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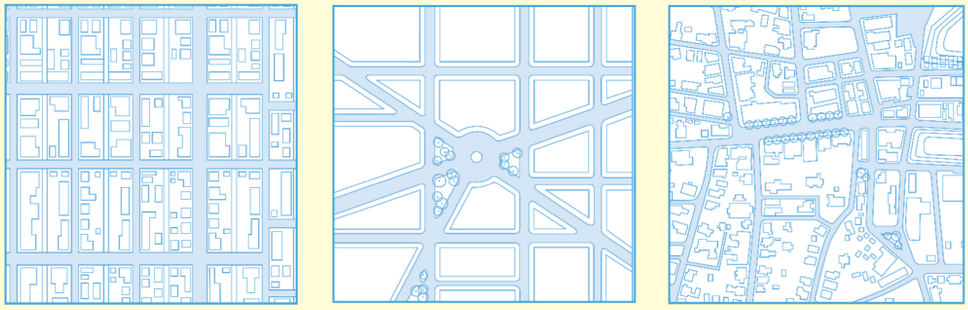

PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN STANDARDS

APA American Planning Association

Frederick R. Steiner and Kent Butler
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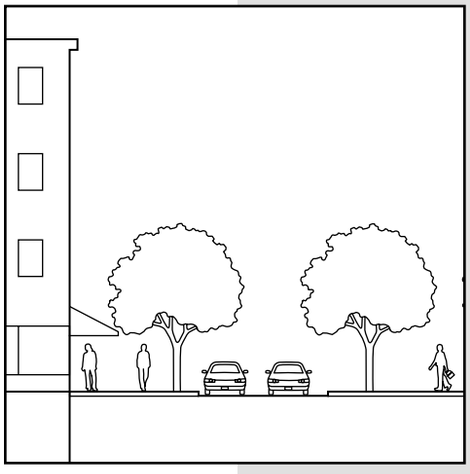

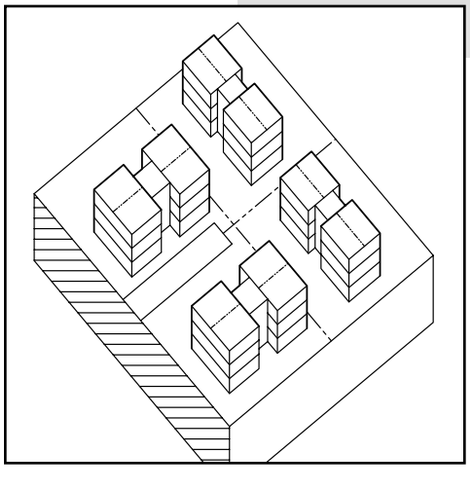

PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN STANDARDS

STUDENT EDITION

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FOREWORD

On behalf of the American Planning Association (APA) and our Planning Foundation, and along with our partners, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., and the University of Texas at Austin, we are delighted to see the publication of the first student edition of *Planning and Urban Design Standards*. This book, derived from the full edition of *Planning and Urban Design Standards,* published in January 2006, contains information from that volume determined to be especially suited for planning students.

What is a planning and urban design "standard"? Responding to this question was a serious challenge for the contributors, editors, and advisors developing the book. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a standard can be "the ideal in terms of which something can be judged: 'they live by the standards of their community'"; or it can be "a basis for comparison; a reference point against which other things can be evaluated: 'they set the standard for all subsequent work.'" This book strives to do both—provide reference to the standards met by the profession and present the standards all should work to achieve. Moreover, the work embraces both standards that are widely used, as well as those that are emerging.

The full edition of *Planning and Urban Design Standards* was the result of a highly complex, three-year collaborative effort involving a broad array of planning and urban design disciplines. With contributions from leading experts in private planning and urban design firms, academia, and public planning agencies across the United States, this book is by the profession for its future professionals. We express our deep appreciation to these contributors, many of them APA members. They shared their wisdom and insights unselfishly for the benefit of all who will use this work to develop their planning and urban design knowledge and skills.

