
CHAPTER 8: GETTING THERE

A plan that does not inspire action becomes only a set of words and pictures on paper. For this reason, Chapter 7 of this document – the plan chapter – is written around action statements: steps that Noble community members can take to make the plan’s vision become reality. This chapter provides additional ideas and resources that Noble community members and city government can use to implement the plan. It includes policy, regulatory and funding approaches.

Policy Approaches

Publicize *Noble 2025* and Planning-Related Activities

The process that produced *Noble 2025* included outreach to the community through regular press releases, a website and community meetings. Continuing to publicize *Noble 2025* and other planning activities related to its implementation will help raise and maintain awareness of the plan and its vision. A website dedicated to the plan and its implementation would assist in this publicity effort.

Use *Noble 2025*

To make the most of *Noble 2025*, it needs to become part of routine decision making in city government and in the community. City staff and community leaders should develop strategies to incorporate the plan into their daily activities. This will also mean educating *new* planning commission members, city council members and city staff about the plan, its purpose and its uses. The city should also periodically reach out to decision makers in the community in order to keep the plan and its uses fresh in everyone’s mind.

Embark on Additional Planning Efforts

A comprehensive plan such as *Noble 2025* looks at the big picture and the long run. Like Noble’s Century Community strategic plan, which contained within it a recommendation for completing a comprehensive plan, *Noble 2025* recommends additional planning efforts. These short-term or medium-range planning efforts (a US 77 corridor plan and a park system plan, for example) are designed as intermediate steps to reach the long run vision. The city may also want to use a planning approach to address other issues such as housing, school expansion or continued interest in downtown revitalization. A “planning approach” means a decision-making or problem-solving effort that includes, in addition to data gathering, coordination among multiple parties inside and outside of government and public involvement. It produces a document – a plan – that can be adopted by the planning commission and the city council.

Use Spending and Investment Decisions to Implement the Plan

Over the next twenty years, both the public and private sectors will continue to make routine spending decisions on operations, maintenance and property upkeep. They will also make larger, long-term investment decisions. Every spending and investment decision presents an opportunity to further the plan's vision. Noble city government will do this through its budgeting process and its capital improvements program. The Noble Public Schools, Cleveland County, the surrounding local governments and the state agencies will also make spending and investment decisions that affect Noble and the plan's vision. Making them aware of *Noble 2025* is the first step in coordination. Channeling private sector spending and investment towards the plan's vision, through outreach via the Noble Chamber of Commerce and other local institutions, also presents an opportunity to realize parts of *Noble 2025*.

Monitor and Update the Plan

A sound plan is a living document and, in order to stay relevant, it will need to be periodically monitored and updated. Once a year, perhaps on the anniversary of the plan's adoption, the Planning Commission should revisit the plan's vision, policy and action statements in their entirety. The commission should evaluate where progress has been made and how well the policies have addressed the issues that the community has faced over the past year. The release of the 2010 census data for Noble would be a time to decide whether the updated data indicate that the plan needs to be fine-tuned or perhaps even taken in a new direction. The city may also want to update the plan as better land use data and mapping technologies become available. Big changes on the horizon – such as definite plans for an I-35 bridge – would also indicate that the time has arrived to do a significant update of the plan.

Regulatory Approaches

Review Development Regulations for Consistency with *Noble 2025*

Land development regulations (or ordinances) are the primary way for new development to help realize the plan. Noble's zoning code and subdivision ordinance should be reviewed for consistency with the policies in *Noble 2025*, especially as they pertain to municipal water and sewer policies and the community connectivity policies. They also should be reviewed for consistency with each other, as over years of piece-meal amendments, they have a tendency to grow apart. For example, the zoning districts allowed in the land use plan's "Urban Residential Areas" should all require municipal water and sewer service.

Land development regulations pertaining to the original town plat should also be reviewed. The plan calls for researching how other Oklahoma communities have dealt with the inconsistencies between modern development regulations and older developed areas. The options run the range from encouraging the Board of

Adjustment to issue variances when appropriate to developing a set of “overlay” regulations that cover the targeted area to adopting a unique set of land development regulations for the area.

