

LAYTON CITY GENERAL PLAN



INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION TO THE GENERAL PLAN

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I. INTRODUCTION

American city planning has evolved in response to the problems and challenges resulting from our growing population and the population shift to urban places. As our nation has become more urban over the last 100 years, the need for city planning has become more pronounced.

In urban places of the late 1800's, there were problems resulting from tenement apartments which often included no windows for ventilation. Streets were often littered with waste, and open space within the city was minimal. Residents were often alarmed to find industrial and manufacturing facilities being built in their neighborhoods. The invention of the elevator contributed to the technological advances which resulted in the earliest "skyscrapers" in many larger cities by the end of this century.

The twentieth century brought more people to the city and for the first time, more of the American population was identified as being urban than rural. As the height and number of buildings in the city increased through the early 1900's, the amount of sunlight was severely restricted. Zoning ordinances limiting building bulk and height were developed, along with building codes which were developed for safety and health purposes. These codes helped to make the city a much safer and more livable place.

As the urban population grew, many of the small towns which had once been on the outskirts of the city, found themselves popular havens for people looking for less densely populated environments. Now, city problems were coming to what had been the rural areas. Unfortunately, many small towns adopted zoning ordinances that had been appropriate for the large cities and soon found themselves set up to look much like the places that people had thought they'd left behind. In most cases, people in the smaller towns perceived planning to be something to do when there was time available to do it or perhaps, not at all. There was disregard for the problems that arise whenever people live in close proximity to one another -- problems with safety, health, and the general welfare of the community.

II. The General Plan: Its Purpose and Functions

The terms "master plan," "comprehensive plan" and "general plan" are often used synonymously to describe a policy document with accompanying maps which identifies the goals a community wishes to accomplish and the direction to be taken towards accomplishing those goals. The term "general plan" has become more accepted in newer enabling legislation in other states as well as Utah (1991), as it denotes the consideration of such items as economic and social concerns of the community. The term "master plan" has been generally applied to plans for private developments and the term "comprehensive plan" is popular in other parts of this nation and is sometimes applied to more specific community or neighborhood plans.

The reasons for general plans may vary from community to community, but the following is a list of the "Functions of the Comprehensive Plan":

1. To be an expression of community goals based on the desires and needs of the citizens.
2. To serve as a guide for rational development which will protect property values and neighborhood character in the present and the future.
3. To act as a guide for appointed and elected officials in making decisions affecting Layton City and for courts in judging fairness and reasonableness in land use regulation.
4. To help establish priorities for the widest use of limited government resources.
5. To establish sound policies for development.
6. To assist developers in understanding where, when, what, and how their development will best fit the needs of Layton City.
7. To establish a legal basis for land use controls (i.e., zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations).

The long term nature of the general plan often makes it difficult for some people to understand why the immediate desires and needs of property owners cannot always be met. The following examples are illustrative of the need for following the general plan.

Example #1

Developers often desire to locate house lots fronting onto streets designated as arterials. The advantages to the developer are obvious in that the street is partly in place and off-site improvement costs will be less, resulting in a greater profit. As the city proposes widening of the street to accommodate traffic, the residents often protest. As the traffic increases, these houses become less desirable as dwellings because of noise and safety concerns. There is usually pressure for commercial use of the existing house. Often, these lots are so small that parking for commercial uses becomes a problem and increased intensity of use affects adjacent property owners. These problems may be remedied early on by including policies not allowing small residential lots to face onto arterial streets which are perpendicular to the existing arterial streets and provide for an adequate sideyard to help provide room for some type of buffer for better privacy.

Example #2

Uncontrolled commercial development can result in blight and traffic problems from too many unoccupied buildings and too many accessways. The blight of vacant commercial property has a very negative impact on the perception of the people residing in or visiting the community

because commercial properties are generally located on high traffic volume streets. Developers often state that their developments will bring the city a certain number of sales and property tax dollars. The question which has to be asked is "will the benefit of tax dollars and providing what may be a needed service outweigh the cost of public services and potentially negative impacts that the use will have on neighborhood or community as a whole at the proposed location?"

These new developments may have the effect of exacerbating the blight and deterioration of other commercial sections along with residential neighborhoods abutting the new development. The new tax dollars may be a redistribution of the old tax dollars. The question of "how much commercial space is needed in Layton?" needs to be addressed, based on our present and projected population growth and income considerations and the amount of land presently zoned for commercial use. The location along with the types of goods and services (i.e., neighborhood, community, and regional) also needs to be considered.