The structure and content of *Planning and Urban Design Standards* would not have been possible without the guidance of the gifted planners, designers, practitioners, and educators who served on our advisory board: Karen B. Alschuler, FAICP, SMWM, San Francisco; W. Paul Farmer, FAICP, Executive Director and CEO, American Planning Association, Chicago; Jerold S. Kayden, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; M. David Lee, FAIA, Stull & Lee, Inc., Boston; Diana C. Mendes, AICP, DMJM + Harris Planning, Fairfax, Virginia; John S. Rahaim, Department of Planning and Development, Seattle, Washington; Brenda C. Scheer, AICP, AIA, University of Utah College of Architecture and Planning, Salt Lake City; and Frederick R. Steiner, FASLA, University of Texas at Austin.

APA is a nonprofit education organization and membership association committed to urban, suburban, regional, and rural planning. In 2003, APA celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the consolidation of two predecessor organizations: the American Institute of Planners, founded in 1917, and the American Society of Planning Officials, established in 1934. Today, our 38,000-member organization has 46 geographically defined chapters and 19 divisions devoted to specialized planning interests. APA and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), advance the art and science of planning to meet the needs of people and society. Our involvement in creating *Planning and Urban Design Standards* is the latest contribution to that goal. We hope you will find this volume, the full edition of *Planning and Urban Design Standards,* and the revised editions that follow over the years to be the most comprehensive and useful quick references on essential planning topics available.

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PREFACE

John Wiley & Sons, Inc., the American Planning Association (APA), and the Community and Regional Planning Program, School of Architecture, University of Texas at Austin, are pleased to present this first edition of *Planning and Urban Design Standards, Student Edition*. We hope that students in planning and related fields will find this book a companion for their education. The student edition is not intended to serve as the primary text for introductory planning courses. Rather, it serves as a reference for a broad range of planning courses required in accredited planning program curricula. In addition, the student edition is meant to be a useful reference for planning courses offered in architecture, landscape architecture, geography, civil engineering, environmental studies, and public administration programs.

To better understand the needs of planning curricula, we surveyed course materials from 30 accredited planning programs. Some 150 course syllabi were reviewed and analyzed for content. We used 65 planning course keyword categories, ranging from "architecture" to "urban form." Information about planning programs, course descriptions, and reading lists was collected and compiled in a database.

We found that planning programs offer a significant proportion of course curricula on environmental issues. These courses are not usually a part of the standard, required curriculum but do constitute a large share of types of courses offered. This could reflect theoretical shifts in the profession and/or trends across changes in primary concerns of society. We also found that required curricula tend to have similar lists of recommended readings whereas electives have a wider range of references.

The survey also indicated a need for more sources that address graphic communication. In addition, we found this need especially important for courses related to physical planning, urban design, environmental planning, and transportation.

This student edition is an abridgement of the first edition of *Planning and Urban Design Standards,* edited by Megan Lewis and William Klein of APA. The editors of *Planning and Urban Design Standards* made our task both easy and difficult. They produced such a thorough, excellent book with comprehensive, detailed information, which eased our undertaking. Our task proved to be a challenge for the same reason. With this rich resource base, we were challenged to identify material to cull. Our survey helped with this task, as did the Student Edition Advisory Board. Although the student edition is an abridgement of the larger, more comprehensive volume produced by APA, it contains original pages whose content was guided by the Student Edition Advisory Board: Timothy Beatley, University of Virginia; Cheryl Contant, Georgia Institute of Technology; Ann Forsyth, University of Minnesota; Gary Hack, University of Pennsylvania; Jerold Kayden, Harvard University; G. Mathias Kondolf, University of California-Berkeley; Megan Lewis, APA; and Janice Cervelli Schach, Clemson University. In addition to planning educators, we included faculty involved in landscape architecture, architecture, and geography programs on this advisory board.

