



# 2013 Comprehensive Plan



Prepared by the East Central Iowa Council of Governments

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East Central Iowa Council of Governments

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The City of Robins

The East Central Iowa Council of Governments is an intergovernmental council governed by a board of directors comprised of elected officials and private citizens. ECICOG was created to promote regional cooperation and to provide professional planning services to local governments in Benton, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn and Washington Counties.

# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>6</b>
The Robins Plan.....	7
The Planning Process.....	8
How to Use This Document.....	9
<b>Overview.....</b>	<b>10</b>
A Brief History of Robins.....	11
<b>Profile and Analysis.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Population Trends and Projections.....	13
Demographics.....	20
Population Findings.....	22
Housing Analysis.....	23
Housing Findings.....	27
<b>Economic Development.....</b>	<b>28</b>
Introduction.....	29
Strengths and Weaknesses.....	30
Economic Development Strategies.....	31
Economic Development Goals and Policies	32

# Table of Contents

<b>Infrastructure.....</b>	<b>34</b>
Introduction.....	35
Infrastructure Systems.....	36
Infrastructure Goals and Policies.....	41
<b>Parks and Recreation.....</b>	<b>43</b>
Green Space and Park System Plan.....	44
Park System Vision.....	45
Park System Summary.....	46
<b>Land Use.....</b>	<b>47</b>
Introduction.....	48
Land Use Tools.....	48
Future Direction In Land Use.....	52
Land Use Plan Summary.....	59
<b>Implementation and Administration..</b>	<b>61</b>
Administrative Background.....	62
Development Review.....	63
Goals, Objectives, and Strategies .....	64
Implementation.....	66
<b>Plan Appendix.....</b>	<b>75</b>
Glossary of Terms.....	76
Community Survey Results.....	81
Notes.....	82

## Executive Summary

ECICOG, in partnership with the City of Robins, provided coordination, planning and facilitation support and identified city-wide recommendations and strategies for the long-term growth and development of the city. Efforts focused on important opportunities to advance growth through the year 2030. These efforts included a community visioning process; the development of strategies addressing business development and infrastructure; and a discussion of future housing issues and needs.

This document also contains information essential for future planning efforts in the city, including land use policies and objectives. It will serve as a coordinated guide for continued planning and development in order to manage growth and make the most efficient possible use of the city's resources. It can also serve as a reference and guide to other research or grantsmanship carried out by city leaders for the general betterment of the community.

In addition, this Comprehensive Plan utilizes the State of Iowa Smart Planning legislation. The legislation, adopted by the State in 2010, established 10 Smart Planning principles and 13 smart planning elements which helped guide the planning process. A listing of where each smart planning principle and element are located in the plan can be found in the plan's appendix.

ECICOG appreciates the efforts of the Robins Planning Committee members who have contributed their time and ideas to the formulation of this plan. Also, special thanks should go to many citizens of the community. Their input has made this document a pertinent and meaningful plan which represents the needs and desires of the people in and around Robins.

# Introduction

The Robins Plan - 7

The Planning Process - 8

How to Use This Document - 9

# Introduction

# Introduction

## The Robins Plan

This plan is intended to be a guide for the City of Robins to coordinate growth and development over the course of the next twenty years. The plan is focused on the area within the current city limits and in the surrounding future growth boundary outside the city.

The plan, utilizing Iowa's new Smart Growth principles and elements, includes an in-depth look at the City's population, housing, economic base, transportation, public and recreational facilities, physical infrastructure and current and future land uses. In addition, broad citywide goals are outlined and policy guidelines are recommended to achieve those goals. The plan, however, is not meant to be a strict blueprint, but rather a guide for officials in their decision-making.

This document looks twenty years into the future, and offers a framework for growth and development during that period. This plan is not a regulatory document, but a policy document. By considering the impact of future development well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a community direction can be established to guide the development of regulatory tools such as zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, housing and building codes and annexation procedures.

The plan has two fundamental purposes. First, it presents a unified vision for Robins articulated from the hard work and participation of the citizens who devoted their time and effort toward creating this plan. Secondly, it provides the legal basis for land use regulation such as zoning and subdivision ordinances.



Robins City Hall

# Introduction

## The Planning Process

Provisions should be made for amending this document as policies and data become outdated. This authority should be used with discretion, however, since much of its value can easily be lost through frequent or arbitrary changes. Amendments may be proposed by the Planning and Zoning Commission, the City Council, or by concerned citizens. Any proposal must always be referred to the zoning commission for consideration and recommendation to the Council.

The planning process should be an ongoing endeavor. The success of this plan will require the support of citizens as well as the City Council. Cooperation from the public and private sectors will provide long-term benefits to the entire planning area and ultimately the City of Robins.

Since the planning process is ongoing, it is important to identify a preferred vision for the future of Robins. Based on the input from the planning committee and results of the community-wide survey, it was felt the overriding policy statement from the city's 2000 Comprehensive Plan was still applicable today:

**Growth and development should continue but neither at the detriment of the existing community nor at the loss of the small town character**

How can this seemingly contradictory statement be realized? Continued growth and development implies Robins should become physically larger. "Small town character" implies Robins should remain small. This incongruous theme can only be accomplished through the clear identification of community values. That is the goal of the Robins 2013 Comprehensive Plan.



# Introduction

## How to Use This Document

It is recommended that the city identify someone to manage and lead implementation of action steps detailed in this plan and other actions as they are identified. It is important to have someone responsible for guiding ongoing future planning efforts. This overall coordinator should be the zoning administrator.

In addition to the overall coordinator, each of the strategies, initiatives or tools described will require someone who assumes ownership to ensure progress towards implementation. In most instances, it is beneficial to have someone who is familiar with the strategy, initiative or tool and able to work with appropriate entities needed to accomplish the work. A champion may be an individual or agency, although one person should be the designated coordinator for the city's future planning efforts.

It is also recommended that the entire plan be carefully reviewed annually to insure that the data and land use maps are updated. Policies may have to be updated as well. The review may be simple if the city has not grown in the years prior to the review or it may be more elaborate following a period of rapid growth or change. The results of the review and revision may very well mean changes in the zoning or subdivision ordinances or other developmental tools.

Successful communities do not just happen. They must be continually shaped and guided. New issues and opportunities will inevitably arise. While no plan could possibly foresee every issue, the goals and strategies developed in the 2013 Robins Comprehensive Plan will provide flexibility for city officials and area residents in successfully planning for the future.

# Overview

A Brief History of Robins - 11

# Overview

## Overview

### **A Brief History of Robins**

In 1842, Joseph Robins, a farmer by occupation, bought 200 acres of land from the United States Government, in Marion Township, Linn County, Iowa. A part of the original Joseph Robins land purchase was situated on South Mentzer Road, the present address being 7814 Council Street NE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. This farm was included in the boundaries of Robins at the time of incorporation in 1910. According to abstracts, his son John M. Robins bought several acres of land in 1860 and more in 1873, which was along our Main Street from Troy Road on the west to east boundaries of 500 Main Street East.

In July of 1887, the Cedar Rapids & Chicago Railroad split the farm ground owned by John M. Robins and his wife and they gave the right of way of 50 feet from the center of the tracks on either side. This served as both passenger and freight line. The Depot was located on the east side of the tracks, north of Main Street. There was a stock yard and a coal yard along the side track.

The Plat and Dedication of the land to become the “Robins Town or Village” was filed on October 19, 1888. The “Town of Robins” was incorporated on October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1911.

# Profile and Analysis

Population Trends and Projections - 13

Demographics - 20

Population Findings - 22

Housing Analysis - 23

Housing Findings - 27

Profile and Analysis

# Profile and Analysis

## Population Trends and Projections

A planning program for the physical development of a community must be based upon the requirements, both present and future, of the citizens living in the area. In order to establish what these requirements will be, it is necessary to know as accurately as possible how many people will be living in the area in the foreseeable future.

Precise predictions of future populations, of course, are not possible. However, a reasonable, reliable forecast can be made on the basis of past studies, population trends over the years, and current, observable patterns. This is essential in arriving at reasonable goals and objectives with respect to services and overall development.

The following section of the Plan will review the City of Robins growing population.

