2	34.7	36.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Education

TABLE 4
EDUCATION ATTAINMENT, 2000
LONOKE AND SELECTED ENTITIES

	Lonoke	Lonoke County	Arkansas
High School Grad or higher 1990	60.2 %	67.1 %	66.3%
High School Grad or higher 2000	68.9 %	77.6 %	75.3%
Bachelor's or higher 1990	11.4 %	10.0 %	13.3%
Bachelor's or higher 2000	16.1 %	14.6 %	16.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Income

TABLE 5
PER CAPITA INCOME (1999 DOLLARS)
LONOKE AND SELECTED ENTITIES

	1989	1999	% change
Lonoke	\$13,907	\$15,598	12.2 %
Lonoke County	\$13,759	\$17,397	26.4 %
Arkansas	\$14,134	\$16,904	19.6 %

TABLE 6
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (REAL DOLLARS)
LONOKE AND SELECTED ENTITIES

	2000	2008	% change
Lonoke	\$31,558	\$38,094	20.7 %
Lonoke County	\$40,314	\$48,664	20.7 %
Arkansas	\$32,182	\$38,815	20.6 %

TABLE 7
POPULATION BELOW POVERTY LEVEL, 2000
LONOKE AND SELECTED ENTITIES

	Lonoke	Lonoke County	Arkansas
Individuals Below Poverty Level	15.0 %	10.5 %	15.8%
Families Below Poverty Level	11.9 %	8.1 %	12.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Housing

TABLE 8
HOUSING INVENTORY, YEAR BUILT, 2000
LONOKE AND SELECTED ENTITIES

	Lonoke	Lonoke County	Arkansas
1990 – Mar. 2000	13.3 %	34.9 %	22.1%
1980 – 1989	15.9 %	18.9 %	18.0%
1970 – 1979	27.9 %	20.4 %	22.6%
1960 – 1969	19.7 %	11.1 %	14.4%
1940 – 1959	13.9 %	9.6 %	15.8%
Pre-1940	9.3 %	5.1 %	7.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

TABLE 9
MONTHLY HOMEOWNER COSTS AS A
PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 1999
LONOKE AND SELECTED ENTITIES

	Lonoke	Lonoke County	Arkansas
Less than 15 %	48.8 %	42.6 %	45.3%
15 % - 19 %	22.3 %	21.3 %	17.3%
20 % - 24 %	6.5 %	13.3 %	11.7%
25 % - 29 %	4.0 %	7.1 %	7.3%
30 % - 34 %	5.8 %	4.7 %	4.5%
35 % or more	12.6 %	10.5 %	12.7%
Not Computed	0.0 %	0.5 %	1.2%
PERCENTAGE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING	81.6 %	84.3 %	81.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

TABLE 10
HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS, 1990-2000
LONOKE, ARKANSAS

	1990	2000
Total Housing Units	1,616	1,703
Single Family	77.8 %	81.4 %
Multi-Family	13.8 %	12.3 %
Mobile Home, trailer, or other	8.35 %	6.3 %
Occupied Units	92.3 %	93.7 %
Owner Occupied	68.5 %	65.4 %
Renter Occupied	32.5 %	34.6 %
Vacant Units	7.7 %	6.3 %
Homeowner Vacancy Rate	2.8 %	2.0 %
Renter Vacancy Rate	6.9 %	5.3 %
Median Value and Contract Rent		
Median Value of Owner-occupied Units	\$43,100	\$63,000
Median Contract Rent	\$219	\$475

Employment

TABLE 11
EMPLOYMENT STATUS, 2000
LONOKE AND SELECTED ENTITIES

	Lonoke	Lonoke County	Arkansas
Percent of population in civilian labor force	58.2 %	65.2 %	60.3%
Employed	55.3 %	62.6 %	56.6%
Unemployed	2.9 %	2.5 %	3.7%
Unemployment Rate*		6.4 %	7.5 %

* May 2010 figures
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

TABLE 12
 EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY, 2000
 LONOKE AND SELECTED ENTITIES

	Lonoke	Arkansas	Location Quotient
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	8.4 %	3.7 %	2.3
Construction	5.4 %	7.0 %	0.8
Manufacturing	16.1 %	19.4 %	0.8
Wholesale trade	3.1 %	3.3 %	0.9
Retail trade	12.1 %	13.0 %	0.9
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	6.0 %	5.9 %	1.0
Information	3.8 %	2.2 %	1.7
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	5.7 %	4.8 %	1.2
Professional, scientific, management, and administrative	3.7 %	5.4 %	0.7
Educational, health and social services	18.8 %	19.6 %	1.0
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	5.9 %	6.3 %	0.9
Other services (except public administration)	4.3 %	5.0 %	0.9
Public administration	6.6 %	4.3 %	1.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
 Location Quotient is a measure

