

How to do a Comprehensive Plan

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A Presentation
by
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Source: APA

Purdue Extension

Knowledge to Go

1-888-EXT-INFO



Why Plan?

- In today's world of fast-paced change, footloose companies, new technology and complex pressures causing fast growth or decline, a long-term comprehensive plan gives communities a better edge in maintaining what they value and arriving at future goals.
- Rather than a five-year planning horizon, communities are increasingly looking 10, 20 and even 30 years into the future, and talking with their neighbors to facilitate the planning process and minimize negative impacts from one community to another.

Benefits of a Long-Range Comprehensive Plan

- Provides informed direction and goals for the present and future well-being of the community
- Bolsters the power of the zoning ordinance and the land-use plan in a community that adopts a comprehensive plan
- Provides information, analysis, and examples of what others are doing, and therefore a better basis for decision-making

Benefits of a Long-Range, Comprehensive Plan

- Helps to avoid conflict and incompatible land uses - when there is no plan, development can become haphazard (even more so when there is no zoning).
- Jurisdictions have little basis for negotiation if neighboring jurisdictions decide to locate less attractive land uses on their borders.

Why should jurisdictions and counties plan collaboratively?

- Collaborative planning enables joint prioritization and power in obtaining the allocation of needed (but scarce) resources for area facilities such as:
 - sewer extensions,
 - road improvements,
 - water extensions and
 - money for economic development.

Hidden Costs of Failing to Plan

➤ **Economic Costs (1):**

- Development increases the need for public services and facilities - schools, libraries, parks, police, fire fighters, etc.

➤ **Economic Costs (2):**

- Lack of planning and zoning spells uncertainty and unpredictability to developers, businesses and residents.

➤ **Environmental Costs**

- Environmental systems require a long-term perspective that transcends boundary lines between governmental jurisdictions.

Hidden Costs of Failing to Plan

➤ Social and Quality of Life Costs:

- Unplanned growth erodes the sense of place shaped by our built and natural environment.
- Failure to plan *FOR* growth leads to inadequate infrastructure to serve the community – eg. Inadequate school systems; traffic congestion; insufficient sewer and water hookups etc
- Failure to plan *TO* grow, on the other hand, or to maintain a stable position, can mean community decline, resulting in loss of jobs, eroding tax base, growing crime, concentrated poverty and increased need for social services and related taxes.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

Basic, Traditional Definition of a Comprehensive Plan:

- Is a set of policy and analytic documents and maps for the guidance of land use and development
- Is sometimes called the General Plan or Master Plan
- Covers the entire land area of the jurisdiction(s) under consideration
- Covers all elements related to the physical development of the area: land use, transportation and communications, water and sewer, solid waste disposal, drainage, parks and open space, school sites and other public and institutional activities, flood control and wetlands.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

- It is a long-range plan, 20 to 30 years is typical (politics and election terms mitigated against this in the past, but the tendency towards long-range planning is growing nevertheless). More than 30 years not recommended.
- The plan is general, not overly specific, because it is intended as a guideline (adopted by resolution, not an ordinance)
- Community plans are *NOT* “blueprint plans.” They need to be flexible, “feedback” plans, to accommodate change.

Comprehensive Plans Today

- More likely to treat the planning area as a system, than as functional parts
- More likely to include socio-economic issues and elements (Fair-share housing; sustainable development, environmental issues including environmental justice, economic development)
- Involve much more “citizen participation” in the process and outcomes

Comprehensive Plans Today

- More likely to include implementation strategies, or an implementation plan, with benchmarking and monitoring to track results, and for accountability.
- More likely to be set in the context of a wider region, including national/international levels.
- Plan is still general, a guideline and long-range.

Other types of Plans

- Strategic plans (for general economic development and businesses) – are more specific than comp plans. Can be part of the implementation plan.
- Limited area plans, such as CBD (Central Business District) plan, Corridor plan, special districts (eg Special Public Interest (SPI) Overlay Districts). These can be quite specific.
- “Action plans” or implementation plans are developed for implementing the Comprehensive Plan strategies

Do You Need a Comprehensive Plan?

