

Chapter 1: Introduction

Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Rockaway Beach is to provide a policy guide for the growth and future development of the City. Section 89.350 of the Missouri Revised Statutes describes the purpose of the plan and how it shall be prepared, "In the preparation of the city plan, the commission shall make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of the existing conditions and probable future growth of the municipality. The plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated development of the municipality which will, in accordance with existing and future needs, best promote the general welfare, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development." The Comprehensive Plan provides a framework for evaluating development proposals, programs for public improvements and the financing thereof. The Rockaway Beach Comprehensive Plan is intended to communicate to public agencies, citizens and other organizations the desired outcomes and future vision of Rockaway Beach.

Plan Development and Organization

Public Participation

The Plan is also a goal oriented document that sets forth objectives and strategies to achieve a vision of the future based on needs identified by residents and property owners through community surveys, public meetings, and studies conducted over a two year period. During this period, citizens of Rockaway Beach have voiced the goal to make Rockaway Beach a vibrant community with a sustainable economy—a community that is a safe, attractive, and welcoming place in which to live, work, visit and invest. The planning process was initiated in 2008 with a community visioning session. During this session, citizens were asked to identify the good things about Rockaway Beach that they wanted to keep in a future vision of the community. The following aspects were identified:

- Lake Front
- Historic Buildings
- Peace and Quiet
- Small Town Atmosphere
- Family Community
- Affordable Value Destination
- Fishing

- Conservation Minded
- Relationship with Branson-Public Events
- Post Office
- Bridge of Faith Chapel
- Empire Park
- Existing Business

Subsequently, members of the community were asked to express their ideas for needs and strategies to move the City forward. Ideas were written on poster boards and then citizens were asked to vote on priority items in a straw poll. These ideas and the straw poll results are presented in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1: Vision Priorities for Rockaway Beach

Visions for Rockaway Beach	Priority Straw Poll Results
Downtown Revitalization	19
Clean up Restrooms	1
Clean up Lake Front	11
River Road from Branson-Bull Creek Bridge	10
Walkable Community	8
Develop Empire Park-Ball Fields	5
Rebuild Mallard Bay Bridge	4
Outdoor Stadium/Amphitheater	7
Boat Traffic-Water Taxi to Branson Landing	6
Skate Park	3
Other Youth Entertainment	2
Create a Safe Downtown	2
Extreme Sports/Regional Events/Kayak Run	4
Signage off Highway 65/Historic Sign	3
Improve Access to the Community	2
Marketing Using Websites	2
Improve Boat Launch Area/Upgrade Entrance	1
Green Community	2
Upgrade Infrastructure	
Water	1
Sewer	1
Underground Electric	
Arts Community	1
Shallow Rock Park	1
Festivals	1

Vision Statement

The intent of the Plan is to take Rockaway Beach into the twenty-first century by providing the necessary guidelines to promote the community's livability as well as economic and environmental sustainability. The vision, as determined by studying the values and critical issues provided by the residents, is to:

Remain an affordable family-oriented community supported by a vibrant and historic tourism and recreation business sector and revitalized lakefront.

The City must meet the basic needs of its residents and businesses while striving to maintain and enhance the quality of life for the future. The objectives and strategies of the Plan are based on attaining the future vision expressed by the people and the following overarching goals for the City of Rockaway Beach developed from that vision:

- The quality of the natural environment will be maintained and enhanced for future generations
- Rockaway Beach will deliver public services to its residents, businesses and visitors
- Tourism and recreation will be sustaining elements of the community's economic growth
- Rockaway Beach will provide a quality living environment that promotes resource conservation and opportunities for leisure and employment

Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Goals are broadly written statements of what the City wants to achieve. Objectives are statements of intent that the leaders of the City, both inside and outside of City Hall, should use to guide their actions and decision-making. Implementation strategies are steps the City should take based upon the goals and objectives. These strategies should be used to form work programs that lay out the development philosophy the City should strive towards to achieve the future vision of the community. Some strategies are clear actions the City should take; others are recommendations for additional planning work, namely the revision and amending of zoning maps and development standards that are consistent with the character of the community and the Comprehensive Plan.

Components of the Plan

The Plan is divided into chapters that relate to different aspects of community development. Some chapters provide only background information on existing conditions and community profile summaries to provide context for objectives and strategies. Other chapters are more defined and include the specific objectives, strategies and further recommendations that relate to the aspect presented and requisite maps that graphically depict the future physical development community; such as the Major Street Plan and Future Land Use Map. The subsequent chapters that follow, in order, are:

- Demographic Profile
- Economic Profile
- Natural Environment
- Public Facilities
- Transportation
- Land Use
- Economic Development
- Plan Implementation

Community History and Overview

Rockaway Beach is situated on Lake Taneycomo in Taney County, Missouri. Rockaway Beach has been a resort community since the early 20th Century. According to some local sources, it is reputed to be the Ozark's first tourist destination. Lake Taneycomo was created after the construction of Powersite Dam in the White River near Forsyth, Missouri in 1913. The dam was constructed for hydroelectric power generation and provided power to Springfield, Carthage, Joplin, Forsyth and many other towns. Rockaway Beach was founded shortly thereafter in 1917.