TABLE 13
 COMMUTING TO WORK, 2000
 LONOKE AND SELECTED ENTITIES

	Lonoke	Lonoke County	Arkansas
Car, truck, or van -- drove alone	82.3 %	82.0 %	79.9%
Car, truck, or van -- carpooled	15.3 %	13.7 %	14.1%
Public transportation (including taxicab)	0.0 %	0.2 %	0.4%
Walked	0.7 %	1.1 %	1.9%
Other means	0.9 %	1.0 %	1.0%
Worked at home	0.8 %	2.0 %	2.6%
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	19.8	27.5	21.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Conclusions

While much of the provided data is a decade old, it can provide some valuable insight into long-term trends occurring within the community. Lonoke is a stable, diverse, and growing city which has seen its population growth rate increase within the last 10 years. Between 1980 and 2000 the community saw very little growth, as the population only increased by about 150 people over the 20 year span. As the city has grown in population, it has also grown in other ways.

Since 1990, the community has seen personal income growth and increases in educational attainment. The city’s proportion of college graduates exceeded that of the county in 2000, but Lonoke lagged behind the county in its proportion of high school graduates. The city also saw growth in per capita income between 1989 and 1999, but this growth was slower than that seen in Lonoke County and the state. This disparity can at least partially be attributed to the prominence of Lonoke’s larger than normal aged population, which is more likely to be on fixed incomes. The city has a much higher proportion of its population that is retirement age compared to the county.

Lonoke appears to have a shortage of available non-rental homes. This is evidenced by a low homeowner vacancy rate and a lower than normal percentage of homes constructed within the last 20 years, compared to both the county and state. While it is difficult to estimate the exact size and nature of the shortage, the convergence of the above indicators provide evidence of a shortage. As such, the city should seek to interest developers into providing new housing within the community as older portions of the housing stock become dilapidated.

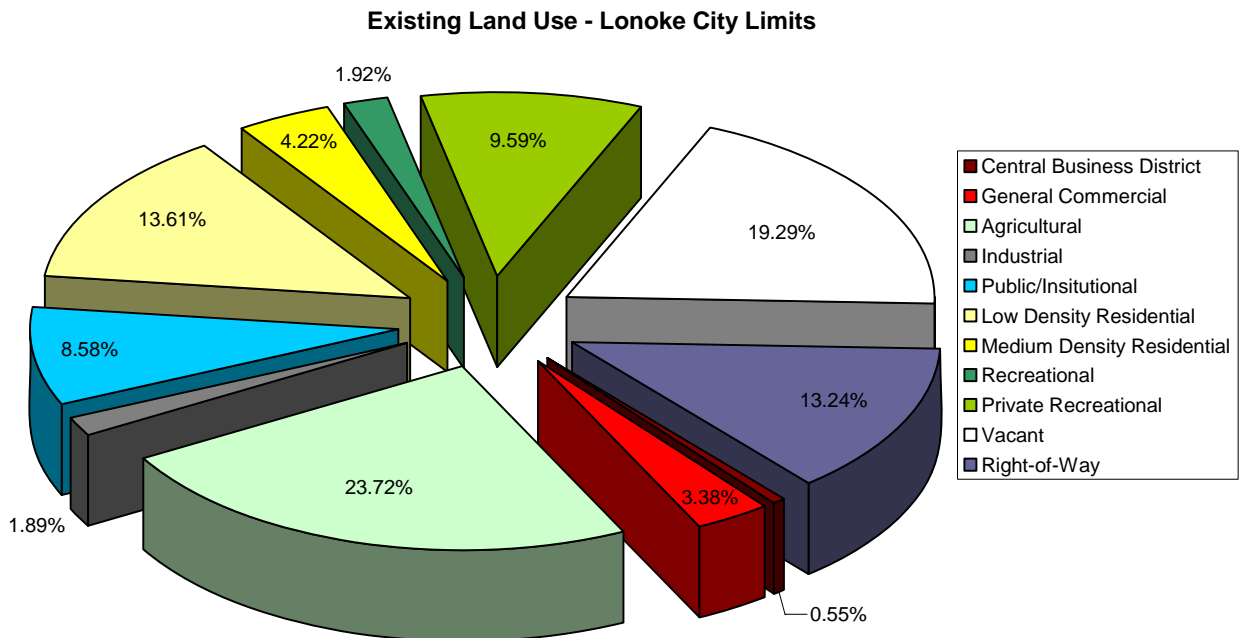
Lonoke is a growing community with many great opportunities and resources. Despite challenges in the areas of income growth, Lonoke has a strong local agriculture industry and a low unemployment rate. The city also enjoys very affordable housing with easy access to a major job market. These factors and the community’s small town atmosphere provide its residents a high quality of life. New housing is needed in the city, and the city should seek to diversify its population by retaining youth in the community.

