

Dan Hoffman ([00:00](#)):

Hi, and welcome to City Works-Part 2 of our Rouss Review podcast. I'm your City Manager Dan Hoffman. With me is Amy Simmons.

Amy Simmons ([00:07](#)):

Hello, Dan.

Dan Hoffman ([00:08](#)):

Today, we're gonna talk to Tim Youmans about the Comprehensive Plan, which is one of the guiding documents for City government required by State Code. It serves a variety of purposes and some things it doesn't do. Today, we're gonna learn about what the Comp Plan does and does not mean for you as a resident.

Music ([00:29](#)):

<Cheerful music>

Dan Hoffman ([00:29](#)):

All right. Tim's here. Now, everybody, you've met Tim before. We had Tim in to talk about something. What

Amy Simmons ([00:36](#)):

What did we talk about Tim?

Dan Hoffman ([00:37](#)):

Last time you were in here? What did you talk about?

Tim Youmans ([00:38](#)):

Well, I used to do the the Rouss Reviews, but other than that it could have been some planning issue.

Dan Hoffman ([00:44](#)):

I think it was a planning issue. Was it a...

Amy Simmons ([00:48](#)):

I don't know, but he used to do the Winchester History 101.

Tim Youmans ([00:51](#)):

Yeah. That's right.

Dan Hoffman ([00:52](#)):

Did we talk about...I think we must have talked about the planning process. Was it just the planning process?

Amy Simmons ([01:00](#)):

I don't remember that.

Dan Hoffman ([01:01](#)):

Oh, you know what? I think we talked about the Comp Plan before leading up to the open house.

Tim Youmans ([01:05](#)):

That's possible.

Dan Hoffman ([01:07](#)):

Yeah.

Amy Simmons ([01:08](#)):

It was so engaging that we completely forgot about it.

Dan Hoffman ([01:12](#)):

Exactly.

Tim Youmans ([01:12](#)):

<Snoring>

Dan Hoffman ([01:12](#)):

So we're gonna do it again.

Amy Simmons ([01:14](#)):

<Laughs> Let's do it again so we can remember.

Dan Hoffman ([01:15](#)):

You know that thing that we all forgot about, let's do another podcast about that.

Tim Youmans ([01:19](#)):

<Laughs>

Dan Hoffman ([01:21](#)):

So let's see if it sticks this time.

Amy Simmons ([01:23](#)):

Okay. Tim, welcome.

Dan Hoffman ([01:24](#)):

So, Tim, welcome.

Tim Youmans ([01:25](#)):

Thank you.

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Dan Hoffman ([01:26](#)):

For those of you don't know, Tim Youmans is our Planning Director. He's been with the City for...

Tim Youmans ([01:32](#)):

This is my 34th year coming up on the start of 35.

Dan Hoffman ([01:35](#)):

You jumped in before I could make a joke.

Amy Simmons ([01:36](#)):

<Laughs>

Tim Youmans ([01:37](#)):

Forever

Dan Hoffman ([01:38](#)):

I make so many jokes about how long Tim's been here. So, Comp Plan. I think this is a good opportunity for the the handful of people that listen to this podcast to understand better what the Comp Plan is, what it is, not what it is in relation to our Zoning and the zoning map, and what's coming up because this is a...

Amy Simmons ([02:07](#)):

It's a big year.

Dan Hoffman ([02:08](#)):

This is a big year. We're updating the Comp Plan. It's been 10 years. Planning Commission's been working on it for five of those 10 years and now, it's in front of City Council.

Amy Simmons ([02:19](#)):

Which is the final step, right?

Dan Hoffman ([02:21](#)):

The final step

Tim Youmans ([02:22](#)):

Should be. Yeah.

Dan Hoffman ([02:23](#)):

So, Tim, explain what is the Comp Plan?

Tim Youmans ([02:26](#)):

All right. Thanks Dan. So yes, it is a guide. It is an official document of the City. It is required by State Code, but it is not law. And that's a major distinction in terms of the CompPlan, as compared to say the

Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance and City Code. Those are all codified ordinances that is local law. The Comp Plan is more of a visionary document. It's kind of a blueprint for the city to say, here's what we think we want to be in the future. And here are some recommendations that may include some narrative in the Comp Plan chapters, as well as some kind of inspirational graphics that show what could be done with some of the sites that City Council and the Planning Commission and the public have said, 'we want to seek each change here.'

Dan Hoffman ([03:19](#)):

So this inspirational graphic you speak of, that's the character map, right?

Tim Youmans ([03:24](#)):

The character map is the larger one, but then in chapter 11, we also break the city as a whole down into 10 geographic planning areas. And we say, here are some places within these geographic areas where we feel there's an opportunity for redevelopment.

Dan Hoffman ([03:41](#)):

Got it. So the character map with inspirational graphics. When he says inspirational, he doesn't mean there's gonna be like American flags and Eagles.

Amy Simmons ([03:48](#)):

And it also doesn't mean it's gonna happen either.

