



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 05/08/2025

REQUESTER: City of Norman

PRESENTER: Lora Hoggatt, Planning Services Manager

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL, ACCEPTANCE, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF RESOLUTION R-2425-101: RECOMMENDATION REGARDING A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA ADOPTING THE AIM NORMAN COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Norman released a Request for Proposal (RFP-2223-29) in September of 2022, seeking proposals from qualified consultants for professional services to prepare the following documents for the City of Norman:

- Comprehensive Land Use Plan;
- Housing Strategy Plan;
- Comprehensive Transportation Plan Update;
- Stormwater Master Plan Update;
- Water Hydraulic Modeling Update;
- Wastewater Master Plan; and
- Sanitation Master Plan.

The citywide proposal will develop an all-encompassing vision for the community that can be supported by all. To facilitate this objective, the City of Norman is seeking to update its Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Stormwater Master Plan, Water Hydraulic Modeling, and develop Wastewater and Sanitation Master Plans to ensure improvements to the City's infrastructure align with the vision and policies of the new Comprehensive Plan.

As set forth in the RFP, Public Engagement was designed to address three key tasks:

Task 1 – Norman Today – Where are we now?

This process was designed to consist of a review of background documents, economic and development trends, hazard mitigation and environmental constraints, land use inventory and urban design, transportation, public facilities and infrastructure, and housing and neighborhoods.

Task 2 – Norman Tomorrow – Where do we want to go?

This process was designed to review the vision and future land use opportunities, or constraints and develop goals and principles based on community engagement and understanding where we are today.

Task 3 – Norman Tomorrow – How do we get there?

This process was designed to develop Plan Elements for the various included master plans, utilizing the overarching goals and principles to define the program and design of the city and outline the specific plan elements and systems that guide the City’s future, thus creating a cohesive strategy across the city and departments, and for all of the included individual masterplans.

Through the RFP process, a team consisting of seven City Staff members and two citizen members selected RDG Planning & Design, Inc. Contract K-2324-46 with RDG was approved by City Council on July 25, 2023. The final scope included all of the proposed individual master plans except that it was determined that the City did not require a Sanitation Master Plan update at this time. Thereafter, and on September 26, 2023, K-2324-46 was amended to include services for the creation of a Parks Recreation and Trails Master Plan, again bringing the total number of included master plans to seven.

An Ad Hoc Steering Committee to work with the City and its consultants in creating the “Area and Infrastructure Master Plan” (“AIM Norman”) was originally appointed by Resolution R-2324-52 on August 22, 2023, and its membership and procedures finalized by Amendment 1 to R-2324-52 on November 14, 2023. The Steering Committee, and its appointed individual Sub-Committees for Housing, Stormwater, Water/Wastewater, Transportation, and Parks, have worked tirelessly to offer input and guidance on the creation of the seven AIM Norman master plans now submitted for the Planning Commission’s review and consideration.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

Public Engagement

The resulting documents are the product of hundreds of hours of stakeholder engagement. Public engagement throughout this process included:

- A Steering Committee team of fourteen decision-makers representing seven of the eight wards in Norman, appointed by the City Council.
- The Steering Committee appointed a dedicated sub-committee for each Master Plan.
- A diverse range of community organizations, social groups, subject matter experts, and more than 100 Norman residents attended listening sessions.
- A project website that garnered more than 22,000 visitors by the end of 2024.
- A total of 3,400 responses across eight survey questions posted to the project website.
- Collection of 190 comment cards at 18 pop-up events throughout the City, such as National Neighbors Night Out, National Weather Festival, and Downtown Norman Fall Fest.
- Collection of 205 comments at a series of seven neighborhood workshops at elementary schools and community centers.
- Publications and appearances in local newspaper and networks to share information on the plan’s purpose and objectives.
- Two open house events held in December of 2024 where consultants and City staff were present to answer questions regarding each Master Plan.

Many of these engagement opportunities took the form of public meetings such as monthly Steering Committee meetings and sub-committee meetings. Additionally, small group updates were provided to City Council bi-monthly.

