



IPS Group
Planning Solutions

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science,
Interdisciplinary Studies,
1999,
Texas A&M University,
College Station, Texas

REGISTRATION

American Institute of
Certified Planners
(#12923)

PROFESSIONAL

AFFILIATIONS

American Planning
Association

Member Texas Chapter,
APA

Member Central Texas Sec-
tion of the APA

Member, Building & Land
Development Forum of
Bryan/College Station

AWARDS & HONORS

Texas APA Comprehensive
Planning Award, 2003 -
College Station Bike and
Pedestrian Master Plan

Professional Planning
Award from Texas APA -
City of College Station
2001

Comprehensive Plan of the
Year 2007, City of Bryan—
Texas APA Central Texas
Section Awards

Comprehensive Plan of the
Year 2007, City of Bryan—
State of Texas APA

Natalie Thomas Ruiz, A.I.C.P.

Principal, IPS Group

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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- IPS Group, College Station, Texas
Principal (2004-present)

Ms. Ruiz formed the IPS Group in 2004, along with her two partners, to serve the planning needs of small and medium sized communities. She has extensive experience with all facets of planning but much of her expertise is in plan implementation including code development, permitting processes and administering zoning regulations. Ms. Ruiz's comprehensive and current planning experience makes her an essential member of any planning team.

- City of College Station, Development Services Department,
College Station, Texas
Development Manager (1998 – 2004)
Assistant Development Coordinator (1995-1998)
Planning Technician (1991-1995)
Building Technician (1990–1991)

During Ms. Ruiz's tenure with the City of College Station she has been in various planning and management positions. She worked her way up from a frontline permitting clerk to a division manager overseeing a staff of 13 highly-skilled planning professionals. Her exposure to every level of the organization afforded her the opportunity to learn all the facets of the development process from inception to occupancy.

As Ms. Ruiz was working her way through Texas A&M University, she began her career in the City's building department responsible for issuing all building permits and coordinating plans review. She then moved to the planning department where she served as the city's liaison to various appointed committees including the Planning and Zoning Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment, Design Review Board and Project Review Committee. Ms. Ruiz was responsible for all correspondence and for complying with legal notification requirements, agenda postings and certified mailings for all cases before five volunteer boards appointed by the City Council. She also participated in various long range planning efforts including the University Drive Corridor Study, the F.M. 2818 Triangle Study and the City's Comprehensive Plan.

As the City of College Station began to experience explosive growth in the early 1990's, Ms. Ruiz became more involved in development review and facilitating private development projects. She was promoted to Assistant Development Coordinator in 1995 where she managed development projects from initial submission to final completion. Ms. Ruiz served as the City's ombudsman to private sector and select public development projects. She was responsible for facilitating plan reviews, inspections and final completion of development projects with other city departments and outside agencies.



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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Development Services
Management,
Paul Zucker, FAICP,
San Jose, California, 2003

Advanced Media Relations,
The Ammerman Experience,
2003

Advanced Presentation
Training, The Ammerman
Experience, 2002

Texas APA Conferences,
1998, 2000, 2001, 2005,
2006 & 2007

Management Academy,
City of College Station,
2001

Management of Planning
and Zoning Departments,
University of Michigan
Seminars, Golden,
Colorado, 2000

Supervisory Academy,
City of College Station,
1998

Smart Code Workshop &
Design Manual Training
Presented by Andres
Duany, Austin, Texas 2007

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (CONTINUED)

In 1998 Ms. Ruiz was promoted to Development Manager where she became the Division Manager for the development review division responsible for reviewing, approving and permitting all development-related projects. She led the preparation and implementation of policies and programs relative to development review. Ms. Ruiz assisted in the comprehensive overhaul of the zoning and subdivision codes resulting in the City's first Unified Development Ordinance. She served as an advisor to the City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission and other review boards on development-related projects, policies, codes and ordinances.

