

Transcript

On West Gray, Episode 15, AIM Norman w/Amy Haas & Jane Hudson

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Tiffany Vrska 0:15

What's up, everybody? Welcome to On West Gray, the monthly podcasts about all things local government and the city of Norman. I'm your host, Tiffany Vrska, Chief Communications Officer for the city of Norman, and we appreciate you tuning in. Today in the studio with us. We have Amy Haase from RDG planning and design and director Jane Hudson of the city of Norman's Planning and Community Development Department. We're very excited to chat with them about the Comprehensive Plan process that we've just kicked off. And ladies, welcome to the show. Thank you. Thanks. Yeah, thank you for coming in. So our comprehensive plan aim, Norman, or the area and infrastructure master plan. First off, Jane, can you tell me a little bit about what a comprehensive plan or a master plan even is and why we're doing this? Sure, Tiffany.

Jane Hudson 1:05

So our comprehensive plan, it's a community's vision for how their city will develop over a longer period of time. It provides the steps needed to make the vision of the development a reality. There's a part of the plan that has goals and objectives. Those goals and objectives are set to show how the community wants to develop in the future directions, number of houses, types of development.

Tiffany Vrska 1:37

We have RDG here with us. Amy, can you tell us a little bit about where we're at in the launch right now I know this is going to be a lengthy and in depth process for our community. And there'll be a lot of public engagement. So where are we at right now?

Amy Haas 1:52

Sure. We're, we're right at the beginning. So we're, this is a really exciting step in the process, where we're kind of doing two things simultaneously, we are collecting all the data and understanding kind of where the community is right now. But just as importantly, we're trying to listen and learn from as many Norman residents as we can so that we can really get a full picture of what what's happening in the community. What what folks value in Norman today. So we're really right at the beginning of that process, it'll be about an 18 month process. And we're two months in.

Tiffany Vrska 2:29

All right, so when you talk about collecting data, that's both data in the form of like insight and opinions with community members, but also hard data as far as like what our numbers are now, like population wise housing, that sort of thing, so that we could maybe make some responsible projections moving forward. Is that what you?

Amy Haas 2:49

Yes, currently? Yes. So we're looking at all that economic and demographic data. But we also need to look at things like what's our environmental conditions, such as opportunities and constraints that we have sometimes within the environment? What's our infrastructure data looking like today and in potentially where we need to be in the future? So all of that all of those pieces coming together? Again, with what resonance are telling us to?

Tiffany Vrska 3:17

Gotcha. And can you tell me a little bit about RTGS history and assisting cities with this type of endeavor? Sure,

Amy Haas 3:24

yeah. So our planning group within RTG have formed over almost 40 years ago now. And we have in that time, have worked with hundreds of communities on these types of planning projects. So and have had the pleasure of working with a number of cities with major universities with flagship universities located in their community. So we're excited to hopefully bring some of that knowledge here to Norman that we've gained over the last 2030 years now. Right.

Tiffany Vrska 3:55

So there is a lot of moving parts to this process. But I think some of the key players are on our steering committee. So can you all tell us how many residents make up that steering committee and what their responsibilities are?

Amy Haas 4:11

Sure. So our steering committee is made up of about 17. Folks, they have a wide variety of backgrounds. And they're really there to be to kind of give us a little bit of a gut check. Maybe that's a really kind of layman's way to say it, but they can provide us with some really good guidance and feedback. So for example, as we're collecting data, that we can take that data to them and say, does something not look right, in this data? Is there a place we should be digging deeper? Is there anything we're missing? Is there something that we should be looking at closer in the same regards with kind of our public engagement pieces? Here's what we're hearing. Here's what we're learning. Is there a place again, we

should dig a little bit deeper? Ask some additional survey questions or or try to reach a segment of the population that you think has been missing in these conversations. So they're really important to us as kind of that sounding board and giving us feedback to making sure we're really hitting all the buttons that we need to be hitting to get us to the end of the finish line.

Tiffany Vrska 5:18

And do you think these members kind of function also in like a liaison capacity? I've heard you all speak a little bit about how this is the community's plan, right? It's not City Council's it's not the steering committees. It's definitely not staffs. And so this is going to be a larger vision for all of Norman, is that correct? Correct, Tiffany.

