



Opinion

February 19, 2009

Brownsboro master plan will be revealed Tuesday to P&Z

By Doug Wampler, President, Oldham Ahead

After nearly seven long years to the day, the Oldham County Planning Commission has an opportunity to advance the county's comprehensive plan, Outlook 2020, as envisioned back in February 2002.

On Feb. 24, the Planning Commission will consider the first of eight area masters plans called for in Outlook 2020. The Brownsboro Area Master Plan will be presented to the commission for approval.

This plan is important not only to the residents of the Brownsboro area, but to the county as a whole as the area master plans allow citizens in sub-sectors of the county to develop their own area master plans. Master plans are to be more responsive to local needs and issues than the Comprehensive Plan. The master plan process allows citizens an active role in shaping the future of their communities.

There are some in the county development community who are determined to deny citizen input and participation through the development of area master plans and have mounted a concerted effort to defeat this first master plan in order to discourage future area master plan development initiatives. I am confident the planning commissioners understand the underlying agenda that forms the basis for opposition to the plan and will make the right decision on Feb. 24.

In early 2006, the Planning and Development staff selected the Brownsboro area for the development of the initial county area master plan due to its past and future development trends and more importantly, the willingness of residents to actively participate in the process.

From its inception, the citizens and planning staff who were involved in the development of the plan have gone out of their way to ensure inclusiveness of the entire planning area's residents. Residents were informed of the project and

asked to participate. That meeting was well attended at the Brownsboro Community Center and resulted in the following vision for the Brownsboro area:

The Brownsboro Planning Area is a unique, environmentally sensitive, rural community with connected greenways, designated growth areas, well-planned infrastructure and design elements, all of which protect the Harrods Creek watershed and respect local character. The Brownsboro Planning Area includes diverse housing, small businesses, farmland, equine activity, scenic views and village centers compatible with small town living.

Volunteers were solicited from the initial kick-off meeting to form a task force to develop goals and objectives to support the vision, and then to help write the content and develop recommendations for the county to consider to implement the plan. The task force comprised a mixture of 20 residents, business owners, developers, planning commission members, and fiscal court members. All meetings have been open to the public.

The task force focused on how to manage and shape growth and future redevelopment in the Brownsboro Village area in a way that respects the area's character while accommodating future growth. Task Force members focused on alternatives that would lead to the increase of property values throughout the planning area, while ensuring property rights of residents are recognized and respected.

The document that the Planning and Zoning Commission will consider next Tuesday is guidance and direction for future growth of the Brownsboro planning area. It is not a regulatory document.

The completed Brownsboro Area Master Plan is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and, upon adoption, will update it. The purpose of the plan is to describe a future vision for Brownsboro and to provide helpful information to reach that future.

For the most part, the plan recommends status quo with respect to existing zoning. While there are recommendations for more intense and dense development in designated areas, there are no recommendations for "down-zoning."

The plan introduces the concept of using various incentives to achieve the plan's vision for the future. The incentives — primarily density bonuses — are suggested for incorporation into the subdivision regulations and zoning ordinance and are intended to ensure that landowners and/or developers retain and even gain housing density if they desire to implement suggested guidelines intended to maintain the rural character and land and housing values of the community.

There are no provisions in the plan that precludes any rezoning and development as currently practiced in the county. The Brownsboro Plan does not change the current subdivision regulations and zoning ordinance. Recommendations from the plan are prescriptive, not regulatory, but can provide developers key insight into community values and attitudes to take into consideration when proposing new developments.

The concept of area master plans is not unique to Oldham County. Twenty neighborhood plans have been developed and approved in Jefferson County and several more are in various drafting and development stages.

Judge-Executive Duane Murner's vision for Oldham County is that we must become, and strive to remain, the best rural/suburban county in the nation. Exceptional counties, and the great communities and neighborhoods within them, don't just happen. Communities constantly grow and change, and we can ensure that these changes are positive through the plans we make today.

The Brownsboro Area Master Plan matters to each and every citizen of Oldham County who wants to identify, preserve, and build on the positive qualities of their section or neighborhood of the county. The first step is its approval by the planning commission. It will then be up to Fiscal Court to put Oldham County residents first, and approve the plan.

The views expressed in this column are those of the writer.

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