

**Section 11**

**IMPLEMENTATION**

**City of Lancaster Comprehensive Plan**

# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

## INTRODUCTION

The City of Lancaster will be continuing a tradition and commitment to shaping the future of the community in a positive manner with the publication and adoption of this Comprehensive Plan document. The Plan will provide a very important tool for the City Staff and civic leaders to use in making sound planning decisions regarding the long-term growth and development of the community. The various elements of the Plan are based upon realistic growth objectives and goals for Lancaster that resulted from a comprehensive planning process involving citizens, City Staff, elected and appointed officials, major stakeholders, business interests and the development community.

Changes in the City's socioeconomic climate and in development trends that were not anticipated during preparation of the Plan will occur from time to time, and therefore, subsequent adjustments will be required. Elements of the community that were treated in general relationship to the overall area may, in the future, require more specific and detailed attention. The Comprehensive Plan should never be considered a finished product, but rather a broad guide for community growth and development that is always evolving and changing in scope. Planning for the community's future is a continuing process, and the Comprehensive Plan is designed to be a dynamic tool that can be modified and periodically updated to keep it correlated with changing conditions and trends.

The future quality of life within Lancaster and the environment of the community will be substantially influenced by the manner in which Comprehensive Plan recommendations are administered and maintained.

**The full benefits of the Plan for Lancaster can only be realized by maintaining it as a vital, up-to-date document. As changes occur and new facets of the community's development pattern become apparent, the Plan should be revised rather than ignored. By such action, the Plan will remain current and effective in meeting the community's decision-making needs regarding growth and development into the next century and beyond.**

## **THE PLAN AS A GUIDE FOR DAILY DECISION-MAKING**

The physical City is a product of the efforts put forth by many diverse individuals and groups. Each subdivision that is platted, each home that is built, each new school, church or shopping center represents an addition to the City's physical form. The composite of all such efforts and facilities creates the community as it is seen and experienced by its citizens and visitors. If planning is to be effective, it should guide each individual decision, whether it be that of a private homeowner or of the entire community. The City, in its daily decisions to surface a street, to approve a subdivision, to amend the zoning ordinance, to enforce the building or other codes or to construct a new utility line, should always refer to the basic proposals outlined within the Comprehensive Plan. The implementation strategies outlined in this element should also be followed. The private builder or investor, likewise, should recognize the broad concepts and policies of the Plan so that their efforts become part of a meaningful whole in planning the community. Those investments are, over the years, reinforced and enhanced by the City's urban form, development pattern, and economic vitality.

## **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS AND PERIODIC REVIEW**

The Comprehensive Plan for Lancaster is intended to be a dynamic planning document -- one that responds to changing needs and conditions. Plan amendments should not be made without thorough analysis of immediate needs as well as consideration for long-term effects of amendments to the Plan. The Planning & Zoning Commission and City Council should consider each proposed amendment carefully to determine whether or not it is consistent with the Plan's goals and policies, and whether it will be beneficial for the long-term growth and development of Lancaster.

At approximately one-year intervals, a periodic review of the Comprehensive Plan with respect to current conditions and trends should be performed. Such ongoing, scheduled re-evaluations will provide a basis for adjusting capital expenditures and priorities, and will reveal changes and additions that should be made to the Plan to keep it up-to-date. It is recommended that the members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee continue to stay on this committee and meet at regular intervals for the purpose of reviewing the status and continued applicability of the Plan as it relates to current planning conditions. This committee should also prepare a report on these findings to present to the Planning and Zoning Commission, the City Council or both. Those items that appear to need attention should be examined in more detail and changes and/or additions should be made. By such periodic re-evaluations, the Plan will remain current and functional and will continue to give civic leaders effective guidance in decision-making. Periodic reviews of the Plan should include consideration of the following:

- ♦ The City's progress in implementing the Plan;

- ◆ Changes in conditions that form the basis of the Plan;
- ◆ Community support for the Plan's goals, objectives and policies; and
- ◆ Changes in State laws.

In addition to periodic annual (or biennial) reviews, the Comprehensive Plan should undergo a complete, more thorough review and update every five years. Specifically, Lancaster should conduct a major update of the Plan in the year 2005 when complete information is available from the 2000 Census. The review and updating process should encourage input from property owners, neighborhood groups, civic leaders developers, merchants, major stakeholders, and other citizens and individuals who possess an interest in the long-term growth and development of the City.

## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

An informed, involved citizenry is a vital element of a democratic society. The needs and desires of the public are important considerations in Lancaster's decision-making process. Citizen participation takes many forms, from educational forums to serving on City boards and commissions. A broad range of perspectives and ideas at public hearings helps boards, commissions and the City Council to make more informed decisions for the betterment of the community as a whole. Lancaster should continue to encourage as many forms of community involvement as possible as the City implements its Comprehensive Plan. The continued involvement of Steering Committee members who assisted in the development of the Plan would be an excellent way to undertake periodic review of the Plan.

## **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

There are two primary methods of implementing the Comprehensive Plan -- proactive and reactive methods. Both must be used to successfully achieve the recommendations contained within the Plan. Capital improvements programming is an example of a proactive method. The City expends funds to finance certain public improvements (e.g., the Historic Town Square, utility lines, roadways, etc.), meeting objectives that are cited within the Plan. Reactive methods include components of the development review process such as zoning, site plan and subdivision review. Several specific implementation strategies for Lancaster's Comprehensive Plan are recommended in the following discussion.

## **ZONING ORDINANCE**

The City's Zoning Ordinance has not had a comprehensive update since 1984. Many changes in State laws, court judgments, development practices/techniques, and administrative processes have changed since then. Additionally, the City will need revised zoning districts that more closely reflect the philosophy of the proposed land use pattern as shown on the Future Land Use Plan (Plate 7-1). It is recommended that the City undertake a complete rewrite or update of its existing Zoning Ordinance, primarily due to the fact that the City will not be able to effectively implement the recommendations outlined herein through the use of the current Zoning Ordinance.

## **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMMING**

The Comprehensive Plan makes recommendations on the various public improvements that will be needed to accommodate growth and development envisioned for Lancaster over the next 10 years or more. Many of the changes involve improvements that will be financed by future improvement programs. It will be a desirable practice to invest regularly in the physical improvement of Lancaster rather than to undertake large *catch-up* programs at longer time intervals. A bond referendum for public improvements is a good example of such a program. A modest amount of money expended annually and regularly in accordance with Plan recommendations will produce a far greater return to the community than will large expenditures at longer ten-year intervals.

It is recommended that priority projects be determined annually, and that the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) be generally scheduled for review on a three-, five- or ten-year basis. The CIP should show a recommended, generalized plan for capital facilities within Lancaster, and it should identify priorities and the approximate cost of improvements. At least one annual meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission should be devoted to reviewing the status of the CIP. A joint review meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council, City Manager and staff would be desirable. A report and review meeting with a *citizens' planning committee* would also be desirable. It should be recognized that the Planning and Zoning Commission's role in the capital improvement programming process should be advisory, and that the financing and priority decisions are the City Council's responsibility. In their advisory role, the Planning and Zoning Commission should seek to achieve programs that are geographically balanced (equitable) and that include all important aspects of the community's development from parks to transportation and utilities. Capital improvements programming should be viewed as a continuation of the ongoing comprehensive planning process. Examples of capital financing mechanisms include impact fees, parkland dedication requirements, drainage improvement districts, and utility districts/storm-water run-off fees. The City already has water and waste water impact fees, but should consider the preparation of roadway impact fees.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES**

The usual processes for reviewing and processing zoning amendments and development/ subdivision plans provide significant opportunities for implementing the Comprehensive Plan. Each zoning, development and subdivision decision should be evaluated and weighed against applicable proposals contained within the Plan. The Plan allows the City to review proposals and requests in light of an officially prepared document adopted through a sound, thorough planning process. If decisions are made that are inconsistent with Plan recommendations, then they should include actions to modify or amend the Plan accordingly to ensure consistency and fairness in future decision-making. It is recommended that a comprehensive development guide or manual be prepared to guide the City Staff and development communities in review and preparation of development proposals.