PROJECT EXPERIENCE

Bryan Comprehensive Plan Update

In 2005 the city of Bryan, Texas (population 70,000) hired IPS Group to update their plan in an effort to address growth impacts and aging infrastructure. This extensive year long project was completed with unanimous approval of the City Council in January, 2007. The plan update included a wide-reaching community involvement plan. Given the diverse population in Bryan, IPS developed a specific media plan to reach as many citizens as possible. The media plan included a comprehensive plan website, public service announcements in English and Spanish, community-wide open houses, public input sessions held within specific neighborhoods and unique ways of distributing the plan once adopted by City Council. At an Open House to unveil the plan, the community voted on the top issues facing Bryan over the next five years. This information was then incorporated and prioritized through the Implementation Guide. This Guide is a primary component of the plan and provides a step-by-step approach to implementing the plan. The Implementation Guide incorporates such elements as maintaining existing levels of service within the City and balancing essential services with new programs. The Guide also spans departments throughout the City so that the plan truly guides the City as a whole—not just the Planning Department. Bryan's new Plan won the "Comprehensive Plan of the Year 2007" by the State of Texas APA and the Central Texas Section of the APA.

Gander Mountain—Fast Track Plans Review & Permitting

In 2006, the IPS Group worked with Oppidan, Inc. to design and build a new 75,000 square foot Gander Mountain retail facility in College Station, Texas. In order to meet Oppidan's aggressive construction schedule and Gander Mountain's targeted opening date, IPS led a design team of one urban planning firm, one surveying firm and three civil engineering firms. This specialized team worked directly with city staff on a fast track plans review and permitting schedule that resulted in building permit issuance within 30 days. Within this time frame, IPS hosted a neighborhood meeting to inform surrounding residents of the pending development plans. Gander Mountain's \$9 million facility was completed ahead of schedule and is now a great asset to the City of College Station and surrounding communities.

San Angelo—Subdivision Regulations

In 2005, the City of San Angelo hired the IPS Group to perform a technical review of the city's Subdivision Regulations and construction standards. A diagnostic report was produced that outlined suggested changes for a user-friendly, consistent, understandable and concise ordinance. Our evaluation was guided by the belief that City Officials, private developers and all citizens are best served by development regulations that are easy to interpret, use, administer and enforce. Vague, conflicting and cumbersome ordinances can pose an obstacle to achieving established community objectives. In evaluating the substance and structure of San Angelo's existing subdivision regulations, we focused on the following issues:

- Document organization, format and usability;
- Consistency among provisions;
- Administrative efficiency;
- Regulatory clarity; and,
- Compliance with the Texas Local Government Code.

The diagnostic report is the first step in updating or possibly redrafting new Subdivision Regulations. This technical report established the basic framework for developing up to date regulations and construction standards for the City of San Angelo.



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PRESENTATIONS

“Development Regulations and Processes,”
Construction Science Implementation,
Texas A&M University,
2002 & 2003

“Municipal Planning and Zoning,”
College Station Citizen’s University,
2000-2004

Frequent Presenter to:

- BCS Board of Realtors
- Lion’s Club
- Rotary Club
- Neighborhood Associations
- Neighborhood Seminar Suppers
- CSISD High School Career Day
- BCS Apartment Association
- City of College Station’s Citizen’s University

PROJECT EXPERIENCE (CONTINUED)

Pflugerville Corridor Study

The City of Pflugerville contracted with Houston-based Wilbur-Smith and Associates (WSA) to conduct a corridor study along two new toll roads planned to divide the city. The corridor study was well under way when the toll roads were completed three months ahead of schedule. In an effort to complete the study and the new development code, the IPS Group was hired to focus on the implementation portion of the project. Natalie led the project for the IPS Group who was directly responsible for:

Analysis of Surrounding Communities – Natalie conducted research and performed telephone surveys of nine surrounding communities to document relevant regional factors, plans and projects that could influence the corridor. In addition, she examined how aggressive each city was in terms of economic development and what Pflugerville would need to do to compete with surrounding communities. Specific recommendations were made that included traditional economic development tools as well as new and innovative techniques.