We would like to express our deep appreciation to Paul Farmer, William Klein, Megan Lewis, and their APA colleagues for setting the stage for the student edition. They spent three years preparing *Planning and Urban Design Standards*. Their work was built on Wiley's experience with the Graphic Standards series, which has been led for more than 70 years by *Architecture Graphic Standards,* currently in its tenth edition with more than 1 million copies sold. The architecture standards book has been joined by similar volumes for interior design, landscape architecture, and planning and urban design. Each of these larger volumes is accompanied by a student edition.

Planning is a profession and, even more, a way of thinking, which links the best possible information to choices facing communities and regions. As a result, planning is an academic discipline that overlaps with several other fields. Planning is also fundamental to democracy, involving many citizens and elected officials. Students and future citizens are at the beginning of a lifetime of making choices about the future of the built environment. Our hope is that *Planning and Urban Design Standards, Student Edition* will serve as both a launching pad and a touchstone for that journey.

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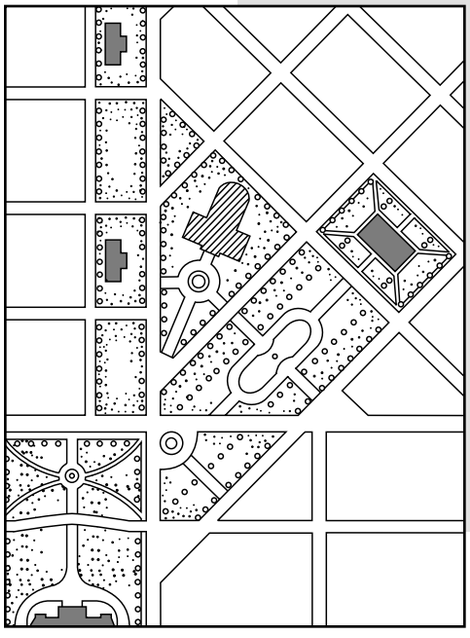


PLANS AND PLAN MAKING

Plan Making

Types of Plans

Participation

Part 1

PLAN MAKING

PLAN MAKING

A plan is an adopted statement of policy, in the form of text, maps, and graphics, used to guide public and private actions that affect the future. A plan provides decision makers with the information they need to make informed decisions affecting the long-range social, economic, and physical growth of a community. This section provides an overview of plan making as applied to a wide variety of plan types.

PURPOSES AND APPLICATIONS OF PLANS

Plans are used when making decisions concerning the future of an area or of a specific topic under consideration. For example, a plan may be used to identify:

- Housing needs—and recommend a program to meet them
- Transportation needs—and propose alternative systems and modes to meet them
- Open-space preservation areas—and present mechanisms to protect these areas permanently
- Priority investment areas—and recommend programs to stimulate growth
- Strategies for a specific area, such as a downtown, corridor, or neighborhood

Some specific applications of plans include:

- Providing residents, local officials, and others with an interest in the area with an overview and projection of development and conservation in the planning area, along with a summary of trends and forecasts.
- Serving as the basis for the local government enacting and administering regulatory measures, such as zoning and subdivision laws, and establishing urban growth boundaries.
- Serving as the basis for making budget allocations for capital improvements, such as parks, utility systems, and streets.
- Serving as the basis for many other public programs, such as those relating to growth management, historic preservation, economic development, transportation systems, and open-space preservation, for example.

