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Introduction

The Tulsa Planning Office is proud to present our accomplishments during fiscal year 2021 in this annual report. This has been a challenging year, as the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped how we work with each other, collaborate with other departments and external agencies, and to engage the public; nevertheless, we made significant strides in several areas.

Faced with unparalleled disruptions to normal operations, the Tulsa Planning Office looked for ways to limit the effects of the pandemic on residents and businesses while also protecting the health of our employees and the public. We adopted new procedures that allowed our staff to do their jobs effectively and safely. From modifying our public engagement approach and providing our staff work-from-home options, to holding public hearings and public meetings online, we minimized in-person interaction and found creative ways to collaborate. Despite concerns that virtual meetings would limit participation, it allowed more people and new audiences to participate who would otherwise not be have been able to.

Despite the challenging circumstances, the Tulsa Planning Office continues our goal of doing meaningful work in Tulsa that makes a visible difference in the lives of residents. We have focused our efforts on addressing communities with the greatest areas of need and often with the greatest disparities in life expectancy. Through our data analysis approach to planning, indicators relating to equity, health, and wellness have been a major consideration and the driving force for prioritizing areas of focus. This approach aims to lift up all of Tulsa, but with special emphasis and care in those areas that need the most assistance and that historically have not been involved in planning processes. By working together toward common goals, these areas can become more vibrant, resilient, and engaged.

Several project milestones were reached in the past year and are detailed in this report. These successes include the development of a draft Neighborhood Infill Overlay; ongoing refinement to the Strategic Planning program resulting in multiple initiatives assisting City departments; completion and adoption of the Route 66 Master Plan; significant progress in our effort to update planitulsa, the City’s Comprehensive Plan; adoption and implementation of the City’s Parklet program; development of the Vibrant Neighborhood Partnership and selection of the first three participating neighborhoods; making significant strides in the City’s Destination Districts program; and continuing to monitor and push for the implementation of recommendations within adopted plans.

This report also provides an update of ongoing processes and responsibilities in our office, such with the Planning Commission (TMAPC), City and County Boards of Adjustment, Preservation Commission, Arts Commission, and Route 66 Commission.

These accomplishments would not be possible if not for the tremendous efforts put forth by the dedicated and talented employees of the Tulsa Planning Office and other entities in the City of Tulsa, and the greater community that supports our work.

Susan Miller, AICP
Director, Tulsa Planning Office
Our Team

**Director**
Susan Miller, AICP

**Current Planning**
Dwayne Wilkerson, ASLA, RLA | Principal Planner
Kim Sawyer | TMAPC Secretary
Janet Sparger | BOA Secretary
Nathan Foster | Senior Planner
Jay Hoyt | Planner
Jed Porter, Ph.D., LEED AP | Historic Preservation Officer
Austin Chapman, AICP | Planner, City BOA Administrator
Felicity Good | Planner
Robi Jones | Community Planner, County BOA Administrator
Kendal Davis | Assistant Planner

**Planning & Design**
Travis Hulse, AICP, CFM | Principal Planner
John Tankard | Senior Planner, Comprehensive Planning
Paulina Baeza | Senior Planner, Strategic Planning
Payton Wynes | Urban Design Planner
Dennis Whitaker | Planner, Route 66 Commission Liaison
Amy Ulmer | Planner, Arts Commission Liaison
Alex O’Connell | Assistant Planner
Samiul Haque | Assistant Planner

**Implementation**
Luisa Krug | Destination Districts Manager
Daniel Jeffries | Senior Planner, Implementation & Communications
Emily Scott | Neighborhood Revitalization Planner

Right: In November 2020, our team led a volunteer effort in partnership with Casa de la Cultura and Tulsa Global District to clean up a pedestrian underpass that connects the Shannon Park and Briardale neighborhoods to Roy Clark Elementary and Hicks Park on the west side of Highway 169, near 41st Street.