### Robins Population Quick View

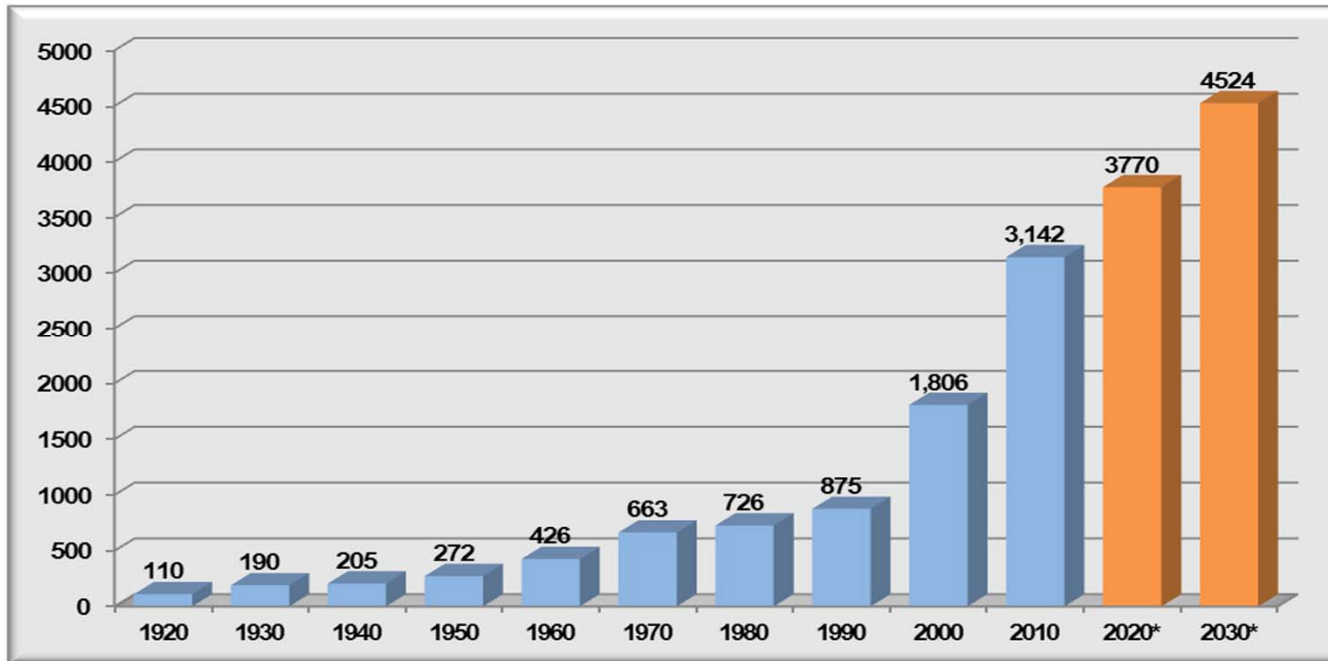
1990	2000	% Change 1990-2000	2010	% Change 2000-2010
875	1,806	106.4%	3,142	74%

Source: U.S. Census

# Profile and Analysis

## Population Trends

The City of Robins has increased in population every decade since 1920. Robins' largest period of growth was between the 1990 and 2000 Census. During this decade the population grew from 875 to 1,806 residents, an increase of over 106 percent. The large growth rate continued between 2000 and 2010 at 74 percent, bringing the city's population to 3,142. Even during its smallest period of growth, 1930 to 1940, Robins still experienced a 7.9 percent increase in population. For a graphic illustration, please refer to the chart below.



Source: U.S. Census

\* 2020 and 2030 predictions are based on a 20% growth rate

## Profile and Analysis

The projected populations for 2020 and 2030 are shown on the chart and discussed later in the Chapter. The population is expected to be near 3,770 residents by 2020 and near 4,524 by 2030. Although Robins has seen tremendous population increases in the last twenty years, large population increases are difficult to maintain. The city is likely to continue its population growth, however, at a pace near 20 percent.

The steady population growth of Robins during the last two census periods is likely due in part to residents who work in the Cedar Rapids metropolitan area but want to live in a small-town setting. Interstate 380, Center Point Road and Council Street make access to the metro area very easy.

If the national and local economy continues its recovery, growth in the metro area should expand outward to cities like Palo, Walford, Ely and Robins. However, if gas prices increase dramatically, commuters may be less likely to move great distances from where they work. Unless Robins' economic development efforts bring more employment locally, this factor alone may slow Robins' future growth potential relative to larger cities with employment opportunities. However, Robins could benefit from employees who now commute from areas like Anamosa, Monticello, and Manchester and decide to move to Robins to be closer to work.

# Profile and Analysis

## Population Growth of Similar Sized Cities

There are several communities within the region that had similar populations and situations as Robins. Each community is located within a short drive of the Cedar Rapids metro area. Since 1990, all five cities have experienced varying degrees of growth (see the table on the following page).

There are basically four types of cities within the region.

- 1) Large metro area cities (Cedar Rapids, Iowa City)
- 2) Cities directly adjacent to the metro areas (Robins, Fairfax, Ely, North Liberty, etc.)
- 3) Mid-size, stand-alone cities (Vinton, Anamosa, Washington, etc.)
- 4) Small, rural towns and villages (Garrison, Luzerne, Mount Auburn, etc.)

The cities located directly adjacent to Cedar Rapids, such as Ely and Robins, have experienced substantial growth during the 1990s and early 2000s. Population trends of this nature may come with substantial negative costs to a city, such as lack of housing space, loss of farm land, increased need for infrastructure and other services, and the extreme cost of those services, as well as the loss of the small-town character. Many other cities near the Cedar Rapids metro area have experienced growth rates in the upper teens and even more as well, such as Hiawatha and Center Point.

Cities such as Vinton, Anamosa and Washington are all stand-alone cities. They are the employment centers of their respective counties. These cities have not seen the double and triple digit percentage growth rates like North Liberty, Fairfax and Robins have seen. But they have seen steady growth. Population increases between 5 and 10% are generally more likely for these communities. Many cities find it easier to plan and budget for infrastructure costs when the growth rate is in the 5 to 10% range.



## Profile and Analysis

Population Trends of Similar Sized Cities						
City	1990	2000	Change (%)	2010	Change (%)	County
<b>Robins</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>1,806</b>	<b>106.4%</b>	<b>3,142</b>	<b>74.0%</b>	<b>Linn</b>
Ely	517	1,149	122.2%	1,776	54.6%	Linn
Hiawatha	4,986	6,480	30.0%	7,024	8.4%	Linn
Center Point	1,693	2,007	18.5%	2,421	20.6%	Linn
Marion	20,403	26,294	28.9%	34,768	32.2%	Linn
North Liberty	2,926	5,367	83.4%	13,374	149.2%	Johnson

Source: U.S. Census

The one constant between most cities in the region experiencing substantial growth is the link to the Cedar Rapids or Iowa City metro areas. Robins' link to Cedar Rapids should position the community for continued future growth.

### Population Projections

As stated before, population projections can be used to plan for the appropriate level of services for future development. When used cautiously, population projections provide an estimate of future growth barring any unforeseen significant change in the economic or social composition of the community. With a sound population projection, a city can plan for infrastructure capacities, housing needs, and future land use requirements.

## Profile and Analysis

### Robins Population Projections

	Base Year	Projection	Projection
Growth Rate	2010	2020	2030
74%	3,142	5,467	9,513
30%	3,142	4,085	5,310
20%	3,142	3,770	4,524
10%	3,142	3,456	3,802
5%	3,142	3,299	3,464

Source: ECICOG

The above table shows several population projections for Robins. Five different scenarios are shown for comparison. The growth rates shown in the table represent the percentage increase per decade (between each census period).

Based on trends of the last 20 years (high residential growth surrounding the Cedar Rapids metro area, and growth of cities of similar size to Robins in the ECICOG Planning Region), the population is expected to continue to increase at rates around 20 percent. This is quantified by the number of building permits issued in the city since 2008 (see Building Permit Data on page 24). The five year period between 2008 and 2012 saw an average of 24 new homes a year. Should that average stay consistent for 10 years, the city will realize approximately 240 new homes by 2020. With an average household size of 2.8 people per housing unit, that means approximately 672 new resident by 2020 – or a population of 3,814 (just over 20% growth).

## Profile and Analysis

As mentioned before, it is unlikely that the city will be able to maintain large percentage growth rates (as shown by the 74% projection above). As the population increases, large percentage changes are much more difficult. In addition, the economy, rising fuel and heating costs, the amount of developable land and available community services (sewer, water, police, roads, etc.) will ultimately dictate how fast Robins grows. Very large percentage growth rates can be a burden on community services. The 74% projection is shown in the unlikely event that dramatic growth rates will continue over the long-term. It is very likely rising energy and fuel prices will slow housing construction in outlying areas and reduce the likelihood that commuters would be willing to drive long distances to work.

However, as mentioned before, barring any unforeseen significant change in the economic or social composition of the region, the population should realize a 20% growth rate through 2030. A population near 4,524 could be expected by that time. For planning purposes, the 20 percent projection will be used throughout the document when discussing future infrastructure capacities, housing and land use needs.

Here is a look at the 2000 Robins Comprehensive Plan population projections for comparison purposes. The 2000 plan did not anticipate the 74% growth rate between 2000 and 2010 and the projections were short of the actual population.

### 2000 Robins Comprehensive Plan Population Projections

	2000	2010	2020
Population	1,660	2,493	3,348

Source: City of Robins 2000 Comprehensive Plan

## Profile and Analysis

The Land Use portion of the plan will look at the amount of undeveloped land remaining within the city limits and examine possible appropriate future growth areas outside of the existing city boundaries to facilitate this future growth.

As stated before, population projections should be used cautiously. Changes in local, state and national economies can have a profound affect on population counts. The rising cost of oil and natural gas could very well continue to negatively impact the economy, making even the smaller percentage growth rates unattainable. However, with the proximity to employment and retail centers, and available land and services, the City's population may be able to withstand small changes in the national economy and reach the plan's projected total of 4,524 by the year 2030.

### Demographics

#### Age Cohorts

Population projections are used to plan appropriately for future growth and development. Breaking down the population by demographics is just as important to the planning process by showing the related demographical needs of the community.

As seen in the table on the following page, in 2010, Robins had a fairly balanced age make-up with the median age of residents at 39.1. This follows regional trends with the median age of the state of Iowa at 38.1. The largest group based on percentage is in the prime employment stage of life at 35 to 59 years of age. The second largest group would be children under the age of nineteen. The smallest groups include those between 20 and 35 years of age and those over 60 years of age.