Jane Hudson 5:39

So the steering committee will, as Amy said, you know, the information that they're given the information that comes back from the pop up sessions, that we have our neighborhood meetings, information that comes back from any subject matter experts that might be reviewing information for the plan, there'll be sifting through that information, and ultimately making recommendations on possibly directions of growth, transportation projects, water, wastewater,

Tiffany Vrska 6:11

yes. And that's a that's a unique thing it feels like in this process, because we have six distinct elements versus two or three that we're going to be looking at, for this plan. So we have comprehensive land use housing market analysis and affordability strategy, comprehensive transportation plan, update, stormwater master plan, update, water master plan, update, wastewater master plan, and Ami, as you said, you'd been in hundreds of your company's been in hundreds of communities kind of going through the Comprehensive Plan processes this unique is this a lot to chew? Tell me a little bit about that. Yeah,

Amy Haas 6:51

it's it is actually very unique. In my 24 years of doing this, I have never worked with a community that's kind of done all of these at the same time. That's, but that's really special. It's really, we were really excited to be a part of that of this process, because of for that reason, because it's really taking a very holistic vision to the community, and saying, How can we make sure all of these different efforts are aligning together at the same time, so it is unique, but it's it I would describe it as unique in a very special and in a really exciting, very exciting way.

Tiffany Vrska 7:31

All right, holistic approach. I like it. So the pop up sessions or events, I think I heard you mention, Jane, that the AME committee and members involved in the process, we'll be putting those on what exactly are those? Where can they catch folks to offer feedback.

Jane Hudson 7:50

So the pop up sessions will be around the city, we've actually gone through and looked at a lot of the events that will be going on in the community as an example, the National Night Out was one of the events that we've attended recently. But there'll be other events throughout the community over the next 18 months that we will be announcing there'll be on the AME norman.com website. They'll also be sent out through Facebook, Instagram, I believe, additional information will be sent out. And so those are just opportunities for us to again, touch base with members of the community, get their information, we have cards, comment cards that say, you know, what's your big idea for Norman, so that we want to know what the community wants to see in the future. As we've said, this is the community's plan. And we can't do that job if we don't have that information from the community.

Tiffany Vrska 8:42

Yes, and I am so excited. I believe that the committee came up with a wonderful idea of making sure that we have monthly polling questions at ame norman.com. And so every month, it might have a different subject matter. But it all has to do with the comp plan. Is that correct? Amy?

Amy Haas 9:02

Yes, that's correct. So each month will be trained to kind of focus on a different topic area. So for the next three or four weeks, we have three questions up that are focused around housing. And in the coming months, you'll see some questions that will focus around transportation and around stormwater. So there'll be something to go back to every month to check those out. The other thing too, if I can add, I would encourage that, if anybody out there listening has an event coming up, and they would like a Norman integrated into their event, they can go to a norman.com. And they could submit that kind of interest in the comment box area now. I'm sure we can accommodate everybody. We've had a few instances where we've got multiple events going on at the same time. Right. So it's kind of hard to do that. But we're always looking for great ideas and we want to hear from from the residents who can't normally come to a normal public meeting. And and we want that opportunity to hear from them. So Well, we love all the ideas that we can we can garner.

Tiffany Vrska 10:03

That's awesome. So ame norman.com That is the place to go to leave feedback to answer the monthly polling questions. And then also, to let the committee members know about some upcoming events that you have in case you want folks to maybe go set up and, and meet the attendees at your event to get

some feedback for our comp plan. So with all of this being said, how important is it for community members in Norman to become involved in this process?

Jane Hudson 10:32

Tiffany, it's huge. You know, again, if I could just so the comprehensive plan that we have right now was adopted in 2004. It is time definitely time to do you know, the new plan. And as Amy said, we've got the opportunity to do all of our plans. And so it is a really unique opportunity for Norman. So even more, so we need the community's input. You know, sometimes you'll see communities that will do a comprehensive plan alone. And as we've said, you know, there's multiple plans here. So we need the entire community to submit their input to come to the meetings to answer the questions, send the emails in. Because again, like I said, if we don't have the input, we will not get a solid Community Plan, in my opinion.

