



April 17, 2020

Teton County Board of Commissioners
Delivered via Email

Re: *Neighborhood Planning*

Dear Commissioners,

At your April 13, 2020 Voucher Meeting, you requested that Planning Staff prepare an informational memo on the process of neighborhood planning. This memo analyzes neighborhood plans as they are defined and described in the 2012 Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan, and also provides a more general scope and description of neighborhood planning within the professional discipline of land use planning.

2012 Comprehensive Plan: The following excerpts identify all references to “neighborhood plans” or “neighborhood planning” within the 2012 Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan currently in effect. Emphasis has been added to highlight use of these terms within the surrounding text.

“Neighborhood plans” are introduced in Policy 3.3.d to support *Principle 3.3 Manage growth predictably and cooperatively:*

*“Policy 3.3.d: Develop **neighborhood plans***

*Focused **neighborhood plans** may be developed where additional detail is necessary to implement the desired future character in a specific subarea. The Illustration of Our Vision chapter generally describes the desired character for all Character Districts, but there may be instances where implementation of certain strategies requires a more detailed, design oriented planning process for a specific subarea in order to ensure the desired future character is achieved.”*

This Policy can be put into action through the following Strategy:

*“3.3.S.4: Develop **neighborhood plans** for specific areas within Character Districts as necessary.”*

Neighborhood plans are also included as Strategies to implement growth management values in Town:

*“4.2.S.1: Complete a **neighborhood plan** for the Town Square Character District. The plan should include design standards and use descriptions.”*

*“4.2.S.3: Initiate **neighborhood plans** for specific mixed use subareas.”*

*“4.3.S.1: Initiate **neighborhood plans** for Transitional Subareas.”*

Neighborhood planning is also referenced in the *Illustration of Our Vision* chapter of the Comprehensive Plan for Subarea 5.6 Northern South Park:

*“This TRANSITIONAL Subarea is identified as a possible location for future residential development at a similar density to the adjacent West Jackson Residential (Subarea 5.5) neighborhoods. While the priority of the community is to first infill and redevelop other already developed Stable/Transitional Subareas in order to meet the Growth Management goals of the Plan; if necessary, this subarea is a suitable location to meet those goals due to its close proximity to many existing Complete Neighborhood amenities. The subarea would not be developed in this manner until determined necessary by the community during a Growth Management Program review. An exception to this requirement would be the allowance for development when associated with an opportunity to provide meaningful permanent open space by clustering development into the subarea from a Conservation or Preservation Subarea. Should development of the area be needed in the future, it should be the subject of a **neighborhood planning** effort that addresses traffic congestion along High School Road. One possible option to be considered is a future east-west connector road between South Park Loop Road and Highway 89. An appropriate Flat Creek buffer will also need to be established in order to ensure the wildlife, natural and scenic values associated with this community resource are maintained.”*

The introduction to the *Illustration of Our Vision* chapter provides some clarity on the intent and purpose of defining the future desired character of Subareas:

“Finally, for each subarea, Character Defining Features are described to ensure the desired character is illustrated. The Character Defining Features provide the greatest level of site specific detail; however the characteristics are still conceptual and will inform specific regulations, incentives and programs...”

In Land Use Planning: Within the general context of professional land use planning, neighborhood plans are broadly defined and may take various forms, processes and timelines. The American Planning Association provides the following policy guidance on neighborhood plans:

“The neighborhood plan is intended to provide more detailed goals, policies, and guidelines than those in the local comprehensive plan. Neighborhood plans often emphasize potential partnerships among government agencies, community groups, school boards, and the private sector—partnerships that can act to achieve neighborhood goals. These plans are often developed through highly

*collaborative processes involving citizens, businesses, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the local government of the neighborhood” (Steiner, F. and K. Butler (2007). *Planning and Urban Design Standards*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc).*

“In many cases neighborhood plans function as extensions of an adopted local comprehensive plan. They refine the community’s vision for a subarea of the jurisdiction and provide more specific goals, policies, and implementation guidance. However, relatively few cities have a systematic neighborhood planning program that divides the entire geographic extent of the jurisdiction into neighborhood planning areas. Rather, most cities intermittently engage in neighborhood planning when particular areas are experiencing or anticipating dramatic changes” (Morley, D. (2016). “PAS Quick Notes: Neighborhood Planning”. American Planning Association).

Further direction on process indicates that neighborhood plans are most commonly completed prior to large rezones and manifest in zoning regulations tailored to implement the plan:

“The most common implementation tools for municipally adopted neighborhood plans are zoning codes and public investments. Cities often amend zoning regulations or design guidelines based on land-use and development recommendations in neighborhood plans. In some cases, cities translate these recommendations into new context-specific zoning districts. Similarly, cities often use neighborhood plan recommendations to guide infrastructure and programming investments” (Neighborhood Planning. (2020). Retrieved from <https://www.planning.org/knowledgebase/neighborhoods/>).

A brief summary of neighborhood planning published by the American Planning Association, is attached to this memo as a resource for further reading.

