



Department of Community Development

City of Duncan, Oklahoma - May 2016

From the Director's Desk:

Greetings! I would like to start by saying how excited I am to be part of the City of Duncan Team and serve as your Director of Community Development! I am sure many of you are curious to know a bit more about me, where I came from, and how I became interested in community development as well as the City of Duncan. As a young child I was always fascinated with both the built and natural environments. I was drawn to historic buildings, town centers, parks, and the agricultural community as well. This led to me pursuing acceptance to Ball State University's College of Architecture and Planning at an early age. My focus through junior high and high school was geared towards being accepted into this prestigious program out of Muncie, Indiana. Happily, I was accepted and graduated from the program with a Bachelor's in Urban Planning as well as a Bachelor's of Science.

Upon graduation I was hired on as the Assistant Director of the Huntington Countywide Department of Community Development and later promoted to the Executive Director which required overseeing all aspects of community development in Huntington, Indiana. During this period I had to wear many hats as related to community and economic development. I was a co-founder of Main Street Huntington, served as the Floodplain Administrator, wrote the Huntington County Comprehensive Plan, prepared a number of ordinance amendments to our zoning and subdivision regulations, and prepared corridor plans for some of our major thoroughfares. I also assisted on a number of economic development projects, brownfield redevelopment, and neighborhood planning - all to try and make Huntington, Indiana a more inviting place to live and conduct business.

After twelve plus years in Community Development, an opportunity to work in a law office arose. I had always pondered if I should pursue a law degree so that I may one day be able to practice land use and environmental law. While working in the law office I was able to further my skills in public relations as well as get some experience working the private sector. Three years later, I realized that my passion was still with community development and working to help build and shape communities based on the local citizens' visions. For that, I began looking for careers in my field of study and discovered that Duncan, Oklahoma was looking to fill the position of Director for Community Development. I did some research on the community, applied for the position, and now I am happy to call Duncan, Oklahoma home. I hope to serve you all well while working to make Duncan a more vibrant place to live, work and play.



Why a Monthly Newsletter?

In planning and community development I feel it is important to keep our citizens informed of what is happening as it relates to planning, zoning, land use, community development, and economic development. I have always believed that in my role as a professional planner working in the public sector, I serve as a steward to the community in how projects not only impact our community but also how funding for such projects occur. I believe that our taxpayers are "investors" and that it is my duty to best utilize their investment into the community to maximize progress, growth, and development that truly reflects the vision of our community. This newsletter will highlight projects that have approvals, the steps in which applications for development are made, how and why code enforcement occurs within the community, and also to share the goals and visions for Duncan, Oklahoma as they are brought to the Department of Community Development.

Trails! Trails! Trails! All Leading Towards Healthier Community Development!



An exciting project that is gaining momentum is the proposed 5k trail that will connect Duncan Regional Hospital, the Simmons Center, Chisolm Trail Heritage Center, Duncan Middle School, and a number of residential units on the west end of town. Many studies have proven that trails and greenways have positive impacts on the overall quality of life for the community by not only providing recreation and transportation alternatives, but also having a positive influence on the local economy and on community development. Thousands of communities across the country have seen the positive impacts that have resulted from incorporating trail networks in their long-term community goals and have noted gains in local economy, safety, recreation fulfillment, healthier demographics, and environmental benefits.

Having worked several years in community development, I have had the luxury of meeting many commercial and industrial leaders looking at communities across Indiana, and I note that in the competitive world of bringing business not only to the State of Oklahoma but also to our community, these leaders are looking for a community where they know their workers will have both amenities and opportunities to better themselves which in turn betters the business. A strong trails program is one such amenity that these leaders are looking for when they are going through the site selection process. I have also been involved with mentoring young minds, both high school and college students, and a growing number of these young adults want a community that provides opportunities for healthier living as well as having a safe means for alternative transportation is growing each year. Many of these students, while in college, learn about foreign countries that have embraced both pedestrian and bicycle trails and now desire our communities to incorporate similar trail systems at the local level.