Land Use Analysis

Existing Land Use Study Summary

Basic Facts	Area	Population	Floodplain
City Limits	3,188 ac. – 4.98 sq. mi.	4,720 est. 2010	275.30 acres
Planning Area	12,428 ac. – 19.42 sq. mi.		

Existing Land Use Type	Area (City)	Percent	Area (PA)	Percent
Central Business District	17.5 acres	0.55 %	17.5 acres	0.14 %
General Commercial	107.9 acres	3.38 %	109.9 acres	0.88 %
Agricultural	756.1 acres	23.72 %	8,237.7 acres	66.28 %
Industrial	60.3 acres	1.89 %	96.7 acres	0.78 %
Public/Institutional	273.6 acres	8.58 %	343.5 acres	2.76 %
Low Density Residential	433.9 acres	13.61 %	886.5 acres	7.13 %
Medium Density Residential	134.6 acres	4.22 %	134.6 acres	1.08 %
Recreational – Public	61.2 acres	1.92 %	61.2 acres	0.49 %
Recreational – Private	305.7 acres	9.59 %	305.7 acres	2.46 %
Vacant	615.1 acres	19.29 %	1,529.7 acres	12.31 %
Right-of-Way	421.9 acres	13.24 %	705.4 acres	5.68 %

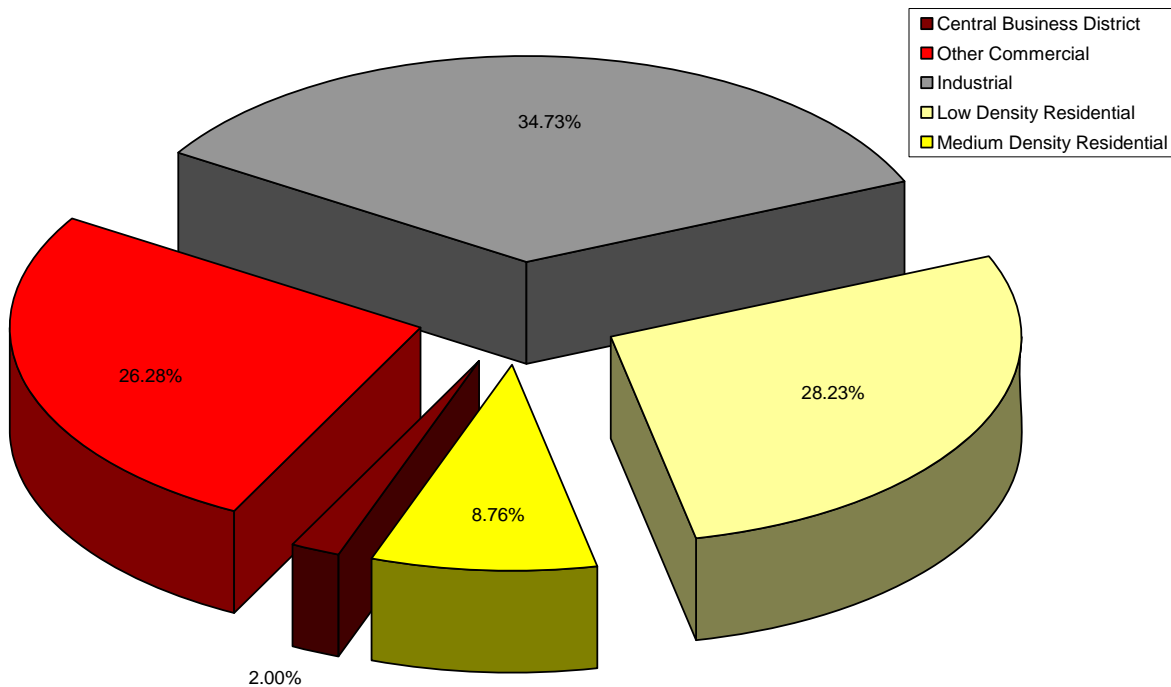


City of Lonoke, Arkansas
Zoning Study Summary

Basic Facts	Area	Population
City Limits	3,188 acres – 4.98 sq. mi.	4,720 est. 2010