Tiffany Vrska 11:20

And so you said the the latest plan we had is from 2004. So we have a lot of updating to do. So this is going to be an 18 month ish process. We're thinking Correct. Okay, and what are the other stages? So you said, Amy, we're about two months into it. And it's a very exciting time, what are what are the other stages in this launch going to look like for us?

Amy Haas 11:43

Well, I think the next kind of big stage that the public will should get excited about, we'll be the land use workshops, those will be happening after the first of the year. So as we collect the data and hear from folks and begin to filter down to what we think are some of the key plan goals, and development principles using the data that we're collecting, and the listening sessions we're having right now, the next big step then will be to actually begin to develop a land use concept and kind of work back and forth with each of our individual master plans to but in after the first of the year, we're going to be holding a series of neighborhood workshops, where we invite and encourage everybody to come out and kind of work alongside with us and talk about what what you value in your neighborhood. And what where you would like to see your area of your community being in the next 20 years.

Tiffany Vrska 12:40

Okay, and for folks who maybe are not very familiar with a master plan, so this is really like a guiding document. But it's a living document. And it's very flexible, right. And so we'll lay out the plan for the next 15 ish years when this process is over. But it's very flexible, right? Can you speak to that a little bit?

Amy Haas 13:02

Sure. This this, a lot of times, you can almost think of it as it's, it's trying to provide a framework that will help our decision makers make better decisions, decisions that really are based on that community input. So it's providing a framework for them in how they can move forward as opportunities, or maybe challenges come before them. And they're a bit but they're basing it on what the residents of Norman have have really shared and, and in prioritize.

Tiffany Vrska 13:32

All right. Well, Jane, you are the planning director. So you're a government nerd like me. So I have to ask you, what are you most looking forward to in this entire process?

Jane Hudson 13:43

I'm most looking forward to actually just getting a new plan. We know like I said, it was 2004 We definitely need the new plan. Norman is growing, we're going to continue to grow. We do have some physical constraints. So we need to address those and figure out which directions you know, we can safely grow. But I'm most excited about getting involved in the community and getting out there and touching base with these people in a meeting yesterday, kind of compare this to, you know, this is like Christmas, you know, at the end, we get to open this present, you know, and Amy was like, Well, I've never been compared to, you know, a Christmas present. But it is I mean, this is a process. And there are so many people that are going to be involved in this. As I said, we've got, you know, different departments that are going to be involved in this and it's gonna be a group effort. And it's exciting, and it's exciting to see what the opportunities are for Norman. So I think that just getting out in the community, getting to hear what the community has to say. And as I said, figuring out what our constraints are so we can move past those and get a solid policy in place of where we need to grow. All right,

Tiffany Vrska 14:55

well, you all have a lot of work ahead of you. I guess I do too, because I'm hoping with the communication on that. And so I think we're all really excited. Ladies, is there anything else that you would like to tell our listeners,

Jane Hudson 15:09

I would just like to say again, I would remind everyone to please stay in touch with the aim norman.com That is our means of communication with with the community. And then as Amy said, the polling questions are very important. And pass that information along to your to your neighbors and have them log in and, and take those polling questions as well. And then again, just stay in touch with us and help us move through the process. All right, Amy.

Amy Haas 15:37

Oh, just I would reinforce what Jane said and look for any opportunity where you can potentially engage. Because, you know, at the end of the day, I'm here to help facilitate a process and help facilitate those priorities for the community to get those into the final plant. So I really need to hear from all of you.

Tiffany Vrska 15:57

All right, and it should be as simple as scanning a QR code. I think when you see us at a booths or with the big signage that will be printed up and placed around town scan that QR code, it'll bring you to norman.com And you all can provide your feedback, questions or commentary about on West gray can be sent into public affairs at Norman Okay, dot give shoutouts to our producer and editor Mr. Bryce Holland of the city of Norman communications office. Visit [Norman ok.gov/news](http://Norman.ok.gov/news). To enroll for E notifications on traffic advisories upcoming events, election notices and more from the city of Norman, follow us on social Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube city of Norman Okay. Until next time, stay engaged. Stay informed and always remember to cast your ballot. I'm Tiffany Vrska thank you for tuning in to On West Gray.

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