We removed tons of debris and painted a geometric mural to cover up graffiti, add beauty, and improve the walk for kids and neighbors who use the 200-foot tunnel. The project was made possible by a grant from Pathways to Health.
Current Planning Activities

Total Activities

This year, applications to the Planning Commission and Boards of Adjustment experienced a 3% increase, while overall activity (including records searches and zoning letters) increased by close to 4%. Since FY15, we have seen a 12% uptick in total activity.

Applications include rezonings, variances, special exceptions, development plan review, sign and landscape plan review, administrative review, historic preservation and urban design permits, plat reviews, and more. Overall activity also includes records searches and zoning letters.

![Graph showing Total Activities from 2015 to 2021](image)

City of Tulsa Board of Adjustment

This rise in activity comes despite the COVID-19 pandemic’s effects on public hearings and application intake, and the elimination of spacing verifications being heard by the City Board of Adjustment. Following a 39% spike of such applications in FY20 due largely to the introduction of medical marijuana dispensaries, BOA applications fell by 27% after the spacing verification process became administrative.

City of Tulsa Rezonings

Applications for rezonings in Tulsa vary only slightly from year to year, and have increased modestly since FY13, growing from 44 to 54.

Tulsa County Applications

Applications in unincorporated Tulsa County have risen somewhat since FY13. The number of applications to the Tulsa County Board of Adjustment has increased substantially, from 45 to 70, though applications for rezoning in unincorporated Tulsa County have remained relatively flat since FY13, with 10 applications this fiscal year.

![Graph showing Board of Adjustment and Zoning Applications from 2013 to 2021](image)
Land Subdivisions

Since FY15, the number of preliminary plats has remained steady, while applications for lot splits have fallen by 9%, partly due to the introduction of lot line adjustments in 2018. Lot line adjustments, which replaced lot combinations, have increased by 24%. Preliminary plat filings have decreased by 10%, while the number of final plats reviewed has grown from 17 to 41. The number of exempt land division reviews, introduced in 2018, is also growing.

Administrative Plan Reviews

The number of administrative plan reviews has diminished steadily after peaking in FY13. Since then, such reviews have fallen by 50%. Sign plan reviews still constitute a great majority of all reviews, while the number of minor revisions to site plans has decreased tremendously. The number of alternative compliance landscape plan reviews has increased in recent years.

Records Searches and Zoning Letters

Accounting for a substantial and growing portion of our work, the number of records searches and zoning letters issued has increased by 55% since FY15, to a total of 1,362.

**Records searches** are triggered when the City of Tulsa receives applications for new proposed uses for a property, and provide a full overview of the property history related to zoning, PUDs, overlays, site plans, and TMAPC and BOA actions.

**Zoning letters** are requested by applicants who need to verify a property’s zoning for a particular use.
Categorizing Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment applications by City Council District shows District 4 experienced the most activity, and District 7 had the least activity.

Application Totals by Council District:

- District 1: 29
- District 2: 21
- District 3: 23
- District 4: 50
- District 5: 24
- District 6: 27
- District 7: 6
- District 8: 9
- District 9: 39

Visit tulsacouncil.org to view an interactive map.

Applications by Type and District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning Cases</th>
<th>Special Exceptions</th>
<th>Variances</th>
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Zoning

District 6 had the most rezoning applications in FY21, with 12, followed by Districts 1 and 4 (nine each), and District 2 (seven). Districts 5 and 8 each had four, and District 7 had five. Districts 3 and 9 saw the least rezoning activity, with two applications each.

Variances

District 9 saw the highest number of variance requests (22), followed by District 4 (14), and District 1 (10). Districts 2 and 5 had seven each, followed by District 6 (five), and Districts 7 and 8 each only had one application.

Special Exceptions

District 4 experienced the most requests for Special Exceptions (25), followed by District 3 (15), and Districts 5 and 9 (12 each). Districts 2 and 8 each had seven applications, and there were no applications in District 7.
What’s the difference between a special exception and a variance?

Special exceptions and variances are both requests to do something on a property that requires a review and approval by the Board of Adjustment, but they have different requirements.

For a special exception, the applicant must demonstrate that the request is found to be in harmony with the spirit and intent of the Zoning Code and will not be injurious to the neighborhood or public welfare.

