



Frequently Asked Questions

What is a comprehensive plan? A comprehensive plan, in simple terms, is first a statement of what citizens want their community to be like at a future point in time, usually 15-20 years from the present. The plan examines current conditions and trends and projects how the community will develop in the future. The desired future condition is expressed through text, goal statements and a future land use map. Secondly, a plan outlines recommendations on how to achieve the desired end state, expressed through policy statements and suggestions on how to implement the plan. The plan serves as a guide to decision-makers on development issues, helping to keep the ultimate vision in mind as decisions are made. This ensures wise use of public tax dollars when making choices about public investments to support development.

Why is a comprehensive plan important? A plan serves multiple purposes. In addition to acting as a guide for making consistent and purposeful public decisions on development issues, it also provides guidance to private individuals desiring to invest in a farm, home or development project. For example, a homeowner may decide not to build a home where a future highway is projected or a developer may choose to plan a commercial project where public water and sewer will be available. A comprehensive plan is also a statutory requirement when zoning and subdivision regulations are adopted.

Why was a new comprehensive plan needed in Riley County? The previous comprehensive plan adopted in Riley County was in 1987. Due to constantly evolving situations and trends, most plans are not useful for more than 15-20 years. Since 1987, many changes had occurred in Riley County creating the need for a more accurate and up-to-date plan. The Riley County Planning Board is responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of the comprehensive plan on an annual basis. Several years prior to the start of the Vision 2025 process in 2005, they determined the current plan was no longer serving as an adequate guide due to increasing rural development pressures and the ineffectiveness of the current zoning regulations.

Why are implementation strategies important to the success of a comprehensive plan? A goal has little success of being achieved unless there is a clear strategy identified for achieving it. Therefore it is important to identify a strategy to implement a plan within the plan itself. Without zoning regulations, subdivision regulations or other implementation strategies, a plan would have very little chance of being successful.

What are zoning regulations? Zoning regulations categorize land into different uses, such as residential or industrial, and serve to separate uses from each other to help protect private investments and the value of land. For example, zoning regulations could prevent a large factory from being constructed adjacent to a home or restrict a residential subdivision from being constructed next to an existing factory. The regulations can also help minimize the premature development of land such as the construction of a large residential subdivision before adequate

sewer, water and roads are available to serve it. This helps keep the taxpayers from having to subsidize the development. A property must go through a rezoning process if the current zoning designation does not permit the desired land use.

What are subdivision regulations? Subdivision regulations direct how land is developed when it is subdivided for that purpose. They ensure development standards are met to protect the public and future buyers of land within the development. Such standards may include access to the site, road improvements, utilities, legal descriptions, future development connections, environmental conditions, etc. The end result of the subdivision process is the preparation of a plat that identifies lot corners, rights-of-way, easements, etc. The legal description of a platted lot is greatly simplified, for example “Lot 1 of John Doe Subdivision”.

When would I have to rezone my property? Rezoning of property is necessary whenever the land use desired by the property owner is not permitted by the current zoning designation, unless exempted due to an agricultural purpose.

When would I have to plat my property? A subdivision plat is required whenever an existing tract of land is divided by deed into tracts of a certain size as defined by the subdivision regulations (currently less than 20 acres in Riley County, unless exempted due to an agricultural purpose).

How does the rezoning process work? The landowner begins with a pre-application conference with Riley County staff. The landowner then files an application and pays the fees to cover the public costs involved. The request is set for a public hearing before a planning board. The Riley County Planning Board would have jurisdiction in the unincorporated areas outside of the Manhattan Urban Area (as defined by a City of Manhattan/Riley County agreement). Notice of this hearing is published in the Manhattan Mercury and is sent to all property owners within 1000’ feet of the request. The public hearing is conducted and a recommendation is forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners. The Board of County Commissioners also conducts a public hearing and makes a final decision on the request.

What is the likelihood of a rezoning request being approved? There is no guarantee a rezoning request will be approved. It depends on the location, the nature of the request and the facts involved in each situation. It is always a good idea to visit with planning staff about concerns that may arise with a particular request before applying. This will help lessen the likelihood of a denial of the request and a loss of the investment involved in filing an application.

What if I am a farmer or rancher, do I still need to rezone in order to build my home? If it is determined you need a residence to support your agricultural operation, following an application process as per Section 3A – Determination of Agricultural Use Exemption of the Riley County Zoning Regulations, then you are not subject to the zoning or subdivision regulation requirements as per state law. This is considered in Riley County as an “agricultural exemption”. This exemption is granted administratively and does not require board action or an application fee. If this exemption is granted, you may apply for a permit to build your residence, at no expense, without having to rezone.