PLAN AUTHORITY

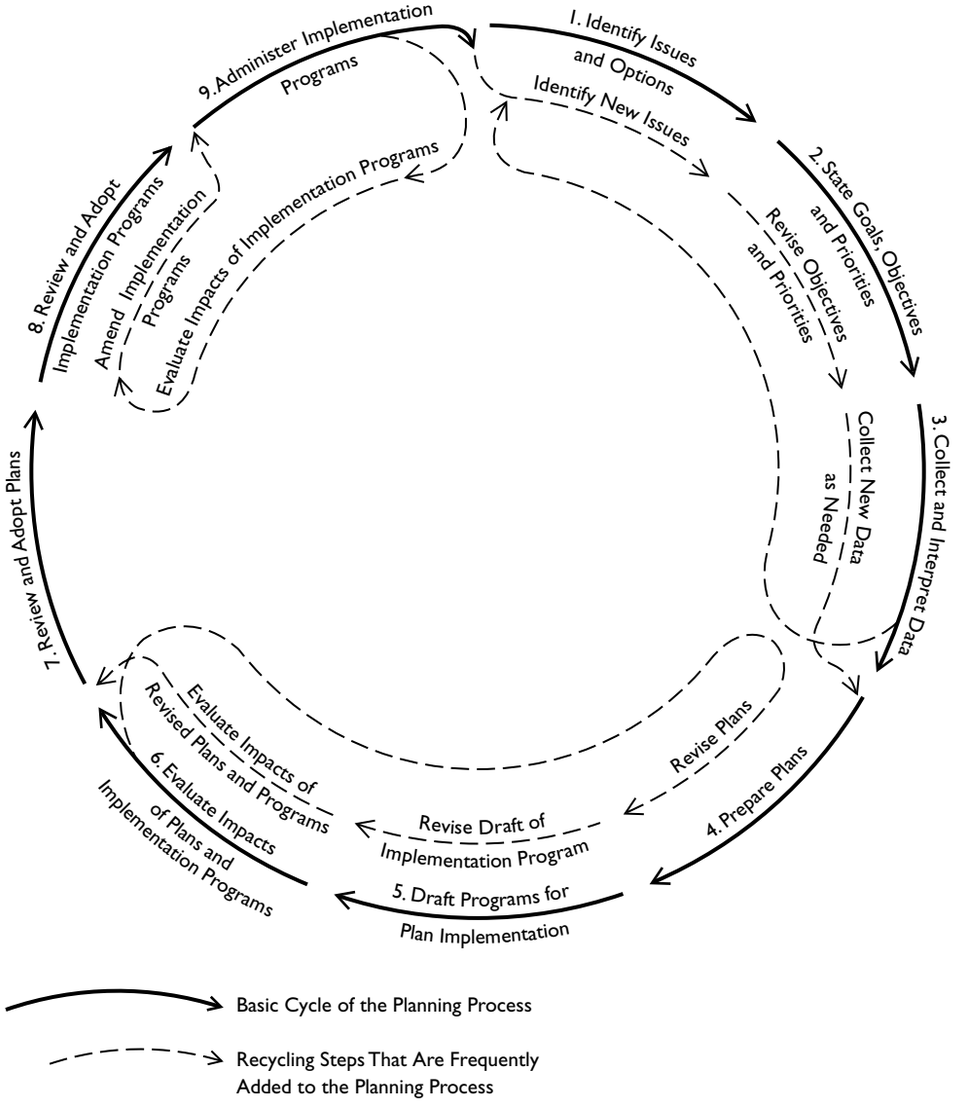
Plans may be expressly authorized or required by statute or administrative rule, depending on the type of plan and the state in which the community is located. For example, every state has its own planning statutes, one part of which authorizes or requires communities to prepare a comprehensive plan, referred to in some states as general or master plans. The statute specifies which elements are included in the plan and the process required for developing and adopting it. States also often use their administrative rule-making powers to further specify, refine, and interpret the statute.

In addition to state planning statutes, federal and state programs established by law sometimes require

EXAMPLES OF PLANS AUTHORIZED OR REQUIRED BY STATE OR FEDERAL STATUTE

PLAN TYPE	STATUTE	JURISDICTION
Conservation Element	Florida Statutes Sec. 163.3177(6)(d)	Florida
Economic Development Element	R.I. Gen. Laws Sec. 45-22.2-6(4)	Rhode Island
Hazard Mitigation Plan	42 U.S. Code Sec. 5133	Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
Housing Assistance Plan	Cal. Gov't. Code Secs. 65580 to 65589.8	California
Housing Element	N.J. Statutes Annotated Sec. 52:27D-310	New Jersey
Land Use Element	Kentucky Rev. Statutes Sec. 100.187(3)	Kentucky
Transit-Oriented Development Plan	Cal. Gov't Code Secs. 65460 to 65460.10	California
Transportation Improvement Program	49 U.S. Code Sec. 5304	U.S. Department of Transportation

Source: American Planning Association, 2004.



