



City of Rector Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2025-2030

Introduction

The City of Rector has experienced a gradual population decline since the 1980s¹. Like many rural communities, Rector faces challenges related to housing affordability, aging housing, and limited infill development. This plan addresses these challenges by proposing changes to zoning policy that will attract new residents, retain younger generations, and promote sustainable growth within existing city infrastructure.

This five-year plan establishes the foundation for updating zoning regulations in a manner consistent with Arkansas law (A.C.A. § 14-56-403 and 14-56-416), providing a policy framework for land use, housing development, and the efficient use of city resources. It is intended to be practical, flexible, and aligned with the needs of a small town committed to revitalizing itself.

This plan favors incremental improvements and fiscally responsible land use, focusing on making the most of existing infrastructure and land before expanding outward.

Goals

Increase housing options and affordability

- Reduce minimum lot sizes to allow more flexible housing layouts and lower barriers to homeownership.
- Permit smaller homes, including starter homes and tiny homes, that meet modern safety and fire codes.
- Legalize accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to provide housing for extended families, caregivers, or rental income.

Support population stabilization and growth

- Attract and retain residents, and affordable homes.
- Remove or clarify outdated zoning barriers that discourage property investment.
- Promote new housing construction within current city limits.
- Support redevelopment of vacant lots and underused residential and commercial parcels.

Ensure safe, high-quality development

- Maintain fire safety, utility access, and lot access standards for all housing types.
- Encourage designs that fit with existing neighborhood character while expanding choice.
- Regulate Manufactured Housing to preserve community standards and safety.

Support Local Business and Entrepreneurship

- Promote flexible zoning that allows for small-scale home-based businesses, live/work spaces, and commercial infill.
- Encourage the reuse and rehabilitation of existing commercial buildings, especially downtown.
- Allow accessory structures and underutilized parcels to be used for small-scale production, services, or retail (when appropriate and compatible with surrounding uses).

Infrastructure and Utilities

Rector should continue to modernize and maintain essential infrastructure, streets, water, sewer, and stormwater systems, to ensure reliable service and support future growth. Investment in these systems should prioritize efficiency, long-term cost savings, and alignment with state and federal funding opportunities. The City should also remain attentive to the sustainability of the Nacatoch Aquifer, which supplies much of the Clay County's water. While monitoring is primarily conducted by state and federal agencies, Rector should explore cooperative partnerships opportunities that allow for aquifer data collection and reporting at little or no direct cost to the City. By aligning land use with infrastructure capacity and water resource stewardship, Rector can ensure that growth remains safe, sustainable, and fiscally responsible.

Future Land Use

Residential (R-1, R-2)

- **Traditional Neighborhoods:** Most of Rector's housing will remain single-family focused, but with more flexibility in lot size and home type. New homes should be allowed on lots smaller than current minimums, provided they meet fire safety and utility access standards. This can be achieved by reducing minimum lot sizes. Reducing minimum lot sizes will allow the development of smaller homes, and bring many nonconforming lots in Rector into compliance.
- **Accessory Dwelling Units:** ADUs (such as backyard cottages or "In-Law Suites") should be permitted in both R-1 and R-2 zones so families can stay together, residents can age in place, and property owners can make use of their land. Lot requirements should exist to prevent overcrowding. ADUs must comply with applicable city ordinances and Arkansas Building Code.
- **Tiny Homes & Small Houses:** Site-built homes under 800 square feet should be allowed where infrastructure supports them, especially in areas with small vacant parcels. These should be built to Arkansas' Building Codes to create long-term housing solutions.

- **Manufactured Homes:** Manufactured home regulations should be improved to address community concerns and uphold neighborhood integrity. These homes should be installed and manufactured in a fashion which stands the test of time. Appearance standards should be compatible with site-built homes.

Commercial (C-1, C-2)

The U.S. has shifted towards a service industry, and this seems to be supported by data provided by the East Arkansas Planning and Development District². Rector should support new service and retail-based businesses. Rector Downtown Central, and Main Street Arkansas may be able to assist new businesses in obtaining grants to preserve and revitalize our downtown.

Industrial (I)

Factories and other manufacturing-based businesses should be allowed when opportunity arises, while the safety and character of the city are preserved. Manufacturing is a great job producer, and any opportunity should be considered, but this shouldn't be a top focus because of national trends.

Agricultural (A)

The Agriculture districts in the southeast of town are not being used for agriculture. These districts should be rezoned to match their actual use. For example, the park and ball field should be residential (R-1), or a new zone which represents these uses. The grocery store along Highway 49 should be commercial (C-2), and the nursing home should be residential (R-1) or commercial (C-2). Rezoning these better reflects their current use, and avoids confusion should these areas be redeveloped.

Implementation

This plan is intended to guide zoning policy in Rector over the next five years. Changes to the Zoning Regulations will be developed by the

Planning Commission, and City Council while receiving input from the public.

Review

The Planning Commission should revisit this plan by 2030 or earlier if major changes in population, infrastructure, or community priorities occur.

Referred Planning Area

This plan primarily focuses on growth within the current city limits. However, in accordance with Arkansas law (A.C.A § 14-56-413), Rector may consider future development and land use conditions within one mile of city limits. Should the opportunity arise, the city should consider expanding its limits to grow its tax base, but community input should be considered through this process.

Sources

1. U.S. Census Bureau. "RACE." Decennial Census, DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171), Table P1, <https://data.census.gov/table/DECENNIALPL2020.P1?q=160XX00US0558490>.
2. East Arkansas Planning & Development District. Clay County Community Profile. East Arkansas Planning & Development District, 2024, pp. 3–4. https://www.eapdd.org/_files/ugd/eb67d2_e8993ecd82a040fbbc96f34ab01766ea.pdf.