The act of subdividing land to create building sites is one of the most important and significant City activities that occurs within a City. Much of the basic physical form of the City is created by the layout of streets, easements, alleys, lots, community parks and school sites. As mentioned previously, many of the growth and development proposals contained within the community's Comprehensive Plan can be achieved through the exercise of subdivision control and other *reactive* practices. Some elements of the Plan, such as major thoroughfare rights-of-way, drainage easements, school or park sites and linear parkways, can be influenced, guided and actually achieved during the process of subdividing the land. Once the subdivision has been filed (recorded) and development has begun, the subdivision becomes a permanent, integral part of the community's urban fabric. It can, thereafter, be changed but only through expending great effort and expense.

## **DEVELOPMENT REVIEW CRITERIA**

It is recommended the following strategies and development review criteria be adopted or considered and included in the development guide mentioned above.

### **It is the policy of Lancaster to have adequate public facilities and infrastructure.**

It is recommended thresholds for water, wastewater and roadway facilities be established and used as a basis for development review. Other cities are or have established such criteria and similar criteria could be established for Lancaster.

### **Park Land**

For a development application or project to be approved, the combined amount of community and neighborhood park land available City-wide must be equal to or greater an amount appropriate per 1,000 persons (see the 1997 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan). The assessment should be based upon the then-available community and neighborhood park land and upon any such park

land programmed for acquisition during the then-current or the following year of the City's Capital Improvement Program. The purpose of the criterion is 1.) to provide adequate availability and access to local park areas 2.) to provide recreational opportunities for residents of all ages; and 3) to maintain and nurture a quality living environment and a family friendly community.

## **It is the policy of Lancaster to protect drainage areas and other natural resources.**

### **Drainage**

For a development application or project to be approved, the projected velocity and volume of surface run-off should not exceed pre-development conditions; any additional run-off projected to be generated by a development should be retained on-site and absorbed, evaporated and/or released from the development at a rate not exceeding the pre-development rate of release. Proposed mitigation measures should not create a tailwater elevation that will cause the upstream velocity or volume of surface run-off to be less than pre-development conditions. Erosion control and pollution prevention plans should be adequate to prevent erosional and depositional features (such as gullies and accumulations of silt) attributable to site development, with such adequacy being determined by the City. The purpose of this criterion is to mitigate the ill effects of increase in velocity and volume of surface run-off on downstream property owners as a result of rapid and intense urbanization, while preventing the flooding of upstream properties. The City's storm drainage ordinance should be evaluated to ensure that water runoff from new residential subdivisions and nonresidential developments is minimized in terms of the impact on adjacent properties. The City should require construction of public improvements prior to approval of a final plat.

### **Wetlands**

For a development application or project to be approved, appropriate professional delineation certification should be provided relative to the existence of any jurisdictional wetlands and/or waters of the United States, as such jurisdictional areas are defined at the time of development application by the Federal Clean Water Act and the standards and guidelines in use by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. If such wetlands and/or waters are determined to exist, assurance or proof of compliance acceptable to the City should be provided relative to all federal regulations pertaining to the protection and mitigation of such jurisdictional areas. The City reserves the right to require the protection and preservation or any or all jurisdictional areas determined to exist and to deny proposed mitigation measures. The purpose of this criterion is to protect the natural, scenic and ecological resources that are essential elements of Lancaster's community character and which provide irreplaceable plant and wildlife habitat.

## Ten-Mile Creek Basin

For a development application or project to be approved within 1000 feet of the Ten Mile Creek flood fringe, it should not propose development containing residential lots of less than those recommended on Plate 8-1, Density Plan. The purpose of this criterion is to mitigate any ill effects of rapid and intense urbanization in Lancaster by protecting the open lands, natural landforms, agricultural landscapes and scenic vistas that create and define Lancaster's unique community character and quality of life.

For a development application or project to be approved, it should not propose development on any existing topographical slopes of 12.0 percent or greater, nor propose to alter any existing topographical slopes that are less than 12.0 percent but equal to or greater than 5.0 percent (other than within five feet of the footprint of the proposed structure or structures). The purpose of this criterion is to ensure that development is respectful of and appropriately integrated with the natural physical geography of the land in Lancaster by requiring environmentally sensitive development techniques to eliminate *scrape-and-build* development.

For a development application or project to be approved, the proposed development should occur in patterns that minimize the visual impact of the development in relation to scenic corridors or vistas, as viewed from arterial or collector thoroughfares. Development employing clustering techniques that place development away from direct view from such thoroughfares should be determined to comply with this threshold criterion. The purpose of this criterion is to integrate residential development with the surrounding natural landscapes in a manner that protects the open lands, natural landforms, agricultural landscapes and scenic vistas that create and define Lancaster's unique community character and quality of life.