The process of plan making should be viewed as a continuous cycle. There are interrelationships among the phases of the planning process. Information gained at a later phase can inform the outcome of an earlier phase. It is important to recognize the iterative nature of planning and to allow for continuous cycling to occur.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

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that plans of a certain kind be prepared as a condition for participation in the program. The table here includes examples of plans authorized or required by state or federal statute.

For the most part, however, many types of plans are not expressly authorized or required in state or federal statutes. Examples include many types of area plans, such as neighborhood plans, corridor plans, and downtown plans, and some types of functional plans, such as parks and open-space plans, bike route plans, and urban forest plans. The content and format of these plans, and many others like them, are guided primarily by professional planning practice. They also represent the kinds of plans for which there is a great deal of variation in form and content.

PLAN INNOVATION

Although state planning statutes and federal and state regulations provide general guidance about plan content and process for some plans, plans can vary greatly from the prescribed themes. In recent years, planners have begun to break away from tradition by reinventing what plans look like and do, shaping the form of plans to fit the unique content and process requirements of the community.

Moreover, some of the most exciting and effective plans in recent years take advantage of new ways of thinking about what a plan should contain and how it can be presented. Interactive electronic participation, benchmarking, Web-based plans, scenario analysis and modeling, and visualization techniques are a few of the new components and techniques found in plans today. Many of these innovations are featured in the plans described in the first part of this book.

An essential first step of any planning effort is to determine the plan's content, format, and process. The degree to which a planner crafts a plan to meet the unique needs of a situation, time, and place will determine whether a plan results in positive outcomes in the real world. An appendix to this book provides a list of award-winning plans to illustrate the breadth and scope of innovative plan making today.

SCOPING CONSIDERATIONS

The subsections to follow comprise a general checklist of some of the most basic considerations to keep in mind when determining the scope of any plan.

Time Frame

What is the time period covered by the plan? Plans almost always cover a time span of longer than a year, and usually address a period between 5 years and 20 years. The time period may be determined by statute or by the subject matter and process.

COMPREHENSIVE VERSUS STRATEGIC

Are all topics covered or just those important to the chosen strategy? Plans that employ a comprehensive approach consider a broad range of topics related to the area or function of the plan, even if some topics are only relevant in a minor way. Plans with a comprehensive orientation are sometimes more general in their treatment of a wide variety of subjects, providing depth only when needed. Alternatively, plans with a strategic approach consider only the topics and relationships that appear to have a direct relevancy to the subject of the plan, hence to the strategy. Consequently, these plans are more focused and can usually be completed more quickly and with fewer resources.

Community Involvement

The issues, findings, and recommendations of a plan should take into account the knowledge and concerns of existing residents, businesses, and other interests in the planning area, and the anticipated concerns of those interests in the future. Issues to consider are those with a connection to local, regional, statewide, and even global matters. Consequently, an important scoping task is the creation of a legitimate and effective process for involving a wide variety of interests in the preparation of a plan. Successful public involvement processes are designed to fit the unique context of the plan.

In-House versus Outsourcing

Who should prepare a plan? Choices typically include in-house staff, outside consultants, community-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or volunteers, or a combination. The best mix results from a realistic assessment of in-house staff capacity in terms of hours and expertise available, funds available for outside consultant services, and the capacity to train and lead an NGO or volunteer effort.

Binding

Plans are officially adopted or endorsed by a governmental body and thereby become a statement of its policies. Depending on the state and type of local or regional governance structure, the governmental body may be the local legislative body, the planning board or commission, a council of governments, or regional planning agency. Occasionally, plans are adopted by nonprofit regional planning organizations for the benefit of the public they serve, such as the regional plans prepared by the Regional Plan Association for the New York metropolitan area or Chicago Metropolis 2020 for the Chicago region.