AIM Norman Framework

AIM Norman examines all elements of city development and quality of life to help shape the community's growth through 2045. Together, all seven Master Plans of AIM Norman creates a roadmap that will provide essential guidance to leaders and decision-makers, representing the City and its partners' plan for growth, change, and adaptation.

AIM Norman is:

- A combination of processes and Master Plans.
- A blueprint for a sustainable and resilient future that embraces Norman's unique character.
- A collective vision for Norman that should resonate with every community member.
- All-encompassing and inclusive, supported by every facet of the community, and aligns with the values and aspirations of Norman residents.

A thoughtful, coordinated approach ensures that all seven elements of AIM Norman work together to create a balanced, sustainable, and thriving community for current and future residents. Together, they shape how Norman looks, feels, and functions. Major decisions in one component can influence the others and determine the trajectory of land use development.

Land Use Plan

Demand

The City has seen substantial growth since 2004. The population has grown roughly 33% since 2000, with the fourth highest growth rate among peer cities. In addition, the City has seen nearly 10,000 acres of land developed since the adoption of the NORMAN 2025 Plan.

In December of 2023, the Steering Committee selected a 1.5% annual growth rate, in line with historical rates. This calculation resulted in a projected population of 185,759 for 2045. This projection equates to a demand for over 23,000 homes, including all the various housing typologies, to serve the growing population.

Further, the Steering Committee directed the consultant team and City staff to explore the development scenario which takes into account the average density that exists today in what is the more urbanized portion of the city. This growth scenario anticipates a net density of 4.1 dwelling units per acre (du/acre) across 5,663 acres. As not all land programmed for residential land uses will develop during the life of the Plan, a range of 8,500-11,325 acres was designated to ensure the net density goal could be met.

Constraints

Norman's natural environment can be a tremendous asset for future growth, but only if development is sensitive to key environmental features such as floodplains, wetlands, hydric soils, and steep slopes.

Avoiding development in areas that create safety concerns, such as floodplains, is not only good practice but reflects the desires of Norman residents. Participants in the planning process regularly noted a desire to preserve the city's natural features and to find ways to protect the city's water sources at Lake Thunderbird and the Garber-Wellington Aquifer.

Development Principles

These principles were built upon residents' input and smart growth principles identified by different national research organizations, including Smart Growth for America and the American Planning Association. Through the work of the AIM Norman Steering Committee, each principle was refined and overarching goals were identified. Within the context of land use, these Ten Development Principles should guide decision makers and community leaders when evaluating opportunities and addressing challenges while implementing AIM Norman. The Ten Development Principles are:

1. Manage urban services efficiently.
2. Promote diverse housing options.
3. Promote infill development and neighborhood reinvestment.
4. Protect the environment in all decision-making.
5. Enhance distinctive neighborhoods, business districts, and natural areas with a strong sense of place.
6. Provide a multi-modal and connected transportation network.
7. Enhance public safety and minimize hazards.
8. Encourage balanced and connected neighborhoods.
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.
10. Make decisions in a transparent and collaborative manner.

Land Use Context

Today, the understanding of a healthy city includes one where residents can be active and move around the city in different ways. These types of vibrant neighborhoods are cultivated by mixing different, but still compatible uses. Several AIM Norman Ten Development Principles support a flexible land use approach that encourages mixing of uses and focuses on the intensity of use, rather than type. To achieve these Principles, an intensity based approach should take into consideration:

- Compatibility with flexibility.
 - Compatibility is the relationship between different uses and how well they do or do not fit with each other. As land uses become more intense and uses become more integrated, compatibility methods focus less on spacing and congregating of similar uses, and more on performance-based methods that directly address issues such as noise, traffic, privacy, and aesthetics.
- Vital, convenient mixing of uses.
 - Uses may be integrated in two ways: horizontally and/or vertically. Horizontal integration keeps individual building purposes separate but relates buildings harmoniously to each other. Vertical integration puts more than one use in the same building.
- Residential density and diversity.
 - Residential density or du/acre can be measured as either gross density (total dwelling units divided by overall area) or net density (total dwelling units divided by developed parcels (exclusive of right-of-ways, parks, buffer areas, outlots,

stormwater facilities, and/or trails). This plan uses gross densities as a tool for representing the goals of each land use.