Zoning District	Area	Percent
CBD - Central Business District	56.01 acres	2.00 %
GC, QB - Other Commercial	735.23 acres	26.28 %
M - Industrial	971.84 acres	34.73 %
R-1 - Low Density Residential	798.91 acres	28.23 %
R-2 - Medium Density Residential	245.17 acres	8.76 %

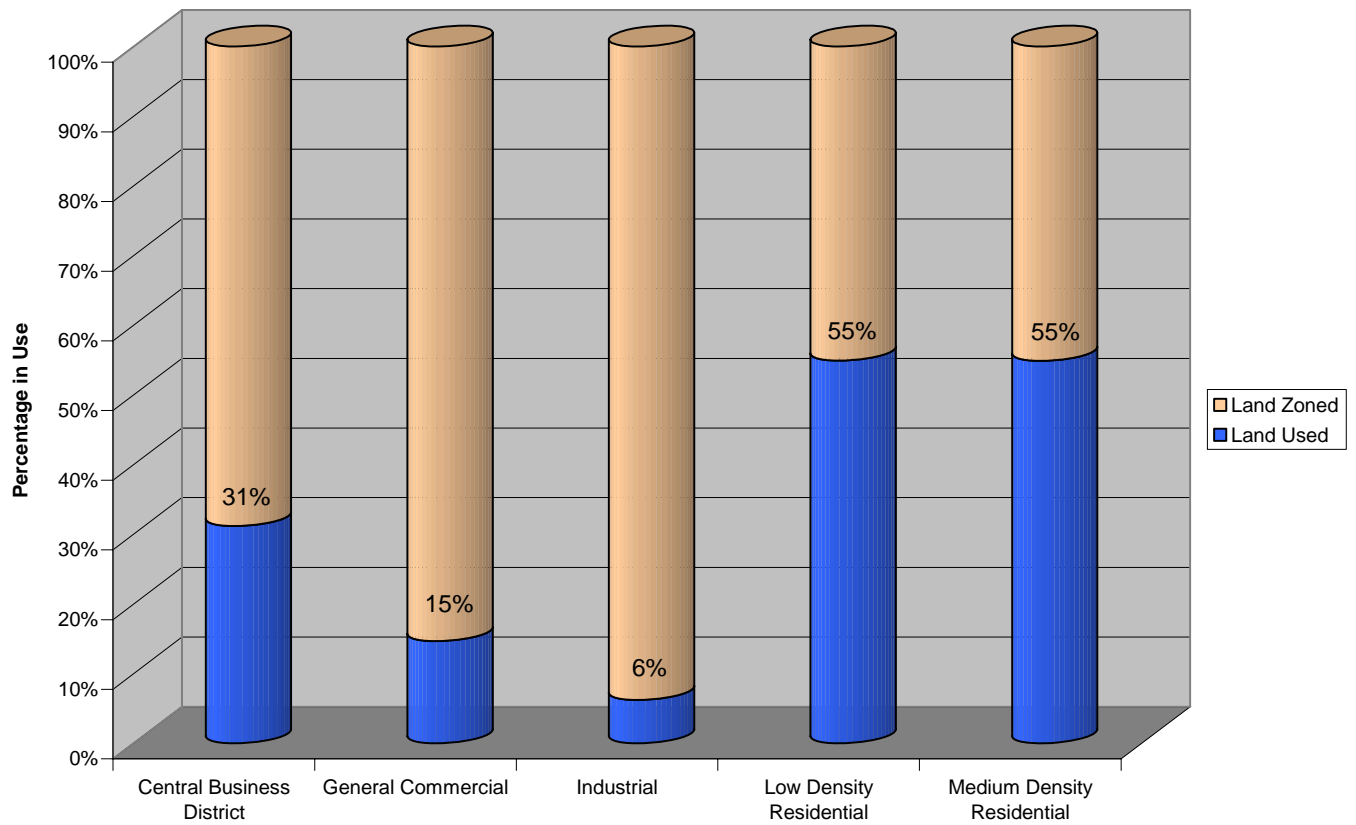
Zoning Districts as Percentage of Area



Aggregate Land Use Analysis Summary

Use Classification	Area Zoned	Area in Use	Percent in Use
Central Business District	56.01 acres	17.46 acres	31 %
Other Commercial	735.23 acres	107.89 acres	15 %
Industrial	971.84 acres	60.28 acres	6 %
Low Density Residential	789.91 acres	433.92 acres	55 %
Medium Density Residential	245.17 acres	134.58 acres	55 %