From a land use perspective, it is important for neighborhood plans in our community to address:

- Density and land use
- Affordability – Housing – Job Generation
- Project Goals and Objectives
- Market Analysis and Projected Population
- Fiscal Impacts
- Site design and general bulk and scale characteristics
- Multi-modal transportation connectivity and traffic impacts
- Community amenities and services (parks, schools, playgrounds, open space, etc.)
- Infrastructure (drinking water, sewer, drainage, electricity, etc.)
- Environmental impacts
- Implementation of Comprehensive Plan values
- Community and stakeholder engagement and participation

Although a formal Request for Proposals and bidding process has not yet been undertaken, Planning Staff has discussed general timeline and budget options for developing neighborhood plans for the following neighborhoods: Northern South Park, fairgrounds, and midtown. Estimated consultant fees would be around \$600,000 with over 800 work hours dedicated from Long-Range Planning Staff. Neighborhood planning could begin in fiscal year 2021 and could take a year or more to complete, depending on the detail of the plan and the level of community involvement. Discussion around options and alterations to this initial estimate can be focused on upcoming consideration of the Long-Range Fiscal Year 2021 Work Plan.

What is Zoning? In contrast to neighborhood plans which are advisory and help determine the desired vision for the future of the area, zoning is one of the legal tools to implement the plan. Zoning is the process of identifying the allowed uses, density, building size and location of structures within a designated area. Zoning is adopted through the Land Development Regulations (LDRs) and is the law that regulates land development (in addition to building and other safety codes). The LDRs (called a Zoning Code or Development Code in some communities) also specify the process that an applicant must follow to obtain permission (permit) to develop land or structures. Once adopted, zoning regulations must be followed to remain in compliance with local laws.

How do Neighborhood Plans and Zoning Work Together? In a timeline, neighborhood plans usually come before zoning. Once a neighborhood planning process is completed, zoning can be adopted to start the process of transforming or creating a neighborhood. The neighborhood plan may identify implementation steps necessary to change the zoning. For example, if multi-family dwellings are identified as a desired land use in a plan, but are not a permitted use, the zoning should be updated to add this as an allowed use. Similarly, if there are other uses currently allowed in a zone that are not desirable, such uses may be eliminated from the zoning. To ensure that the right mix of land uses is allowed in an area, a new zone district may need to be created. The new zone district could also include different building setbacks, heights and forms that are not standard in other zone districts. Zones can also be very specific to regulate the “form” of a structure, rather than the use inside, called Form Based Zoning.

The timeframe to adopt zoning will depend of the complexity of the new zone regulations and support from the community. Rezoning property to an existing zone with significant community support could take as little as to six (5-6) months, including Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioner hearings; creating a new zone and/or rezoning without community support would add time to the process.

I look forward to further discussion on these topics, and how they may be used to advance the future planning for the community.

Sincerely,

Chris Neubecker
Teton County Planning Director

Enclosed: Morley, D. (2016). "PAS Quick Notes: Neighborhood Planning". American Planning Association).ISSN 2169-1940

Cc: Keith Gingery, Chief Deputy County Attorney
John Graham, Deputy Attorney

QUICKNOTES

Neighborhood Planning

Neighborhood plans present recommendations for a discrete, contiguous subarea of a city. Most neighborhood planning areas contain housing as well as commercial, institutional, and recreational uses that serve the local area. Some neighborhood plans cover a wide range of topics relevant to the plan area, while others focus more narrowly on topics of special opportunity or urgency.

Background

Planners have long viewed strong neighborhoods as the fundamental building blocks of healthy cities. Strong neighborhoods are not static. They are dynamic places where residents, institutions, and physical features all change over time. Strong neighborhoods are places where heritage and tradition are valued, and places where both new and long-term residents feel a collective sense of ownership and responsibility.

Neighborhood planning has its roots in the early 20th century concept of the neighborhood unit, popularized by Clarence Perry of the Regional Plan Association in 1929. In Perry's model the neighborhood unit was a predominantly residential district or section of a city centered on neighborhood institutions and ringed by neighborhood-serving shops and services. While few real-world neighborhoods match Perry's unit to a T, his idea influenced a wide range of neighborhood-scale planning initiatives in older cities across the United States in the second half of the 20th century, and has continued to provide inspiration for neighborhood-scale planning and development that aims to replicate traditional neighborhood design.

In many cases neighborhood plans function as extensions of an adopted local comprehensive plan. They refine the community's vision for a subarea of the jurisdiction and provide more specific goals, policies, and implementation guidance. However, relatively few cities have a systematic neighborhood planning program that divides the entire geographic extent of the jurisdiction into neighborhood planning areas. Rather, most cities intermittently engage in neighborhood planning when particular areas are experiencing or anticipating dramatic changes. Furthermore, many neighborhood planning initiatives are self-organized by residents and other neighborhood stakeholders, and the resulting plans may or may not have a formal relationship with the local comprehensive plan.

Defining the Neighborhood

While the term "neighborhood" is familiar to most people, it often takes on different meanings based on context. Planners and local officials may think of neighborhoods primarily as political subdivisions that make it easier to deliver services or analyze small-scale social or economic trends. And these neighborhoods may have relatively arbitrary boundaries (e.g., to ensure that all neighborhoods have roughly the same population), or their boundaries may be more "organic" (e.g., based on changes in land-use patterns, the character of the built environment, or demographic characteristics of residents).