## Profile and Analysis

Robins Age Cohorts		
	Number	Percent
Under 5 years	217	6.9
5 to 9 years	261	8.3
10 to 14 years	310	9.9
15 to 19 years	259	8.2
20 to 24 years	79	2.5
25 to 29 years	95	3
30 to 34 years	166	5.3
35 to 39 years	234	7.4
40 to 44 years	277	8.8
45 to 49 years	317	10.1
50 to 54 years	256	8.1
55 to 59 years	232	7.4
60 to 64 years	188	6
65 to 69 years	94	3
70 to 74 years	69	2.2
75 to 79 years	47	1.5
80 to 84 years	26	0.8
85 years and over	15	0.5
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>39.1</b>	

Source: U.S. Census

Looking at the changes in the age groups of Robins, in twenty years during the life of this plan, the largest age group will shift to the 65-69 group and will be retiring. The population of Robins will begin to increase in age and services the community offers may need to reflect the changing demographics. Services such as elderly housing may play a larger role in the future development of the community



New housing development, City of Robins

## Profile and Analysis

### Population Findings

- Rapid population increases since 1920 as seen with an average growth rate of 48.4 percent over the past 9 decades.
- Median age in 2010 is slightly higher than the state of Iowa (39.1 versus 38.1).
- Median age is anticipated to increase as the largest age cohort shifts to retirement age.
- The city's population increase since 1990 is significantly higher than the average in the ECICOG region (8 percent). Robins was one of several communities experiencing substantial growth (double and triple digit percentage growth rates) during this time.
- The population is expected to be near 3,770 residents by when the next census (2020) data is released.
- Robins should prepare for an estimated population of 4,524 residents by the year 2030 or the equivalent of approximately 1,382 new residents between 2010 and 2030. Housing, infrastructure and land use needs throughout the plan will be based on this projection.

## Profile and Analysis

### Housing Analysis

In addition to examining population trends and demographics, a look into the city's current and future housing needs must be taken in order to establish growth management strategies for the planning area. Housing development is crucial to a growing community. With implications in land use and infrastructure decisions, housing trends should be studied to establish adequate growth areas in and around the community.

In development terms, the projected population increase (at the 20% growth rate per census) is equivalent to approximately 494 new housing units by the year 2030. This represents an average annual construction rate of nearly 28 new units per year. At the current allowable density of approximately 3 units per acre, the new units would require approximately 165 acres of land (this does not account for the rights-of-way for streets and other utilities). As a general rule, 10 percent of developed land is consumed by rights-of-way. This makes an additional 17 acres of land to be used for streets and other utilities to serve the projected residential needs. **All told, it is projected that 182 acres of land will be needed to account for new residential development in Robins over the next twenty years.**

Using an "in-fill" first development strategy – or, first developing land, if possible, within the city's existing boundaries before annexing new land for development – it is likely, much of the new growth will fit within the existing city limits. There are currently approximately 2,000 acres of undeveloped property within Robins. Some of this land is undevelopable due to steep slopes, wetlands or other development constraints. Some of this land is not ready for development due to owners unwilling to subdivide. However, based on projected need, most residential use should be met within the existing city limits. (see the Land Use chapter of this plan for further explanation of this total as well as land use needs for park, commercial and industrial land uses).

# Profile and Analysis

Housing Permits Issued	
2012	11 (YTD)
2011	20
2010	29
2009	27
2008	33
2007	55
2006	67
2005	80
2004	60
2003	39
2002	36
2001	36
2000	33
1999	42
1998	32
1997	26
1996	29
1995	16
1994	24
1993	25
1992	25

Source : City of Robins

## Building Permit Data

The housing permit data supplied by the City of Robins shows a four year period between 2004 and 2007 where 262 housing permits were issued. This is certainly consistent with the growth occurring in Robins at the time. The city was averaging over 65 new homes a year during those four years. Likewise, starting in 2008, growth in the community began to slow. The four year period between 2008 and 2011 saw an average of only 27 new homes a year. Seven months into 2012, only 11 housing permits have been issued.

## Housing Data

By 2000, the Census showed 603 housing units in Robins. The 2010 Census data shows a population of 3,142 people and 1,072 housing units in Robins, or nearly a 78% increase in housing units from 2000. This is consistent with the 74% population growth during this time.

In 2000, the Census showed the average household size was 3.09 people per housing unit. That number decreased in 2010 to 3.04. Generally, this number has been decreasing throughout the region as families are trending smaller due to the aging population. The average household size is expected to continue to drop across the region and by the year 2030, Robins is expected to have approximately 2.80 people per housing unit. Based on this figure and the population projection, Robins should plan on needing approximately 494 new housing units by 2030 to bring the overall total to approximately 1,566 units.



## Profile and Analysis

### **New Housing Development**

When new housing development occurs, it should, wherever possible occur as infill development within the existing city limits. As infill possibilities are exhausted, development should then occur incrementally, or contiguous to existing development. Growth of this nature will reduce capital outlay and maintenance costs to the city by allowing short, economical extensions of municipal infrastructure (sewer, water, street, sidewalk, etc.) which serve the new neighborhoods. Incremental housing growth will also save open land and areas better suited for agricultural or other use.

As residential development occurs, the city should insure that each new growth area can reasonably flow into the existing community. One point that was made during the town meeting for the plan was that Robins seemed disconnected from itself, with limited connectivity to several neighborhoods. This may be due to limited connecting streets and sidewalks in parts of the city.

To encourage walkability, main connections to the city's trail and sidewalk system and to the major commercial areas as well as to city access points should be required. Infill development should be encouraged to diminish the impact of sprawl and promote connectivity.

## Profile and Analysis

In addition, Robins should ensure that appropriate recreational opportunities grow as new housing is developed. The number and location of neighborhood parks should keep pace with new construction. As new housing developments are planned, the city should ensure that common “green space” is included in each new neighborhood. Because recreation opportunities are a major influence on a family’s decision on where to live, expanded recreation opportunities should be a priority for Robins as discussed during the plan’s town meeting.

Recreation goals and the objectives to meet those goals will be discussed later in the plan. The infrastructure and land use implications of this population target and housing analysis will be discussed in Chapters on Infrastructure and Land Use.



## Profile and Analysis

### Housing Findings

- Average household size in 2010 was 3.04. That number is expected to decrease to 2.80 by 2030.
- A 20% growth rate is equivalent to approximately 494 new homes between 2010 and 2030 or approximately 28 per year.
- The number of new homes by 2030 would require 182 acres of land.
- There were 1,072 housing units in Robins in 2010. Based on building permit data, since April 1, 2010 there have been 60 new housing units built in the City bringing the total number to approximately 1,132 housing units.
- The City will require approximately 1,566 housing units by 2030.

# Economic Development

Introduction - 29

Strengths and Weaknesses - 30

Economic Development Strategies - 31

Economic Development Goals and Policies - 32

Economic Development

## Economic Development

### Introduction

One of the most important aspects of economic development in a community is to clearly understand what the core values are and to plan economic growth with those core values as an integral part of the process. The Robins community-wide survey and ME&V focus group activities communicated a strong message to maintain a small town atmosphere and a planned economic growth that compliments the community character. This is consistent with the community character stated in our 2000 Comprehensive Plan and carried over to this Plan which states “Growth and development should continue but neither at the detriment of the existing community nor at the loss of the small town character.”

The City of Robins has a small but growing commercial base. Since the 1990s, many new commercial establishments have located within the city limits, including in Robins Square. This commercial growth may have seemed unlikely for Robins even ten years ago. Traditionally, Robins has been a “bedroom” community to neighboring Cedar Rapids. During the last comprehensive planning process, many residents resisted commercial development.

However, today that trend has changed. According to the recent survey (see survey results in appendix), attracting new business was the third highest issue in terms of importance to residents of Robins. Also, 57% of respondents agreed that Robins needed more business development and over 62% of respondents believed Robins should be more proactive in bringing business into town. That residential support provides the framework to grow Robins’ economic development potential.



Robins Square clock tower

## Economic Development

Recognizing citizen support for commercial growth, the City Council recently established an economic development group, whose purpose is to create a strategic plan for business development. This group has already conducted a SWOT analysis and will make their recommendations to the Council in 2013.

### Strengths and Weaknesses

Located in the Cedar Rapids metro area, Robins has significant strengths and opportunities regarding economic development. Easy access to major transportation routes, significant developable land, historically low tax rates compared to surrounding cities, community support, access to amenities such as schools, trails and entertainment opportunities are but a few of Robins strengths. The city should utilize its considerable strengths when creating a brand for marketing purposes.

Yet, in order to foster a growing business community, there are always hurdles to overcome. In many cases, these hurdles are easily addressed through land use policies or simple directives from the City Council. However, some issues that are critical to economic development are equally important to other community elements such as infrastructure or transportation. These issues will be addressed throughout this comprehensive plan. Some of the weaknesses or threats established in the recently completed SWOT analysis include:

- Limited cross-transportation routes for the community
- Water and sewer infrastructure not available along prime development areas
- Lack of community identity
- Limited funding available
- Potential land lock from Hiawatha and Cedar Rapids growth
- Condition of national and regional economy.

## Economic Development

### **Economic Development Strategies**

The following strategies will assist Robins in strengthening the city's economic development potential.

#### **Empower Local Economic Development Group**

Expand and grow local economic development group to promote economic development growth in the community. Business and city leaders can work together to identify and complete projects, such as groundbreaking for a new business venture that demonstrate success. Success builds credibility and energy and attracts new members.

#### **Promote Robins to the Region**

With a vibrant housing market, proximity to natural areas and transportation routes, and friendly atmosphere, Robins can draw people and businesses to visit and locate in the city. Opportunities exist to market quality of life, amenities and unique character to a growing and vibrant regional market. Work closely with the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance to market Robins to the region.