**Variances** grant relief from strict compliance with the regulations of the Zoning Code that would render the property very difficult or impossible to put to reasonable use. As such, they have a higher threshold for approval, requiring applicants to demonstrate a hardship based on the physical characteristics of the property itself. The hardship cannot be self-imposed or a financial burden.

→ Sections 70.120 and 70.130 of the Zoning Code
The Tulsa Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (TMAPC) hears rezoning cases, provides recommendations for zoning code amendments, has approval authority for subdivision matters, and considers adoption of comprehensive plan amendments throughout the City of Tulsa and unincorporated lands in Tulsa County. The 11-member commission includes appointees representing the City of Tulsa and Tulsa County.

Tulsa Planning Office staff guide applicants through the process, receive and process applications, prepare case reports and histories, provides public notice, collects public comment, makes recommendations for approval or denial, and presents information to TMAPC and the City Council regarding applicant cases and amendments to the Zoning Code and Comprehensive Plan. → tulsaplanning.org

### Zoning Code Amendments

- **The 2019 housing study recommended making it easier to build additional housing types in near-downtown neighborhoods, along with relaxing some lot and building regulations citywide. Creating the Neighborhood Infill Overlay included several meetings with near-downtown residents, homebuilders, developers, and City Councilors, followed by drafting changes and then testing the regulations against real-world conditions. In June, TMAPC recommended approval of the overlay text amendment (ZCA-19).**

- **ZCA-20 was adopted to remove the prohibition of drive-throughs for Medical Marijuana dispensaries.**

- **The Zoning Code Implementation Team drafted several clean-up items and clarifications identified through the development review process, such as: reducing minimum school parking requirements, adjusting MX-P Build-to-Zone to avoid utility conflicts, and clarifying the definition of commercial vehicles.**

### Subdivisions

- **In response to the pandemic, the Technical Advisory Committee began offering a virtual attendance option that increased participation among reviewers and improved outcomes of regular meetings. Applications for subdivision items are now accepted and distributed digitally which improves efficiency and reduces paper waste. Staff will continue these practices beyond the pandemic to take advantage of the benefits.**

### Neighborhood Infill Overlay Text Amendment

- **Allows the following additional housing types by right: Duplex, Triplex, Quadplex, Patio House, Townhouse, Cottage House Development, Multi-unit House, Apartment/Condo (up to eight units)**

- **Reduces minimum parking requirements by 50%**

- **Reduces minimum lot area, lot width, street frontage, open space, and setbacks, minimum lot area per unit**

**Engagement**

1,565 survey respondents
194 attendees of the nine neighborhood meetings
286 attendees of two citywide housing meetings
85 attendees at three Housing Development Roundtables

→ Section 20.080 of the Zoning Code
City Board of Adjustment

The City of Tulsa Board of Adjustment hears cases from applicants seeking relief from the Zoning Code, and comprises five members appointed by the mayor. The Board has the ability to grant variances and special exceptions from the requirements of the Zoning Code.

- The Board of Adjustment held a work session in October 2020 to discuss frequently-raised issues, including 300-foot spacing for bars, alternative compliance parking studies and blade sign limitations, which were subsequently evaluated by the zoning code implementation team.

Tulsa Arts Commission

The Tulsa Planning Office assists the Arts Commission in the approval of beautification projects, the maintenance and marketing of public art, and the long-term cultivation of Tulsa’s cultural resources.

- The Independent Review Panel recommended allocating $113,000 of Vision 2 funds to 11 large organizations, and $187,000 to 22 small organizations to help cover programming costs in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In June 2021, the Arts Commission approved the updated artist contract language provided by the City Legal Department to include two clauses for either “standard” or “iconic” artwork that will be included in future calls for artists.
- The Steering Committee for the third iteration of the Vision Arts grant program began to meet and discuss the draft program guide.

planitulsa

planitulsa is Tulsa’s Comprehensive Plan, which guides the long-term, physical development of the city. Its goals and policies provide a framework within which individuals, businesses, city departments, and public officials make decisions. planitulsa was adopted in 2010, and work on this update, which will be more data-driven and actionable, began in 2019.

