

## **PlaniTulsa releases its plan that is pure New Urbanism**

<http://www.tulsabeacon.com/?p=2962#more-2962>

PlaniTulsa recently released its 45-page draft report entitled Our Vision for Tulsa, which outlines the next steps in our comprehensive planning process. It is available online at the PlaniTulsa website.

You won't find the phrase "New Urbanism" anywhere in this document, but that is, in fact, what is described.

All of the components of New Urbanism are in this report - mixed-use developments, choices of driving, biking, walking or light rail, "innovative parking solutions," housing choices, "planning for complete communities," public-private partnerships, "smart use of land," transit oriented developments (TOD's), shared parking lots and facilities, infill development, open space, compact communities and numerous references to sustainability.

There were only two references to churches in the document.

The first reference is on page 20, in the "Land Use" Chapter under the heading of "New Residential Neighborhoods," it says, "Churches and schools will continue to be important parts of Tulsa's community and culture and new neighborhoods will be designed so residents can easily reach them on foot, by bike or car."

The second reference is on the following page under "Existing Residential Neighborhoods" where it says, "Parks, schools and churches will continue to be important community assets, and will be protected and maintained."

Neither reference explained what it meant for churches to continue to be important, but I found it disturbing that churches would only be mentioned in the context of a neighborhood. While I am very glad to hear that some effort will be made allow churches back into neighborhoods, I question why there was no mention of existing or new churches in other areas of the city.

On page 39, in the "Strategies" chapter under the heading "Align Development Incentives with Goals" it says, "The city's zoning code should be another tool that facilitates the kind of development outlined in the vision and comprehensive plan." Will churches be allowed to build new facilities only in areas where planners deem them appropriate?

The report contains chapters on land use, transportation, economic development, housing, parks, open space and sustainability and the built environment. It calls for strategies that begin with revision of the zoning code, and includes other strategies for redevelopment, transportation, neighborhood and small area planning, and "innovative building types as demonstration projects" (but does not say what these are or who will pay for them).

There is a heavy emphasis on downtown, including plans to link Owasso, Broken Arrow, Coweta, Bixby, Sapulpa and Sand Springs to downtown with rail transit. The concept is that residents of these outlying communities will come to downtown for work or entertainment. When they arrive, they will be able to walk or take a streetcar to their destinations. For those who drive downtown, they would park in designated parking areas or garages that are linked to downtown by streetcar.

Downtown is also to be linked by streetcar to The University of Tulsa, OSU-Tulsa, and Langston University, to allow students to work downtown.

To accommodate students and downtown workers, high-density condominiums, apartments and lofts are planned for downtown.

The report leaves no question that development will be highly regulated in regard to where and what can be built. On page 12 of the report it says, "Undeveloped land at the edges of the city should be planned for complete communities that balance homes, jobs and amenities." This could mean that large areas must be planned and built by one developer, which is not a scenario conducive to inclusion of any significant churches.

Page 35 discusses development of areas of land that are not within the city limits, but are within the city fence line. It says, "These areas will eventually be fully incorporated by the city. While PlaniTulsa does not envision a growth management boundary, new annexation areas should be planned with sufficient infrastructure to support mixed-use new communities that will blend seamlessly with the rest of the city." This statement contradicts itself because the condition of developing these areas indicates that growth management will be done, whether it calls it a boundary or not.

It is clear that we are headed to a New Urbanistic, form-based code. There are good things in the report, but other things not so good. It is long on generalities and short on specifics, and leaves a lot of open-ended questions. I hope people are paying attention because this will drastically change Tulsa. More next week.

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