#### **Generate a Strategic Plan for Business Development**

Some challenges, such as marketing, business recruiting and perceived lack of public support for business growth, require more detailed planning and coordination. A strategic plan will clarify goals, policies and objectives and create a work plan for implementation. A plan identifies needed resources and can increase confidence of potential project funders or investors.

#### **Foster a Growing and Diverse Business Community**

- Establish design standards to promote high quality commercial and industrial development
- Provide space and infrastructure for business location and expansion by expanding critical infrastructure to growth areas
- Establish high quality office parks for job creation within the city limits

# Economic Development

## Economic Development Goals and Policies

### ❖ Empower Local Economic Development Group

- ❖ Provide funding
- ❖ Engage available resident talent pool to support economic development
- ❖ Establish duties and responsibilities for group
- ❖ Utilize group to promote business growth within the community

### ❖ Promote Robins to the Region

- ❖ Establish a brand for marketing Robins
- ❖ Establish an economic development website for Robins
- ❖ Work with the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance
- ❖ Work with the East Central Iowa Council of Governments through the region's Comprehensive Regional Development Strategy document

### ❖ Generate a Strategic Plan for Business Development

- ❖ Utilize local economic development group for creation of plan
- ❖ Apply for state, federal and MPO grants



## Economic Development

### ❖ **Foster a Growing and Diverse Business Community**

- ❖ Establish design standards to promote high quality commercial and industrial development
- ❖ Provide space and infrastructure for business location and expansion
- ❖ Extend infrastructure into economic development growth areas
- ❖ Establish high quality office parks for job creation within the city limits
- ❖ Establish connectivity throughout Robins through cross-community transportation routes
- ❖ Utilize future land use map to plan for appropriate economic development growth areas as well as protect future residential growth areas

# Infrastructure

Introduction - 35

Infrastructure Systems - 36

Infrastructure Goals and Policies - 41

Infrastructure

# Infrastructure

## Introduction

This section of the plan presents an inventory and evaluation of the city's infrastructure facilities. The primary infrastructure for Robins includes the systems for water distribution, sanitary sewer, storm sewer collection and transportation.

The city should encourage the preservation of viable existing infrastructure and promote the economical extension of new infrastructure and services. It is wise to conserve limited public funds by promoting efficient growth patterns. Extension of Robins' infrastructure to new, appropriate development areas is a priority for the city. Economic development opportunities will rely on new extensions of sanitary sewer and water lines. Extension of these services into the city's economic development growth areas – including along County Home Road and Center Point Road – should be a priority.

To implement specific goals in this section of the plan, the city should not only rely exclusively on municipal funds, but utilize the development tools such as TIF and connection fees to fund infrastructure, redevelopment and economic development projects, where practical. Although a comprehensive listing of the city's infrastructure is contained in this plan, it should not be construed to replace the day-to-day maintenance and operation of the city's infrastructure. It is intended to provide a framework for the future growth of the overall system.

## Infrastructure

### Infrastructure Systems

#### Water System

Currently, Robins buys water from the City of Cedar Rapids. All new developments are required to connect to the municipal water system, where and when available. This helps promote development of the city water infrastructure, which is a critical public safety issue.

All water to the city is currently supplied by two point sources from Cedar Rapids near the eastern city limits. This leads to limited water capacity available to some of the high potential growth areas within the western portions of the City. There is ongoing work to identify both near term and long term improvements that would provide Robins with a reliable water source to improve this situation. Robins should continue working with the City of Cedar Rapids to implement recommended improvements that may include another source connection from the south along North Center Point Road and/or a City of Robins water tower.

#### Sanitary Sewer System

As with the water system, Robins' sewer system is connected with the City of Cedar Rapids. All new developments are required to connect to the municipal sewer system, where and when available. Robins should continue cooperative development of downstream sewers that add to the capacity of the system in order to ensure continued availability of sanitary sewer services as the city increases demand. As capacity becomes available, Robins should pursue a revised 28E agreement with the City of Cedar Rapids that increases the Robins' permitted effluent limits. Average wastewater flows for Robins are currently approaching the 1980 treatment agreement permit limits of 400,000 gallons per day, and many individual days have already exceeded the maximum allowable daily flow of 1.12 million gallons per day.

Most development areas within the current corporate limits and planned future growth areas cannot be serviced by gravity sewer and will require development of new and larger lift stations. Due to significant costs associated with developing this infrastructure, the city should develop strategies to allow growth of the infrastructure within the community.

## Infrastructure

The city should also review sewer user fees periodically and adjust as necessary to allow Robins to fund sewer system development, maintenance, and treatment costs from revenues generated by user fees. Currently, sewer rates are relatively low compared to other communities in Eastern Iowa.

### **Storm Sewer System**

The City's storm sewer system consists of a combination of storm sewers, ditches, culverts, and storm water management facilities (i.e. - detention basins) throughout the community. As Robins continues to grow, storm water management will become a greater concern for the city and its residents. State and Federal regulations also continue to increase with respect to managing storm water and associated erosion control.

All new developments are required to provide storm water management facilities to reduce potential adverse impacts due to flooding associated with the increased impervious areas normally associated with development. In order to function properly, these facilities need regular maintenance, which can be both expensive and time consuming. Robins should continue to review policies on storm water management practices to ensure that they are both effective and in accordance with current regulations. Consideration should be given to such things as developing fewer and larger regional detention basins and requiring other practices that promote storm water infiltration (in lieu of or in addition to constructing small detention basins) such as rain gardens and amended soils.

Many surrounding communities have now adopted, or are currently considering, a storm water utility to help fund development and maintenance of these facilities. Robins should consider if this is a feasible revenue source, particular as larger commercial properties are developed.

Over the course of the planning period, Robins should monitor storm water drainage problems within the community and correct the problems as necessary.

## Infrastructure

### Street System

The future street system of Robins should be planned and developed on the basis of future land use and traffic count. A well-planned road system will be cost effective, as well as provide for the efficient movement of pedestrian and emergency traffic. The improvements to existing streets and the structure of proposed streets should be determined by addressing such issues as parking needs, sub-base soil types, traffic volumes and types, required speeds to reduce congestion and land use of adjacent properties.

For Robins to grow successfully, new development, including new transportation routes, must be directed to achieve city land use goals and improve cross-community mobility. The city must maintain street continuity and convenient access to new neighborhoods, as well. Robins is theoretically split in half due to the north and south running railroad and Cedar Valley Nature Trail. This limits the connectivity of the community and can be important when emergency vehicles need to cross the city. Therefore, it is important that new developments are linked to the existing community through connector streets, sidewalks or trails.

The future street map of Robins, at the end of this chapter, is a conceptual plan for the logical extension of the street system around the community. The map is intended to be a guide for development and not a rigid blueprint. Traffic generators and traffic volume, as well as cross-city mobility should influence the development of future streets in Robins.

As shown on the map, Robins should plan on the creation of a north-south collector street connecting County Home Road and Tower Terrace Road on the west side of the nature trail. In addition, the City should plan on the creation of three east-west collector streets, one north of Main Street and two south of Main Street. Note that only new collector streets and major extensions of current streets are shown on the Future Street Map. Minor collector and local streets should be planned to coordinate with the new major routes.

## Infrastructure

Robins has primarily three types of streets in the community: Arterial, Collector and Local and are defined in the appendix of this plan. The four lane Interstate 380 on the west side of the city’s boundary is considered an arterial in addition to the streets listed below.

The streets identified as arterial roadways (County Home Road, N. Center Point Road, and Tower Terrace Road) are primarily meant to serve through traffic. As adjacent land develops, so too will the demand for access onto these roadways. In order to preserve the capacity of the existing roadway network, it is important that accesses be strictly limited in both spacing and type. New accesses to major arterial roadways should generally be limited to public streets. Exceptions may be made for certain private entrances that generate significant volumes of traffic and meet the required access spacing. Unless otherwise justified by a traffic study and approved by the City Engineer, access spacing for new access points along major arterial routes should be limited as follows:

Arterial Road Name	Spacing for Access Points
County Home Road	½ Mile
N. Center Point Road	600 feet
Tower Terrace Road	Match predetermined access points identified in the Tower Terrace Road Corridor Management Plan.

Source: City of Robins Engineer, Snyder & Associates

In addition, the development of Tower Terrace Road, particularly the proposed interchange with Interstate 380, has been identified as a significant priority to improve the region’s transportation network. Complete build-out of this road and interchange would greatly improve the connectivity between the City of Robins and surrounding communities.

## Infrastructure

### **Sidewalks and Trails**

Currently, the city has a growing, but incomplete sidewalk and trail system. A sidewalk system contributes to the ease of walking and daily interaction among neighbors. Sidewalks are also necessary to provide safe passage for pedestrians throughout a community. During the planning period, Robins should strive to continue development of a sidewalk system which encompasses the entire community.

Current design standards mandate that sidewalks be constructed in new subdivisions. City policies generally include sidewalk construction to be included with reconstructed roadways. Over time, the city should work with property owners and extend the system throughout any area of town currently unserved by sidewalks.

Portions of existing sidewalks which are in disrepair should be fixed through a routine maintenance program. Besides being a nuisance, unkempt sidewalks are a health and safety issue. In addition, the application of ADA accessibility standards, as they relate to sidewalk facilities, has changed since some of the older portions of sidewalk were constructed. The city should work to bring older sections of sidewalk up to current requirements. Robins should follow the trails and sidewalk map for specific, planned projects.

