



City of Horn Lake

Job Description – Planning Director

Purpose of Position

The Planning Director directs and manages the activities of the Planning Department and serves as the City's principal advisor on planning, zoning, land use, growth management, development review, and long-range planning matters. The Planning Director provides professional guidance to the Mayor, City Administrator, Planning Commission, and Board of Aldermen; oversees implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations; supervises departmental personnel; and directs review of major development projects, ordinance amendments, and planning initiatives affecting the long-term physical development of the City.

The duties listed below are intended only as illustrations of the various types of work that may be performed. The omission of specific statements of duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related or a logical assignment to the class.

Major Duties and Responsibilities

- Direct and manage the daily operations of the Planning Department.
- Supervise, assign, review, and evaluate the work of departmental employees.
- Establish department goals, priorities, procedures, and work programs.
- Ensure that planning, zoning, development review, permitting, and administrative functions are completed accurately, consistently, and in a timely manner by appropriate staff.
- Serve as the City's principal advisor on planning, zoning, land use, development, and growth management matters.
- Advise the Mayor, City Administrator, Planning Commission, and Board of Aldermen on planning policies, development proposals, ordinance amendments, and long-range growth issues.
- Lead the preparation, implementation, and periodic update of the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- Develop and recommend policies to guide the physical growth, development, redevelopment, and long-term planning of the City.
- Prepare, review, and recommend amendments to zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, land development regulations, and other planning-related codes.
- Review major development proposals, rezonings, planned developments, subdivision applications, and other complex land use matters for consistency with adopted plans, ordinances, and City goals.
- Oversee staff review of routine development applications, permits, site plans, plats, and related submittals, with direct involvement limited to complex, sensitive, or escalated matters.

- Provide directions to staff on complex or unusual planning, zoning, subdivision, development review, and code interpretation issues.
- Coordinate review of major development projects with the City Engineer, Fire Department, Public Works, utilities, consultants, and other relevant agencies.
- Work with applicants, property owners, developers, engineers, architects, and consultants to encourage high-quality development consistent with City standards and long-range planning goals.
- Recommend project revisions related to access, circulation, buffering, landscaping, connectivity, building placement, site design, drainage, infrastructure, and compatibility with surrounding uses.
- Prepare or oversee preparation of staff reports, agenda materials, maps, presentations, and recommendations for the Planning Commission, Board of Aldermen, and other public bodies.
- Attend and present at Planning Commission meetings, Board of Aldermen meetings, public hearings, staff meetings, and other meetings as required.
- Manage or coordinate long-range planning studies, corridor plans, redevelopment plans, downtown planning initiatives, transportation planning efforts, and other special planning projects.
- Manage or oversee consultant-led planning studies, technical analyses, and development-related projects on behalf of the City.
- Coordinate with other City departments to ensure that planning decisions align with infrastructure, transportation, drainage, public safety, economic development, and community development goals.
- Respond to complex, sensitive, or escalated inquiries from citizens, applicants, developers, elected officials, and other stakeholders regarding planning, zoning, and development matters.
- Provide professional interpretation of adopted plans, zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, and other planning-related ordinances.
- Identify needed updates to City ordinances, procedures, maps, forms, and development review processes.
- Oversee implementation and maintenance of planning maps, development records, case files, and project tracking systems.
- Monitor planning trends, development patterns, demographic changes, housing conditions, transportation needs, and other factors affecting the City's growth and development.
- Represent the City in meetings with regional, county, state, and federal agencies concerning planning, development, transportation, stormwater, and growth-related matters.
- Coordinate with engineering staff, stormwater personnel, and consultants to address drainage, stormwater, infrastructure, and development compliance issues for major projects.
- Assist in preparing and managing the Planning Department budget, goals, and annual work program.
- Review and approve employee timesheets, leave requests, and other departmental administrative matters.
- Promote professional standards, effective customer service, and consistent application of City ordinances and procedures within the Planning Department.

- Perform other related duties as assigned by the Mayor, City Administrator, or Board of Aldermen.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

Knowledge

- Knowledge of principles and practices of urban planning, comprehensive planning, land use planning, zoning administration, subdivision review, and development review.
- Knowledge of municipal planning practices, growth management, redevelopment, transportation planning, housing policy, and community development.
- Knowledge of local zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, land development regulations, building-related procedures, and other applicable City codes.
- Knowledge of federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and procedures related to planning, zoning, subdivision review, public hearings, public records, and municipal government operations.
- Knowledge of site planning, subdivision design, urban design, access management, circulation, buffering, landscaping, parking, stormwater coordination, and compatibility between land uses.
- Knowledge of Comprehensive Plan implementation, ordinance development, policy analysis, and long-range planning techniques.
- Knowledge of municipal government structure, including the roles of the Mayor, City Administrator, Board of Aldermen, Planning Commission, and other boards or commissions.
- Knowledge of public engagement methods and techniques for communicating planning issues to residents, applicants, elected officials, and community stakeholders.
- Knowledge of research methods, demographic trends, development patterns, mapping resources, and data analysis used in municipal planning.
- Knowledge of interdepartmental coordination related to infrastructure, transportation, drainage, utilities, public safety, economic development, and community development.