- Places for employment and enterprise.
- Relating land use and infrastructure.

Land Use Maps

The Character Areas and Land Use maps are based on population projections, economic trends, environmental analyses, and public input. As explained on page 58, the amount of urban land planned is more than the projected need to provide market flexibility and avoid creating a false land shortage. Many areas shown in the Character Areas and Land Use maps are unlikely to fully develop in the 20-year time frame generally addressed by this plan.

Character Area Map

The Character Area Map guides how the built environment, community features such as streets, parks, water, sewer, and stormwater fits together. The Character Areas build upon past plans, community input, and factors that influence how the built environment is used and looks. This includes characteristics like building age, architecture, connectivity, scale, and environmental sensitivity. The development of these areas over time may be fluid, as new opportunities arise or growth rates fluctuate. The policies identified in the following section should be viewed from a big-picture perspective, with the goal of balancing neighborhoods and providing quality living environments across the city.

Each Character Area has a specific set of goals, opportunities, challenges, policies, and action items that are meant to guide development in these areas. There is also a list of overarching policies that stretch across all land within Norman. These lists are designed as two-page spreads so that all information pertaining to each Character Area is clearly discernable.

AIM Norman proposes the following Character Areas:

- **Core Neighborhood.** The Core Neighborhood is a focal point of the city, the traditional central business district, with a concentration of activities such as general retail, service commercial, professional office, mixed-density housing, mixed-use spaces, and appropriate public and open space easily accessible by pedestrians. This area frames the University of Oklahoma campus.
- **Classic Neighborhood.** These neighborhoods feature relatively well-maintained housing, possessing a unique style of lot and street design with high rates of homeownership. Characteristics include limited public open spaces, often curvilinear street patterns, a medium degree of building separation, and distinct separation of uses.
- **Suburban Neighborhood.** Suburban Neighborhood Areas are where suburban residential subdivision development have occurred or are likely to occur (due to availability of water and sewer service). This area is characterized by low pedestrian orientation, existing but largely inconvenient public transit access, high to moderate degree of building and use separation, predominantly residential with scattered civic buildings and varied street patterns, often curvilinear.

- **Corridor.** Corridor Areas are developed or undeveloped land on both sides of a roadway; primarily designated, although not limited to, commercial and mixed-use development with auto-centric design. Scale and location affect the type and intensity of these uses. Corridor character is determined by scale and is recognized in three main areas; Gateway Corridors, In-Town Corridors, and Downtown Corridors.
- **2045 Reserve.** The 2045 Reserve is an area of deep concern for the community of Norman. The area is currently sparsely developed, with large-lot residential uses and agricultural/grazing lands. Most of the area follows vestige section line streets, with smaller, private roadways serving residential uses. High intensity development is not present in this area. New development in this area should be done with sensitivity and only when City services are available to adequately serve future use.
- **Rural.** The area of Norman east of the 2045 Reserve is dominated by Lake Thunderbird, publicly owned land, and large agricultural/grazing land tracts. There are also historic farmsteads and pockets of large-lot residential subdivisions with pastoral views and a high degree of building separation. Commercial activity is primarily located at arterial intersections. Most of the area follows vestige section line streets, with smaller, private roadways serving residential uses. High intensity development is not present in this area. Recreational amenities offered by Lake Thunderbird are the largest economic attraction of the area. Future growth and development in Norman should continue to remain to the west of the 2045 Reserve area and therefore, land use patterns in this Character Area are likely to remain unchanged in the next twenty years.
- **Protected and Sensitive.** The Protected and Sensitive Areas encompass the FEMA designated floodways and floodplain, and the Stream Planning Corridors. Primarily undeveloped natural lands and environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for development, e.g., scenic views, steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, watersheds, wildlife management areas and other environmentally sensitive areas.