→ tulsaplaning.org/planitulsa

- Staff developed draft goals, strategies, and actions for each chapter with details on the type of action identified and the responsible parties at the City identified for all actions.
- Significant progress was made on the development of the plan document, estimated to be completed in fall 2021.
- Staff conducted subject matter expert engagement, which included more than 200 meetings and interviews with community organizations, non-profits, government agencies, and the business community.
- Staff completed several public engagement activities including a Housing and Neighborhoods survey with more than 1,600 responses; a policy survey with more than 400 responses; and 18 3-hour Zoom sessions for one-on-one discussions about ideas for policies for each chapter, with 150 discussions that average 29 minutes each. Additionally, three Local Home Builder Roundtable discussions, and a public meeting on Infill development were completed.
Urban Design

The Urban Design program encompasses all issues related to the public right-of-way. Tulsa Planning Office staff provides technical reviews of transportation infrastructure projects; manages the parklet, tables and chairs, and sidewalk café permit programs; provides design solutions and alternatives; and collaborates with a wide range of public and private entities to solve issues in the right-of-way.

→ tulsaplanning.org/row

• Our staff reviewed and provided technical comments for 39 transportation infrastructure projects.

• Right-of-way permits represent an area of growth in application volume. Applications for sidewalk cafés has grown from seven in FY20 to 29 this year, while applications for tables & chairs permits increased from two to eight. New programs were introduced this year, with 30 applications to the parklet program and 10 to the temporary parklet program, which was introduced to reduce barriers to providing safe, outdoor dining in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

• The Parklet and Sidewalk Café Ordinances were updated in September 2020 to create temporary permits for each program. Tulsa Planning Office staff is currently working with representatives from the Downtown Tulsa Partnership, Streets & Stormwater, Legal, and Development Services to update these ordinances in order to accommodate lessons learned over this past permit cycle.

• The Tree Committee Final Report was completed in October 2020. The report outlines the issues related to regulations, process, funding, the approved tree list, and next steps to resolve these issues. Staff is currently working with Development Services, Streets & Stormwater, Engineering Services, and the Downtown Tulsa Partnership to resolve the identified issues, specifically in downtown.
Historic Preservation
The Tulsa Preservation Commission and Tulsa Planning Office staff administer the Historic Preservation Zoning Overlay and associated residential permit process and deal with Zoning Map Amendments and other government actions affecting historic properties. In addition, they identify and nominate properties and districts to the National Register of Historic Places, and produce educational material describing Tulsa’s historic resources. By working with residents, owners, neighborhood organizations, and City of Tulsa departments and officials, the Commission helps protect and enhance Tulsa’s cultural and architectural heritage.

- The number of historic preservation permit applications has remained stable, with 85 applications.
- The survey of the Morningside Addition in the Maple Ridge Historic Residential District has been completed, and additional residences have been identified as Contributing Resources.
- Fieldwork in the Harvard Hills Historic District and the Forest Hills Addition continues. This step includes documenting and taking photos of every home, and will eventually lead to a formal nomination to list the district on the NRHP.
- The Tulsa Preservation Commission conducted its Annual Retreat in June 2021 and identified several priorities, including outreach and regulations on demolition and accessory buildings.

Route 66 Commission
The commission implements specific strategies and plans to encourage economic development and promotion for Route 66. Tulsa Planning Office staff assist with administration of their work.

- Sixteen neon grants totaling $87,931 were awarded (with total project costs of $183,563).
- A new, monthly Shop 66 Saturday event was created to highlight commercial districts across the two Route 66 alignments.
- Created a map for residents and tourists identifying seven commercial districts, neon grant sign locations and historic marker locations was created in partnership with Visit Tulsa.
Destination Districts

This program aims to create vibrant places in Tulsa where people want to be. Its goals are to stimulate economic development, foster authentic cultural expression, develop civic pride, and deepen the connections to places that will allow our city to retain talent, attract new residents, and increase tourism.

