

Planning Focus

Linking You to Green County Comprehensive Planning

Fact Sheet 1

What Makes Planning Comprehensive?

We all set goals and objectives, and develop plans for achieving them. Planning is an activity we engage in regularly both at a personal and a professional level:

- Vacation Plans
- Retirement Plans
- Estate Plans
- Financial Plans
- Business Plans
- Marketing Plans

Communities also identify goals and objectives, and develop plans for reaching them. Such plans help local government officials make decisions that are consistent with the needs and desires of citizens.

When communities plan there are many factors to consider. For example, a community that centers its economic base on manufacturing needs strong transportation systems (rail, roads and/or waterways) in order to bring in raw materials and send out finished products. If this same community has a population of threatened or endangered birds, it will need to route its transportation systems around the habitat that supports these birds.

Because multiple issues within a community are interconnected, (such as economic development, transportation and natural

resources in the example above) community planning is often called “comprehensive planning.”

In 1999 Wisconsin adopted a nine element definition of *comprehensive planning*. A coalition including the following organizations worked to develop this definition:

- Wisconsin Realtors Association
- 1000 Friends of Wisconsin
- Wisconsin Builders Association
- Wisconsin Chapter of the American Planning Association
- Wisconsin Council of Regional Planning Organizations
- WI League of Municipalities
- Wisconsin Towns Association
- Wisconsin Counties Association
- Wisconsin Alliance of Cities
- Wisconsin Dept of Administration
- Office of Land Information

Wisconsin’s current comprehensive planning legislation (commonly called the “Smart Growth Law”) was enacted in order to provide a basic framework for land use planning and regulation. Under this legislation a community’s comprehensive plan should address all nine comprehensive planning elements. In addition, a community’s official actions regarding land use need to be consistent with their comprehensive plan by January 1, 2010.



A good plan is like a road map: it shows the final destination and usually the best way to get there.

-H. Stanely Judd

The Nine Elements of a Comprehensive Plan

- *Issues and opportunities*
- *Housing*
- *Transportation*
- *Utilities and community facilities*
- *Agriculture, natural and cultural resources*
- *Economic development*
- *Intergovernmental cooperation*
- *Land use*
- *Implementation*

What are the Benefits of Planning?

Comprehensive planning is a tool for determining what we want the future of our community to look like and how we are going to get there based upon where we are today. Comprehensive planning:

- Gives citizens an opportunity to develop a community vision
- Explores alternatives that will guide a community towards its preferred future
- Shows developers, local government officials and others the location and types of development the community desires
- Allows local governments to prepare for public service needs and associated costs
- Leads to more consistent decision making
- Provides the community with an opportunity to reach a balance between the natural environment and residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural development

The development of an effective comprehensive plan requires citizens, organizations and local officials to dedicate time and energy to the planning process. Controversial issues may arise during the process, and local leadership will be needed to help the community work through those issues.

In addition, it may be necessary for some communities to commit fiscal resources for such things as hiring professional assistance, paying per diems, surveying stakeholders, and developing and distributing the plan document.

A comprehensive plan can help a community prepare for and direct, versus react to, change. However, the ability of a community to reach its preferred future is dependent upon the measures (guidelines/procedures) put in place to achieve what has been laid out in the plan.

Comprehensive Planning In Green County

- *Three-year process (2003-2006)*
- *21 participating jurisdictions*
- *Estimated total project cost of \$565,689*
- *\$326,000 grant awarded by State of Wisconsin to help offset project costs*
- *Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission serving as project manager*

Excerpts taken from *Comprehensive Planning Fundamentals*, UW-Extension Fact Sheet G3746, authored by Mike Koles; *Planning Facts: Portage County Comprehensive Plan*, Portage County UWEX Fact Sheet 1, authored by Mark Hilliker; and *What Will Your Community Look Like?* Waushara and Marquette Counties UWEX Brochure, authored by Patrick Nehring and Patricia Watson.

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