Plans have often been referred to as "just a flexible guide to development in the city". While the plan which will be developed will be a flexible policy-oriented document, the degree of flexibility must be carefully considered. The status of the plan must not be weakened to such an extent that the status of the document becomes suspect in everyone's eyes. People in the community have no idea of what to expect over the long term. Developers can point to decisions not in their favor as being "arbitrary and capricious". This "flexibility" has allowed incompatible uses to be located next to each other with no type of adequate buffer, detracting from the desirability of at least one, if not more, uses. It has also resulted in court cases invalidating portions of the zoning ordinances because they have not followed the plan.

Planning has as its purpose to decide what is in the best interest of that group of people who make up the community. The general plan must consider the preservation of property values and neighborhood character. The plan needs to serve as a guide in day-to-day decision-making, because it is easier to focus on single site development and the immediate, perceived needs of developers and disregard the long-range, comprehensive future of a neighborhood or the city. Because cities change and general plans are an important guide to decisionmakers, plans must be updated with the public good in mind.

The growing importance of planning is discussed in the following excerpt from the book, The Zoning Game Revisited:

It should be obvious that in the volatile arena of zoning where changes are constantly requested, where 500 people show up to scream, and bone-tired members of the Plan Commission (sic) try to make decisions at 2 A.M., that some guidelines should be set out in advance so that the decisions be based on more than impulse, prejudice, or just plain fatigue. The existence of a plan provides the Court with a yardstick by which to measure the reasonableness and fairness of planning as a prerequisite to regulatory ordinances. ...as the courts became more willing to question the tactics of local governmental agencies, we may expect more frequent challenges of evidence of parochialism and a denial of procedural due process.

III. Enabling Legislation

State statutes relating to comprehensive or master plans for municipalities are found in Article I of Chapter 9 (Zoning Power of Cities and Towns) and Article 2 of same chapter (Municipal Planning Enabling Act). These two pieces of legislation are based on the Standard State Zoning Enabling Act (1924) and the Standard City Planning Act (1927). These model acts were prepared under Herbert Hoover while he served as Secretary of Commerce to Pres. Calvin Coolidge.

Section 10-9-3 of the Utah Code Annotated indicates that the general plan should provide for the present and future needs of the municipality as well as the growth and development of the municipality. Some of the purposes of the plan are then listed, along with considerations for health, general welfare and safety issues; the efficient use of resources that result from excessive congestion or scattering of population; and the efficient use of energy resources and the protection of air quality.

Utah State law also provides for the creation of a planning commission whose duty it is to prepare and recommend to the legislative body, a general plan for physical development of the municipality.

IV. General Plan Process

Possible Elements

Land-use & Population
Housing
Parks & Recreation
Economic Development

Community Facilities and Services
Community Identity and Character
Transportation and Circulation
Environmental

1. Data Gathering and Analysis:

Information pertaining to the various elements of the General Plan are gathered to determine what resources are currently available. This information is also frequently used to answer requests for information that are received by the Community Development office.

2. Completion of land-use surveys and analysis:

The land-use survey identifies the way land is being used in Layton by general category. This information aids in assessing how much land is presently developed and how it is developed. It also helps identify existing land-use conflicts.

3. Introduction to General Plan:

This information will provide participants with an idea of why city planning has become important to communities over the last one hundred years and what its history has been in Layton. A definition of what the comprehensive plan is, its purposes, and examples of its importance are also included, along with this description of the general plan process.

4. Joint meetings of Planning Commission and the City Council:

This meeting is often held to discuss the general plan process, the proposed elements and specific concerns which need to be included in the plan.

5. Complete various elements reaction documents:

These short documents will include statistical data and other general information pertinent to the element being discussed. The concerns from the meeting of the council and commission will also be included in these reports.

6. Presentation of element reaction documents to citizen groups:

The reaction document will be presented to a citizen's group composed of people from various areas of the city who are interested in specific concerns of each element. Announcement have been included in the city newsletter to invite citizens to participate. Local newspapers will also be contacted to include articles inviting participation. Those people who served on the citizen's committees for the 1982 Master Plan are also contacted and invited to be involved. From the discussion of these groups, policy proposals are developed for the general plan. It is recommended that each citizen's group include either a council member or a planning commissioner.