→ tulsaplanning.org/dd

- Tulsa Global District and Historic Greenwood District have both adopted a mission, vision, and goals and are applying to become 501(c)3 organizations.
- Historic Greenwood District and Tulsa Global District had 1,275 volunteer hours this fiscal year.
- Destination Districts Program and Kendall Whittier Main Street started working on renewal of Kendall Whittier Improvement District.
- The Commercial Toolkit was launched in fall 2020. It offers information and resources on how to implement place-based projects, regulations, and programs that support active commercial districts, and fundraising ideas. Projects, programs, and initiatives fall into one or more of the following categories:
  - Regulations
  - Place-based
  - Historic preservation
  - Grants or funding opportunities
  - Transit-oriented development
  - Beautification

Vibrant Neighborhoods Partnership

This is a community-driven program aimed at improving the quality of life in Tulsa’s neighborhoods. It seeks to holistically improve neighborhood infrastructure and enjoyment through targeted public support and service delivery in collaboration with neighborhood residents and community partners.

→ tulsaplanning.org/vnp

- Our staff launched the Vibrant Neighborhoods Partnership and made significant progress on program development.
- Three neighborhoods were selected to participate in the program’s initial application phase: Crosbie Heights is underway, while the Phoenix District and Charles Page Neighborhood are slated to begin in FY22.
- Identified and targeted resources to the enrolled neighborhoods through the coordination of ten participating City Departments and a growing group of more than 25 community partners.
Implementation

Implementation Report
The Tulsa Planning Office monitors and supports implementation of adopted small area plans. Each year, staff reviews the status of each of the nearly 1,300 plan recommendations and publishes an Implementation Report, tracking progress over time.

- Progress continues on implementing recommendations in existing plans. Overall, 42% are either complete or ongoing, 20% are in progress, 35% have not been initiated, and 3% are obsolete. Compared to the previous year, the number of recommendations considered complete or ongoing increased by more than 34%, and those not yet initiated decreased by around 5%.
- Progress varies greatly between plans, with some of the oldest plans remaining largely not initiated, while newer plans with more momentum have seen much more progress.
- Defining Implementation Statuses
  - Complete: Projects have been fully implemented, e.g. a street project
  - Ongoing: Projects are of a continuous nature (e.g. policy changes) and have been initiated/completed
  - In Progress: Partially completed or are underway
  - Not Initiated: Projects have not yet been initiated
  - Obsolete: Not currently recommended for initiation based on a change of conditions or other factors since plan adoption

Neighborhood Toolkit
The Neighborhood Toolkit was created to support implementation efforts and residents who want to work together to strengthen their neighborhoods. It offers information on how to organize an association, launch projects, celebrate with neighborhood events, access resources, and more.

- The Toolkit is becoming the place neighbors turn to when they want to work together to make their neighborhoods better. With nearly 3,000 pageviews in FY21, neighbors are actively using the Toolkit and its resources. Each project page contains specific steps, contact information, and resources to help accomplish a particular task.
- The top 5 viewed project pages in FY21:
  1. Reporting Code Violations
  2. Installing a Storm Shelter
  3. Forming a Neighborhood Association
  4. Planting and Caring for Trees
  5. Developing a Neighborhood Sign
Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning is a data-oriented process that directs the allocation of programs and services towards specific areas where funds and other resources are most needed, can be readily utilized, and are most likely to achieve sustainable success in alignment with City priorities.

- The Sidewalk and Ramp Prioritization Initiative identified and prioritized sidewalk and ramp infrastructure recommendations for implementation. Following this initiative and using the Strategic Planning model as a framework, staff also completed a Sidewalk Gap Priority Ranking list to prioritize sidewalk gaps as outlined in the city's GO Plan. The goal is for this list to help facilitate the strategic usage of future GO Plan Implementation funds.

- Our office was commissioned with producing an update of the 2005 Route 66 Master Plan. The process was based on conducting Strategic Planning, outreach, and reporting on the previous plan's successes. Plan 66 took effect in December 2020, becoming the first adopted and approved plan to be created solely in-house by Tulsa Planning Office staff.

- Staff has begun recording Plan 66 implementation, and is in the process of reporting the implementation of the recommendations contained in the adopted plan.

