

Washington County

Job Description

JOB TITLE: Planner

Exempt (Y/N): No

DEPARTMENT: Planning Dept.

REVISION DATE: Oct 2015

SUPERVISOR: Planning Director

SUMMARY:

The Planner is responsible for reviewing proposed land development submittals to ensure safeguarding of the public's health, safety, and welfare through enforcement of Washington County's ordinances, regulations, and zoning.

The Planner position requires a high mental demand as multiple projects that can vary greatly in type and requirements are processed and analyzed by this position. This position requires an intense amount of public contact, as well as contact with a variety of other departments and agencies. Critical thinking skills are of utmost importance in this job- as well as excellent communication and interpersonal skills. The incumbent must perform all tasks with only moderate to minimal supervision from the Department Director. Organizational skills and good knowledge of computers is required. Accuracy in work is of utmost importance in this job to avoid the potential for legal action against the organization. Knowledge of state and federal laws regarding planning is required in addition to a bachelor's degree and a preference for 2-3 years' experience (or equivalent combination of education and experience).

The Planner must demonstrate the ability to exercise sound judgment and take responsible actions as a County representative during contact with the public, elected and appointed officials, developers and other County employees.

The Planner must understand the customer base and seek to meet the needs of the community.

The Planner must identify, analyze and solve problems in support of group, department, and organization objectives; consider cause and effect among different factors or stakeholders of a problem.

The Planner is responsible for critical and timely communication with the public, elected officials, utility providers, and other professionals to achieve development that is in accordance with County ordinances, regulations, and zoning. The position plays an integral role in facilitating, documenting and participating in communication with these entities.

The Planner is responsible for educating the public and other entities about Washington County's ordinances, regulations, zoning, and the planning review process in order to maintain the public's health, safety and welfare.

The Planner will participate in the development of comprehensive plans and programs that will be used as tools for guiding land development within Washington County.

The Planner will be responsible for formulating recommendations and strategies regarding the planning and policies of the development of Washington County.

The Planner will be responsible for the professional presentation of research and analysis to elected officials and government bodies.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES include the following: (Other duties may be assigned.)

1. Responsible for review of projects submitted to the Planning Department to ensure completeness and accuracy and to determine whether they are in compliance with Washington County's ordinances, regulations, and zoning.
2. Research and process administrative property divisions and property line adjustments. If property is located within a planning area, the Planner must coordinate with the corresponding city.
3. Advise applicants on corrections to submittals that are necessary for the purpose of moving a project through the planning process in a timely manner.
4. Complete site visits to ensure projects have no discrepancies between the plans submitted ~~to~~ and the actual site.
5. Research and assemble submittals and related materials and author detailed, analytical reports for distribution to other County departments, Planning Board, Utility Companies, Cities, Emergency providers, County Judge, County Attorney, Quorum Court and any other reviewing agencies in order to receive appropriate feedback and keep appropriate parties informed.
6. Coordinate, document, and participate in communication with different entities to ensure planning requirements are met. All communication must be documented in an organized and efficient manner to ensure that requirements from every entity involved have been adequately met.
7. Conduct all liaison activities in a professional manner to ensure maximum cooperation between and among County and other agencies. Ensure that all activities are professionally and ethically performed in accordance and within the law to protect the individual rights of all citizens in Washington County.
8. Work with special County taskforces as assigned by the Planning Director to facilitate problem solving on special issues within the County. Produce and present reports and research to the Planning Board/Zoning Board of Adjustments or Quorum Court as assigned by the Planning Director. The planner is responsible for assignments given by the Planning Director with minimal or no supervision.
9. Converse and meet with the County Attorney and County Judge to discuss projects within Washington County when needed.
10. Prepare documents to aid in presenting project information at Planning Board/Zoning Board of Adjustments Meetings and Quorum Court Meetings; including GIS maps, PowerPoint presentations that have background information for submitted projects, plan layouts, staff recommendations / reports, and any additional info requested by the Planning Board or Quorum Court.
11. Prepare and disseminate Freedom of Information Act Request documents in a timely manner as requested.
12. Keep abreast of County changes and how they affect information given out and enforced by the Planning Office.
13. Meet with the public to facilitate the creation of comprehensive plans for the County.
14. Assist the public, staff from other County departments, and other professionals by researching and providing information regarding County ordinances, regulations, zoning, and review processes, either by phone, fax, in person, or email.
15. Conduct parcel and past project research related to specific parcels and land development using official records from other County Departments, Planning Databases and records, and GIS map material.
16. Maintain detailed and organized project files, both hard copies and digital, and develop methods for filing as amount of information to be stored increases. Prepare and update files and records pertaining to projects submitted to the Planning Department

