

INTRODUCTION

Traditional zoning is based on the concept of separation of uses, where residential uses are in one place, businesses somewhere else, schools and other facilities in a third place. This focus on separation of uses made sense when the goal was to protect human health and well-being from the negative impacts such as pollution, noise, and odors. Today's typical development pattern of individual subdivisions with internal collector roads that lead to an arterial lined with strip malls is the result of conventional zoning.

Today, there is an effort underway to return to more traditional community patterns, like what is found on Main Street, Smithville. Economic changes have allowed for this because few businesses today have the negative external impacts of businesses in the past. There are few 'smokestacks' to be found in cities, instead business has become technology and service oriented. This allows for a new type of development where businesses and residences are found in proximity and people can live and work in the same neighborhood. The SmartCode is a tool that is being implemented to create a better development pattern that provides a mix of uses, more density, and better design.

What is SmartCode¹?

Unlike conventional zoning, which focuses on the specific use of a property, SmartCode focuses on the form of a building and how it relates to its location. It is intended to create compact, walkable, mixed use communities with a mix of uses. It is not intended as a 'one size fits all' solution, rather it provides for a transect approach that leads from rural to urban development with appropriate standards for each transect. In the transect model, certain forms of development are appropriate depending on which transect it is in. For example, a large lot, single family home is appropriate in a more rural setting, while a 3 story building with retail on the ground floor and apartments above would not be.

SmartCode offers flexibility and options to the community and developers because it provides for a broad range of design and uses. Rather than requiring all of a property to be developed as a 'monoculture' of single family homes on ¼ acre lots, SmartCode would allow that same property to be developed into some single family homes, some businesses, and some multi-family homes. Because the SmartCode is design focused, this mix of uses would be designed in a fashion that allows them to be compatible and functional.

The basis of SmartCode is the transect, which is sequence of different development intensities ranging from undeveloped rural to very intense urban uses. SmartCode defines 6 transect zones:

- T-1 Natural Zone – undeveloped lands not suitable for development
- T-2 Rural Zone – sparsely settled, primarily agricultural
- T-3 Sub-Urban Zone – low density, suburban residential
- T-4 General Urban Zone – Mixed use, but primarily residential
- T-5 Urban Center Zone – Higher density mixed use
- T-6 Urban Core – highest density

¹ SmartCode Version 8.0

Within each of these transects, different building types and design standards would be utilized to ensure development was appropriate to the area. For example, in the Urban Core, large lot single family homes would not be allowed. Instead, 4 or 5 story buildings with no setbacks would be required. The transect concept also allows for variety depending on the larger context of the project as well. What would be considered a T-5 Urban Center development in Smithville (similar to what is already existing along Main Street) would be found in the T-4 General Urban zone of a larger city, such as Austin. This allows the individual community to develop standards and design guidelines that reflect their priorities and concerns rather than being a one size fits all code.

Rather than replacing a city's conventional zoning, SmartCode would be an additional tool that could be utilized for specific properties or projects. In some communities, it is used almost like a Planned Unit Development zoning, where specific projects fall under the jurisdiction of the SmartCode. Some communities that have implemented SmartCode are Leander, as part of its Transit-oriented Development around the commuter rail station, and Sarasota, FL. The full SmartCode handbook can be found on the following website <http://www.smartcodecomplete.com/learn/downloads.html>

SMARTCODE EXAMPLE

The approximately 377 acre triangular property bounded on the west by Loop 230, the north and east by Hwy 71, and the south by the Colorado River (Illustration A-1) is a property that is ideally suited for redevelopment using SmartCode principles. It is located between two major roads, including the primary entrance to Smithville. This provides excellent access to the site and would support fairly intense development with minimal traffic impacts on the rest of the community. The site has a mix of topography from bluffs along the river to extremely flat at the northern tip. It is within the desired growth area of Smithville and is served by infrastructure. While there are a few buildings, and a substation, on the property, most of it remains undeveloped. In addition, this appendix is only intended as an example of SmartCode development and is not in any way an attempt to regulate development of this property. The idea is to show what the SmartCode is and how it can be implemented using this property only as an example.

