

Comprehensive Plan 101

A Comprehensive Plan is a local government's guide to planning physical, social and economic development. Plans provide a rational basis for local land use decisions with a twenty-year vision for future planning and community decisions. While the Comprehensive Plan does not dictate where or when development occurs, it does improve the amount and quality for communication with and between jurisdictions, which may indirectly lead for more information decisions.

There are 9 required chapters of a Comprehensive Plan. These chapters lay out background information, policies, issues, goals, maps, and programs related to that element.

- Issues and Opportunities
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Land Use
- Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resources
- Economic Development
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Implementation.

Other key components of a Comprehensive Plan include a Future Land Use Map and an Existing Land Use Map which assist with land use planning.

There are many benefits to Comprehensive Plans:

- **Lays out a roadmap to the future** – A plan puts down on paper a community's goals, values, and aspiration – it's vision for the future – and the steps needed to achieve these things.
- **Coordinates community activity** – A plan strategically and holistically examines and coordinates all of a community's policies, programs, departments, initiatives, regulations, responsibilities and other systems.
- **Understand the past and present** – A plan collects useful information about the community, where it's been, where it is now, and where it is headed.
- **Proactive rather than reactive** - Helps community identify and resolve issues early on
- **Promotes economic development** – Planning helps communities retain existing businesses, attract new ones, and revitalize downtowns.
- **Promotes intergovernmental cooperation** – Communities identify existing cooperation between jurisdiction, identify conflicts and describe processes to resolve these conflicts.
- **Protects resources** – Planning helps protect the things a community treasures most, including historic buildings, farmland, forest, wetlands, downtown mainstreets, rivers, etc.