Skills and Abilities

- Directing, supervising, assigning, reviewing, and evaluating the work of departmental personnel.
- Establishing departmental goals, priorities, procedures, and work programs.
- Interpreting and applying zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, adopted plans, and other planning-related policies.
- Reviewing and evaluating major development proposals, site plans, subdivisions, rezonings, planned developments, variances, and other complex land use applications.
- Identifying planning, zoning, transportation, infrastructure, stormwater, design, and compatibility issues associated with proposed development.
- Preparing and presenting clear staff reports, ordinance amendments, policy recommendations, maps, presentations, and other written materials.
- Communicating effectively, both orally and in writing, with residents, applicants, developers, elected officials, appointed boards, City staff, consultants, and outside agencies.

- Explaining complex planning, zoning, and development issues in a clear and professional manner.
- Making sound recommendations based on adopted plans, ordinances, professional planning principles, and the long-term interests of the City.
- Managing multiple projects, deadlines, meetings, and assignments with limited supervision.
- Coordinating work with other City departments, consultants, engineers, public agencies, and regional planning partners.
- Managing consultant-led studies, planning projects, ordinance updates, and development-related initiatives.
- Maintaining professional composure and exercising sound judgment in difficult, controversial, or politically sensitive situations.
- Facilitating meetings, public hearings, staff discussions, and development review conversations.
- Negotiating or recommending project changes related to access, buffering, site design, circulation, landscaping, drainage, infrastructure, and compatibility with surrounding uses.
- Using planning-related computer software, mapping resources, document preparation tools, and project tracking systems.
- Maintaining confidentiality and handling sensitive personnel, legal, development, and policy matters' appropriately.
- Working independently while also functioning effectively as part of the City's management team.
- Developing, implementing, and improving departmental procedures to ensure consistent, timely, and professional service delivery.
- Representing the City professionally in meetings with residents, developers, consultants, regional agencies, state agencies, and other governmental entities.

Job Context

The Planning Director is a full-time, permanent position in the Planning Department. The immediate supervisors for this position are the Mayor and City Administrator.

The Planning Director supervises the personnel assigned to the Planning Department, including the Building Inspector, Planner 1, Rental Housing Coordinator, and General Clerk/Administrative Assistant.

The Planning Director works regularly scheduled hours year-round. Attendance at evening meetings, including Planning Commission meetings, Board of Aldermen meetings, public hearings, and other meetings, is required as part of the position. Occasional overtime may be necessary depending on meeting schedules, project deadlines, public hearings, and other City needs.

The majority of work is performed in an office setting. The position also requires occasional field work, including site visits, field review of proposed development areas, review of existing conditions, and attendance at meetings or events outside City Hall. Field work may require walking on uneven terrain, walking around construction or development sites, climbing stairs, and working outdoors in varying weather conditions.

The position has responsibility for departmental operations, staff supervision, planning recommendations, development review oversight, ordinance interpretation, long-range planning initiatives, budget-related matters, and coordination with other City departments, consultants, applicants, developers, elected officials, appointed boards, and the public.

The Planning Director is expected to exercise sound professional judgment, maintain confidentiality, communicate clearly and professionally, and represent the City in a manner consistent with adopted policies, ordinances, and the long-term interests of the community.

The position may involve competing deadlines, complex development issues, public meetings, controversial land use matters, and interaction with residents, applicants, developers, elected officials, and outside agencies. The Planning Director is expected to maintain professional composure and sound judgment in these situations.

There is generally no regular exposure to hazardous chemicals or materials. The position may require occasional work in or around active construction sites, drainage areas, roadways, or other field conditions associated with development review and planning-related work.

The person in this position must possess and maintain a valid driver's license.

A bachelor's degree in urban planning, public administration, geography, architecture, landscape architecture, civil engineering, or a closely related field is required. A master's degree in urban planning, public administration, or a closely related field is preferred.

At least five years of progressively responsible professional planning experience is required, preferably including municipal planning, development review, long-range planning, ordinance preparation, and supervisory experience.

AICP Certification is preferred.

Physical work involved with this position includes sitting, standing, typing, walking, reviewing plans and documents, attending meetings, conducting site visits, walking around project sites, and climbing stairs as needed.

FLSA: Exempt

REPORTS TO: Mayor and City Administrator

SUPERVISES: Assistant Planning Director, Building Inspector, Planner I/Storm Water Coordinator, Rental Housing Coordinator and General Clerk/Administrative Assistant

The job description does not constitute an employment agreement between the employer and employee and is subject to change by the employer as the needs of the employer and requirements of the job change. Characteristics described in this job description are representative of those an employee encounters while performing this job. Reasonable accommodation may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform them.

Signature Acknowledging Job Description

Date

* Revised Board Adopted: 07/21/2026