Land Use Map

This map shows general patterns of proposed uses, rather than the use of individual sites or lots. The map provides a general vision of Norman's land use future and guidance for private and public sector decision-makers.

Where different land use categories are located on the Land Use map depends on such factors as:

- Existing land use patterns.
- Adjacent use compatibility.
- Infrastructure existence and capacity.
- Transportation facility existence and capacity.
- Environmental Impact.

The Land Use designations outlined within AIM Norman are:

- **OP: Open Space.** Areas intended for parks can be developed with recreational features, while open space areas are more appropriate for wildlife habitat preservation with only passive recreation uses.
- **AR: Agricultural Residential.** Areas of Norman, far east and west of the City Core that are primarily agricultural uses or large-lot residential living.
- **RR: Rural Residential.** This designation is limited to existing large lot or rural subdivisions in the eastern fringes of the city and are unlikely to ever change in character.
- **UR: Urban Reserve.** These areas extend out to approximately 72nd Avenue East and represent the likely limit of Norman's future urban development outside the life of this plan. Acreage subdivision would compromise the feasibility of future urban services.
- **UL: Urban Low.** This category includes built-up areas of largely single-unit developments within the Current Development Character Area east of 12th Avenue East and west of Interstate 35. New growth UL areas are located toward the interior of areas bounded by major streets east of 24th Avenue East, open sites where the predominant form are relatively large lot, urban single-unit subdivisions, and in areas to the east where development densities transition to more rural levels to the east.
- **UM: Urban Medium.** Urban Medium includes most of Norman's established neighborhoods west of 48th Avenue East. Within new growth UM areas, this category is located along and behind section-line arterials that can support higher density environments and neighborhoods with a variety of housing forms. It also follows potential trail and greenway corridors where creative site design can provide larger stormwater management facilities and recreational, walking, and bicycling amenities can serve more people.
- **UH: Urban High.** This category is located along major transportation and amenity corridors and corridors with high residential demand. These include the Classen Boulevard/Legacy Trail/BNSF corridor, on the edges of major mixed-use centers, near and around major intersections, around the OU campus, between Downtown and OU, and as a transitional use between potential commercial nodes and low- and medium density neighbors.
- **ULC: Urban Living Center.** These very high density centers, are focused at points of very high transportation access and existing or future urban services, making a walking distance environment feasible. Other locations include redevelopment projects, such as conversion of underused commercial centers to mixed-uses.
- **MX: Mixed-Use Development.** This category includes both existing developed areas that include a variety of uses with opportunities for greater connectedness and infill development (12th Avenue East and 24th Avenue East at Alameda and Lindsay; Porter and Robinson; and Ed Noble Parkway); redevelopment sites (Griffin Hospital); and new Turnpike related areas (Indian Hills and I-35).
- **IMX: Interchange Mixed-Use.** This category is logically located along Interstate corridors with parallel service streets, creating the linear pattern with diverse uses along I-35 between 24th and 36th Avenues West.

- **TOD: Transit Oriented Development.** TOD's are very high intensity mixed-use areas within easy pedestrian or bicycle distance from major transit stations. These are located at future stations of a proposed passenger rail line from Norman to Edmond through Downtown Oklahoma City. TOD's may also develop along bus rapid transit lines or a major community transit center.
- **LC: Local Commercial Corridors.** These urban corridors are characterized by a mix of commercial and limited residential uses and relatively shallow commercial sites with Small-scale businesses and strip centers. Policies will include spot redevelopment, improved multi-modal access, and introduction of residential uses while building on the character of these urban streets. This category include the Main, Lindsay, and Porter corridors.
- **C: Commercial.** The commercial category is generally reserved for large format retail and commercial concentrations. Mixed-uses may be included, but commercial uses dominate. The land use map recognizes existing commercial concentrations such as University North Park and proposes new focuses at principal arterial intersections, including the access points of the east-west Turnpike.
- **CBD: Core Business District.** This encompasses Norman's two "main street" mixed-use areas with street-oriented, pedestrian environments –Downtown and Campus Corner. New commercial or mixed-use development could conceivably generate a similar type of district in developing areas.
- **JC: Job Center.** Employment-intensive uses, including low-impact industry, office, and research uses, along major transportation corridors.
- **CIV: Civic.** Recognized spaces for large scale institutional, educational, and other public and quasi-public uses including educational campuses, the Max Westheimer airport, municipal services, and major utilities.

