Introduction

For planning to be effective, its benefits must be clearly visible. However, the benefits of planning will remain unseen unless planning goals can be clearly and rationally stated and measured.[1] Once stated, a goal provides direction to those whose decisions in some way change the community in which they live. These decision makers include elected and appointed officials, City staff, developers, realtors, lawyers, bankers, and other citizens. Goals are, therefore, a basic part of a community's planning process.

A starting point for the development of goals is identifying the nature and relationships of community concerns. The analysis of these concerns begins with a basic listing of the conditions facing the community. The listing may remain fairly general or reach a detailed level of description. Severe community concerns are usually obvious, but the opportunity should not be missed to improve upon an already acceptable condition.

At this point, it is useful to recognize the general definition of a community concern as it relates to planning. A concern exists if there is a gap between the current or anticipated achievements of a community and its aims and desires.

Once a concern has been identified and analyzed it is then important to clarify the ends being sought. A goal is the end toward which effort is directed. Goals are intended to be statements designed to address, in this case, the aims of community planning. For example, a goal of the City may be to "promote consistent and equitable land use regulations and strategies."

Several questions are raised in the discussion of a community's goals. The number, type, and nature of goals may vary significantly as may the range of topics they cover. In order to ensure the usefulness of goals in a community's planning process it is essential to maintain goals as distinct statements supported by policies.

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[1] Nathaniel Lichfield, Peter Kettle, and Michael Whitbread. Evaluation in the Planning Process. (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1975), p. 20

While a goal is a broad statement, a policy is specific and relates to details of the goal. Policies are more refined than goals and are designed to achieve a measurable end. Frequently there are several policies related to one goal. The relationship between a goal statement and specific policies is shown in the example below:

Goal 1: Established Commercial Area Development
Allow for the formation, retention and expansion of commercial development in the established areas of the City.

Policy 1.1: Ensure Compatibility of Development -
Encourage investment in new and existing commercial development which is compatible in size, architectural design, intensity, and signage with the surrounding land uses in established areas.

Policy 1.2: Contain Commercial Development -
Encourage the formation, retention, and expansion of commercial development within the existing commercial boundaries as shown of the Future Development Plan.

The focus of a community's planning efforts is maintained by keeping the goals directed toward the most pressing issues.

Goals are intended to be the focal point from which the methods of achieving community aims are drawn. Goals are not designed to be binding, unchangeable statements. They are instead structured to guide development and permit flexibility in the types of strategies and programs used to achieve them. To be effective, however, goals should be more than written statements in search of a following. With these thoughts, the goals for office; commercial; hotels and motels; industrial/ business park; parks, recreation and open space; low-density residential; medium- and higher-density residential; and public and semipublic land use in Overland Park were developed.