

Delta County Master Plan FAQ

What is a Master Plan?

The Delta County Master Plan is a long-range plan for land use to guide growth and development of unincorporated Delta County. It is used by the Citizens of Delta County, the Planning Commission, Board of County Commissioners, property owners, business owners, and developers to make decisions about where to locate new development such as housing and businesses.

Is a Master Plan a regulatory document?

The Delta County Master Plan is advisory only, and not a regulatory document. The Master Plan is a long-range plan for land use that can be used by the Citizens of Delta County, the Planning Commission, Board of County Commissioners, businesses, land owners, developers, and neighbors to guide growth and development of the unincorporated Delta County. The Master Plan is a road map and provides a policy foundation that can be used to guide updates to the County's land use regulations, including Subdivision, Specific Development, and Oil & Gas Regulations or creation of new regulations. These regulations are the tools used to implement the Master Plan.

What is the Vision/Goal of the Master Plan?

The vision of the Master Plan is to promote prosperity in Delta County for present and future generations through stewardship of the county's resources, and thoughtful, predictable land use regulations.

How will the County use this Master Plan?

The updated Master Plan is intended to be used in several different ways. The plan is designed to be a "living document" that can actively guide several activities including:

- **Updates to/development of land use regulations:** The plan outlines several strategies throughout the document that can help the County update its current land use regulations, and evaluate the necessity/effectiveness of potential new land use regulations. The plan discusses the need for updated land use processes that are fair and predictable. Following adoption of the Master Plan, the County will begin evaluating its subdivision, specific development, and oil and gas regulations to determine how to implement the goals and strategies identified in the Master Plan with a focus on creating fair and predictable regulations. The County will also evaluate additional land use tools.
- **Vision/values source for property owners, businesses, and developers:** The plan reflects the values of Delta County residents and provides guidelines for land use and development patterns. Property owners, citizens, businesses, and developers can use the plan to help them make informed decisions that are consistent with the vision and goals of the Master Plan and to avoid challenges and conflicts.

- **Information source for neighbors:** Neighbors can use this plan to communicate with one another about their vision for their property, their vision for their neighborhood, and to work with one another to address issues through improved communication.
- **Guide for Investment, Strategic Planning:** Delta County and other entities can use the Master Plan to help inform other decision-making processes such as capital improvement plans, budgets, and even grant applications. The document can help the County in communicating the vision of county residents to other government entities like the BLM and Forest Service.

Are my private property rights protected by this Master Plan?

Private property rights are highly valued by Delta County residents, and are discussed throughout the Master Plan. However; the Master Plan is not a regulatory document, and cannot on its own offer protection to anyone's private property rights or to property values.

The Master Plan lays a foundation for ensuring that property rights are protected. The County's best tool for protecting property rights is land use regulations. The Master Plan states "the intent of the Master Plan is to lay groundwork for future regulations that will protect property rights while rationally planning for growth, addressing impacts on neighboring properties, and protecting the most important land and economic resources...Future land use regulations need to maintain a balance between community goals and individual property rights and must be consistent, fair, predictable, and easily understood." Striking a balance between addressing the need for fair, predictable land use regulations, and protecting property rights will require a balanced approach as the County evaluates its land use regulations.

Why doesn't the Master Plan specifically address oil and gas and confined animal feeding operations? Didn't the community express concerns about these?

Throughout the Master Plan update process we heard a lot about oil and gas and confined feeding animal operations. We also heard a broad spectrum of opinion for both of these topics. Our discussions across the county highlighted the significant conflict in our county over these two topics, and others. We have residents who feel very strongly on both sides of each issue.

The Master Plan does not focus on any single issue, but is instead intended to provide a broad comprehensive framework to address multiple challenges and issues. The Master Plan acknowledges that these two topics, as well as others such as the location of future industrial development, points of conflict with varied opinions. The Master Plan lays out a plan for the County to establish thoughtful regulations that can deal with the conflicts and concerns residents have regarding more intensive development. Strategy 2.1.6 and Strategy 7.0.4 direct the county to convene working groups. These working groups will help the county explore solutions to conflict around these two issues, and help the

county develop a regulatory framework that can better handle the conflict that arises when new projects are proposed.

What is the Future Land Use Plan (FLUP)?

The Future Land Use Plan (FLUP) is a tool that can help the County implement the vision and goals of the Master Plan by creating a better understanding of where opportunities and constraints for future growth exist. The FLUP includes an assessment of existing conditions across the County including existing assets, development patterns, and current challenges. The FLUP suggests policy that can be used in updating existing land use regulations, or creating new regulations to help guide development around the County. Property owners and developers can use the FLUP to help them understand the county's vision and make informed decisions that support the vision.

Isn't the FLUP just "disguised zoning"

The FLUP is not disguised zoning. It is not detailed enough to be considered zoning, and does not address the things that zoning would address. The FLUP is intended to help the County implement the vision of the Master Plan by creating a better understanding what types of development are happening around the county, and what infrastructure is available to support future development. One of the goals of the Master Plan is to protect agriculture. The FLUP helps identify where agriculture exists around the county, and provides policy recommendations for how to protect agriculture. For example, the FLUP suggests the county should create an incentive program that would encourage conservation and continued production on quality agricultural lands.

While the FLUP is not disguised zoning, the FLUP does outline the need for a new regulatory system to address conflicts between residential, agriculture, industrial, and commercial uses. Zoning is one potential regulatory tool that could be used to implement the Master Plan, but it is not the only tool the County could utilize to address the needs identified throughout the Master Plan.

Did you say zoning?

Throughout the Master Plan process, the County heard from many residents that do not want to see the County create overreaching land use regulations, including zoning. However, the County also heard growing support for the idea of simple zoning that can help address specific points of conflict and confusion.

This Master Plan identifies the need for improved regulations in Delta County. The Planning Commission believes that our current subdivision and specific development regulations are inadequate, create confusion, and are unfair to both neighbors and applicants. "Zoning" has been discussed as a possible tool to address the issues that are identified in the Master Plan. Once adopted, several strategies will be evaluated to begin implementing this Master Plan. This will include needed updates to existing regulations and evaluation of additional tools, including zoning, that might help the County implement the vision of this Master Plan, which is to have land use regulations that are fair, predictable, and offer protection to property owners.

What's next

After adoption of the Master Plan, the County will immediately take multiple steps to begin implementation of the Master Plan. These will include:

- Development of a Master Plan Implementation Road Map, which will help identify what updates are needed to existing land use regulations and will identify other land use tools that could be considered to help implement the Master Plan.
- Updated intergovernmental agreements with all municipalities to ensure coordination and collaboration within the planning areas around each municipality.
- Establishment of a Confined Animal Feeding Operation and Oil and Gas working groups.

Following these initial first steps, the County will begin updating its subdivision and specific development regulations, and may also begin developing new land use tools. The community will be engaged throughout the next steps to help guide and shape the future of Delta County's land use regulations, policies, and procedures. The Master Plan emphasizes the importance of property owner, resident, and business owner input.