### **Infrastructure Analysis**

There are a variety of funding sources to assist and finance the development and improvement of the City's infrastructure system. For sewer and water projects, there are several grant and loan programs from the Iowa Departments of Economic Development and Natural Resources, including the CDBG, PFSA and SRF. For the transportation system, these sources would include: Road Use Tax fund, STP and TAP funding for eligible routes (allocated through the CMPO), RISE grant and loan funds for economic development projects, and other categorical grant programs. The City should explore alternate grant programs to meet local needs.



## Infrastructure

In addition, the city should continue to modify and update its five year Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). The CIP helps coordinate capital costs and financing while working towards the long term goals of the community.

### **Infrastructure Goals and Policies**

The following policy statements are intended to provide the City of Robins with guidance on infrastructure and public facilities issues:

- **Encourage the preservation of viable existing infrastructure**

- Follow the Capital Improvements Plan for a detailed schedule of infrastructure repairs and maintenance
- Monitor storm water drainage problems within the community and correct as necessary
- Consider storm water management fees to pay for critical infrastructure projects
- Utilize State and Federal grant and loan assistance for infrastructure improvements

- **Promote the economical extension of new infrastructure and services**

- Expand infrastructure systems into the economic development growth areas
- Ensure adequate infrastructure capacities for long-term potential growth
- Ensure adequate water pressure for fire protection (study recommended improvements including new source connections and/or water tower)
- Promote rain gardens in new developments for alternative stormwater management
- Consider regional detention basins for stormwater management

- **Maintain street continuity and convenient access to new neighborhoods**

- Link new growth and development to the existing community and economic development growth areas
- Create a sidewalk and trail system which encompasses the entire community

## Infrastructure

Street and sidewalk/trails map inserted here----

# Parks and Recreation

Green Space and Park System Plan - 44

Park System Vision - 45

Park System Summary - 46

Parks and Recreation

## Parks and Recreation

### Green Space and Park System Plan

Parks and public green space are vitally important to cities and their overall quality of life. They help contribute to a city's character with friendly, open environments. In addition, they also provide important active and passive recreational resources. The following section examines the city's park and recreational system, including all city-owned and operated facilities. In addition, this section will provide a vision for Robins open space and park system.

The maintenance of these public spaces and their extension into new sections of the community should be part of Robins future. As the city grows and takes advantage of new development opportunities, its park system will become important to unite the new residents with the established community.

As Robins grows, there will be a substantial need to expand public recreational activities. Families in the community will look to the city to provide safe and accessible services for both children and adults. The city is currently actively expanding the park area available to residents. There are two new planned park areas in the community. Other park areas can be established through provisions in the city's subdivision ordinance requiring park or open space in each new subdivision. The development of recreational facilities should include large park and open space areas with active recreational opportunities, in addition to connection to the city's expanding trail system.



Cedar Valley Nature Trail through the City of Robins

## Parks and Recreation

### **Park System Vision**

A goal for Robins park system should be a network of open spaces which impact all parts of the community, connecting old and new neighborhoods with one another and with major activity centers. This vision would bridge barriers that otherwise might separate parts of the city from one another.

To accomplish this, the city should create a networked system of trails and sidewalks throughout the community. A system of this nature would link parks, neighborhoods and activity centers by a continuous system of trails, sidewalks and environmental corridors. As Robins grows, new subdivisions should be linked to this trail or sidewalk system. The trail network could include on-street bikeways, trails through parks and school grounds, designated city sidewalks, and abandoned railroad right-of-way. Future trails and sidewalks are shown on the city's Future Transportation Extensions Map.

Because recreational trails are heavily used and involve only moderate costs to develop and maintain, they are one of the most cost efficient recreational investments a community can make. The City of Robins, Linn County, the state Departments of Natural Resources, Transportation and Economic Development, along with private sponsors could each play a role in creating a community-wide network of trails.

In addition to linking Robins parks and activity centers with trails and sidewalks, the city should also integrate new regional parks and open space into the community. As shown in the Land Use chapter of this plan, the city will need to create approximately 22 acres of new park space to accommodate the population growth projected within the next 20 years. The new, regional parks should be linked to the city's trail and sidewalk system. The concept of a linked pedestrian system, connecting neighborhoods, natural areas and parks, schools, and the Robins Square would establish a unified community.

## Parks and Recreation

### Park System Summary

Currently, the City's park system is just short of meeting the population's demand for recreation areas. The community-wide survey show favorable support for increased recreational opportunities in the community. As Robins population grows, new parks and recreational activities must keep pace with development. It is the city's goal to create a network of regional parks and open space throughout the community. Then, the new parks should be linked to the existing sections of town by trails and/or sidewalks.

To assure adequate youth recreational opportunities, the city should designate a portion of each new park for active recreation. This includes neighborhood ball fields and practice fields for youth sports leagues.

Recreation opportunities will continue to influence a family's decision on where to live. Unfortunately, many communities have paid limited attention to the recreational needs of its residents. Imaginative recreational opportunities can be both low cost and limited maintenance to the community. In turn, this investment should retain current residents and promote future growth. Expanded recreation opportunities should be a priority for Robins.



# Land Use

Introduction - 48

Land Use Tools - 48

Future Directions in Land Use - 52

Land Use Plan Summary - 59

Land Use

## Land Use

### Introduction

This chapter of the Plan is focused on land use, both existing and future, within and around the City of Robins. The intent is to provide a framework to guide and direct new development in the planning area. This should ensure that future development is consistent with the goals of the plan and paced in such a way as to not outstrip the City's ability to provide proper services.

The Chapter is divided into two sections. The first describes useful tools for managing land use; the final section describes future policy directions in land use including the official Robins Future Land Use Map.

### Land Use Tools

Zoning and subdivision ordinances are two common regulatory land use tools for cities and counties to enforce community standards. Ordinances of this nature enable the implementation and enforcement of the policies and provisions contained in a comprehensive plan.

In any growing region, development pressures are usually the strongest at the edge of an already developed area. When allowed to go unregulated, this development pressure often causes undesirable results. The city, however, can utilize this plan to logically identify where appropriate growth areas should be planned for and use zoning and subdivision tools to assist in the sound development of the city. The Land Use Chapter of the Robins Plan can serve as a guide for future revisions of the city's development tools.



## Land Use

### **Zoning Ordinance**

Zoning is the most important tool to implement a comprehensive plan. This method works by regulating various aspects of how land may be used. Zoning's name is derived from dividing areas of a city into zones, or districts. Certain uses of land are permitted in each zone according to specific standards set by the planning and zoning commission and adopted by the City Council. Zoning helps protect property values, neighborhoods, farmland and community features.

Robins has a zoning ordinance currently in place. After the Comprehensive Plan is adopted, the zoning ordinance should be thoroughly reviewed and updated annually to ensure the standards are working in conjunction with the goals and objectives contained in this Plan. At a minimum, the ordinance update should include reviewing standards for the mixed commercial and light industrial development, as discussed later in this chapter.

### **Subdivision Ordinance**

A subdivision ordinance is a tool a city uses to enforce standards so that land subdivision occurs in a beneficial manner. The platting requirements in the Robins subdivision ordinance specify the criteria for subdividing land throughout the community. Simply put, subdivision is a process in which land is legally described and is converted into building lots. It involves the division of a tract of land into smaller parcels and usually involves the creation of streets and other infrastructure improvements such as water and sewer systems, sidewalks, and street lighting. The subdivision ordinance is a very effective tool for enforcing growth policies as well as limiting the obligations of the government by strategic building and maintaining of its infrastructure.

The subdivision ordinance is also the tool cities use to require open space and park dedications in new developments. By including the requirement to devote open space in the ordinance, developers must include open space in any plans for new development. The open space could then be maintained by the neighborhood or home owner association or the city.

## Land Use

Robins should update its subdivision ordinance to be consistent with the goals and objectives contained in this Plan. Specific issues the city should review in the subdivision ordinance update include:

- ❖ Open space and park dedication requirements
- ❖ Compact, contiguous subdivision design requirements
- ❖ Requirements for sidewalks and pedestrian or bike trails

### **Additional Planning Tools**

In addition to the zoning and subdivision ordinances, the city has other options when planning for future growth. A fringe-area agreement with the county is another very important tool a city can use to coordinate growth management policies and manage future development. Robins should work with Linn County to adopt a fringe-area agreement that works in conjunction with this Plan. Fringe-area planning is important to coordinate development policies in the two-mile area; especially when growth is likely in that area.

In addition, although Robins should handle much of its future projected growth during the life of this plan within its existing city limits, the city should have annexation policies in place to facilitate the annexation process if the need arises. The following section lists the city's annexation policies.

## Land Use

The following are general policies of Robins with respect to annexation:

- ❖ To gather proper public input and seek the use of voluntary annexations
- ❖ To annex areas of land within the designated Future Growth Areas as shown on the Future Land Use Map
- ❖ To annex areas where it is clearly desirable to square out boundaries for the purpose of greater efficiency or economy in providing municipal services
- ❖ To annex areas where annexation is determined to be in the best interest of the city and the owners of the annexed property
- ❖ To consider topography, water and drainage conditions, current land use, cost to city, and other features such as prime agricultural land when annexation is proposed.

## Land Use

### **Future Directions in Land Use**

This section of the Comprehensive Plan will focus on the land use characteristics needed to support the projected population increase through the year 2030. In addition, it will project the community's probable housing demand and land requirements during the planning period.

