

# Land Use Education and Communication Task Force

March 11, 2009 – 4:00 PM

## **Meeting Agenda**

1. Introduction of Task Force members.
2. Discussion of Task Force goals, objectives, and timeline (*see draft Mission Statement*).
3. Presentation by Development Services Division and discussion regarding proposed site planning/zoning process improvements.
4. Discussion regarding comparable cities and possible survey of land use education and communication processes (*see draft list of comparable cities and outline of potential survey questions*).
5. Task Force schedule and upcoming agenda items (*see March-April calendar*).

# Land Use Education and Communication Task Force

## **Draft Mission Statement** **(Verbatim from the Mayor's Memo of March 2, 2009)**

***Mission: to review and recommend revamped processes for education and communication regarding city land use processes***

Specific Objectives:

1. Review our education and communication regarding land use processes.
2. Examine how cities with a more collaborative process communicate with citizens regarding land use.
3. Provide recommendations for implementing new procedures here in Tulsa. Make recommendations on how to establish communication and education that:
  - A. Allow citizens to understand land-use planning and regulations through education and/or tools for receiving assistance in interpreting technical information,
  - B. Provide specific methods and language to effectively communicate public participation rules,
  - C. Explore methods for informal collaborative problem solving prior to the formal public hearing process,
  - D. Provide a clear and transparent method for understanding the decision-making process and obtaining information regarding the decision,
  - E. Utilize a database which can allow both neighbors and developers to understand past precedents and the reasons for such decisions,
  - F. Explore a method for evaluating potential changes in processes or land-use ordinances with a goal towards collaborative and consistent decision making, and
  - G. Outline resources needed to implement the recommendation.

TO: City Council

FROM: Mayor Kathy Taylor

DATE: March 2, 2009

SUBJECT: Task Force to Review and Recommend Revamped Process for Education and Communication Regarding City Land Use Processes

The City of Tulsa currently operates with a 30 year old comprehensive land use plan. While we are working diligently through PlaniTulsa to finally update this plan, currently some of the most divisive issues in our community relate to land use. The age of our comprehensive plan is not the only factor that disconnects citizens from the land use process. For decades the City of Tulsa has outsourced the staffing of the entities (Board of Adjustment and Tulsa Metropolitan Area Planning Commission) that provide exemptions to that plan, creating a further disconnect in communication to our citizens.

Tulsa Metropolitan Area Planning Commission is a joint City-County cooperative planning commission designed to provide comprehensive planning, zoning and land division services for land development and preservation of quality of life for the entire region. The Board of Adjustment is charged with interpreting the City of Tulsa's zoning code by granting variances and special exceptions. The decisions of both of these groups, which by necessity must be based on the seriously out-of-date comprehensive plan, impact the lives of citizens and the interest of developers in investing in our city. TMAPC and BOA do a good job of complying with the law regarding notification of issues, but it is clear we must go beyond this mission. We need to take responsibility as a city to educate our citizens so that we can maintain healthy neighborhoods and provide consistency to developers to encourage investment, which provides jobs and economic vitality.

Education and communication are the first steps to make the process more positive for our community. As part of PlaniTulsa, I have asked a small group who have first-hand knowledge of these issues to review our education and communication regarding land use processes. They will examine how cities with a more collaborative process communicate with citizens regarding land use and then provide recommendations for implementing new procedures here in Tulsa.

The Task force will make recommendations on how to establish communication and education that:

1. Allow citizens to understand land-use planning and regulations through education and/or tools for receiving assistance in interpreting technical information
2. Provide specific methods and language to effectively communicate public participation rules
3. Explore methods for informal collaborative problem solving prior to the formal public hearing process
4. Provide a clear and transparent method for understanding the decision-making process and obtaining information regarding the decision

5. Utilize a database which can allow both neighbors and developers to understand past precedents and the reasons for such decisions
6. Explore a method for evaluating potential changes in processes or land-use ordinances with a goal towards collaborative and consistent decision making
7. Outline resources needed to implement the recommendation

I am asking the Task Force to provide recommendations that lead to a clear, consistent and understandable process, which allows both neighbors and developers to be educated and included in processes that impact their neighborhoods and their businesses. I am asking the task force to report back by April 15<sup>th</sup> with initial recommendations on first steps.