Land Management Matrix – Natalie prepared a detailed matrix highlighting the different types of land management techniques available in Texas. Each technique was scored according to ease of use, effectiveness in implementing the City’s vision and ease of administration. As a result, the Advisory Committee directed the consultant to draft a hybrid code that combines the use regulations in a Euclidean ordinance, the character and form regulations of a Smart Code with incentives to develop in a denser, traditional pattern.

Development of Code - Natalie performed a diagnostic review of current development-related codes and other regulations relevant to plan implementation in an effort to propose specific code revisions. She worked closely with WSA and assisted in writing specific sections of the code and establishing two development options within the same code. The resulting regulations allow someone to develop in a typical suburban pattern; however, there are many incentives to entice developers to choose a more traditional neighborhood development pattern. Much of the code language, developed in association with WSA, was vetted and refined utilizing 3D visualization software. Using this technique the citizens and public officials were able to “see” what type of development the code would produce as the planning process progressed. Comments and concerns raised were instantly analyzed from a visual standpoint such as the “sky exposure angle” buffering provision.

Implementation Action Plan – Natalie authored an Action Plan that recommended specific steps for “jump starting” implementation, particularly within the first six months following plan adoption, as well as strategies for maintaining stakeholder support and awareness.

Fast Track Permitting System for the Research Valley

Co-authored and developed a Fast Track Permitting system for industrial park clients of the Research Valley Partnership in the cities of Bryan and College Station, Texas. This system allows a developer or business owner to know exactly what to expect throughout the permitting process in both cities. The Fast Track system provides a quick and thorough review of all plans by a specialized team of professionals customized to the needs of the business owner and project. This Fast Track Permitting system is the only one of its kind that is marketed in the United States.

Unified Development Ordinance

The City of College Station sought to update its zoning and subdivision regulations and combine them into one unified ordinance that would protect existing neighborhoods and be easy to administer. When the consultant failed to make substantial progress, staff was given the task. Weekly 7 a.m. meetings with citizens, engineers and developers were employed to review and refine each section. Though the initial draft was hotly contested by the development community, the final draft was recommended by the development representatives. The resulting document was recommended by a unanimous vote by the Commission and adopted by a unanimous vote of the City Council in March of 2003.



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TESTAMONIALS

“Natalie’s true calling is development facilitation. Quite simply, she knows how to take charge. She can organize multiple contractors and engineers while interacting with the city and public. I know of no one else with her innate ability to foresee problems and avoid procedural delays.”

Kelly Templin,
Planning Director
City of Seabrook, Texas

“The impressive organizational skills exhibited early on in this process, coupled with their years of experience, put us on a track that would not have been possible with another firm. There was never a time when a question was asked, be it morning or evening, week-day or weekend, that an answer wasn’t provided immediately.”

Claudia Ryan-Mosley,
Oppidan Investments
Minnetonka, MN

PROJECT EXPERIENCE (CONTINUED)

Project Manager / City Ombudsman

Ms. Ruiz served as the Project Manager and City Ombudsman responsible for overseeing development projects from the idea stage to final inspection and occupancy of the building. She facilitated the overall review and permitting including troubleshooting potential problems and constraints with City departments, utility companies, inspectors and general contractors.

University Drive Corridor Study

This business corridor study was conducted to carefully shape a critical gateway to the city of College Station. Elements of the plan included the creation of a new zoning designation, a new access management plan, tailored setback, signage and landscaping regulations and use-specific standards for service stations. These standards were later included in the Unified Development Ordinance and applied city-wide.

East By-Pass Neighborhood Action Plan

The East Bypass Area planning project was a neighborhood-based effort to develop an action plan to address local issues. The purpose of the plan was to work with residents to identify issues of concern and devise strategies for addressing them. This project used the combined efforts of residents, property owners, neighborhood groups and city departments to positively affect the area. It received the Project Planning Award from the Central Section of the Texas Chapter of APA in 2000.

Youth Vision!

Youth Vision! was a program to involve children and young adults in planning process of College Station. Through activities and workshops youth could express their concerns and describe their vision for the future of their neighborhoods. The results of the Youth Vision! were turned into “action recommendations” that were included in neighborhood plans.