Using the Future Land Use Map to Guide Zoning Decisions

Once the future land use map is adopted as part of the plan, it becomes a guide for future zoning changes. A land development proposal is checked against the future land use map and the plan’s development policies for consistency. If the proposal is consistent, a zoning change can be easily justified. If the proposal is not consistent, justification is present for rejecting the proposed development. If the city still wishes to consider the proposed development, it is better to update and amend the plan’s future land use map first, instead of just approving a zoning change inconsistent with the plan. All the issues that went into creating the future land use map’s original land use designation should be reconsidered as part of the plan amendment process.

Usually, landowners or developers petition for a zoning change as preparation for changing the use of a parcel. The city can also initiate zoning changes. This can help facilitate the desired development by clearing legal considerations in advance of proposals, thus removing uncertainty for potential developers and landowners. Expanding the commercial land uses in the US 77/Main St. corridor may an objective that would benefit from putting the zoning in place in advance of development proposals. Significant consultation with the affected landowners and Main St. business community would still be advised.

Code Enforcement

Concerns about Noble’s appearance and the upkeep of property in Noble appeared frequently in the public involvement processes associated with the comprehensive planning study. Educational and outreach efforts, including those that come with some social support (community clean up days, for example) and/or economic assistance (perhaps donated materials or labor for low elderly households), can be used to address such issues. The city also has the authority to enforce property standards through its ordinances related to health, safety and nuisances. Code enforcement does require that city resources be dedicated to inspection, follow up and penalties for noncompliance.

Funding Resources

Increasing Municipal Revenue

Maintaining consistent levels of municipal services while the population grows will require additional revenue. Expanding municipal services, needed to achieve the vision outlined in *Noble 2025*, will also require additional revenue. Noble’s sales tax revenue generation is relatively weak compared to surrounding communities. The

plan's call for expanding the amount of land dedicated to commercial development should assist with generating additional sales tax revenue. Noble may also have to explore additional or increased fees for city services to cover future costs. See Appendix 8 for more details on municipal revenue generation.

Grants, Loans, and Other Resources

Noble city government has a good track record of applying for and receiving funding from external sources. This section highlights two external funding sources that will help meet *Noble 2025's* emphasis on transportation improvements, especially for the schools and local community connectivity. It concludes with a brief list of state and federal agencies that provide funding for activities related to *Noble 2025's* vision and policies.

Safe Routes to School Program -- The Safe Routes to Schools Program is a Federal-Aid program of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The Program was created by Section 1404 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users Act (SAFETEA-LU).

The Program provides funds to the states to substantially improve the ability of primary and middle school students to walk and bicycle to school safely. The purposes of the program are:

1. to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school
2. to make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and
3. to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity (approximately 2 miles) of primary and middle schools (Grades K-8).

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation administers the state's program and develops procedures to solicit and select projects for funding. The program establishes two distinct types of funding opportunities: infrastructure projects (engineering improvements) and non-infrastructure related activities (such as education, enforcement and encouragement programs). The Oklahoma Department of Transportation (interim) point of contact is Mr. David Streb, email: dstreb@odot.org; phone: (405) 521-6916.

Transportation Enhancements (TE) -- Transportation Enhancements (TE) activities are federally funded community-based projects that expand travel choices and enhance the transportation experience by improving the cultural, historic, aesthetic and environmental aspects of our transportation infrastructure. TE projects must be one of 12 eligible activities and must relate to surface transportation.

1. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities
2. Pedestrian and bicycle safety and educational activities
3. Acquisition of scenic or historic easements and sites
4. Scenic or historic highway programs including tourist and welcome centers
5. Landscaping and scenic beautification
6. Historic preservation
7. Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities
8. Conversion of abandoned railway corridors to trails
9. Inventory, control, and removal of outdoor advertising
10. Archaeological planning & research
11. Environmental mitigation of runoff pollution and provision of wildlife connectivity
12. Establishment of transportation museums

The 2006 application packet, which describes the program and provides contact information, can be downloaded from:

www.okladot.state.ok.us/roadway/2006application.doc and the enhancements coordinator, Rick Johnson, can be reached at rjohnson@odot.org; (405) 522-0990.

Oklahoma State University (OSU) Cleveland County Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) - Offers educational planning programs in agricultural and natural resources and community and rural economic development. In cooperation with other agencies, OCES coordinates strategic planning workshops to help communities assess their needs and devise solutions. There are websites for the Cleveland County office (countyext.okstate.edu/cleveland/index.htm) and OSU's Rural Development program (www.rd.okstate.edu/).

Oklahoma Department of Commerce (ODOC) - ODOC (www.okcommerce.gov) is the primary economic development arm of the state government. Its mission is to increase the quantity and quality of jobs in the state. It also administers a number of state and federal programs and services focused on providing a solid foundation for communities. This includes the Community Development Block Grants and others. ODOC's State Energy Office also supports energy efficiency (including weatherization) programs across the state.

Oklahoma Housing Finance Authority (OHFA)

The Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency (ohfa.org) is a Public Trust that was established by the Governor’s executive order in 1975 to better the housing stock and housing conditions in the state. It offers nine housing programs ranging from a homeless program and rental assistance to housing development and homeownership.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Housing Service (RHS)

The USDA-RHS has several programs: Rural Housing Direct Loans, Guaranteed Program Loans, Mutual Self-Help Housing Loans, Rural Housing Repair and Rehabilitation Loans (and Grants), Rural Rental Housing Guaranteed Loan, Rural Rental Housing Direct Loans and the Community Facilities Direct and Guaranteed Loan Programs. According to the USDA’s property eligibility map on the program’s website (www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/), Noble is in an eligible area.

Additional Resources

Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies – The OKACAA provides poverty-related education, information and technical assistance to Community Action Agencies that offer programs and services to help low-income people become self-sufficient (www.okacaa.org/).

Oklahoma Community Institute – Created in 1995 to serve as a resource from communities who want to help themselves, The Oklahoma Community Institute (www.ocionline.org) has focused on the areas of community-wide visioning and planning, providing opportunities for networking and information sharing and gathering, asset mapping of community resources, leadership development, and sharing research on community success stories.

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Design Manual for Small Towns (prepared by the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission for VDOT)

The Design Manual for Small Towns: Transportation and Land Use Strategies for Preserving Small Town Character is a practical "how to" handbook for residents of small towns, their elected officials, and the local government staff who support them. It is organized in a fashion that shows the community how to work together to better understand the existing conditions, identify current transportation problems, and articulate desirable solutions. The manual has information, diagrams and a toolbox of practical transportation design techniques (www.tjpd.org/community/designManual.asp).

Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development

The Oregon Department of Land Conservation and development (OLCD) (www.lcd.state.or.us) publishes many manuals about small town community

revitalization. One of the most vexing problems in Oregon, like Oklahoma, is facilitating transportation projects while remaining sensitive to existing community character, design and historic resources. The publication, *Main Street: When A Highway Runs Through It*, (egov.oregon.gov/LCD/TGM/docs/mainstreet.pdf) is an excellent resource for communities to work with their Departments of Transportation to identify design and traffic calming techniques for small communities.

University of Wisconsin Center for Community and Economic Development

Part of the Cooperative Extension office of the University of Wisconsin, the Center provides data resources, community and leadership development tools along with business and economic development tools. Of note is the Downtown/Business District Revitalization section of the economic development tools (www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/index.cfm).

USDA Rural Information Center - Downtown Revitalization

(www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ricpubs/downtown.html). Provides links to community planning and downtown revitalization resources including information on business improvement districts and case studies, best practices and model programs.

The Sources of Information sections at the end of the chapters in Part I also contain additional resources.