Long Range Planning

Comprehensive Planning

Long Range Planning's responsibility is to facilitate the process by which the City's key stakeholders are brought together to determine the vision for the City and to recommend policies which guide the City step-by-step to realizing that vision. These policies may be reflected in a city's overall general plan, in specific land use elements (e.g., transportation, historic preservation), in community plans, and plans that address specific areas (e.g., State Street). Typical objectives of plans are:

- To build consensus

- To establish a partnership among the key stakeholders

- To provide direction

- To provide choices

- To anticipate problems and address those problems comprehensively

- To take advantage of opportunities and not cut off options for the future

- To ensure consistency and fairness

- To protect the City in court

Long range planning often refers to the development of plans and their implementation. Implementation comes in the form of ordinance development or amendments, capital improvements budgeting, and following policies. Current Planning often refers to implementation of the plan policies and zoning ordinance regulations.

Although Long Range Planning and Current Planning are two distinct functions, when the pressure is on Current Planning to keep up with applications reviews, Long Range planners are drawn into doing Current Planning projects and the Long Range Planning program is de-emphasized. This becomes counterproductive, as Long Range Planning can usually solve some of the problems Current Planning faces and relieve the current planners of the pressure to revise ordinances and do intensive level research on issues.

When the Planning Commission and staff do not have the time to step back and address problems, tensions build as staff, applicants, elected officials, planning commission, and community councils face the same problems day after day with no resolution. The frequent moratoriums set by the City Council would not be necessary if there were a consistent Long Range Planning program which is on par with current planning.

City General Plan

As one can see by reviewing the existing plans (see charts at end of this report), Salt Lake City has been addressing these elements by specific plans rather one overall general plan. The City has adopted transportation, open space, public utilities, housing, and urban design plans, and is in the process of preparing downtown, hillside, historic preservation, and riparian corridor plans.

Utah State Law

Utah State law requires "each municipality prepare and adopt a comprehensive, long-range general plan." The state law specifically requires the development of:

- A land use element

- A moderate housing element

- A transportation element.

It may also include:

- An environmental element

- A public services and facilities element showing general plans for sewage, water, waste disposal, drainage, public utilities, etc.

- A rehabilitation, redevelopment, and conservation element consisting of plans and programs for:

- Historic preservation

- The diminution or elimination of blight

- Redevelopment of land, including housing sites, business and industrial sites, and public building sites

- An economic development plan

- Any other type of plan the municipality feels important to include in the general plan

Community Plans

In 2005, the Planning Commission and City Council came to a consensus on a standardized format for community master plans. The outline below was approved with the understanding that all community plans would include these elements, but additional topics could be included based on the desires of the individual communities for which the plans are being developed.

- **Background and Introduction:** Define the planning area and purpose of the plan

- **Planning Context:** Outline of the planning process and identification of stakeholders and partners, and definition of a public involvement strategy.

- **Vision Statement:** A concise description of how the area is to develop.

- **Assessment:** An inventory and analysis of existing conditions and emerging issues in the following areas:
  - ➢ Demographic Trends
  - ➢ Environmental Attributes
  - ➢ Land Use and Zoning
  - ➢ Housing
  - ➢ Transportation/Mobility
  - ➢ Economic Activity
  - ➢ Historic, architectural and Landscape Resources
  - ➢ Arts and Culture

- **Plan Recommendations:** The community's plan recommendations should include (1) Concept land use plans for the area; (2) Plan recommendation in the form of goals and objectives, issue identification and resolution; and (3) Civic responsibilities.

- **Plan Implementation**: The plan must have or create an implementation program to achieve plan recommendations. The program should include priorities and suggest regulatory changes, public infrastructure, and any public/private partnership that need to be considered and used to achieve plan recommendations.

