

Adopted by St. Louis County Council

April 1999

Publication Date

June 1999

Published by

**St. Louis County Department of Planning**

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# SPANISH LAKE COMMUNITY AREA STUDY

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Purpose

The purpose of this community area plan is to identify issues that are of concern to the residents of Spanish Lake and to devise strategies for addressing these concerns. The planning process is intended to protect and enhance the livability within specific neighborhoods, as well as to help fulfill the overall community vision and to create a more livable community. More specifically, this plan is intended to:

- C Educate both county government and community residents about each other's concerns and visions for the future.
- C Promote collaboration between the county and the community in order to achieve mutual goals and a shared sense of responsibility.
- C Create a "sense of place" within a community by identifying and developing the assets within the community.
- C Initiate change, rather than simply reacting to it, by addressing specific issues and opportunities.
- C Achieve sensible and coordinated project and program planning.

## Initiating the Process

The St. Louis County Department of Planning has historically conducted small area studies for areas of the county that were experiencing development pressure. Previous community area studies generally addressed future land use recommendations in detail. As the county has become more developed, issues related to retaining property values and commercial services as well as maintaining aging infrastructures have surfaced. The Spanish Lake Community Area

Study was undertaken in response to requests from residents to develop strategies that would maintain the quality of life in this area.

## Spanish Lake Profile

The Spanish Lake Community is located in the northeastern portion of St. Louis County. The community is bounded by the Mississippi River to the east, the Missouri River to the north, Highway 367 to the west, and Interstate 270 to the south.

Today, the population of the area from the most recent census is 20,791, of which there are 5,647 families. The area is experiencing a slight population loss, which is consistent with the overall pattern for St. Louis County with the shift in population to the outlying areas.

According to the 1990 census, the median household income was \$33,766. This income is 89% of the average median income for St. Louis County. Spanish Lake residents are also relatively well- educated. Approximately half of the adult population has either had some college or a college degree. The majority of Spanish Lake residents (61%) are employed in a white collar profession. Persons working in a blue collar profession represent 28% of the population. Those who work in a service industry comprise 11% of the workers.

The Spanish Lake Community has a diversity of housing stock. Two-thirds of the housing was built between 1960 and 1979 (about a third, 36% between 1960 and 1969 and approximately another third, 33%, between 1970-1979). The median value for single family homes is approximately \$72,728. Most of the commercial properties are located on highways, such as Highway 367 or Dunn Road or clustered at the intersection of Parker and Bellefontaine Roads.

## The Planning Process

A kick off meeting was held on September 30, 1997 for residents to identify issues. The major issues were related to housing and neighborhood character, land use, transportation and other services and economic development. Task Forces were formed according to these themes. The purpose of the task forces was to examine the issues in each of these categories in more detail.

A steering committee was formed to oversee the management of the planning process. The role of the Steering Committee was to provide representation of community interests in order to assist the Department of Planning in conducting the Community Area Study. The main functions of the Steering Committee included identifying issues, providing specific information about the community, serving in an advisory and facilitator role, maintaining contact with the community, and providing guidance and oversight.

The steering committee and task forces created the following work products:

- C A Community Values Statement - A collection of concepts the community holds important which serves to undergird the plan;
- C Trend Statements and Scenario - The task forces made observations about the trends that were occurring in Spanish Lake and what may happen if these trends continue.
- C A Vision Statement - What the community would like to become in ten years.
- C An Action Plan - This plan contains the goals for the community as well as the strategies used to meet these goals. The goals developed for the community are listed below:

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## COMMUNITY GOALS

- T Create a better sense of community and identity in Spanish Lake
  - T Enhance the aesthetic appeal of Spanish Lake through beautification
  - T Promote public safety and health of the Spanish Lake community
  - T Maintain a safe and efficient transportation system with travel alternatives for all residents
  - T Create new commercial opportunities including retail choice for residents and new businesses for job growth.
  - T Stabilize the housing market to promote the desirability of Spanish Lake and improve the quality of its housing stock.
  - T Create exceptional recreational opportunities to attract both visitors and new home owners
- 

It should be noted that all of the recommended strategies are not included in this document since Louis County Government does not have jurisdiction over school districts. The input gathered at the meetings will be forwarded to the Hazelwood School District for review.

## Community Preference Survey

Since revitalization will be a principal function of a planning effort, three task forces were given a community preference survey in order to determine what aspects of commercial development were most desired. Participants were shown slides taken of commercial developments located in St. Louis County. Staff

attempted to include a variety of established as well as newer developments including shopping centers and individual buildings located in various communities in the county. The slides were not identified as to location.

In summary, the following design elements were preferred by community participants in the visual preference survey:

- C Pedestrian scale buildings - 2 story maximum height
- C Attractive landscaping including a variety of trees and shrubs (evergreen and deciduous)
- C Green space or lawn areas
- C Parking areas with landscaped islands and green buffers from street rights-of-way
- C Moderately sized parking areas in front of retail properties
- C Durable building materials, such as brick, for exterior elevations
- C Regulated signage with uniformity of size; monument signs
- C Architectural details such as clock towers, cupolas and dormers
- C Residential-style architectural ornamentation
- C Traditional colors for building exteriors and signage
- C Avoidance of garish color schemes and generic corporate architecture for chain retail
- C Limited access points to commercial properties to enhance vehicular safety
- C Campus-style design for business parks with industrial/distribution facilities
- C Inviting streetscapes which include sidewalks, decorative street lighting, street furniture, awnings and landscaping .

### **Land Use Recommendations**

General recommendations were formulated in order to establish guidelines for future development, zoning petitions and planning

decisions. With respect to future land use in the Spanish Lake area it is recommended that:

- C Natural and unique aesthetic qualities of the area should be preserved in public or common ground open space whenever possible.
- C Residential subdivision development should be environmentally sensitive and in keeping with surrounding development.
- C Ensure that infill developments are compatible with the surrounding area and promote the desired character of the Spanish Lake community.
- C Identify and establish development/redevelopment areas via master plans and create specific land development guidelines in addition to zoning and subdivision regulations.

### **Plan Implementation**

The implementation of a plan is the most critical piece of the planning process. A plan is not effective unless it is implemented. To address this key part of the process, an implementation committee will be formed to monitor the implementation process. This group will meet on an annual basis throughout the duration of the action plan.

The formation of a 501(c) community association is most fundamental to keeping the momentum. The community association will be the body to articulate problems and suggest solutions to solve these problems. Furthermore, this association will coordinate projects, acquire funding, and be a clearinghouse of information for the area. This group will not stand alone, however. A partnership with St. Louis County Government should be cultivated. Together, these two entities will assure the revitalization of the Spanish Lake community.