Dan Hoffman ([03:52](#)):

Exactly. It's inspirational in that we hope it inspires a developer to do something kind of like that. And kinda like that's the key phrase. I think a lot of folks, especially with recent developments that have come through, they'll point to the Comp Plan and say, 'Hey, this is different than the Comp Plan.' The Comp Plan is just inspirational, aspirational. It is not law, as you said.

Tim Youmans ([04:22](#)):

We call it normative. It is what could, and maybe what should happen, but it is not what must happen or shall happen.

Dan Hoffman ([04:29](#)):

Normative.

Amy Simmons ([04:31](#)):

Hmmm. That's that's a new word.

Dan Hoffman ([04:32](#)):

That's a good SAT word for the day. So in layman's speak. In normative speak tell me what the difference is. So if I want to find out what...there's a property next door to my house. I wanna figure out, and I see some signs posted as to, 'oh, it looks like something's about to happen in this property.' What should a resident go look at?

Tim Youmans ([04:57](#)):

They should go to the City website and access the City's Comprehensive Plan to see what we have said should or could happen on that property. And this is particularly important if somebody's looking to purchase a property and they are backed up to a farm field. Well, if that farm field is the Kernstown Battlefield, they will quickly find out that there are preservation easements in place. If they are backed up to land that's vacant, they should be suspicious if it's inside the City limits. I say suspicious, they should be wanting to find out.

Dan Hoffman ([05:29](#)):

Yeah. Just want to find out. There's nothing nefarious with an empty lots sitting in your backyard.

Tim Youmans ([05:34](#)):

No, but it's buyer beware. And if you back up to vacant property, you need to check with either the Planning Department directly, or consult the Comprehensive Plan that's posted on the City website, and see what is likely to happen there in the future.

Dan Hoffman ([05:53](#)):

So that's the Comp Plan, but sometimes what we would like in the Comp Plan, isn't what happens. So if somebody wants to know what is allowable on the property, they would go to the zoning map, right?

Tim Youmans ([06:10](#)):

They would go to the zoning map as well. That's correct.

Dan Hoffman ([06:13](#)):

And that's also available on the website.

Tim Youmans ([06:14](#)):

It is. Yep. With the GIS maps. And so yes, that is the law. There's the official map, and then also the Zoning Ordinance. Those two things comprise the law and the Zoning Administrator's tasked with keeping that zoning map up to date, and as well as looking at text amendments from time to time. In terms of what could be it there either on a by-right basis or a conditional use basis.

Dan Hoffman ([06:41](#)):

So by right versus conditional. Sometimes I hear some confusion around what that actually means. When they hear by right, they just assume that there's no process whatsoever. That the person can start pouring concrete, throwing up two by fours. By right doesn't mean without any conditions whatsoever. It means you can do it, but through a different process. And as long as you meet certain requirements, you can do it. We can't say no.

Tim Youmans ([07:13](#)):

That's right. Every property in the city is zoned for some type of use on what we call by right basis, meaning they don't have to seek special permission from City Council to do something that is beyond that list of uses that are allowed. Some of those uses will require a site plan approval, land disturbance

permits, building permits. Sure. All of that is required. But from a zoning standpoint, if you have land that's zoned Low Density Residential, you're allowed to develop single family houses by right.

Dan Hoffman ([07:46](#)):

The Comp Plan shows some trees and a little bit of maybe a building or two. Zoning map says Low Density Residential. What wins?

Tim Youmans ([07:59](#)):

The Zoning Ordinance wins every single time.

Dan Hoffman ([08:01](#)):

There you go. So check out the Comp Plan. Comp Plan I feel like has more context to it. It gives a description of, 'Hey, this is what we would like. This is what's been discussed by the public in the past.'

Tim Youmans ([08:13](#)):

Right.

Dan Hoffman ([08:14](#)):

But at the end of the day, zoning wins.

Tim Youmans ([08:17](#)):

It does. Every single time,

Dan Hoffman ([08:18](#)):

Every single time. But Comp Plan's still important. We spent years working on it. Why do we do that, Tim?

Tim Youmans ([08:26](#)):

So it's really important to give the residents and business developers and the community, an idea of where we want to see change as compared to where we don't want to see change. We have a lot of very established neighborhoods where we're not gonna go in into a single family residential subdivision and say, 'you know what, we're gonna let this person put an apartment building right in between your two single family houses.' That's an area where the character map and the Comp Plan says, 'these are neighborhoods that should remain of the character that they are today' as compared to redevelopment sites. Some of which are zone residential and some of which are zoned, a lot of them, quite honestly, are commercial and industrial sites that we see coming before City Council for rezoning for what we call PUD, which is Planned Unit Development. That's what most of our development rezoning cases are now. We recognize that we're only 9.3 square miles. If we are going to grow, if we are going to sustain growth, we need to intensify the development in the city. But it has to be in an orderly fashion. And it has to be on properties where the City has said that they want to see change occur.

Dan Hoffman ([09:48](#)):

So on the Comp Plan and the character map of the Comp Plan, there's a few redevelopment sites identified. Ward Plaza is a big one that everyone knows about. What are some other examples?