Percentage of Zoned Land in Use



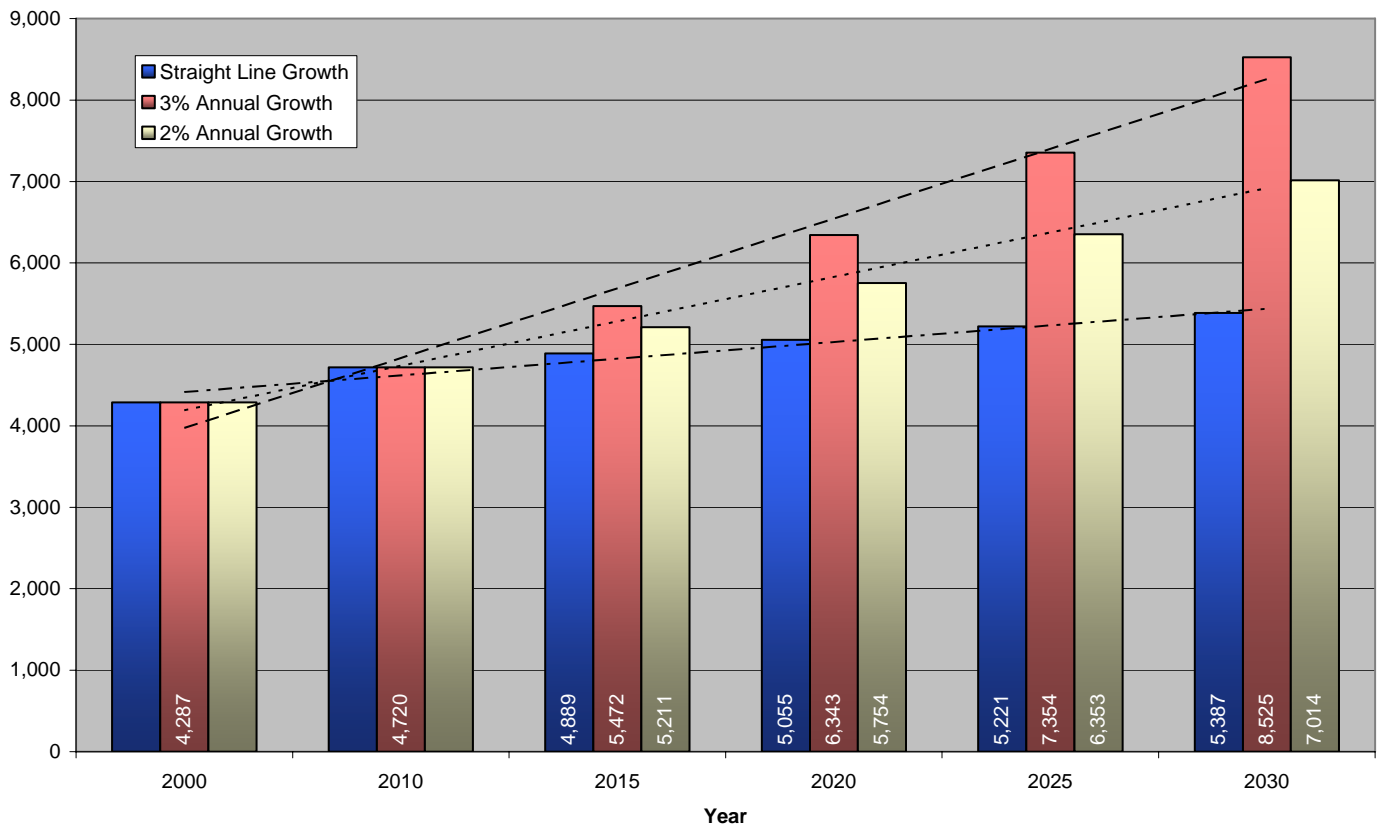
Population/Land Use Projections

Projected Population

In 2000, the population of the City of Lonoke was 4,287, a net gain of 265 persons from 1990. Since 2000, growth has continued yielding an estimated population of 4,720 in 2010. By the year 2030, the City of Lonoke could approach 5,387 persons using straight line projections. However, such projections can be unreliable as the factors affecting local population can be very volatile and difficult to predict. For example, the addition of as little as 100-200 jobs, or diversion of suburban growth from other communities to Lonoke could provide a substantial population increase within a very short period of time. Therefore, to understand the effects of future population growth this study will utilize alternate scenarios.