Transects

SmartCode is intended to be applied to properties large enough to support a range of transects. The idea is to include at three different transects in each project to assure a mix of uses and development styles. The example property offers an opportunity to incorporate four of the different transects, ranging from T-1 Natural Zone to T-5 Urban Center. These transects generally flow from T-1 Natural along the Colorado River to T-5 Urban Center at the intersection of Loop 230 and Hwy 71 (Illustration A-2). The transects reflect the physical characteristics of the site as well as transportation access, visibility, and other factors.



T-1 NATURAL ZONE

The natural zone (approximately 40 acres) logically falls along the Colorado River where the topography and flood potential make it unsuitable for development. This area is also very scenic and provides a viewshed for properties across the river in the main part of town. It will also provide for trail development along the river that is identified in the future land use plan. This trail would connect

Riverside Park to the rest of the city. Studies have shown that properties in proximity to open space have much higher values than similar properties. This will benefit the homes developed in the T-3 zone adjacent to this area.

T-3 SUB-URBAN ZONE



The Sub-Urban zone (approximately 133 acres) should not be confused with conventional suburban development which is typically rows of cookie cutter houses (see adjacent picture). Rather it is an area of pre-dominantly single family homes that are built to complement their surroundings and the property characteristics. They may be homes on varying sized lots, with different setbacks and relationship to the

street. The idea is to maintain a feeling of the natural environment in which the homes are located. Rather than leveling the property and removing all vegetation, as much of the native plants are kept and replanted rather than replaced with non-native species. This kind of development will result in a stronger sense of place and connection to the community because it will reflect what is unique about it rather than looking like any other suburb in the country.



T-4 GENERAL URBAN ZONE

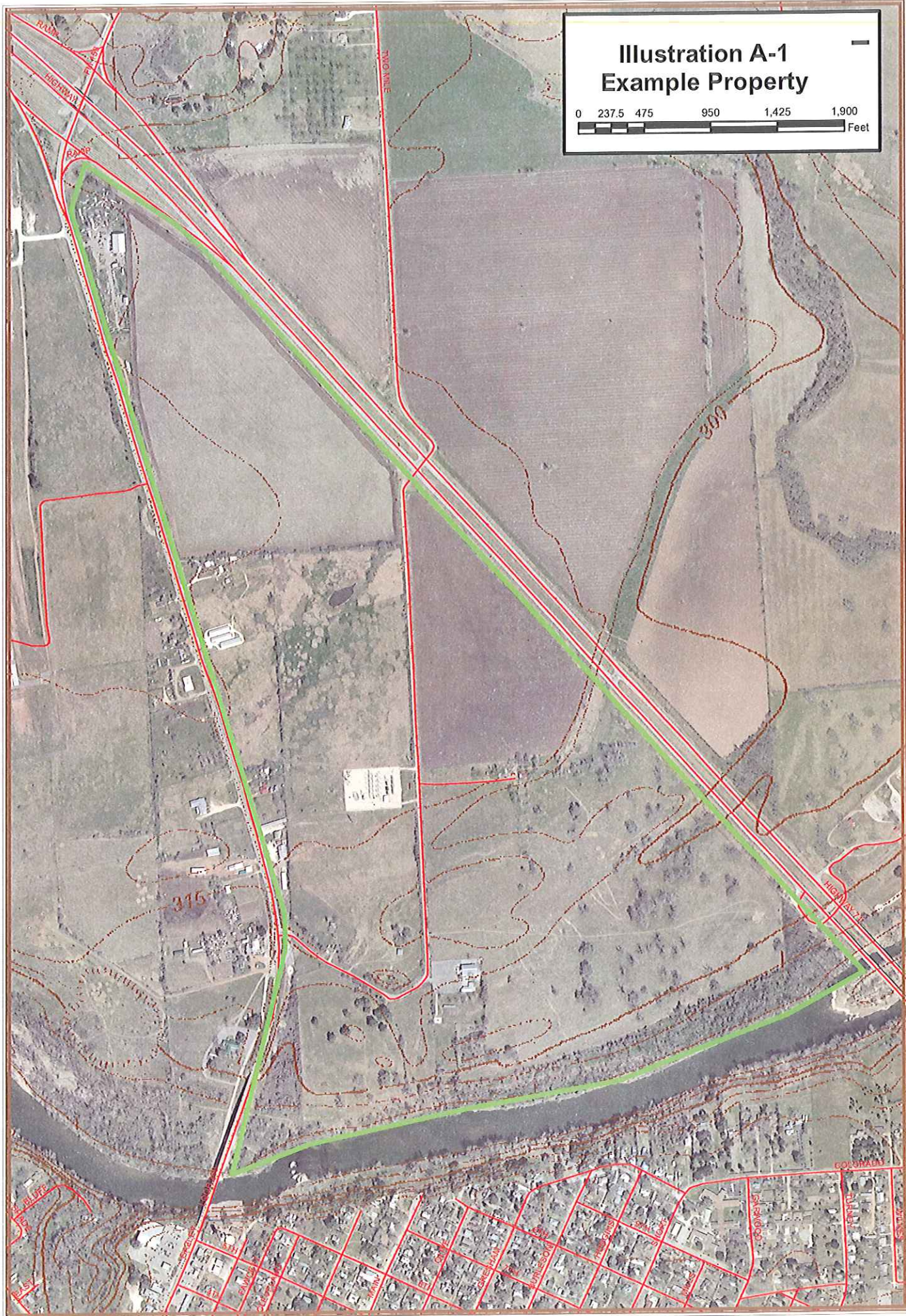
The General Urban zone is intended as a mixed use zone that is primarily residential in nature. This is the largest zone defined in this example at approximately 144 acres and