General Plan Related Projects in Progress

- Preservation Plan
- North Temple Master Plan
- Euclid Master Plan
- Northwest Quadrant Plan
- Streetcar Analysis in South Downtown
- Small Neighborhood Businesses
- State Street Livability

What Experience Tells Us

Importance of Momentum

If done well, Long Range Planning can generate much excitement in a community. (It is often easier to discuss vision and concepts than details of specific planning projects.). This excitement steamrolls and creates a momentum of its own. That is, consensus is established among all the stakeholders as to what needs to be accomplished, everyone feels ownership in the plan, and they work together to implement it.

Indeed it is not uncommon that a plan is realized in thirds: the first 1/3 gets implemented when the stakeholders sit down with one another and identify concerns and discuss possible solutions, 1/3 is realized when the plan and the accompanying ordinances implementing that plan are adopted by the City Council, and the last 1/3, the hardest, happens when budgets (e.g., CIP) are approved or as the City works with other entities to implement their policies (e.g., state and regional governments, other cities).

Once started, if plans are delayed or set aside because others issues take priority, the momentum may be lost and the effectiveness of the plans is lessened. An example is the Euclid Community Plan. During the planning process in this area, the consultants recommended an additional section to this plan and officials applied for a Federal grant to fund it. The Plan was put on hold for several years, and then was revitalized in late 2008. Once it was put back into play, the community basically had to start over because those involved before were not longer around and those coming to the meetings were new. (It is anticipated the plan will come to the Planning Commission for review in late 2009.)

When the momentum is stalled, it places the planners in a predicament that in order to keep faith with the community who developed the plan, the planner uses the "draft" plan as the basis for recommendations in their staff memos. This is a dangerous practice, as these cannot be assumed to be City policies until the City Council has formerly adopted them.

It rests upon the planning managers to ensure the momentum is maintained, to be alert to any delays that might arise, and to remove the impediments to their adoption.

Need for Consistency of Community Plans with Existing Zoning Maps

One of the strongest tools used to implement plans are the zoning ordinances and zoning map. Historically, Salt Lake City community plans were adopted, but the zoning maps for those areas were not changed to be in accord with those plans. Consequently, the zoning ordinances allow more intense uses and/or zoning requirements than envisioned in the plans and may not reflect existing developments in the area.

In those areas already built up, it is imperative that the plan and revisions to the zoning map to implement the plan be done at the same time. This ensures that there are no future problems with vested rights where the property owner comes with a development proposal which meets the existing ordinance, but the proposed use conflicts with plan policies.

In basically undeveloped areas, the City may wish to delay the zoning until future developments are proposed and the City may then determine whether the time is right to rezone the property.

The General Plan Provides a Framework Within Other Smaller Plans Fit

Salt Lake City has over a hundred adopted plans. Since 1990, there have been 43 plans adopted. Having so many plans creates major problems:

- How do the planner, decisionmakers, and public keep track of all those policies?
- How do we know when policies from the various plans conflict with one another?
- When does a new plan replace an old one? Is a plan ever over?
- Do we have too many plans?

The advantages of the existing approach are:

- A General Plan takes a lot of time to develop, when the City's focus has been reacting to specific concerns or controversies.
- The overall plan is evolving through developing its parts (elements) in greater detail than an overall general plan typically would, and that is a plus, rather than a minus.

The dangers of doing it this way are:

- The City develops so many policies, there are too many to tract and this often results in conflicting policies.
- There are no citywide policies which serve as a framework, e.g., the City's commitment to all neighborhoods. As a result, policies that are desired and effective in one planning community may not be able to be used in another one if not included in the other community's plan.
- Doing all these specific plans takes a lot of time, and may delay much larger issues from getting resolved.
- Some ordinances (i.e., walkable communities) have no basis in policies for this program.
- Distinction may not be made whether a new plan replaces a previous plan, when a new plan is developed.

To answer these questions and concerns, the City needs a concerted effort to adopt a framework of what the General Plan is and what it includes, and adopt city-wide policies under which the smaller plans are developed.