Each Land Use designation within the Plan outlines the specific policies for development best suited for that Land Use. These policies refer to the building types, site design, transportation network, circulation, and access, utility access, public space types, locational criteria, and zoning districts that are appropriate for each Land Use. The policies are designed as two-page spreads so that all information pertaining to each Land Use is clearly discernable.

Neighborhood and Special Study Areas

During the AIM Norman process, several areas were identified for further study because of their unique characteristics and opportunities. Expanded studies for these areas should help guide future uses, development, and/or redevelopment.

Neighborhood Studies

Central Norman neighborhoods are mostly small single-unit homes in the Urban Low and Urban Medium Land Use designations. Yet, they differ substantially in architectural and landscape character, circulation patterns, public spaces, and scale from more contemporary developments. For these reasons and the recognition of their unique characteristics, plans for these areas are needed. Some existing neighborhood plans that cover these areas need updates. For areas that do not have existing plans, plans should be created.

Special Study Areas

- **The Griffin Memorial Hospital Site.** The State of Oklahoma plans to replace the Griffin Memorial Hospital with a new facility and offer the site and its buildings for redevelopment.
- **The Ed Noble Parkway Center.** This area includes a mix of older commercial uses and spaces. The area has excess parking relative to demand, creating opportunities for new investment in the area.
- **The 12th Ave East and Alameda Node.** The 12th and Alameda area includes underused commercial areas and parking that exceed demand. A master plan for this area should identify opportunities to strengthen it as a central hub for the larger neighborhood.
- **The 12th Ave East and Lindsey Node.** This area includes underused commercial areas and parking that exceed demand. A master plan for this area should identify opportunities to strengthen it as a central hub for the larger neighborhood.
- **Campus Corner.** This area covers one of the city's most iconic business districts. Many current and past residents have strong memories associated with the district.
- **Transit Oriented Development Areas.** The development of the commuter rail line will make these locations highly desirable. Proactively developing a vision for these areas will better prepare the community.

Plan Element Chapters

The AIM Norman Comprehensive Land Use Plan is intrinsically linked to each of the other six Master Plans. An executive summary of each Master Plan is included within the Comprehensive Land Use Plan in order to ensure cohesive implementation of the Plans.

Implementation

The Implementation portion of the plan clearly outlines the maintenance and implementation process for the land use plan and summarizes the initiatives outlined in the plan with additional information guiding follow-through. This is to ensure that Plan implementation:

1. Uses consistent decision-making processes.
2. Makes development decisions transparent.
3. Is financially sustainable with public investment by considering costs and benefits.
4. Spurs regular review and update of the Land Use Plan.

Administrative Processes

The AIM Norman Comprehensive Land Use Plan is designed to be applied with flexibility. Though amendments are not expected to be a common occurrence, this section sets forth guidance for how this document may be updated and amended periodically, or by specific request.

Character Areas. This Plan is not designed to accommodate individual requests to Character Area Designations or boundaries. Any amendment to the Character Areas (designation, boundary or policy language) may only be brought as a City initiative, and may be founded

upon broader public engagement and analysis of relevant data and municipal services and needs.

Land Use Designation Amendments. Land Use designation amendment requests may be initiated by the record owner(s) of a parcel or area of land, by the Planning Commission, or by City Council. Major amendments (identified as amendments for 50+ acres) proposed by individual property owners may require greater than thirty days review time by staff prior to being considered by Planning Commission.