reflects the nature of Smithville as a whole. This zone would allow for the development of higher density residences, such as townhomes, and business development along the highway frontages (areas that are not suitable for single family homes) while having smaller lot single family homes in the interior of the property. This type of development is more urban in character than the T-3 and typically has wider sidewalks, narrower streets and is geared more towards pedestrians. The T-4 zone is adjacent to the

most intensely developed area and provides a buffer from this area and the more rural T-3 zone to the south. The higher density in this area, within walking distance of the T-4 zone will provide a larger market for businesses locating in the area.






0 237.5 475 950 1,425 1,900 Feet



100



Transect

- 
-  T-1 Natural Zone
 -  T-3 Sub-Urban Zone
 -  T-4 General Urban Zone
 -  T-5 Urban Center Zone



T-5 URBAN CENTER ZONE

This is the most intensely developed area, which makes sense given its location at the intersection of two major roads. This area will have the highest density and most mix of uses, with a focus on businesses rather than residences. In this zone it is appropriate to have three to five story buildings that front directly onto wide sidewalks, rather than buildings set back behind parking lots. This area is also the most pedestrian oriented. The goal is to have residents from the entire property able to access this area without driving, and those who drive to

it can park and walk to their destination. The entire 56 acres is within a ¼ mile radius, which is the distance most people are willing to walk.

Development in this area would be similar to what is already found on Main Street, Smithville; however, it could be somewhat more intense with buildings that are one or two stories taller than those found in the historic area of town. This intensity would be appropriate for this area because it is adjacent to existing historic areas and is located at a major intersection. A vibrant, urban center would create a strong entrance to Smithville and be a unique asset that would complement the historic character of the community.



CONCLUSION

The idea of transect planning is to create a seamless transition from one zone to the next. It is not intended for there to be a sudden break from single family homes to three story apartments. Rather, what might be appropriate is for large lot single family to transition into smaller lot single family then into two story buildings, etc. Also, transitions that happen at the rear property line, so that properties are back to back rather than facing, are also more appropriate when possible.

The final image is a very general development plan that reflects SmartCode principles for the example property. Obviously, this is only intended as an example and should not be used as more than an illustration of what development could look like. It is very unlikely for a single project to encompass all 377 acres of this property; however, this plan represents a vision of what the property could look like if the city were to pursue SmartCode development as the community grows.

Illustration A-3 Development Plan

0 230 460 920 1,380 1,840 Feet

