

Introduction

Why Do We Have a Master Plan?

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

What Is the City's Master Plan?

The second question is: **What is the city's Master Plan?** The Master 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 Master Plan has four traits, which are:

- The Master 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 because of the unpredictability of development cycles, however.
- 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 Master Plan is a **statement of the city's policy** for directing land development as:
 - Stated in the land use goals;
 - Discussed in the 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 Master 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.

To show the four traits discussed above, the Master Plan is presented in six documents:

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; and
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, 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 four documents are the most important to review annually to insure that the Master Plan reflects current city land use policy.

How Is the Master Plan Used?

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

The Master Plan also discusses the community policy issues, which are policy issues of concern to the Governing Body, Planning Commission, and department directors. Once city leaders reach consensus on an issue, the result has been the adoption of new city land use policies. Several examples exist of how the discussion of a community policy issue has resulted in new land use policy including: the Greenway Linkages Plan and Guidelines; the Master Plan land use goals; the Neighborhood Conservation Program; the Blue Valley Plan; and the Tomahawk Creek Drainage Basin Study.

Developers and landowners use the Master 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 Master 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, Land Use Intensity System, 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 Master Plan Sometimes Change?

The Master Plan, or Comprehensive Plan, is reviewed annually to ensure that it accurately reflects current city land use policy and is updated to reflect recent approved changes and recommended changes such as a development proposal or other land use map or policy change. Conformance to the city's Master Plan is only one of eight factors, as determined by the Kansas Supreme Court, that the city must use to evaluate the appropriateness of a development proposal such as a rezoning, preliminary development plan or special use permit. As such, the Governing Body of the city may choose to approve a development proposal even though it may conflict with the current Master Plan as the other seven factors may outweigh the desire to conform with the city's Master Plan.

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 Master Plan: why we have a Plan; what the Plan is; and how the Plan is used.