BASIC PLAN STRUCTURE

The structure of a plan usually consists of two basic components: a core, followed by a number of elements. The specific contents of a plan depend upon numerous factors, such as the type of plan being prepared, the purpose of the plan, and the scope being addressed. Consult the chapter on types of plans for information on plan contents for specific types of plans.

The Plan Core

The core includes the following:

- A statement of authority to prepare and adopt plan
- Background data, including area history, existing conditions and trends, and data projections
- Documentation of stakeholder interests and stakeholder involvement process
- A vision statement or statement of goals and objectives for future conditions
- An evaluation of plan and design alternatives
- A program of implementation

The Plan Elements

The elements of a plan consider, specifically, the plan's various topics. The elements that must be included depend upon the plan's purpose. For a comprehensive plan, the land use, transportation, housing, and community facilities elements are considered essential—they form the foundation of the comprehensive plan. Other elements are added as considered to be appropriate, based on the plan's scope and as required by state law.

Elements frequently included in a comprehensive plan or often prepared as separate functional plans include the following:

- Economic development
- Historic preservation
- Natural hazards
- Farmland preservation
- Parks, recreation, and open space
- Urban design

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ASSUMPTIONS

Universal to all plans is an identification of the goals, objectives, and assumptions of the plan. Reaching consensus on these three components is often quite difficult, if not impossible. Sometimes, agreement can be reached only in the broadest of terms; often, participants reach "incremental" agreement using negotiation and compromise. Intensive communication between those preparing the plan and the stakeholders is required here.

Goals

A goal is a statement that describes, usually in general terms, a desired future condition.

Objectives

A set of measurable objectives should accompany the goals established for the plan. An objective is a statement that describes a specific future condition to be attained within a stated period of time. Typically, these objectives are more numerous than the goals, and they are organized according to the topics in the goals statement.

Several questions can be asked at the outset of the planning process to determine the objectives of the community. Examples of such questions include:

- What type of development pattern do the stakeholders want?
- What type of transportation system and network does the community want?
- What forms of housing do stakeholders want in the community?
- What program of uses do stakeholders want for the downtown area?

The effort to create and evaluate objectives for each of the broader goals can be instructive for communities and planners, helping all to understand the implications of goal setting as applied in a planning and implementation process.

Assumptions

An assumption is a statement of present or future conditions describing the physical, social, or eco-

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nomic setting within which the plan is to be used. At the outset of the process, it is necessary to identify the basic assumptions concerning the planning area.

On the local level, these can include the accepted boundaries of urban growth, the probable rate of growth, and the desired general character of the community, for example. At a larger scale, it is also usually desirable to state assumptions concerning national and regional economic trends. Where current research data are not available, it can be essential to state and obtain agreement on a set of working assumptions for the particular planning effort.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR BALANCED GROWTH: NANTUCKET, MASSACHUSETTS

Goal A: Open Space Acquisition
To establish and manage a communitywide network of publicly and privately held open spaces intended to protect critical land and water resources, habitat, and scenic vistas, while affording reasonable access consistent with a policy of wise stewardship.

Goal B: Protection of Water Resources
To protect the quality and quantity of the community's groundwater and surface water resources.

Goal C: Growth Management
To better manage the design, location, and rate of new residential and commercial development in a manner that: protects important natural and cultural resources; encourages development in or near village centers; promotes and preserves the vitality of the downtown; is compatible with the community's historic character; minimizes dependence on the automobile; and creates opportunities for affordable housing.

Goal D: Transportation
To provide a transportation system that will move people and goods to, from, and through the community in a way that is safe, convenient, economical, and consistent with the community's historic, scenic, and natural resources.

Goal E: Affordable Housing
To promote the development and retention of affordable housing for families, individuals, and the elderly.

Goal F: The Economy
To strengthen and diversify the local economy.

Goal G: Energy and Utilities
To provide energy and utility services to the community in a manner that is affordable, efficient, effective, and environmentally safe.

Goal H: Human Services
To facilitate, sustain, and improve the health, education, and well-being of all persons in the community by providing those public and private human services that will improve the quality of life for all age groups.