7. Presentation of reaction documents and policy proposals developed by the citizen's groups for each Plan Element:

As each proposed reaction document is completed, it is given to the planning commission for their consideration. The proposed element with accompanying policies developed by the citizen's committee will then be presented to the commission. It is then forwarded to the city council for their consideration.

8. Presentation to the city council of reaction documents, along with policy proposals developed by the citizen's committee and adopted by the planning commission to the city council:

After each element has gone through the citizens' committee and has been reviewed by the planning commission and forwarded to the city council, the city council shall hold a public hearing and adopt each "General Planning Element" by ordinance, as it is a policy document to guide the direction of development in the city.

V. A Brief History of Planning in Layton City

The first mention of city planning in Layton City Council minutes was on May 3, 1948 when George Smeath met with the town board to discuss the planning and zoning of the Town of Layton and Davis County. The zoning map and ordinance prepared was done by the county for all towns and unincorporated portions of the county.

In May 1949, Clay Allred, an employee of the Davis County Planning Commission, met with the Board of Trustees of the Town of Layton and presented and discussed maps pertaining to future planning for the town. The plan included relocation of business buildings and the location of a new highway through town.

The 1950s

The committee to work on zoning and planning was set up on March 27, 1950 which consisted of Arthur Bulkley, LaMarr Day, Frank Adams, Haven J. Barlow, Afton Ellison, Vilate Adams, and Martha Kent. On May 22nd of that same year, Mr. Allred of Davis County Planning, was directed to write an ordinance and bring before the board, plans for setting up streets, obtaining property for schools and other public buildings. The committee met as needed.

In November, 1951, the name of the planning committee was changed from the planning board to the city planning board and Clay Allred was employed to assist the committee in "getting plans for zoning and planning in the City". A zoning map was presented by Allred to the city council on May 19, 1952. It had been approved by the planning committee and the ordinance was passed by the city council subject to changes. A public hearing on the ordinance was held November 17, 1952 and "the recorder was authorized to make the necessary postings of ordinance for the planning."

At the last meeting of December, 1952, David H. Whitesides was appointed to represent the city at the county planning board and serve as chairman of the city planning board. During a request for a side yard and front yard variance, the need for an adjustments board was discussed and set up. This was April 27, 1953.

Under David Whitesides, the planning committee became more involved in planning concerns and in October, 1953, Mr. Whitesides met with the council to discuss matters pertaining to planning and zoning. Two months later, Mr. Whitesides asked the city council to approve a planning and zoning ordinance to be included as apart of the new city ordinances. On May 3, 1954, a new zoning ordinance was included as Mr. Whitesides had requested.

The need for a master plan of the city wad discussed for several years, but in early 1957, Mr. Whitesides approached the city council about a future planning map, which would cost the city \$3,000. The council expressed their feeling that the planning commission should begin to do research on future planning and that the future use of Verdeland Park should be a part of that study.

While the discussion of a master planning for the city was occasionally discussed by the planning commission, in October of 1958, the commission started to have members review planning books

and pamphlets. On October 29, City Councilman Hal Marsell discussed the pamphlet "Responsibility to Plan". The necessity and importance of a Master Plan to be followed by a zoning ordinance was highlighted by the councilman. During much of 1957 and 1958, Mr. Grant Burns of Davis County Planning, who had replaced Mr. Allred as the county planner responsible to Layton, had been assisting the planning commission with zoning questions.

On February 4, 1959, the commission's attention turned again to hiring a professional planning consultant and on February 12, a letter was sent to I. Dale Despain of Provo to inquire whether or not he would be available to consult on the layout of a master plan for the city and an analysis of commercial needs. Despain attended his first commission meeting in the latter part of February to discuss standards for determining the amount of commercial land a city like Layton would need. The Comprehensive Zoning Plan of Layton, Utah was adopted by the city council on March 9, 1959 and on November 30, the Master Street Plan was adopted by the planning commission and approved by the city council. In the years that followed there were several references to a master land use plan, although there is not a copy of anything that might resemble that plan in the community development office.

The 1960s

The early 1960s found the planning commission involved in many decisions that had a profound influence on Layton in the years that followed.

