

# Introduction

## Why Do We Have a Comprehensive Plan?

In discussing the City's Comprehensive Plan three questions most often come to mind. The first question is: **Why do we have a Comprehensive Plan?** Simply put, the Comprehensive Plan reflects what we want Overland Park to be in the future.

## What Is the City's Comprehensive Plan?

The second question is: **What is the City's Comprehensive Plan?** The Comprehensive Plan is a policy guide that describes in its text and displays in its graphics the City's aims for directing future land development. The Comprehensive Plan has four traits, which are:

- The Comprehensive Plan is **primarily a physical plan**, showing on the map and describing in the text the location and relationships between specific land uses and densities of development.
- The plan is **long range**, examining Overland Park's expected growth well into the future. The Plan map graphically displays the ultimate development of the City. No specific time frame is given, however, because of the unpredictability of development cycles.
- The plan is **comprehensive** covering such issues as population, housing and economic trends which have and will continue to influence land development in Overland Park.
- The Comprehensive Plan is a **statement of the City's policy** for directing land development as:
  - Stated in the land use goals;
  - Discussed in the special studies and study area reports;

- Identified in the adopted policy resolutions of the Planning Commission and City Council; and as
- Displayed graphically on the Plan's maps.

The Future Development Plan map has the highest profile of the Comprehensive Plan maps. The Future Development Plan map is a compilation of the others, but it is only one of several maps reflecting the City's policies for directing land development. The other maps include: the Greenway Linkages Plans for northern and southern Overland Park, the Future Parks Plan, the Street Network/ Official Street Map, the Study Areas Map and the Bike Route Plan.

These six Comprehensive Plan documents show the four traits discussed above:

1. The Future Development Plan;
2. The Greenway Linkages Plan for Northern Overland Park;
3. The Greenway Linkages Plan for Southern Overland Park;
4. The Plan Implementation text;
5. The Plan Elements text; and
6. The Goals for Overland Park text.

The Plan Elements text discusses in detail various past, present and expected population, economic, and housing trends that influence land development in the City. The Plan Elements also discusses environmental issues affecting land development, parks and recreation facilities planning, the Public Art Master Plan, and utility services provided to City residents and businesses. Because of its scope, only portions of the document are reviewed and update in any given year. The Goals for Overland Park text is reviewed as needed.

The other documents are reviewed annually. By their nature, these six documents are the most important to review annually to insure that the Comprehensive Plan reflects current City land use policy.

## How Is the Comprehensive Plan Used?

Going back to the questions that we started with, the third question is: **How is the Comprehensive Plan used?** The Comprehensive Plan is used as a source of information on a variety of land use topics. The **most significant role of the Comprehensive Plan** is as a **policy guide** that identifies the City's goals for directing future land development.

Developers and landowners use the Comprehensive Plan to identify where they can locate, and, for residential uses, at what density they can build. This is for new development proposed at the fringes of the City, for redevelopment or new development within the established areas such as around the downtown, and for vacant tracts skipped over in past years as development progressed southward.

Homeowners and neighborhood organizations use, or should use, the plan to identify what land uses the City is planning for around them. Other agencies including the school districts, county government, and utilities use the plan to help them in forecasting future service needs.

Finally, the City itself uses the Plan in a variety of ways including:

1. Evaluating development proposals;
2. Coordinating development within the City and with adjacent jurisdictions;
3. Neighborhood and special area planning;
4. Forecasting future service and facilities needs; and for
5. Qualifying for state and federal grant programs.

Of the various ways the City uses the Comprehensive Plan, the Plan is used most often to help the City Council and Planning Commission in evaluating the appropriateness of proposed development. The plan compliments the other planning tools of the Unified Development Ordinance and the various design guidelines for commercial, multifamily, infill and development corridors by **SHOWING the BIG PICTURE**. In other words, the plan puts individual pieces, represented by individual development projects, together to form a desired mosaic of land uses and densities of development.

## **Why Does the Comprehensive Plan Sometimes Change?**

In accordance with the Unified Development Ordinance, the Planning Commission and City Council use 15 factors, including conformance with the City's Comprehensive Plan, when reviewing the appropriateness of a development proposal for rezoning or a special use permit. Other factors may weigh equally in the decision and result in approval of a proposal that conflicts with the Comprehensive Plan.

Kansas state statutes recognize that changes in anticipated development will take place and provide for an annual review of the Comprehensive Plan by the Planning Commission and City Council to ensure it does not become obsolete.

The annual review of the Comprehensive Plan involves updating all changes in land use, goal statements, and City policies that have occurred during the previous year as a result of rezoning, special use permits, other plan approvals, or special studies.

### **Summary**

Only by looking beyond the pros and cons of a particular development proposal, by examining the collective patterns and densities of development within corridors, sections, and for the City overall can this ideal mosaic of Overland Park be achieved. This then is an overview of the Comprehensive Plan; why we have a Plan; what the Plan is; and how the Plan is used.