The following criteria must be evaluated by City Council in determining whether to approve Land Use designation amendment requests:

1. The compatibility of the proposed Land Use to the existing and adjacent Land Uses based upon intensity (See Land Use Compatibility Guide, including the Compatibility Matrix).
2. An evaluation of the likelihood of adverse impacts to surrounding properties based on the following information provided by the applicant and in Staff's report to the Planning Commission and City Council:
 - Character Area policies;
 - o Land Use characteristics, including: Building types, site design, transportation, utility access, public space, locational criteria;
 - o Designation or inclusion in a Neighborhood Study Area/Plan or Special Study Area; and
 - o Other AIM Norman Master Plan Policies, as applicable.

Additionally, when the property or area of land subject to a Land Use designation amendment request is found within the 2045 Reserve Character Area AND the proposed amendment would EITHER remove the property from OR amend the property to an Urban Reserve Land Use designation, the following shall also apply:

1. A Land Use designation change to a higher level of intensity (see Land Use Compatibility Guide) must be contiguous to urban development and must demonstrate implementation of the policies set forth for the 2045 Reserve Area, and
2. As applicable, planned unit developments, or similar regulatory mechanisms, proposed within the Urban Reserve area should only be utilized when 65% of the area is reserved for future urban level densities (3+ units per acre).

Amendment to Neighborhood Study Area or Special Study Area. Inclusion within Neighborhood Study Areas or Special Study Areas, and any adopted plans, are not subject to individual amendment, and may only be amended by City initiative (and as may be set forth in said Neighborhood Plan), and may be founded upon broader public engagement and analysis of relevant data and municipal services and needs.

Other Plan Amendments. Other amendments to the Plan and/or its language may be proposed by staff or City initiative. Items identified in the plans annual review or development of neighborhood plans are two examples of why staff may initiate amendments. Any Neighborhood Plan or further plan for any Special Study Area pursuant to this Plan may incorporate community input but would be prepared by the City (or its consultant(s)).

Annual Evaluation

An annual evaluation of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan should be assembled by staff and reported to the Planning Commission and City Council at the end of each calendar year. This evaluation should include a written report that:

- Summarizes key land use developments and decisions during the past year and relates them to the Land Use Plan.
- Reviews actions taken by the City during the past year to implement plan recommendations.
- Defines any City initiated changes that should be considered for the Land Use Plan.

Initiatives & Action Items

Throughout the AIM Norman Comprehensive Land Use Plan, several key items are identified which must be completed to ensure the implementation of the Plan. These include numerous items ranging from on-going policy and operational impacts to long-term implementation projects. Within this section, each action or on-going item is paired with timing and key stakeholders.

Examples of these initiatives and action items include:

- Rewrite Development Codes.
- Updates to Existing Neighborhood Plans.
- Completion of Master Plans for Special Study Areas.
- Incorporate results of the Center City Infrastructure Study into future projects.
- Conduct a parking study to identify solutions, including shared parking, to adequately support residents.

In addition to these initiatives, each of the Master Plans that make up AIM Norman - Water, Wastewater, Stormwater, Housing, Transportation, and Parks - all identify specific actions and initiatives that will support the implementation of the Land Use Plan.

Other Parts of the AIM Norman Comprehensive Land Use Document

- **Glossary.** Definitions for terms which may or may not be easily understood, or that have specific, Federal descriptions.
- **Appendix A, Norman Today.** A review of current demographics, land use and economic conditions, parks and recreation amenities, environmental character, and infrastructure currently in Norman, establishing a baseline of conditions.

RECOMMENDATION:

All of the plan updates, including the Comprehensive Land Use Plan were approved for presentation to the Planning Commission and the Norman City Council by the AIM Steering Committee. This unanimous vote was part of the March 12 Steering Committee Meeting.

Staff recommends the approval R-2425-101, the Area Infrastructure and Master Plan Norman Comprehensive Land Use Plan, which is presented to the members of the Planning Commission for consideration of a recommendation to the Norman City Council.