- Do you need zoning? If so, you will have to have a comp plan first.
- Do you already have a plan? If so, is it older than 10 years?
- If you don't have a plan,
 - Does the community have a broad range of issues and opportunities?
 - Are you prepared for all the work and commitment it implies?
 - Do you have the resources you need?
- Plans should be reviewed and updated at least every five years

Elements of a Comprehensive Plan

The Indiana Code governing Comprehensive planning in the state requires only three main elements:

- 1. A statement of objectives for the future development of the jurisdiction.*
- 2. A statement of policy for the land use development of the jurisdiction.*
- 3. A statement of policy for the development of public ways, public places, public lands, public structures, and public utilities.*

See also Indiana Code, 36-7-4-503

- The law also provides for a number of optional elements, including:
 - parks and recreation, flood control, transit, natural resource protection, conservation, farmland protection, education, and redevelopment of blighted areas. (Bergman, IPA, p.4)

Comprehensive Plan Elements Today

A typical set of comprehensive plan elements today would include:

- **Population and demographics**
- **Land use**
- **Utilities and Community facilities**
- **Transportation and communications**
- **Economic development**
- **Housing**
- **Natural resources and conservation**
- **Recreation and Cultural resources**

(Source: Kelly and Becker, 2000)

Comprehensive Plan Elements Today

Other elements that have appeared in comprehensive plans recently include:

- **Civic engagement and social capital**
- **Environmental and social justice**
- **Governance**
- **Health and human services**

The process for doing a Comprehensive Plan 1: Planning for the Plan

Time frame for the planning process

- Preparing to plan – 3 months to 1 year
- Making the plan – 6 months to 2 years (look at the South Bend website)
- Adopting the plan – up to 3 months
- Implementing the plan – up to 30 years
- Can do a PERT or GANTT chart to map the process and keep track of progress; or use Microsoft Project (a bit complex)

Planning for the Plan

Budget for the planning process

- You get what you pay for
- Total sum depends on how inclusive or comprehensive the plan is, how many special and technical studies, publicity and publication costs etc
- Consultants are unlikely to cost less than \$25,000, and around \$45,000 - \$50,000 is representative for a small town or township with a smaller population
- Build in 10-20% extra for unexpected needs (eg special studies; unanticipated publicity costs, or publishing costs)

Planning for the Plan: The RFQ

Hiring a consultant and writing an RFQ

You may want to write an RFQ (Request for Qualifications) when you

- Don't have a big pool of consultants that you know
- Want to expand your range of choices
- Are doing a new kind of project or plan
- Are doing a large and/or multi-part plan
- Want to winnow down the number of firms that you will review and interview

Planning for the Plan: The RFP

You will write an RFP (Request for Proposals)

- When you have a fairly well defined planning project
- Need more technical expertise
- Don't have a planning staff, or only a small planning staff
- You may already have a pool of consultants that you can address

Planning for the Plan: Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder analysis involves three major questions:

- Who are the stakeholders that should be involved in the planning process?
- How will we involve them in the planning process?
- At what point do certain stakeholders need to be involved?

Planning for the Plan: The Steering Committee

Assembling and Appointing the Steering Committee for the Plan

- Responsibility of the Planning Commission (with advice from Planning staff)
- Can be decided from among the stakeholder list
- Members should be capable of being even-handed and seeing all points of view
- Use County Commissioners/City Council to advise
- Choose the Chairperson(s) wisely
- Find roles for those stakeholders who didn't make the Steering Committee, for example, on Task Forces and sub-committees

Planning for the Plan: Background Studies

Background studies for the plan often occur in the “pre-planning process.” They may include:

- The history of the community
- Overviews of previous plans
- Population and demographic trends
- Broader regional and international trends that may impact the local community - and so on.

You will likely need some Special Studies

Special studies may include:

Traffic and transportation plans and reports; economic base analysis; scenario development; buildout analysis; population and economic projections; soils and drainage analysis etc. as dictated by the circumstances of the community

Planning for the Plan: Maps

Maps, maps, maps

- Maps are tools for communication and representing the relationships between plan elements
- Indiana Code does not mandate maps for a Comprehensive Plan, but you should have them anyway

Planning for the Plan: Maps

Common sets of maps that are usually contained in a comprehensive plan include:

1. Existing land use map (basic uses show Residential land, Commercial, Industrial, Open space, Agricultural)
2. Existing transportation map (roads, railways, airports, river or seaports)
3. Parks and open space
4. Utilities map (sewer, water, power and communications lines)