Zoning & Subdivision Ordinance Revisions

Zoning ordinances are the strongest tool to implementing the General Plan. The Planning Division, with the assistance of the **Zoning Amendment Task Force (ZAP)**, is development ordinance amendments for large chunks of the ordinances. These include:

- Purpose Statements
- Notices and Appeals
- Zoning Text Amendment Standards
- Conditional Uses
- Nonconforming Uses
- Infill provisions
- Special Exceptions
- Planned Development Regulation
- Parking
- Use Tables and Definitions
- Alcohol Regulation Changes
- Subdivision Ordinance
- Sustainability Project
- Condominium Conversions

Setting Long Range Planning Priorities

Priorities for long range planning projects are made by the Mayor and Planning Managers after consultation with the Council, Planning Commission and other decisionmaking bodies which may be affected.

To be effective, priorities should be a mixture of (1) systematic updates of community plans and other key plans, and (2) the desire to address issues which have arisen and need be addressed in the short term. Other factors which may be considered are the availability of staff resources, the age of existing plans, development pressures in specific geographic areas, and whether funding has been allocated for the project.

Once the priorities are established, it is imperative that the planners and stakeholders in those plans be allowed to complete their work, rather than pulling them off one project (essentially putting it on hold) to address another plan because a controversy arose. This has often happened to the Planning Division in the past, and leads to the slowing of momentum of plans in progress, the inability to meet the expectations of the elected officials, other decisionmaking bodies, and citizens, and low morale amongst the planners.

The current Planning Director has noted that 3-4 new assignments are suggested for the Planning Division per month. The Community & Economic Development Director and the Planning Director together have been working to advise elected officials that in order for the planning staff to take on new projects, others need to be deleted from the priority list. Otherwise, we (the City) are all setting ourselves up to fail.

	Policy/Reference Documents	Year Adopted	Name of Plan
A		*1987*	Avenues Community Master Plan
CC		1991	1300 East/University District Area Plan
CC	x	1992	Block 1/A Policy Plan
CC		1992	Block 4 & 5 East Waterloo Subdivision Master Plan (St. Joseph Villa)
CC		1990	Block 42, Master Plan (part of the East Central Neighborhood Plan.)
CC		2005	Central Community Master Plan
CC		1998	Creating an Urban Neighborhood (Gateway)
CC		1995	Downtown Plan
CC		1993	East Central Community Small Area Master Plan (9th & 9th)
CC		1984	East Central Neighborhood Plan
CC		1990	East Central Neighborhood Plan, Addendum
CC		1990	East Downtown Neighborhood Plan
CC		1998	Gateway Specific Plan
CC	x	1993	Holy Cross Medical Campus Master Plan
CC		2002	Library Block Plan
CC	x	1990	State Street Plan
CC	x	2000	Towards a Walkable Downtown
CC	x	1994	Visionary Gateway Plan
CH		1999	Beck Street Reclamation Framework and Foothill Area Plan
CH		1999	Capitol Hill Community Master Plan
CH		2001	Capitol Hill Community Master Plan, Amendments
CH, A		*1986*	City Creek Master Plan
CITY	x	1998	Creating Tomorrow Together- Future Commission's Report
CITY		1997	Design Guidelines for Residential Historic Districts in Salt Lake City
CITY		1994	Open Space Master Plan
CITY	x	1992	Salt Lake City Strategic Plan
CITY		1992	Urban Design Element
EB		1998	Arcadia Heights, Benchmark and H Rock Small Area Plan
EB		*1987*	East Bench Community Master Plan
NW		1992	Jordan River/Airport Small Area Plan
NW		2000	Northpoint Small Area Plan
NW		1990	Northwest Community Master Plan
NW		2004	Northwest Community Plan Update
NW		2001	Rose Park Small Area Plan
SH		2001	Sugar House Community Plan
SH		2005	Sugar House Community Plan, Amendments
W		1995	West Salt Lake Community Plan