Conservation development (clustering) should be considered for conservation incentives commensurate with the following 1.) the quality and character of the open or natural lands to be placed within a conservation easement, or otherwise conserved; 2.) and the extent to which the conserved land contributes to the preservation of the country character, including its open, natural, scenic and ecological values. Incentives should be considered on a project-by-project basis, and should be approved by the City Council only after community input and a public hearing. Such incentives may include, but are not limited to: expedited development review, permit fee waivers, reduced street infrastructure requirements, reduced park land dedication requirements, and reduction of monetary assessments relative to agricultural rollback taxes. The purpose of this criterion is to protect the open land, natural landscapes and ecological resources that create and define Lancaster's unique community character and that are essential to the accomplishment of community character, quality of life and economic development objectives.

**The following are policies designed to protect and improve the City's image and the design of land uses.**

**All Land Use Planning Districts**

For a development application or project to be approved for retail or nonresidential use, the proposed buildings should be individually designed and planned to create structures that comply with the City's community image guidelines and/or standards contained herein, as they may exist on the date of development application. The purpose of this criterion is to ensure that the character and quality of retail and nonresidential development contributes to desired community character objectives.

For a development application or project to be approved, all onsite utility facilities should be designed to be placed underground, including the land-wire distribution facilities of electrical, cable, telephone and telecommunications providers. The purpose of this criterion is to ensure that the character and quality of Lancaster's built environment contribute to desired community character objectives and to maintain or enhance property values.

For a development application or project to be approved, existing access to public hike and bike trails or other public recreational areas on public lands should be encouraged. The access provided may be restricted to pedestrian, bicycle and/or equestrian uses. The purpose of this criterion is to provide adequate availability and access to park lands and recreational opportunities for residents of all ages, and to maintain and nurture a quality living environment and a family-friendly community.

## Economic Development

### Economic Development Incentives

New private capital investment (exclusive of land values) exceeding a specific dollar amount and related to targeted nonresidential and industrial uses may be considered for economic development incentives. Targeted uses are defined as those uses/businesses identified by the Lancaster Economic Development Corporation (EDC). Such incentives will be considered and negotiated on a project-by-project basis, commensurate with the quality and character of the development and the extent to which it contributes to the accomplishment of community character and quality of life objectives. Incentives may be approved by the City Council only after community input and public hearing, and may include, but are not limited to: expedited development review, permit fee waivers, infrastructure assistance, public-private partnerships, and performance-based tax abatements (with given-back provisions in the event of non-performance). The purpose of this criterion is to promote a vigorous, diversified and regionally competitive economy, while creating a balanced tax base to ensure Lancaster's long-term financial ability to respond to the service demands of both new and existing development, without placing a disproportionate tax burden on homeowners.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation is probably one of the most important, yet most difficult, aspects of the comprehensive planning process. Without viable, realistic mechanisms for implementation, the recommendations contained within the Comprehensive Plan can never be realized. The following points specify ways to implement the various recommendations within the Plan:

- ♦ **Completely revise the Zoning Ordinance text and if necessary the Zoning Map to implement the guidelines and standards recommended within the Comprehensive Plan. For example, revise the Zoning Ordinance to include the design guidelines recommended within the Urban Design & Community Image element. Zoning districts should be specifically designed to correlate to the recommended land use categories shown on Plate 7-1, and reflection in the appropriate ordinance as soon as possible.**
- ♦ **Adopt recognized review procedures for implementing policies and other guidelines that are not incorporated within current City codes and ordinances.**

- ♦ Offer short courses and other educational classes or seminars to the City Council and the Planning & Zoning Commission.
  
- ♦ An annual report should be prepared by the Planning and Zoning Commission recommending any changes or amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, and identifying items for implementation or further study.
  
- ♦ Completely revise the Subdivision Ordinance and other City codes, as necessary, to implement the Thoroughfare Plan and other urban design proposals. The City should consider adopting roadway impact fees to assist in the financing of new roadways.
  
- ♦ The City should encourage the Code Enforcement Department to pursue the objectives set forth in this Plan for the purpose of improving the community's appearance and overall neighborhood integrity.