Historically, the center of town had been Main and Gentile. As the population of the area grew and with the construction of I-15, new pressure surfaced for commercial development at the intersection of Fort Lane and Gentile. The developers stated that what developable land did exist on Main was limited and overpriced. The interests of these developers were included in a letter to the planning commission from Milton P. Matthews, Ph.D., director of the Institute of Marketing Research, dated October 30, 1961. His letter informed the commission that his company had been doing studies of Layton for some time and that there were some needs and concerns that they had identified:

- the neighborhood pattern of commercial development had been neglected in favor of strip commercial zoning along the highway
- there was a need in the area for a large supermarket
- the construction of I-15 would divide the community with no commercial land on the east side of the freeway

The planning commission was also concerned about the large number of shopping centers which had been proposed, but never constructed in the city. While the commission asked for a study of commercial and industrial lands and the development of a plan to address these land uses, minutes indicate that such a study and plan were never done. By 1964, the concern of the amount of land which was zoned commercial, but sitting vacant was discussed again, as a request for rezoning the northeast corner of Fort Lane and Gentile was presented to the commission.

The need to facilitate multi-family housing by including a zone specifically for this use was also discussed extensively during this period, recognizing it as an important buffer zone between commercial and single family housing.

In 1964, work was commenced on a new city master plan. On June 24, Chairman Whitesides pointed out the worth of examining past work which had been done on master planning prior to attempting completion of a new one.

In September, 1966, Oma Wilcox was to set up a meeting with Clay Allred, now working as a private consultant; Rod Sutton, Davis County Planning; and the Layton City Recreation and Planning Commissions, along with the City Council, to discuss involvement in 701 funding for completion of a new Master Plan. Section 701 was that part of the Housing Act of 1954, as amended, which provided federal money for developing comprehensive plans. The plan which was eventually developed out of this meeting was completed some four years later in 1970.

The 1970s

The Master Plan which was developed was for the whole county, including individual sections for the various towns. The plan emphasized the need to develop adjacent existing development to avoid costly infrastructure for isolated development. On August 25, 1970, the planning commission approved sending a letter to the city council recommending adoption of the preliminary master plan on September 21, 1970. According to the Davis County Planning Office, the plan was never formally adopted by the county commission.

The late 1970s brought about the beginning of work for a new master plan to be done by Millard Consultants of Salt Lake City. The planning commission had several extra meetings starting in 1978 to discuss some of the items that needed to be considered in the new plan. The planning commission recommended that the city council accept and adopt the first phase of the Layton City Master Plan on September 26, 1978. The city council accepted phase one of the plan on October 19 of the same year.

On March 27, 1979, the building administrator asked the planning commission if there were items they would like included in the city budget. The commission stated that they felt it was time for Layton City to have a full-time planner, rather than contracting with the county on a part-time basis. They also requested a room where they could have their maps and other necessary information. At the next commission meeting on April 10, the following reasons for a full-time planner were listed:

- to give on-going Master Plan support
- to help with the interpretation of the master plan after adoption
- to be a full-time liaison with the city council
- the rapid growth of the city on a continual basis
- increasing number of planning issues
- hillside ordinance and other documents need updating
- this would allow more indepth study and analysis of requests to the city
- time to make special studies and investigations

- the shared arrangement with other cities through the county dilutes the planner's efforts
- 50% more expense in wages would provide more than double affectivity

The city council approved the request and on October 1, 1979, Scott Carter became employed by Layton City. It was the feeling of the commission that with a new full-time city planner, that Mr. Millard's role needed to be redefined. Rich Stevenson, Jr., a member of the commission recommended that the \$2200 left in the budget for the master plan be used by the commission rather than the consultant to finish the plan. On October 18, the city council approved this idea.

The 1980s

Work on a Master Plan for Layton City was completed in 1982 and adopted by the commission on July 13, and by the city council on August 5 of that same year. The plan consisted of goals developed by citizens in various eight sections of the city. Due to time constraints a document for distribution was not made available until recently.

Work on an updated General Plan for Layton City began in 1986. The plan format was to consist of several elements covering topics such as land use, transportation, community identity, etc. Each element was then to be reviewed by a citizen's committee.

The 1990s

From 1991 to 1994 the City Council adopted the Community Identity, Parks and Recreation, Transportation, and Land Use/Population Element (with W. Layton amendments).

The current process involves the adoption of all existing elements, including Housing and Community Facilities and Services, into one complete document known as the 1994 Layton City General Plan. Two additional elements, Environmental and Economic Development, will follow as amendments to the General Plan.