
Planning Your City

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Oklahoma's rapidly growing urban population is placing an increasing load on municipal facilities. However, municipal revenue is not expanding in proportion to this increasing load, and there are few additional sources of revenue which can be utilized. Most of our Oklahoma cities have efficient administrators who are squeezing all they can from each tax dollar, and yet many cities still face a financial crisis.

Long range community planning offers a new approach in meeting urban problems. It facilitates maximum dollar return from a narrow tax base and economic use of tax revenue. It keeps citizens better informed on present municipal activities, and those proposed for the future.

Long range planning anticipates and looks for solutions to problems before they become acute. Too often municipal governments have had to compromise the best interests of the community because they had to remedy an emergency rather than plan a permanent cure.

BECAUSE long range community planning is an application of sound business principles to running city government—

BECAUSE it offers new tools—zoning, major thoroughfare plans, better platting of land, coordination of school, park and recreational facilities, and others, for guiding good community growth—

BECAUSE it offers opportunity for better living for the people of Oklahoma—

we have set forth here, in brief outline form, answers to some questions on long range community planning.

WHAT IS CITY PLANNING ?

City Planning is the study and analysis of the physical, social, economic and administrative resources of the urban area; the determination of present and future needs, and finally the preparation of a program of action to meet these needs and correct past mistakes. In essence, vitalized city planning takes the community from where it is to where it wants to be. It protects the community's assets and works to correct its liabilities.

WHY PLAN ?

- To insure orderly and harmonious development of the community.
- To develop facilities for industry, business and trade.
- To provide adequate terminal facilities for transportation.
- To lessen traffic congestion.
- To provide off-street parking facilities.
- To provide well-located schools, parks, and recreational facilities.
- To prevent overcrowding of buildings.
- To stabilize land values.
- To provide for adequate health facilities.
- To provide public service at lower cost.

A planned community grows up with its citizens. Its inhabitants are proud of it as a place to live, to work, and to play. Planning, well conceived and intelligently applied, will assure the community of lasting benefits.

WHO DOES THE PLANNING ?

Planning is for the people. It should be done by the people. It is a co-operative undertaking requiring the understanding and support of the whole community. Organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, civic clubs, women's clubs, garden clubs, and youth groups should all play an active role.

Planning, to be effective, should have official status. The program should be under the direction of the City Planning Commission and in turn should be considered and officially approved by the City Council.

Outside help may be obtained when dealing with the technical aspects of planning. Studies of a technical nature should be made by professional people experienced in the field of work who serve as a staff to the commission. The plan itself will prove effective only so long as the people *understand* it, *use* it, and *keep it accurately up to date*, so that continually it will be in harmony with the goals and desires of the people it is designed to serve.

WHAT IS THE LEGAL BASIS FOR PLANNING ?

Any city or town in the State of Oklahoma is authorized to create a city planning commission.

The state act providing for city planning commissions requires that

the commission be composed of not less than five members, all legal residents of the community. In addition to the five citizens, the mayor and city engineer are ex-officio members. The act provides for staggered terms of three years. The members of the commission serve without pay.

The planning commission is charged by the act "to prepare from time to time plans for the systematic development and betterment of such municipality as a place of residence or for business." The commission is given authority to hire such help as is deemed necessary subject to the approval of the legislative body. (U. S. Title 11 Sec. 401-423.)
HOW TO PROCEED?

Collection of Data:

The first step in the planning process is the study and analysis of the physical, social, economic, and administrative resources of the community. The following is a suggestive topical outline of information that should be studied and analyzed about your community.

I. HISTORY

II. PHYSICAL RESOURCES

- a. Land use
- b. Climate
- c. Topography and drainage
- d. Natural resources
- e. Transportation and communication

III. SOCIAL RESOURCES

- a. Population
- b. Housing
- c. Health
- d. Education
- e. Recreation
- f. Religious organizations
- g. Social welfare

IV. ECONOMIC RESOURCES

- a. Trade area
- b. Business activity and consumer demand
- c. Agriculture
- d. Employment
- e. Public utilities
- f. Financial structure of city and county government

V. ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES

- a. Departments of local government
- b. Civic organizations

Determination of Needs:

Step two involves an analysis of the data collected to determine the community needs—a school in a new residential area, more off-street parking space, a by-pass to relieve traffic congestion on Main Street, a zoning ordinance to protect property values—to name a few.

At this point in the planning process standards for measuring existing community facilities come into play. Nationally and regionally accepted standards for such things as recreation areas, off-street parking space for different types of business establishments, school facilities and

land development are checked against local conditions. These national standards, modified to suit the particular community, can serve as useful guides in determining present and future needs.

A Program of Action:

Analysis of data in step two of the planning process sets forth not only community needs but a schedule of priority based on urgency. From this schedule a program of action is drawn up. An outline of such a program would include the following:

1. **LAND USE PLAN**—establishes the plan for the uses of all public and private properties within the city and the area surrounding the city that will be subject to urbanization in the foreseeable future. This plan is implemented through the zoning ordinance as it applies to private properties and through the capital improvements program that provides for public facilities.
2. **ZONING ORDINANCE**—establishes the districts in which the use of the land, the amount of yards and open space and the height of the buildings are regulated for the good of the community as a whole. The only way to assure that industry, business, residence, streets, utilities and public uses, such as schools and parks, are coordinated in convenient, healthy and attractive relation to each other is to *plan for their development before they are built*. This means that a zoning ordinance must be officially adopted to give legal status to the principles set forth in the land use plan by guiding the future growth of the community.
3. **MAJOR THOROUGHFARES PLAN**—sets forth a long-range program to improve the flow of traffic by planning for streets in accordance with future traffic requirements. Traffic is channeled onto streets built to handle it and away from areas it can harm. The Plan can save the city hundreds of thousands of dollars in acquiring right-of-way since it provides for adequate building setbacks in new areas abutting the future thoroughfares.
4. **SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS**—establish minimum standards for new land development. These regulations give the assurance that new development will tie in with the network of major thoroughfares and minor streets, that lot sizes in residential neighborhoods will be sufficient to provide a desirable living area, and that adequate easement widths for utilities and streets will be provided. They encourage the best possible utilization of topography to provide good drainage and orientation.
5. **SCHOOL AND PARK LOCATION PLAN**—provides a factual basis for fitting the public facilities to the needs of the population. It is designed to answer such questions as: what and how many new schools are needed now; when and where will they be needed in the future; in which directions is the city growing; what additional park facilities are needed to serve the different age-groups and interests; where should these facilities be located; how can school and park plans be coordinated in that they may supplement each other and give maximum return for each dollar spent?
6. **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**—determines the public facilities required by the city and their estimated cost, and establishes a schedule for financing them. The program may designate that some projects be financed by bond issues, while others can be put on a pay-as-you-go basis. This business-like financial planning usually is projected into the future for a period of several years and revised each year to take care of new developments.

This list by no means exhausts the possibilities of a planning program—it's just the first round of solid steps toward better community living.