Willard Merriam, a member of Merriam, Ellis and Benton Realty and Insurance Company Inc. of Kansas City, Kansas, learned of plans to construct Powersite Dam and purchased 600 acres of land in and around Rockaway Beach, which he deemed a good location for the development of a summer resort community. He proceeded to make a real estate project out of this acreage after christening the resort with its present and only name. Merriam's venture soon paid off as property sales soared and people became permanent residents of Rockaway Beach. The first post office was established on January 31st, 1919. Initially, the community attracted affluent vacationers, which allegedly included many celebrities of the time. These individuals built large houses on

the lake, some in a unique architectural style. The Merriam's first home, "Whileaway", was located on the site currently occupied by the Eden Rock Motel.

Tourists first travelled to Rockaway Beach on the Missouri Pacific Railroad to Branson or Hollister, then down Lake Taneycomo by boat. According to local legend, the most famous tourist visiting Rockaway Beach was Al Capone during his heyday. Reportedly, you can still view the ruins of his vacation spot from the lake. During this period the picturesque one and half mile shoreline was home to a number of hotels, as well as a dance hall and a pavilion. Boats landing at Rockaway Beach in those days docked in front of the pavilion, through which the passengers walked to make their way to destinations on the beach.

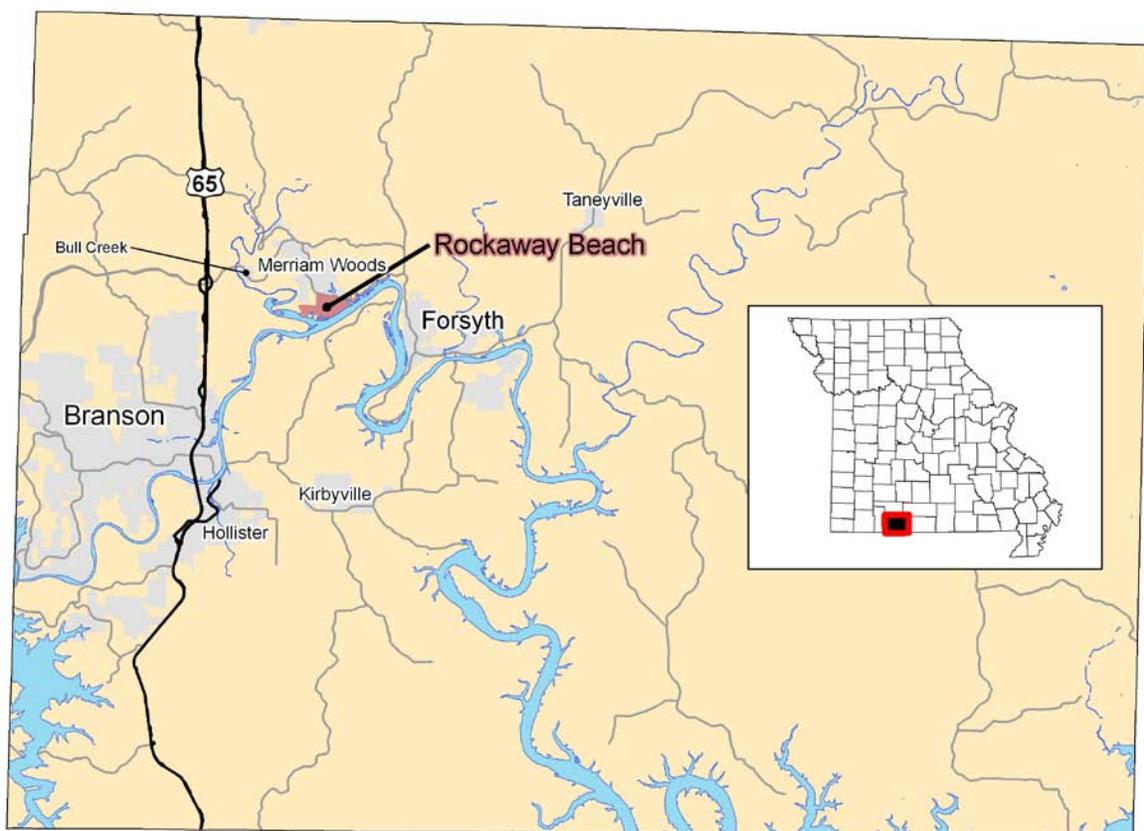


Figure 1-1: Location of Rockaway Beach in Taney County, Missouri

In 1930, a bond issue was passed and the Rockaway Water Company was established to replace a less efficient system of numerous individual wells serving only a few properties each. The City was not accessible by car until after World War II when new

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highways were constructed. Rockaway Beach continued as the primary tourist destination in Taney County even after the construction of the Table Rock Dam in 1958 made the warm waters of Lake Taneycomo much cooler. The cooler waters of Lake Taneycomo became ideal for a trout hatchery at the foot of Table Rock Dam and Rockaway Beach began to build a reputation as one of the most popular trout fishing destinations in the state.

Rockaway Beach continued to be a vibrant, family-friendly resort and amusement destination throughout the 1960s and into the 70s and 80s. It wasn't until recently that the growth of Branson as the primary tourist and recreation destination in Taney County began to detract from investment and continued development in Rockaway Beach. As Branson boomed some of the local resorts and amusement ventures along Beach Boulevard fell into disrepair and suffered as viable investment and business opportunities. Despite these effects, the resident population in the community doubled in the 1990s as Rockaway Beach became an affordable housing community for seasonal and year round employees in the tourist service economy of Taney County and others who have made Rockaway Beach their community of choice.

Rockaway Beach, to its credit, still remains a prominent place in the region due to the emotional attachment many have to positive experiences with family and friends while visiting the community. Currently Rockaway Beach is a community in transition. The City must function as quiet and affordable residential community while it rallies around its assets to find its niche in the contemporary tourist economy of Taney County.