For Robins to accommodate growth successfully, it must determine the character of that growth and assure that it enhances rather than alters the sense of the community. Land use projections should anticipate future growth needs and permit a reasonable amount of flexibility to accommodate possible changes in trends.

As mentioned before, a community benefits from compact growth. When development occurs incrementally, contiguous to the edge of existing development, a town grows in a unified way. This method of incremental growth reduces costs associated with public infrastructure extensions (sewer, water, transportation), and allows for the efficient movement of pedestrians and emergency vehicles. This is especially true when development constraints limit the cross-mobility of a community (i.e. in Robins case, railroad tracks).

### **Land Use Projections**

Past trends in land development rates provide guidance in determining how much land will be needed to accommodate future growth in Robins (see the table on the following page). Projecting population, housing, and development trends of the last twenty years to the next twenty would suggest 182 acres of additional residential land would be needed. This additional land would accommodate the community's anticipated housing needs up to the year 2030.

## Land Use

Commercial and industrial land needs are more difficult to project. If the city aggressively pursues commercial or industrial development, possible projections could be skewed. Commercial and industrial development supplies cities with the resources necessary to provide services to the city's residents. It is important to provide a proper amount of land for business uses to serve the expected population. This includes promoting appropriate areas for commercial and industrial development. This plan establishes a major role for the city to increase economic development efforts. Approximately 1,920 acres have been set-aside for mixed commercial and light industrial development, as well as general commercial and office commercial. This future commercial land area is adjacent to major arterial and connector transportation routes and would provide an appropriate location for planned commercial development such as office, retail, restaurant or entertainment opportunities.

For future recreation and open space needs, the Robins Plan projects the city's future population at approximately 4,524 residents in 2030. This represents about 434 additional housing units during the planning period. Based on a park dedication standard of 0.05 acres per unit, future growth will require the dedication of nearly 22 additional acres of park and recreational space in the next twenty years. Based on the number of projected houses in 2030, the city should strive for over 78 acres of park and open space within the city limits

As a general rule, 10 percent of developed land is consumed by rights-of-way, this includes space for the public utilities and infrastructure needed to serve each new development. Of the 2,124 acres set aside for residential, commercial and open space, 212 acres of that total would be used for streets and other utilities in future developments.

# Land Use

## Projected Twenty-Year Additional Land Use Needs, City of Robins

Land Use	Projected Additional Needs (Acres)	
Residential	182	
Commercial / Industrial	1,920	
Park/natural areas and open space	22	
<b>Total Land Needs</b>	<b>2,124 acres</b>	

Source: East Central Iowa Council of Governments

The above table displays the projected land use needs for Robins for the next twenty years. The total suggests 2,124 acres of additional land will be needed to support the projected population increase. It should be noted that approximately 212 acres of that total is needed for utility and street rights-of-way.

## Land Use

### **Future Growth Areas**

As discussed before, the City of Robins contains approximately 2,000 acres of undeveloped land within the existing city limits. To maximize the city's growth potential, as well as protect surrounding agricultural operations, future growth should occur within the established growth areas as shown on the Future Land Use Map, with priority given to development within the existing city limits.

### **Future Land Use Recommendations**

The following recommendations are listed in no particular order, and are presented as a guide for city officials in making decisions about future land use in Robins. These recommendations correspond to the Future Land Use Map.

**Single-Family Development:** During the life of this plan, the primary residential development in Robins will be single-family housing units. The response to the city-wide survey established significant support for single-family dwelling units in Robins. This housing type should be focused in two general areas as shown on the Future Land Use Map:

- ❖ **Future Residential Growth Area.** This area, as shown as Single-Family Residential on the Future Land Use Map, is generally to the north and south of Main and west of the railroad tracks. Currently, this area is largely undeveloped.
  
- ❖ **Infill Development.** Single-family dwelling units should also be located on vacant lots within the existing community, wherever possible. Although, there are very few vacant lots within Robins.

## Land Use

**Multi-Family Development:** Specific areas for multi-family development are not shown on the Future Land Use Map. However, it is intended to be city policy to allow market conditions to dictate the placement of multi-family dwellings within proposed developments. Multi-family dwellings shall include town home and condo developments as well as duplex style units. The following general policies will help foster the future placement of multi-family development in Robins:

- ❖ Multi-family residential development should buffer lower density single-family residential development from higher impact commercial or industrial uses.
- ❖ Multi-family residential development should buffer lower density single-family residential development from arterial or collector streets. In Robins, those streets include: County Home Road, Council Street, Main Street, Center Point Road, Tower Terrace Road, Quass Road, and all proposed collector streets.

**Commercial Development.** This land use type includes three specific land uses as defined below and shown on the Future Land Use Map:

- ❖ **Mixed commercial / light industrial.** The primary focus of commercial use in Robins is shown on the Future Land Use Map as mixed commercial / light industrial. There are approximately 1,575 acres set aside for this land use type. Many of those acres are located outside of the existing city limits. By allowing a mix of uses within this district, the city can streamline the development process without the need for constant map or zoning updates. Typical uses that might develop in this area may include: large, highway type commercial uses; warehouses, hotels; restaurants and entertainment, office campuses and other similar style uses.



## Land Use

### Commercial Development (continued)

- ❖ **Office Commercial.** There is approximately 200 acres between Interstate 380 and Center Point Road for office style use. This would include land set aside specifically for office headquarters and office campuses. Infrastructure in this area would have to include high speed internet capabilities as well as connections to the city's trail system.
- ❖ **General Commercial.** 145 acres are set aside for general commercial use. This use would be for smaller commercial uses such as doctor offices, banks, small retail, restaurants and entertainment and other similar uses. Robins Square is a perfect location for this type of use.

**Industrial Development.** This land use should occur within and adjacent to the confines of the city's existing industrial areas, as shown on the Future Land Use Map (specifically the quarry area). Robins should ensure, through appropriate zoning standards that existing and future industrial use does not negatively impact surrounding uses.

**Future Growth Corridor.** The future growth corridor for the City of Robins is designated on the Future Land Use Map. This corridor includes the likely growth area of the city after the life of this plan. The projected land use needs of Robins for the next twenty years should be met if the city generally stays within the current city limits. However, there may be a need to annex land to accommodate future growth should certain tracks of land go undeveloped. When that occurs, any land to be annexed should locate within this corridor. If, during the life of this plan, trends or priorities change, the city should update its future growth corridor to include new annexation possibilities. By staying within the corridor, the city will protect valuable environmentally sensitive ground and prime farm land from unwanted development, while meeting projected land use needs.

## Land Use

**Gateways into the Community.** The city should create gateway elements to the city along major entrances. This could include establishing appropriate welcome signs to creating small monuments with attractive landscaping. Two areas which attractive gateways could be designed would include County Home Road, just off the Interstate and Council Street as it enters Robins.

Coordinated signs around the community could give directions to major attractions, such as parks, the proposed trail system or other activity generators. These informational welcome signs should be coordinated with a theme to present a unified community. There are grant possibilities to fund the construction of welcome signs to enhance community gateways. Robins should research funding sources for this community enhancing project.

### **Other Future Land Use Considerations**

As mentioned previously, future development should utilize incremental design (compact and contiguous growth) to protect natural features and preserve open space. Future neighborhoods should connect to existing neighborhoods to improve cross-community mobility and cul-de-sacs should be discouraged whenever possible.

The development of new activity centers such as parks and recreation areas should be encouraged. The community-wide survey showed significant public support for increased youth recreational opportunities.

## Land Use

### Land Use Plan Summary

#### Future Land Use Map

The future land use map is generalized, but indicates the relative size, location and densities of land required to accommodate future growth. This map should be consulted prior to any decision regarding a proposed development or a request for a change in zoning. Doing so adds validity to the Planning and Zoning Commission's and City Council's decisions when considering planning requests. This review, along with adopted procedural requirements of the Commission and Council, and those in the Code of Iowa, should assist the city when faced with a legal confrontation about zoning and land use decisions.

#### Land Use Plan Analysis

This plan is intended to guide new development for the next twenty years. Its broad goals and objectives reflect the consensus of the Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council, and the citizens in and around Robins. The policy directions are to serve as a general guideline for more specific action undertaken by the residents and government of the city. These recommendations look twenty years into the future with the expectation that periodic updates will need to be done to reflect changes in the city and the region. Procedures to update the plan are contained in the Implementation and Administrative Chapter.

Land use maps inserted here-----

# Implementation and Administration

Administrative Background - 62

Development Review - 63

Administration Goals, Objectives and Strategies - 64

Implementation - 66

Implementation and Administration

## Implementation and Administration

### Administration Background

Once the plan has been adopted, the city should make every attempt to put the plan to work. However, no plan could possibly foresee every issue that will arise during the planning period. Therefore, the plan should be used as a guide for growth and development. Some developments will inevitably differ from the vision of the plan. However, if properly used, the policies and goals contained in the plan should provide the city with the flexibility to ensure each development fits with the overall vision of the community.

The goals, objectives and strategies on the following pages reflect the day-to-day administration of Robins. The planning process should be an ongoing endeavor. The success of this plan will require the support of city residents as well as the City Council. Cooperation from the public and private sectors will allow implementation of the goals and objectives that will provide long-term benefits to the entire city.