As I have discussed with the members I have asked to serve, for this task force to be effective, the discussion must include all impacted parties. To that end, I have asked a residential developer, a commercial developer, several neighborhood representatives, our newest member of TMAPC, and Nancy Siegel, general counsel to the Mayor's office, to participate in this important task.

Although we cannot change what has happened in the past, we can pave the way for a citizen involvement program that gives citizens, developers, and neighborhoods the opportunity to be involved and a sense of consistency in all phases of the planning process in the future. The importance of this issue demands our immediate attention and action. This will be a timely effort to improve communications regarding land use in conjunction with the update of our entire land-use plan.

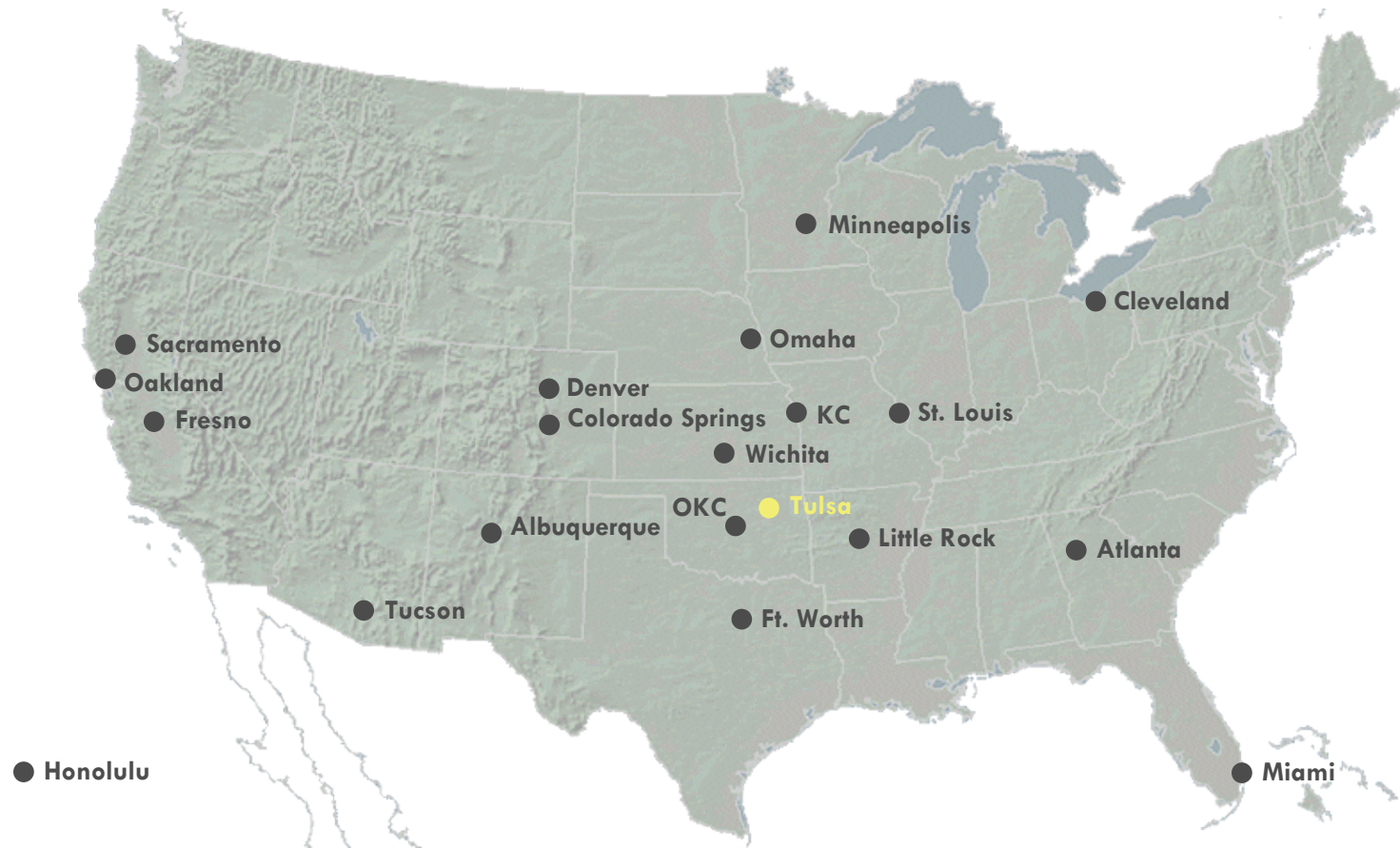
Committee List:

Bruce Bolzle, commercial builder  
Lauren Brookey, Director of Marketing and Communications for Tulsa Community College  
Julie Hall, neighborhood leader  
Dr. Suliman Hawamdeh, Chair of the IT Department at OU-Tulsa.  
Paul Kane, President of the Homebuilders Association  
Bill Leighty, TMAPC, residential realtor  
Nancy Siegel, General Counsel- Office of the Mayor

CC: Rich Brierre, Executive Director INCOG  
Don Cannon, Council Administrator

# Comparable Cities

(from the 2008 Quality of Life Report)



Cities were selected based on 2000 central city populations, clustered immediately above and below Tulsa. Denver, Ft. Worth, Oklahoma City, Tucson, and Little Rock were selected for regional comparisons.

# Land Use Education and Communication Task Force

## Potential Survey Questions

City:

Staff Contact:

Primary Planning/Zoning Authority(ies):

Agency Web Site(s):

Please briefly describe your planning and zoning organization (planning commission, board of adjustment, city-county-regional cooperation, staff support, etc.)

- What kinds of public notices are *legally* required for zoning changes? For variances and exceptions?
- Could you provide an example of mailed notification of a proposed rezoning, variance, and/or exception?
- What methods of communication are employed *above and beyond* legally required public notices?
- Does your primary planning/zoning authority employ a communications professional/public information officer?
- Does your community have a planning/zoning ombudsman, or other official liaison who works to help applicants and citizens engage in planning and zoning processes?
- Do you develop and maintain your planning/zoning authority's Web site in-house, and/or do you engage an outside Web developer?
- Does your community use emerging collaborative technologies, such as Second Life, Twitter, wikis, Google Earth, Flickr, and YouTube, to educate the public about planning and zoning processes and/or notify citizens about pending cases?
- Does your city offer citizen planning academies, seminars/webinars, or other opportunities for citizens to educate themselves about planning and zoning processes?

- Does your planning/zoning authority publish a guidebook that simplifies complex planning and zoning concepts? If so, how is it distributed? Could you provide a link or copy?
- Does your city and/or planning/zoning authority actively engage neighborhood associations, planning districts, or other neighborhood scale organization in planning/zoning processes affecting their neighborhoods? If so, how?
- Does your planning/zoning authority encourage or require neighbors and applicants to discuss rezoning or variance proposals, development plans, potential traffic issues, etc., *before* cases appear before planning/zoning authorities?
- Does your city offer and actively promote alternative dispute resolution processes, such as mediation?
- At what point, if any, in the rezoning (or other) process does your planning/zoning authority require submission of detailed site plans? What must those site plans include?
- At any stage in the rezoning (or other) process, does your planning/zoning authority require applicants to submit three-dimensional representations of proposed developments?
- Does your governing body (city council, commission, etc.) delegate certain functions *entirely* to planning/zoning authorities (such as approving minor amendments to Planned Unit Developments, verifying spacing requirements, etc.)?
- If your community employs approaches by which planning/zoning authorities can impose site-specific conditions on rezoning, variances, etc. – does your agency publish those site-specific requirements, so that citizens can know and report violations?
- Are there any aspects of your planning/zoning processes that you've noticed tend to trigger or exacerbate conflicts and miscommunication?
- Are there any aspects of your planning/zoning processes that are particularly effective in reducing conflicts and encouraging cooperative approaches?

# MARCH 2009

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