Planning for the Plan: Maps

Common sets of maps that are usually contained in a comprehensive plan include:

4. Contour and soils maps
5. Jurisdiction boundaries
6. Future land use and transportation maps
7. Sometimes there will be a cultural resources/historic preservation map

(Adapted from Kelly and Becker, 2000, p.37)

Planning for the Plan: Publicity and Public Participation

Publicity and public participation

- Public input and review meetings are extremely important and sometimes required by law.
- During the planning process, it is usual to hold 2 or 3 public meetings in the form of an “Open House,” or Community Forum.
- You will need to plan ahead for these.

Planning for the Plan: Public Participation

Obtaining public participation is sometimes difficult. A variety of methods can be used to get public input into the plan. These include but are not limited to:

- surveys, web-surveys
- focus groups
- forums and town meetings
- It can be helpful to hire a PR firm to advise and conduct at least part of the publicity activities, and design publicity materials.

Planning for the Plan: Publicity

It is necessary to publicize plan meetings and events. Some ways of doing this are:

- The city or county website
- Interviews or presentations on the community channel of the cable TV company;
- Local newspaper and regular TV interviews
- Press Releases
- Notices placed in public buildings (Public Library, City Hall, County Administration Building)
- Notices placed on community bulletin boards at the supermarket or grocery stores.

Who Does What in a Comprehensive Planning Process

Roles and Responsibilities of the Planning Commission

- Initiate the planning process
- Maintain oversight of the planning process
- Review and comment on elements of the plan as they are completed
- Adopt the plan and certify it to all participant jurisdictions
- Other, according to the local area
- Ensure that elected officials are aware of the provisions of the plan, and that their decisions are consistent with the plan

Who Does What in a Comprehensive Planning Process

The professional planning staff

- Prepare RFP/RFQ for consultants needed to complete the plan
- Hire the consultants
- Prepare maps
- Gather background data; analyze and interpret the data
- Communicate data and analysis to planning body and public
- Carry out special studies (**or can hire consultants to do this**)
- Organize and facilitate meetings of the Steering Committee, sub-committees and Task Forces
- Prepare press releases and other publicity to inform the public about the plan process and plan meetings (*nowadays this often also includes creating and maintaining a plan website to report progress, post studies and maps, and announce meeting timetables and other plan activities*) (**or can hire a PR firm to do all this**)
- Organize and facilitate meetings and other means of participation of the public
- Compile, organize and analyze comments from meetings
- Project trends and develop alternative scenarios, to help the planning body and public understand the implications of different decisions (**consultants often do this**)
- Turn the policy decisions of the planning body into a plan document (**or can hire a technical writer**)
- Make the plan document accessible and meaningful to the larger public
- Manage the process of final public hearings, amendments and adoption

(Adapted from Kelly, 2000, p. 37)

Who Does What in a Comprehensive Planning Process

The County Commissioners/City Council

May appoint the Steering Committee/Planning Committee

May serve as a member of the Steering Committee

Participate in, or at least keep up to date on the planning process

Comment on the plan at the appropriate stages

Support the planning process (public appearances, publicity, budget etc)

Approve or amend the plan

Who Does What in a Comprehensive Planning Process

The Steering Committee

- Oversee and participate in planning events, exercises and materials development
- May head up sub-committees
- Ensure that the process occurs as planned
- “Represent” at plan events
- Review and refine plan documents and recommended policies before presentation to the Planning Commission and County Commissioners

Who Does What in a Comprehensive Planning Process

The Public and individual citizens

- Participate in the planning process as far as possible
- Identify important community and planning issues and opportunities
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of the community
- Take part in developing the vision and goals of the community
- Assist in developing strategies for achieving the vision and goals
- Offer individual expertise and service on sub-committees and task forces
- Volunteer to help with meetings and logistics
- At least, comment on the plan at public meetings during the planning process and comment formally on the plan at the public hearing before plan adoption.

What we will cover in Part 2

- **Roles and responsibilities of participants in a Comprehensive Planning Process**
- **Doing a Comprehensive Plan 2: The Planning Process**

- **Thanks for your participation tonight.**
- **Don't forget to fill out your Evaluation Form!**
- **We hope to see you in September...**