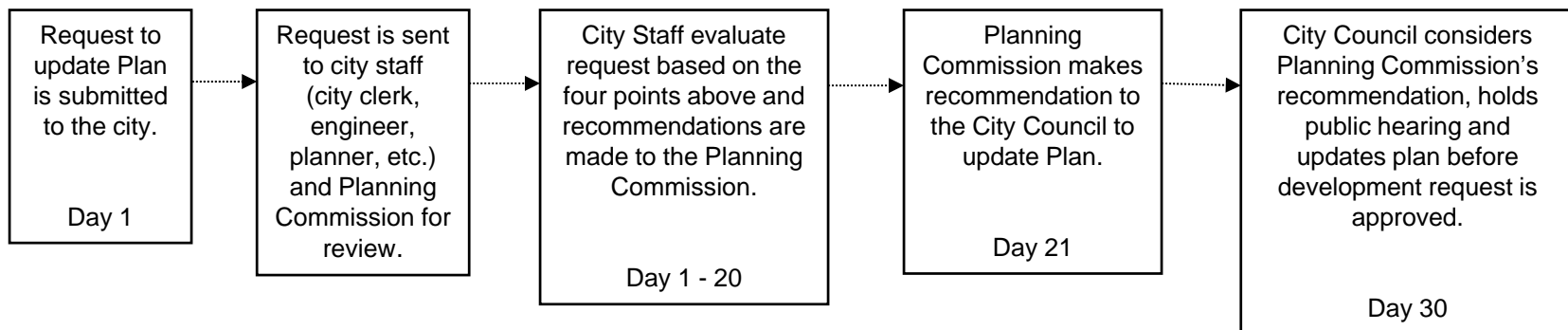
## Implementation and Administration

### Development Review

Since the plan should be used as a guide for future growth, some developments will inevitably differ from the vision of the plan. In such cases, the plan may need to be updated. When reviewing all development proposals, the criteria for evaluation, is as follows:

- ❖ Consider Iowa's smart planning principles and elements
- ❖ Consider overall city goals
- ❖ Consider general city objectives and strategies
- ❖ Plan Maps

Every attempt shall be made to satisfy the above criteria. However, if a development proposal cannot satisfy all of the criteria, yet is still deemed worthy to benefit Robins, the Plan will need to be amended before the development proposal is approved. Because a request to amend the plan will likely occur during the development proposal review process, both actions may occur simultaneously. The city should establish a fee schedule for reviewing Plan update requests. The following is the Plan update process:



## Implementation and Administration

### Administration Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Based on input gathered during the planning process, the following goals, objectives and strategies were developed for the administration of the city.

#### Goals

- ❖ Promote collaboration between all private and public parties during planning and regulation creation.
- ❖ Promote transparency, efficiency and consistent outcomes in all planning endeavors.
- ❖ Encourage and utilize public participation during the creation or revision of planning regulations.

#### Objectives

- ❖ Facilitate an environment that allows cooperative work among governmental, community and individual stakeholders during the planning and regulation process.
- ❖ Robins officials shall conduct business with the utmost degree of transparency possible, allowing for comprehensive public understanding of municipal operations.
- ❖ Plan for the projected needs of the community and provide governmental facilities to meet these needs.



## Implementation and Administration

### **Administrative Strategies**

- ❖ Seek additional input and collaboration with regional development groups, Linn County and other local governments.
- ❖ Provide advance notification to stakeholders regarding planning and regulation creation.
- ❖ Document the public participation during city and public interactions and make these documents, along with other planning documents available electronically and/or hardcopies.
- ❖ Update the city's website for expanding community-wide benefits, including increased economic development potential.

## Implementation and Administration

### Implementation

Responsibility for adopting and implementing future planning initiatives remains with the community guided by its civic and elected leadership. Generally the following principles guide implementation priorities:

- ❖ Focus on strategies, initiatives and projects that will have the most impact on the community when completed.
- ❖ Move forward on strategies, initiatives and projects that can be completed quickly, have significant public support or have available funding. Completion of these initiatives or projects creates significant visibility for recovery and helps solidify community and political support for continued recovery activities.

It is important to note that this plan does not establish any new ordinance or legislative mandate. The goals and policies contained in the plan are to be used as a guide for local officials in decision making and implementing specific developmental tools, such as the zoning and subdivision ordinances. While adoption of this plan does not commit the city to any specific recommendations, it should commit the city to actions that are consistent with the policy guidelines and action steps contained in the plan.

This section presents an implementation schedule for the recommendations, summarizing the actions proposed by the plan. Each action is listed generally in the order presented in the plan. The action is then given a specific time frame for implementation. Each dot is representative of a completion date. The schedule does not list ongoing policies or day-to-day actions the city should continuously undertake (i.e. maintenance of the city's street system). In this way, the schedule can be used to monitor the progress of the plan. This is an important role of the update process that will be necessary to keep this document dynamic and up-to-date.

## Implementation and Administration

Plan and Administration Sector						
Action	Ongoing	Within 5 years	Within 10 years	Within 20 years	Funding Options	Leadership / Action Coordinator
City Council and P&Z to meet annually to review plan goals and policies.	❖				General Funds Zoning Fees	City Council Planning & Zoning Commission
Plan for approximately 1,600 housing units.				❖		City Council Planning & Zoning Commission
Plan for a population of approximately 4,500.				❖		City Council Planning & Zoning Commission
Update the city's website for expanded community-wide benefit and economic development potential		❖			General Funds Local Business Donations	City Council Economic Development Group

## Implementation and Administration

Economic Development Sector						
Action	Ongoing	Within 5 years	Within 10 years	Within 20 years	Funding Options	Leadership / Action Coordinator
Create local economic development group		❖			Grants Donations	City Council
Market Robins and available business opportunities to the region.	❖				General Funds Local Business Donations	Ec. Dev. Group City Council
Adopt a Strategic Economic Development Plan		❖			General Funds Local Business	Ec. Dev. Group Business Leaders City Council

## Implementation and Administration

Economic Development Sector						
Action	Ongoing	Within 5 years	Within 10 years	Within 20 years	Funding Options	Leadership / Action Coordinator
Establish a brand for marketing Robins		❖			Grants Donations	City Council Ec. Dev. Group
Establish economic development website for Robins		❖			General Funds Local Business Donations	Ec. Dev. Group City Council
Work with the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance	❖				General Funds Local Business Donations	Ec. Dev. Group Business Leaders City Council

## Implementation and Administration

Infrastructure Sector						
Action	Ongoing	Within 5 years	Within 10 years	Within 20 years	Funding Options	Leadership / Action Coordinator
Extend infrastructure systems into appropriate economic development growth areas	❖				General Funds G.O. bonds Revenue bonds	City Council City Engineer
Plan for recommended water system improvements that may include new source connections, volume improvements and growing the system as options.		❖			General Funds	City Council City Engineer
Promote rain gardens in new developments for alternative stormwater management	❖				General Funds Developers	City Council City Engineer Developers
Implement city's sidewalk and trail system plan				❖	General Funds G.O. bonds Grants Donations	City Council City Engineer Property owners

## Implementation and Administration

Infrastructure Sector						
Action	Ongoing	Within 5 years	Within 10 years	Within 20 years	Funding Options	Leadership / Action Coordinator
Consider regional detention basins for stormwater management	❖				General Funds G.O. bonds Stormwater management fees	City Council City Engineer
Consider storm water management fees to pay for critical infrastructure projects		❖			General Funds	City Council City Engineer
Link new development to the existing community and economic development growth areas through planned street, sidewalk and trail extensions	❖				General Funds Developers TIF funds	City Council City Engineer Developers
Support the development of Tower Terrace Road and resulting extensions and interchange with I-380	❖				General Funds G.O. bonds Grants	City Council City Engineer

## Implementation and Administration

Parks and Recreation Sector						
Action	Ongoing	Within 5 years	Within 10 years	Within 20 years	Funding Options	Leadership / Action Coordinator
Focus on the creation of a few, large regional park areas, where appropriate	❖				General Funds Developers	City Council Local developers
Develop 22 acres of new park space within the community				❖	General Funds G.O. bonds Grants Donations	City Council Local developers Planning & Zoning Commission
Promote walkability with expanded trail and sidewalk opportunities	❖				General Funds Grants Donations	City Council Local developers Planning & Zoning Commission



## Implementation and Administration

Land Use Sector						
Action	Ongoing	Within 5 years	Within 10 years	Within 20 years	Funding Options	Leadership / Action Coordinator
Review and update zoning and subdivision ordinances to ensure consistency with the new comprehensive plan.		❖			General funds	Planning & Zoning Commission  City Council
Focus new growth in the Future Growth Areas on the Future Land Use Map.	❖					City Council  Planning & Zoning Commission
Work with Linn County to adopt a fringe-area agreement for coordinated planning efforts in the two-mile area		❖			General funds  Linn County	City Council  Planning & Zoning Commission
Ensure enough land is available for the projected growth of the community, including residential, commercial, industrial and park space				❖	General funds  Developers	City Council  Planning & Zoning Commission  Developers

## Implementation and Administration

Land Use Sector						
Action	Ongoing	Within 5 years	Within 10 years	Within 20 years	Funding Options	Leadership / Action Coordinator
Create a gateway into the community at the intersections of I-380 and County Home Road as well as Council Street and other main entrances into the community		❖			General funds Donations Grants	Planning & Zoning Commission City Council
Support the development of a commercial office park as shown on the future land use map			❖		General funds G.O. bonds TIF funding	City Council Ec. Dev. Group
Support single-family residential development in appropriate locations as the primary residential development type	❖				Developers	City Council Planning & Zoning Commission Developers
Streamline the development process for mixed commercial / light industrial developments by updating zoning ordinance		❖			General funds	Planning & Zoning Commission City Council

# Appendix

Glossary of Terms - 76

Community Survey Results - 81

Notes - 82

# Appendix

## Appendix

### Glossary of Terms

**Aesthetic:** The perception of elements in the natural or created environment that are pleasing to the eye.

**Amenity:** A natural or created feature that enhances the aesthetic quality, visual appeal or makes more attractive a particular property, place or area.