17. Develop, update, and maintain methods for tracking development, in a countywide context through planning databases, excel spreadsheets, GIS maps, and by archiving relevant newspaper articles related to Washington County development.
18. Perform duties as general GIS professional for the Planning Office.
 - Attend regional GIS meetings and work proactively with City and Regional Planning Departments to obtain accurate data for County maps. Coordinate with other County offices (Assessor, 911 operations, etc...) to share and incorporate other available County data into maps.
 - Have knowledge and/or experience with ARCVIEW GIS or obtain knowledge within six months of hire in order to create maps and analyze information in a comprehensive fashion.
 - Responsible for preparation of County maps including but not limited to the Official County Zoning Map, the Future Land Use Map, and the Planning Areas Map.
 - Maintain accuracy and provide the most updated information on County maps.
 - Create project neighbor buffer maps in ARCVIEW GIS and use the resulting information to prepare neighbor notification mailings as required by Washington County ordinance.
19. Actively participate to further the goals of the National Flood Insurance Program, in order to mitigate the hazards of flooding. This includes but is not limited to the following:
 - Integration of floodplain maps with GIS program.
 - Regulate development with flood hazard areas – (i.e.- plat and plan review, & address applications (proposed structures, no rise certificates),
 - Educate the public on the National Flood Insurance Program
 - Attend educational workshops to further education in regard to the National Flood Insurance Program as it relates to Washington County
 - Determine whether structures have sustained “substantial damage” during times of flooding
 - Become a Certified FEMA Floodplain Manager and perform related duties.
20. Supervise, assign, and coordinate planning intern projects based on each of the interns’ schedules and abilities.
21. Assist the Public Works Coordinator by supervising the front desk when scheduled.
22. Attend seminars and training courses to retain and put to use new ideas and skills learned.
23. Perform all other required or assigned duties. This requires judgment to identify work that has not been assigned but must be completed, and the ability to self-start.
24. Be the County representative for the Northwest Arkansas (NWA) Active Transportation Committee.
25. Create and update an ARCVIEW GIS map of significant historical properties within the County. and conduct research on and maintain detailed records of the properties.
26. Attend, represent, and present detailed analytical reports to the Planning Department at after-hour Planning Board meetings.
27. Attend and represent the Planning Department at after-hour Quorum Court meetings and County Services meetings as required by the Planning Director.
28. Make determinations on and process Additional Dwelling Unit applications and Department of Emergency Management 911 address applications.
29. Coordinate with the Department of Emergency Management office regarding address applications.

30. Make determinations on and process cell tower and antenna submissions as assigned according to Washington County ordinances.

31. Assist in the upkeep and care of the Washington County rain garden.

32. Must be able to use mathematics involving the practical application of fractions, percentages, ratios and proportions.

QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS:

To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

EDUCATION and/or EXPERIENCE:

Bachelor's degree (B.A.) from four-year college or university and two to three years related experience and/or training is preferred; or equivalent combination of education and experience. The incumbent must have general knowledge of principles and practices of Urban and Regional Planning.

LANGUAGE / COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Must possess excellent interpersonal skills in order to establish and maintain good working relationships with co-workers, other County employees, contractors, developers, realtors, surveyors, engineers, title companies, general public, Planning Board members, Quorum Court members, and other officials.

Must be able to learn, explain, and provide correct information about Current Planning Practices, Subdivisions, Variances, Zoning Regulations, Administrative Lot Splits, Large Scale Developments, Planning Office Statistics, Mapping Information, Floodplain Information, and Future Land Use Information within six months of hire.

The incumbent must possess excellent interpersonal and communication skills when dealing with the public, and must be able to effectively communicate with others orally and in writing, often under complex conditions that require good judgment.

Must possess public presentation skills to provide presentations to staff, the public, various boards and committees, the Planning Board and Quorum Court in a clear, effective manner.

REASONING ABILITY:

Must have the ability to interpret and analyze technical and statistical information.

Analytical ability skills are necessary in order to analyze planning data and make appropriate recommendations. Possess the ability to read and comprehend codes, specifications, legal descriptions and boundary maps of real property, maps, and development plans and plats. The work performed requires judgment in the application of established guidelines to specific situations, with instruction or assistance from a supervisor on problems or unusual cases.

ORGANIZATION SKILLS:

Ability to work on several projects or issues simultaneously. Must be detail-oriented and be able to multitask effectively. Must be able to organize work and establish priorities.

OFFICE EQUIPMENT & COMPUTER SOFTWARE:

Regular and intensive use of computer, laptop and ipad to complete daily work. Some knowledge of advanced specialized programs (such as the ARC VIEW GIS mapping system) and software are required or must be obtained within 6 months.

Machine skills include computer and Internet, calculator, ~~FAX machine~~, copy machine, and typing skills.

Computer programs utilized include: Arcview GIS, Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Excel, database software, Adobe Reader/Writer and overall basic computer knowledge.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS:

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to sit, talk and hear, and use hands to finger, handle or feel objects. The employee frequently is required to stand walk, and reach with hands and arms. The employee is occasionally required to stoop, knee, crouch, or crawl. The employee must frequently lift and/or move up to 10 pounds and occasionally lift and/or move up to 25 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close and distant vision.

WORK ENVIRONMENT:

The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those that an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. While performing the duties of this job, the employee occasionally works in outside weather conditions.

The noise level in the work environment is usually moderate.