In many cities, residents may have different ideas from local officials and from each other about what defines a neighborhood. They may think of their neighborhood primarily in terms of the spaces and institutions they visit or value the most. Alternately, they may be influenced by real-estate marketing or perceptions about cultural differences. Consequently, it's not uncommon for residents of the same block or even the same building to see different boundaries for their neighborhood.

For a neighborhood planning effort to be successful, all participants must first agree on neighborhood boundaries. Often the best ways to determine appropriate boundaries is to have residents as well as representatives from local government and social service providers draw their own boundaries on the same map. This can help identify areas of common, if not universal, agreement.

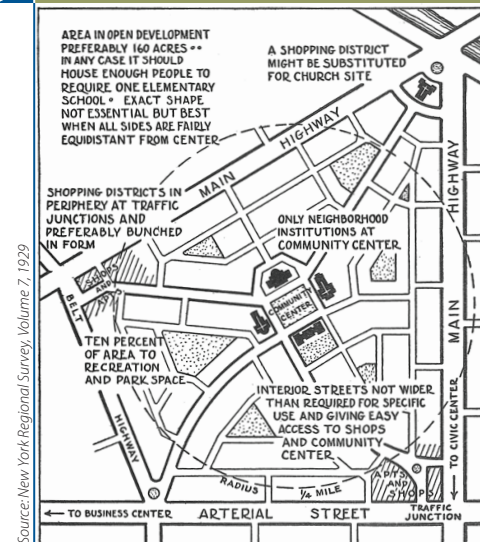


Diagram of Clarence Perry's
neighborhood unit.



American Planning Association

Making Great Communities Happen

Defining the Scope

If the neighborhood plan is an extension of the local comprehensive plan, it makes sense to address all of the major functional elements or pertinent themes of the comprehensive plan in the neighborhood plan. In other cases, it may be beneficial to narrow the scope of the plan to a few topics or themes of special relevance or importance to the planning area.

The benefit of a more limited scope is that it can be easier to build support for action around a small set of pressing issues than it can be for a broad set of topics with varying levels of perceived neighborhood-level impacts. Another advantage of limiting the scope of the plan is that it generally makes it easier to go into greater depth on issues of top concern for residents and other stakeholders.

In addition to being more limited in geographic extent than the local comprehensive plan, neighborhood plans also typically have a shorter time horizon. While 20 to 30 years is common for a comprehensive plan, the implementation time frame for neighborhood plans is often between five and 10 years.

Setting Goals and Objectives

In the context of neighborhood planning, goals are general statements about desirable future conditions in the neighborhood, and objectives are measurable outcomes in furtherance of these goals. Often, planners, local officials, or neighborhood leaders use surveys and a combination of online and in-person visioning and goal-setting exercises to help identify potential goals for the planning area. Then, one or more stakeholder working groups may take on the task of refining these goals and establishing objectives. The most successful goals and objectives tend to be those with the broadest base of neighborhood support and the firmest grounding in economic reality.

Detailing Policies and Actions

Beyond goals and objectives, effective neighborhood plans typically include both specific policy statements and action steps. Policies are statements of intent with enough specificity to guide decision making, and actions are directives about capital investments, regulations, programs, or procedures intended to implement each policy. While goals and objectives may remain somewhat abstract, policy statements must suggest a specific course of action, and action steps should make it clear who will do what by when.

Conclusions

The limited geographic extent of a neighborhood plan has both advantages and disadvantages. The narrower focus of neighborhood planning and strong connections that many stakeholders feel to their neighborhoods can lead to a loss of objectivity in the neighborhood planning process. In these cases, neighborhood plans may make it difficult for cities to prioritize scarce resources. With that said, residents, business owners, and institutions may identify more with specific neighborhoods than with the city as a whole. For this reason, it can be easier to engage these stakeholders around planning initiatives that have obvious implications for their homes, businesses, and shared public spaces. Furthermore, neighborhood plans offer opportunities to be more specific about goals, objectives, policies, and actions to guide growth or change within a small area over a relatively short time period.

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FURTHER READING

1. Published by the American Planning Association

Gregory, Michelle. 1998. "Anatomy of a Neighborhood Plan: An Analysis of Current Practice." In *Modernizing State Planning Statutes*, Vol. 2. PAS Report No. 480/481. Chicago: American Planning Association. Available at planning.org/pas/reports/archive.htm.

Jones, Bernie. 1990. *Neighborhood Planning: A Guide for Citizens and Planners*. Chicago: American Planning Association. Available for purchase at planning.org/publications/book/9026753.

2. Other Resources

Colombo, Louis, and Ken Balizer. 2005. "Neighborhood Planning." Available at neighborhoodplanning.org.

Myerson, Deborah. 2004. *Involving the Community in Neighborhood Planning*. ULI Community Catalyst Report No. 1. Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute. Available at tinyurl.com/jug84mw.