Route 66 Bus Rapid Transit Study

In 2020, the Mayor's Office asked the Tulsa Planning Office to conduct a study to determine the alignment for the Route 66 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route, identify stop locations, and develop a land use framework for what will become Tulsa's second BRT route. The intention of the project is to serve the community by offering a frequent bus service that is reliable, accessible, convenient, and safe, while highlighting many of Tulsa's local assets.

- Our team conducted outreach and oversaw the study. Activities included three steering committee meetings, 2 meetings with downtown stakeholders in coordination with the Downtown Tulsa Partnership, a survey aimed at existing transit riders using the service along the corridor, and a survey for downtown stakeholders.

- Staff identified a final route alignment using Strategic Planning, the outcomes from the outreach process, and conducting a feasibility study. The feasibility study included cost analysis, transit indicators, and an operational review of the existing service and its future needs.

- Station location selection was completed through a combination of Strategic Planning, the outreach process, and budget analysis for project implementation. Staff also prioritized, ranked and categorized types of stops in the event of budget constraints.

- Development of the Land Use Framework is underway, and slated to be complete by the end of 2021. This initiative includes rezoning recommendations and strategies.
Tulsa County Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan describes the long-term vision for unincorporated land within Tulsa County, and contains common goals that guide development. Most of these areas exist within the fencelines of the eleven municipalities located in the county and generally fall under the municipalities’ land use plans because properties in the unincorporated areas may someday be annexed into the municipality. This approach gives each city the opportunity to offer their perspective on the design and development of the land within their fenceline prior to annexation.

The Tulsa County Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a compilation of the land use plans adopted by municipalities in the county and the area plans for the remaining unincorporated areas. Much of the plan for areas outside the fencelines was sorely out of date, and overlapping boundaries were complicated and confusing. In 2018, Tulsa County asked the Tulsa Planning Office to update and untangle the plan.

- Tulsa Planning Office staff completed the plan update process in October 2020, culminating with TMAPC adoption and approval by the Tulsa County Board of County Commissioners.
- Staff conducted surveys, meetings with residents and planners from each of the 11 municipalities in Tulsa County, and analyzed data and maps, ensuring all unincorporated land in the county was covered by the Plan.

Tulsa County Zoning Code Update

The Tulsa County Zoning Code was adopted in 1980, and was last amended in 2018. It reflects the prevailing planning practices at the time it was adopted, and is in great need of modernization to reflect current best practices and to be better organized. The project is underway and adoption of the new code is anticipated in early to mid 2023.

- Tulsa Planning Office staff secured approval for funding for the code update in spring 2021, and hired Duncan Associates to help lead the process. Work has already commenced on this important update. Duncan Associates updated the City of Tulsa’s Zoning Code in 2015. Their familiarity with the Tulsa area and previous work here will ensure the City and County zoning codes are compatible, making development in the metropolitan area more predictable.
- The scope of work includes:
  - Reorganizing and reformatting the structure of the document
  - Introducing new zoning code provisions and amending the current code
  - Conducting public outreach, hosting public meetings, collecting input and feedback on draft documents, and making any necessary adjustments based on community input
  - Presenting the updated code document to the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners for plan adoption
Tulsa County Adopted Comprehensive Plans Coverage Areas

Legend

Corporate Limits
- Bixby
- Broken Arrow
- Collinsville
- Glenpool
- Jenks
- Liberty
- Owasso
- Sapulpa
- Sand Springs
- Skiatook
- Sperry
- Tulsa

Tulsa County Comprehensive Plan
- Bixby Fenceline (2019)
- Broken Arrow Fenceline 2020
- Collinsville Fenceline (2019)
- Glenpool Fenceline (2019)
- Jenks Fenceline (2019)
- Owasso Fenceline (2019)
- Sapulpa (2014)
- Sand Springs Fenceline (2020)
- Skiatook Fenceline (2019)
- Sperry Fenceline (2019)
- Berryhill (2019)
- Keystone (2020)
- North Tulsa County (2020)
- South Tulsa County (2020)
- Turley (2020)
- West Central Tulsa County (2020)
- No Comprehensive Plan