

## *Comprehensive Planning vs. Zoning*

Differences between planning and zoning are not clear to every citizen or to all local units of government. Both planning and zoning are important elements in land use management efforts of local governments because an effective zoning decision should be based on a sound plan that is supported by the community. A comprehensive plan will, with all nine plan elements, focus on the future and establishes community goals and objectives regarding how land will be used in the next 20 years. Zoning on the other hand, is only one tool that can help communities achieve their respective goals and objectives through land use regulation.

*Comprehensive planning* is focused on the future and helps establish community goals and objectives. It is visionary in that it identifies where and how citizens would like to see the physical development of the community take place. Planning is a process that helps a community prepare for change, rather than react to it.

*Zoning* is a tool that is used to implement the comprehensive plan and to limit land uses for the protection of public health, safety, and welfare. It does this by separating conflicting land uses and ensures development is directed in certain areas that can accommodate that particular land use. Under zoning, communities are divided into different districts, (or zones) which impose different land use controls or specific restrictions on each district. A local government comprehensive plan will likely be more successful if the plan and zoning ordinance (if one is in place) are well integrated and if they accommodate the interests and needs of neighboring communities.

In summary, zoning is a regulatory tool used to regulate and enforce comprehensive plans. The development of a comprehensive plan ensures effective and consistent zoning decisions at the local level.

## *Public Participation in Comprehensive Planning*

In recent years, many local authorities have not circulated information effectively enough to increase public participation and interaction between local government officials and the people they serve. As part of the Comprehensive Planning Legislation, people are given better opportunities for participation than before, particularly in the early stages of plan development. The Comprehensive Planning Legislation mandates that the governing body adopt written procedures to foster public participation throughout the planning process. The "Public Participation Plan" forms the framework for achieving an interactive dialogue between all parties involved in the development of the comprehensive plan. Citizen participation in the development of comprehensive plans is essential for a number of reasons:

- Ensures that good plans remain intact over time
- Promotes strong public buy-in for the plan
- Reduces the likelihood of conflicts between councils, boards, and planning commissions
- Speeds the development process and reduces costs associated with the project
- Increases the quality of planning
- Enhances the sense of community trust in government

During the planning process, citizen participation will be made available through a number of methods. Some of those will include visioning and nominal groups, public meetings and workshops, information and education sessions, and open houses at the local and county level. Formal public hearings will also be conducted as part of the plan adoption process to allow public testimony to be heard regarding the local government's plan. All meetings related to the development of the comprehensive plan(s) are open to the public and your participation is strongly encouraged. Check with your local unit of government or Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission to find out when upcoming meetings are scheduled.

## *Requirements of a Local Comprehensive Plan*

Within the development of a comprehensive plan, specific elements must be included to meet the statutory requirements of §66.1001. These elements will provide local governmental units (towns, villages, cities, and counties) with the tools (goals, objectives, maps, policies, or programs) necessary to create comprehensive plans, which in turn, will promote more informed land-use decisions. The following is a short summary of each of the required nine elements that must be included within a local comprehensive plan.

1. **Issues and Opportunities Element** - Background information on the local government unit that includes such things as population, household and employment forecasts, demographic trends, age distribution, education levels, income levels, and projections where applicable. This information is used to guide the future development and redevelopment of the local government unit over the next 20 years.
2. **Housing Element** – A compilation of the tools to provide an adequate housing supply to meet existing and future housing demands. Included in this section would be things like age, value, housing stock, and occupancy characteristics.
3. **Transportation Element** - Described as a collection of tools to help guide the future development of the various modes of transportation such as highways, walking, bicycles, railroads, air, trucking, water, and transit.
4. **Utilities and Community Facilities Element** - A reference to help guide future development of utilities and community facilities in a local unit of government. Examples include sanitary sewer service, water supply, solid waste disposal, on-site wastewater treatment technologies, recycling facilities, parks, telecommunication facilities, power plants, transmission lines, cemeteries, and health and childcare facilities. It also would include other public facilities like police, fire, and ambulance; libraries; and schools.
5. **Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resource** - Identifies programs for the conservation and promotion of effective resource management. Examples include groundwater, forests, productive agricultural areas, environmentally sensitive areas, threatened and endangered species, stream corridors, surface waters, floodplains, wetlands, wildlife habitat, metallic and nonmetallic mineral resources consistent with zoning limitations under s. 295.20(2), open spaces, historical resources, recreational and other natural resources in the area.
6. **Economic Development Element** - Defined as a set of programs to help promote the stabilization, retention, or expansion of the overall economic base, quality of employment, and employment opportunities in the region. It will also include such things as analysis of labor force and economic base, assessment of desirable types of new business, as well as strengths and weaknesses in attracting and retaining business.
7. **Intergovernmental Cooperation** - Outlines programs for joint planning and decision making with other jurisdictions, including school districts and adjacent local units of government, for siting and building public facilities and sharing public services.
8. **Land Use Element** - Helps guide the future development and redevelopment of public and private property. Included will be such things as amount, type, intensity and net density of existing land uses; examination of trends in supply, demand, and price of land; projections based on background information for the next 20 years in five-year increments; and a series of maps that show things like current and future land uses, wetlands, soils, and the general location of future land uses by net density or other classification.
9. **Implementation Element** - Will describe how each of the elements of the comprehensive plan will be integrated and made consistent with other elements of the plan. It must also include a mechanism to measure progress toward achieving all aspects of the comprehensive plan and include a process for updating the plan. A comprehensive plan should be updated no less than once every ten years.