**Annexation:** To incorporate a land area currently outside of the existing city limits into a municipality, with a resulting expansion in the boundaries of the municipality.

**Arterial Street:** See *Street System Hierarchy*

**Buffering:** The Plan calls for buffering between different land uses to minimize negative impacts. Buffering can include open space, landscaped areas, fences, walls, berms or any combination thereof to physically separate or screen one use or property from another. In designing buffers, the city's zoning ordinance should allow flexibility for the type and size of the buffer.

**Built Environment:** Artificially created fixed elements, such as buildings, structures, devices and surfaces, which together create the physical character of an area.

**Capital Improvements Plan:** A local government's timetable or schedule of all future capital improvements to be carried out during a specific period and generally listed in order of priority, with cost estimates and sources of financing each project. A typical capital improvements plan is a five-year program. A capital improvement is generally a major construction project or the acquisition of large, expensive equipment.

**Circulation:** Systems and structures for the movement of people, goods, water, sewage, air or power by such means as sidewalks, trails, streets, highways, waterways, towers, pipes and conduits.

**Collector Street:** See *Street System Hierarchy*

**Contiguous:** Having a common boundary, next to, abutting or touching an adjoining property.

## Appendix

**Density:** The number of housing units or structures allowed per unit of land. In Robins, current allowable density is approximately three housing units per acre or less.

**Design Standards:** A set of guidelines defining parameters to be followed in site and/or building design and development. Can also be used to define standards for infrastructure improvements as well.

**Development:** The physical construction of buildings and/or the preparation of land. Development activities include: subdivision of land; construction or alternation of structures, roads, utilities and other facilities; installation of septic systems; grading; and clearing of natural vegetative cover (with the exception of agricultural activities).

**Environmentally Sensitive Land:** An area with one or more of the following characteristics: (1) steep slopes, (2) flood plain, (3) soils with high water tables including wetlands and wetlands transition areas, (4) soils that are highly erodible or subject to erosion, (5) land incapable of meeting percolation requirements, (6) stream or river corridor, (7) mature stands of native vegetation, and (8) habitats of endangered species.

**Floodplain:** The land area on either side of the banks of a waterway subject to flooding.

**Fringe-area agreements:** See *Intergovernmental Agreement*

**Future Growth Area:** The corridors that define the potential growth area for the city. The corridors, as shown on the Future Land Use Map, can be generally described as where development outside of the City limits should be directed. Also called Urban Service Areas or areas that define the geographical limit of government-supplied public facilities and services.

**Goal:** Description of a desired state of affairs for the community in the future. Goals are the broad public purposes toward which policies and programs are directed. Generally, more than one set of actions (objectives) may be required to achieve each goal.

**Green Space:** See *Open Space*

**Growth Management:** A wide-range of techniques used in combination to manage or influence the amount, type, location, density, timing and/or rate of growth. Growth management objectives often form the backbone of a comprehensive plan. Techniques used to execute growth management policies may include: zoning and subdivision ordinances, capital improvements, and designation of future growth or urban service boundaries.

## Appendix

**IDNR:** The Iowa Department Of Natural Resources

**IDOT:** The Iowa Department of Transportation

**IEDA:** The Iowa Economic Development Authority

**Incremental Design:** Method of development to maintain small town atmosphere and reducing sprawl by utilizing compact, contiguous growth to existing development.

**Infrastructure:** Public services and facilities needed to sustain residential, commercial, industrial and all other types of development activities. Infrastructure includes, but is not limited to sewage disposal systems, water supply systems, drainage systems, roads, parks, sidewalks, trails, schools, libraries, fire, police, emergency, medical facilities and public works facilities.

**Intergovernmental Agreement (28E Agreement):** A legal document binding two or more governmental units or agencies to act in certain, cooperative ways. The term is most often used in a planning context to refer to shared or delegated responsibility to review development proposals and/or to recognize adopted plans and policies of the governmental units or agencies. For example, the City of Robins and Linn County might create an intergovernmental agreement which requires each entity to provide materials on development proposals within certain geographic areas for the other entity to review and comment upon. Also called fringe-area agreements.

**Issues:** Points of debate, discussion or dispute in the community that are identified in the plan and are dealt with by the plan's goals, policies and objectives.

**Land Use:** A description of how land is occupied or utilized. Land use types typically include: various types of residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and public uses.

**Local Street:** See *Street System Hierarchy*

**Mixed-Use District:** The development of a tract of land with a variety of complementary and integrated uses in a compact urban form. Mixed use within Robins could include a combination of properly planned commercial and light industrial uses to ensure compatibility between each use.

**Multi-modal Transportation:** A term for the variety of transportation types, including motor vehicles, mass-transit, and pedestrian oriented (i.e. walking and bicycling).

## Appendix

**Neighborhood:** An area of a community with characteristics that distinguish it from other areas that may include distinct ethnic or economic characteristics, housing types, or boundaries defined by physical barriers such as a major highway or river.

**Neighborhood Commercial:** Small-scale business activity that is limited in size and operation to insure compatibility with adjacent neighborhoods and uses. It is generally within walking distance to local residential neighborhoods.

**Objective:** Individual accomplishments which, taken together, will enable the city to achieve stated goals.

**Open Space:** Any parcel or area of land or water that is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open space use for the purposes of (1) the preservation of natural resources, (2) outdoor recreation (active or passive), or (3) public health or safety. Land used for the managed production of resources (farming, etc.) is not considered open space for the purpose of this plan.

**Plan:** The formulation and graphic representation of the means to reach a desired end, as well as the act of preparing a plan (community input, research and analysis). The Robins Plan is a written and graphic analysis of a desirable and feasible pattern of growth with goals and objectives to best serve the residents of the community. This plan is based on the input of the community and upon data and extensive research.

**Planning Area:** The area specifically shown on the Future Land Use Map contained in this plan. It can be generally described as all the land within the corporate boundaries of Robins, as well as all the land within two miles surrounding the community. This is the area that directly influences the character, services and facilities of the City of Robins. This area may be amended from time to time as the city physically grows.

**Planning Period:** The period for which the projections and the goals and objectives of this plan were made (from the year 2012 to 2030).

**Policy:** Statements of government intent for which individual actions and decisions are evaluated.

**Region:** The region designated by the Iowa Legislature as State Planning Area 10. This region consists of six contiguous counties in eastern Iowa, including: Benton, Iowa, Benton, Jones, Benton, and Washington, which are served by the planning agency East Central Iowa Council of Governments (ECICOG).

## Appendix

**Sense of Place:** The characteristics of a location that make it readily recognizable as being unique and different from its surroundings.

**Setback:** The distance between the permitted structure and the lot line. In Robins, the setback is regulated for the front, rear and side yards of principal and accessory uses.

**Smart Planning:** The State of Iowa has adopted Smart Planning principles and elements that cities and counties should consider when preparing plans and reviewing development proposals.

**Strategy:** Tasks that may be taken to achieve stated goals and policies.

**Streetscape:** All the elements that constitute the physical makeup of a street and that, as a group, define its character, including building frontage, paving, street furniture, landscaping (trees and other plantings), awnings and marquees, signs and lighting.

**Street System Hierarchy:** The Robins street system generally consists of three functional uses of streets: Arterial, Collector and Local streets. Arterial Streets provide a continuous route for the movement of large volumes of through-traffic across and beyond the city and between high traffic generation points. Collector Streets provide movement of traffic between arterial streets as well as providing limited access to abutting property. Local streets serve as a means of access to abutting property.

**Urban Design:** The process of organizing the contextual elements of the built environment such that the end result will be a place with its own character or identity. Also, urban design can be described as planning the development of the built environment in a comprehensive manner to achieve a unified, functional, efficient and appealing physical setting.

**Urban Sprawl:** Uncontrolled growth, usually low-density in nature, in previously rural areas and some distance from existing development and infrastructure.

**Use:** The purpose for which a lot or structure is or may be leased, occupied, maintained, arranged, designed, intended, constructed, moved, altered, and/or enlarged in accordance with the zoning ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use categories.

**Zoning:** The delineation of districts and the establishment of regulations governing the use, placement, spacing and size of land and buildings.



## Appendix

### Community Survey Results

The crucial element in any plan is ensuring that the wishes and hopes the residents hold for their community is represented in the content of the plan. If the plan does not accurately reflect the needs and desires of area residents, it will have little value.

This survey was sent to every address in the community along with a self-addressed stamped envelope to return the survey. All told, it was sent to 1,135 addresses with 500 surveys returned. This represents over a 44% response rate – a tremendous response, indicating the value Robins' residents place on planning.

The survey was held at the beginning of the planning process for two reasons:

- ❖ The critical elements for the future vision are identified early in the process ensuring that appropriate problem identification occurs at the very beginning;
- ❖ Public participation is crucial for creating an effective and appropriate plan. By having the survey at the beginning of the process, every resident has an opportunity to direct a future vision for the planning area.

Due to the voluminous nature of the survey results and the written public comments gathered in the survey, they are not being included in the plan. The survey results and all public comments will be made available at city hall and on the city's website. The information gathered from the survey was instrumental in the creation of this comprehensive plan. ECICOG thanks all the respondents who are a large part of this plan.

Appendix

**Notes**