Tim Youmans ([10:01](#)):

The Smaltz property, for instance. The Berryville Avenue corridor. We have some aging commercial development, particularly along the north side there. You've got properties like the Virginia Apple Storage property--huge one down off the west side of Valley Avenue. Quite a few of the other ones have been proposed for redevelopment recently. Good example is the the Kassabian tract, which is just in behind Lowe's there on Legge Boulevard. We didn't know back in 2011, when that was identified for redevelopment, it would be suitable for residential. But by today's standard, that's where the demand is. The big box development with the extent of online purchasing, we don't need as much of that bricks and mortar type of commercial development. So residential turned out to be the majority of that. It was still a mixed-use product. But that was a good example where we never envisioned that somebody would come forward with almost 250 residential units.

Dan Hoffman ([11:07](#)):

So, the stage in the process that we're currently at. It has gone through Planning Commission. We just talked about how they spent a significant amount of time on it. It's gone through our Planning and Economic Development Committee. And now we're at full Council. Next big step is March 1st at the public hearing. What can people expect? It's a Special Meeting being called just for this purpose. So if you're coming out for that, it's on a Tuesday that we don't normally meet: March 1st. What can people expect at the open house?

Tim Youmans ([11:39](#)):

The first hour of that event is going to be an open house. Very similar to what the Planning Commission held back in August of last year, 2021. That'll provide an opportunity for interested parties to review the various exhibits, including the character maps, the 10 geographic planning area maps, and then also the text. Although, they can access the text, it's probably not the best use of your hour to sit there and read a hard copy of the narrative. But to see some of the graphics and ask planning staff, and hopefully other staff and maybe some elected or Planning Commissioners, about the changes that are proposed there. After that hour-long open house, then we will commence a public hearing with City Council in the Council Chambers at 6:30 PM.

Dan Hoffman ([12:29](#)):

There you go. And then you can say your peace. You get three minutes. Say your peace about the Comp Plan. But it's not voted on that night.

Tim Youmans ([12:38](#)):

No.

Dan Hoffman ([12:39](#)):

That's just for Councilors to hear from the public. There will be another meeting. There will probably be one or two more meetings after the public hearing in which there might be some more discussion in deliberation by Council. Ultimately, they will vote on it by the end of March.

Tim Youmans ([12:55](#)):

Yeah, that's right. State Code says that the Planning Commission has to hold the public hearing, then do a resolution forwarding that to the elected body, in our case City Council. But Council does not have to

do an ordinance or a resolution. But most likely it will be in the form of a resolution to adopt the complete update.

Dan Hoffman ([13:18](#)):

Got it.

Amy Simmons ([13:18](#)):

For those people who can't come to the open house or public hearing, we are accepting public comments in writing. So all they have to do is just send it to the clerk's email address, or mail it, drop it off, or we have an online form.

Tim Youmans ([13:34](#)):

Yeah. I was gonna say, I think you've reinstated the online comment for comment.

Amy Simmons ([13:38](#)):

Yeah. That's the preferred method just cuz it's easier. But we accept it any way.

Dan Hoffman ([13:43](#)):

Yeah. Excellent. Well Tim, thank you very much for talking to us about the Comp Plan. Next time, we will remember we had this discussion.

Amy Simmons ([13:49](#)):

<Laughs>.

Tim Youmans ([13:49](#)):

<Laughs>

Dan Hoffman ([13:49](#)):

Although it might be 10 years. It might be 10 years before we talk about it.

Amy Simmons ([13:51](#)):

Maybe.

Tim Youmans ([13:53](#)):

Well, I just wanna point out this is a major update to the plan, but the Planning Commission hadn't just been sitting around, twiddling their thumbs. We had a revision in 2014, and then we just had a revision in 2020 to designate the entire city as an Urban Development Area. So, this is a big update to the plan. When we say we haven't updated the plan since 2011, we haven't updated it to this extent.

Dan Hoffman ([14:21](#)):

Got it. All right. Thank you very much, Tim. Good seeing you.

Tim Youmans ([14:25](#)):

Good to see you.

Dan Hoffman ([14:31](#)):

So there goes Tim Youmans.

Amy Simmons ([14:32](#)):

There he goes. <Laughs>

Dan Hoffman ([14:33](#)):

There he goes. I was talking to somebody about Tim the other day. He's been with the City for 33 years.

Amy Simmons ([14:40](#)):

Yes. He knows a lot of stuff.

Dan Hoffman ([14:42](#)):

Yeah. And he's starting to think about that next stage. And when it does come time for him to retire, I think it's safe to say that no individual has had more influence on various City projects. I mean, everything that's happened from a planning and development standpoint, the neighborhoods you see, the buildings you see.

Amy Simmons ([15:06](#)):

Street names.

Dan Hoffman ([15:07](#)):

Street names. I mean, Tim has his fingerprints on all of it. So, it'll be a momentous occasion when he finally decides to hang up with spurs.

Amy Simmons ([15:18](#)):

Let's hope it's not anytime soon.

Dan Hoffman ([15:19](#)):

Yes. All right. So that's all we've got for you today on the City Works portion of the Rouss Review. Thank you very much for listening, and we'll see you around City Hall.

Outro ([15:28](#)):

<Cheerful music>