

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan is both a vision for the future and a blueprint-for-change, especially as it relates to the physical growth of the city's buildings, streets, and infrastructure. Once adopted, a comprehensive plan will become a fundamental part of the City's policy. It will serve as both an inspiration for a broad (i.e., "comprehensive") range of City actions and a standard by which they can be measured.

Once adopted, several legal requirements are generally associated with a comprehensive plan:

- All land-use regulations (i.e., zoning) must be in accordance with the plan.
- All plans for capital projects in the city must take into consideration the goals of the plan.
- Other municipalities are required to take the adopted plan's recommendations into consideration when updating their own plans.

A comprehensive plan:

- Guides decision-making about development/conservation
- Provides a framework for capital improvements
- Provides residents with a basis for accountability of decisions
- Enables neighboring municipalities to understand your community's planning program
- Enhances the City's competitiveness in grant applications
- Facilitates the environmental review process for projects

For issues that may be developing or controversial, a comprehensive plan will not necessarily be agreed upon by the entire community. However, a good plan that has the support of the general population will add weight to the ideas and proposals it endorses. A plan that prioritizes issues like sustainability, walkability, or affordable housing can be used by advocates to hold the City accountable for implementation of these goals.

Public participation in the comprehensive planning process is essential. Fundamentally, a comprehensive plan is what we (the city and all its moving parts) make of it, over time. It is ideally a living, breathing, and evolving document, a written agreement the city makes with itself at a given point in time. A good comprehensive plan evolves organically and ages gracefully, as the City and the community members involved in implementing it "learn by doing."

Municipalities are encouraged (by State law) to consider the importance of the following kinds of topics in their comprehensive plans:

- **Growth & development**
- **Location/intensity of proposed uses**
- **Recreation & park land**
- **Commercial/industrial facilities**
- **Regional needs/issues**
- **Agricultural uses**
- **Historic & cultural resources**
- **Coastal/natural/sensitive areas**
- **Population/socioeconomic trends**
- **Transportation**
- **Utility infrastructure**
- **Future housing**
- **Affordable housing**
- **Educational facilities**
- **Health/emergency services facilities**
- **Local economic development**