In Economic Development, “Change is Inevitable but Progress is Truly Optional.” - Don A. Holbrook

The City of Duncan Plan Commission heard two rezoning requests in the month of May, and both were passed with favorable recommendations to the City of Duncan City Council where the requests were adopted by ordinance. The first was an application made to rezone property to C-2, a commercial classification, that will allow the future construction of a medical office located on Chisolm Trail Parkway just south of the Elk Avenue intersection. The second request was made by the Duncan Area Economic Development Foundation to rezone property behind Cameron University to I-2, an industrial classification, which will allow the establishment of a business incubator.

Rezoning a property brings out the fear of unknowns to the adjoining property owners. Is this proposal going to lower my property value? Is this proposal going to generate additional traffic? Is this proposal going to generate dust, smell, lights that will disrupt the enjoyment of my property? Will this proposal have an industrial spill that will harm the environment? These concerns are not just isolated to an industrial and commercial uses. These concerns also exist with the different levels of residential and agricultural classifications.

When evaluating a request, as the Department of Community Development did with these two request in May, research is done regarding surrounding land uses, surrounding zoning classifications, proposed infrastructure improvements, proposed future land use maps, and the adopted comprehensive plan. Staff then makes a recommendation to the Plan Commission who then passes a recommendation on to the City Council. At both the Plan Commission meeting and the City Council meeting, the public is given the opportunity to express their support or concern for the proposal.

As a professional planner, it is important to hear from local citizens the reasons that they are for or against a proposal. This provides valuable information that can be used to amend our current zoning codes to not only make the community more inviting for future development but to also protect our citizens from potentially bad development. I feel that both of the proposals that were made this past month will be beneficial to our community, and favorable staff recommendations were given on each. Both of these requests represent change, and I also feel that they both represent progress for the City of Duncan.



“The Environment is Everything That Isn’t Me.” - Albert Einstein

“The environment is everything that isn’t me.” Yet as humans, we do not always realize that our actions, or lack of actions, has great impacts on the environment around us. Driving around Duncan we all see properties with tall grass, abandoned vehicles, trash piled in the yard, or even burned out homes. I understand that many of our community leaders receive complaints from concerned citizens about these properties with questions like, “why isn’t anything being done?” I can assure you that the Department of Community Development takes these matters very seriously. For the month of May, our code enforcement officers cited 177 different properties for these types of violations. Of these properties, about 60 **did not** take any corrective action on their own and the Department had to bid out the work to be done so the property could be brought into compliance. To bring these properties into compliance does come at a cost - mowing can range from \$20.00 to \$350.00 a property while tearing down a home may cost \$5,000.00. Liens are then placed on the property if the City of Duncan has to contract the work out.

Inspectors and Code Enforcement Officers working for the Department of Community Development are also tasked with using their senses to discover violations that may not be as easily noticed by the general public. Our staff regularly finds residential properties that have been discharging raw sewage onto neighboring properties or into street rights-of-way; commercial businesses that did not take proper steps to ensure that chemicals being used to maintain their property did not find their way into the drainage network and ultimately leading to fish-kills; or finding that local restaurants have been bypassing grease traps and just dumping directly into our community’s sanitary or storm sewer infrastructure.

Sadly, these violations to our environment are all too common in the City of Duncan. In the month of May I personally know of three residential sewer failures, two area restaurants that have illegally dumped grease and oils, and one asphalt resurfacing that was washed by a rain event. Most of the time the Department of Community Development is able to catch these violations before extensive damage is caused to our environment.



Raw sewage coming from a nearby residential sewer line failure - these failures contaminate across property lines and into public rights-of-way.



Grease from a restaurant that was not properly disposed of and allowed to enter nearby storm-water control infrastructure. If this had not been caught this pollutant could have found its way into nearby drainage-ways and ultimately contaminates local lakes and streams.



A fish-kill caused by a commercial business - business tried to top coat a parking area right before a rain event and the storm-water runoff containing toxic chemicals was allowed to enter nearby drainage system and water bodies.