The first scenario, already provided, would provide very low population growth as stated above. A second medium growth scenario would assume two percent annual growth over the next 20 years. This scenario would yield 7,014 persons by 2030. A final higher growth scenario would assume three percent annual growth and yield 8,525. These three scenarios present a range of growth possibilities for the city. The likelihood of any of these scenarios occurring rests both within and outside the control of the city and its residents. It is likely over the course of the next 20 years that Lonoke may experience growth period resembling each of the scenarios.

City of Lonoke
Population Growth Scenarios



Housing and Land Use

Over the next 20 years, a net increase in population for the City of Lonoke is expected to be approximately between 667 to 3,825 persons. This population increase will generate a demand for new housing given the city's historical low housing vacancy trends. Assuming a density pattern of three units per acre, it is estimated that between 90 to 500 acres of new development will be required to meet residential housing demand for the City. That figure equates to roughly between 265 and 1,500 new homes over the next 20 years. Taking into account residential land use absorption represents approximately 75% of all areas converted (25% for other supporting services: commercial expansion, industrial developments, schools, churches, parks, open space, streets, and other land use activities) it can be determined roughly between 120 and 675 gross acres will be demanded and likely converted from rural or vacant use to urban purposes within the next 20 years.

With regard to future land use needs, Lonoke's future growth cannot be accommodated within the current city limits for the studied planning period by use of vacant land alone. Conversion of current agricultural land within the city to urban uses will be required to provide for the city's future residential growth. This will likely occur toward the city's western edge. However, commercial growth will continue to be accommodated in the form of new development near the Arkansas Highway 31 Interchange and with redevelopment along the Center Street corridor leading to downtown. Unless an interstate highway interchange is placed on the Arkansas Highway 89 corridor it is unlikely the corridor will possess enough vehicle traffic to support increased commercial uses.

Considering land uses further, Lonoke currently has a distribution of land uses typical to many small, older Grand Prairie/Delta cities. The city is very compact and the city limit boundary serves as a stark divider between urban and agricultural uses, meaning residential and commercial uses congregate almost exclusively within the city. This is due in large part to the high suitability and value of the lands surrounding the city for agricultural uses. The city has a healthy amount of commercial uses for its population size, though continued commercial growth in the city during the Great Recession indicates the city has been commercially underserved. Of the city's residential uses, single-family homes predominate and constitute the largest form of improved land use across the city. It is likely most future residential development in the city will come in form of single-family homes.

The city's land use patterns do have one concerning trend, however. The city appears to be currently zoned in an inefficient manner. Only 15% of the areas zoned for highway and neighborhood commercial uses are occupied. This likely indicates that areas not suitable for commercial uses have been zoned commercial. While this may not seem like a negative issue, commercial zoning can often serve to increase the value of property. Therefore, if areas that are not suitable for commercial development are zoned commercially, this can serve as a barrier for transfer and development of those properties to appropriate uses.

For Lonoke to continue to grow, annexation will need to take place. However, annexations can often come with up-front costs that can take decades to recoup. As such, the city should carefully consider any future annexations, accepting only those annexation proposals that would present a financial benefit to the community as justified through use cost-benefit analysis.

Implications

The data provided in this report paint a portrait of Lonoke as a growing community of a unique character and charm, with its best days lying ahead of it. The city is anchored by a strong downtown that is a hub for many of the city's cultural, political, and institutional entities. The plan should develop strategies that will work to retain downtown's strength despite continued residential and commercial growth at the city's edges. Therefore, a strong emphasis will need to be placed on maintaining and improving the fabric and economic vitality of downtown, the heart of the city.

The Center Street corridor is now and will likely continue to be the city's primary commercial corridor for the foreseeable future. As the Lonoke grows, this corridor will slowly be redeveloped. This has already been seen with developments such as the Dollar General Store at the corridor's intersection with 9th Street. The plan should create policies to guide redevelopment along this corridor such that it occurs in a way that benefits both the community and the long-term viability of Center Street.

Given the city's previously identified compact form, noted housing shortage, and potential for future suburban growth; accommodating new development will need to be a key focus of the general plan. This should be addressed in a number of ways. For example, planning for the convenient movement of future residents will be a priority and ensuring the city has a sound master street plan will be vital. Also, working to ensure that future growth follows access to utilities will be key in easing burdens on city infrastructure.