Source: Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission, 1990.

TYPICAL DATA NEEDS FOR PLAN PREPARATION

MAPS AND IMAGES
Base maps
Aerial photographs
GIS map layers

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
Climate
Topography
Soils
Vegetation
Water features
Habitat areas
Natural hazards

EXISTING LAND USES
Residential
Commercial
Industrial
Institutional
Open-space lands
Vacant urban lands
Farmlands

HOUSING
Inventory of housing
Housing condition
Vacancy rate
Affordability

TRANSPORTATION
Street network
Street capacity
Traffic flow volumes
Parking supply and demand
Transit facilities by mode
Bicycle networks
Pedestrian networks

PUBLIC UTILITIES
Water supply
Wastewater disposal
Stormwater management
Solid waste management
Telecommunication services

COMMUNITY SERVICES
Administrative centers
Education facilities
Parks and recreation facilities
Health services
Public safety facilities

POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT
Population size
Population characteristics
Vital statistics
Labor force characteristics

LOCAL ECONOMY
Employment
Retail sales
Cost of living

SPECIAL TOPICS
Historic sites and buildings
Archaeological sites
Urban design features
Existing zoning

DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

Whether published on paper, as a series of posters, or on the Web, it is important to create a clear, usable plan document. When creating a plan document, consider the reader's needs. The document should clearly reflect the planning process and serve as a useful tool for future users.

Name of the Plan
Identify a name for the plan that is simple, sensible, and incorporates the planning area or topic name.

Table of Contents
Provide a table of contents so that readers find the plan easy to use and can go directly to a topic of particular interest. Include tables and figures in the table of contents.

Time Frame
Provide the dates of all pertinent planning milestones, such as initiation of the planning process, completion of the first draft, and when certain benchmarks might be achieved. This information gives readers a sense of the plan's progression, shows investment in the planning process, and provides the plan's full time span. Include the plan adoption date on the front cover or title page.

Acknowledgments
Include an acknowledgments page that lists the names, titles, and affiliations of individuals who contributed to the production of the plan.

Glossary/Terminology Key
A glossary can explain technical or local jargon and acronyms, and describe unfamiliar places.

See also:
Analysis Techniques
Implementation Techniques
Participation
Types of Plans

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TYPES OF PLANS

COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

The comprehensive plan is the adopted official statement of a local government's legislative body for future development and conservation. It sets forth goals; analyzes existing conditions and trends; describes and illustrates a vision for the physical, social, and economic characteristics of the community in the years ahead; and outlines policies and guidelines intended to implement that vision.

Comprehensive plans address a broad range of interrelated topics in a unified way. A comprehensive plan identifies and analyzes the important relationships among the economy, transportation, community facilities and services, housing, the environment, land use, human services, and other community components. It does so on a community-wide basis and in the context of a wider region. A comprehensive plan addresses the long-range future of a community, using a time horizon up to 20 years or more. The most important function of a comprehensive plan is to provide valuable guidance to those in the public and private sector as decisions are made affecting the future quality of life of existing and future residents and the natural and built environments in which they live, work, and play.

All states have enabling legislation that either allow, or require, local governments to adopt comprehensive plans. In some states, the enabling legislation refers to them as general plans (California, Maryland, and Arizona, for example), or master plans (Colorado). Most state-enabling legislation describes generally what should be included in a comprehensive plan. However, several states, including Oregon and Florida, detail the content of plans through administrative rules promulgated by a state agency.

REASONS TO PREPARE A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Local governments prepare comprehensive plans for a number of reasons, which are described in the following subsections.

View the "Big Picture"

The local comprehensive planning process provides a chance to look broadly at programs on housing, economic development, public infrastructure and services, environmental protection, and natural and human-made hazards, and how they relate to one another. A local comprehensive plan represents a "big picture" of the community related to trends and interests in the broader region and in the state in which the local government is located.

Coordinate Local Decision Making

Local comprehensive planning results in the adoption of a series of goals and policies that should guide the local government in its daily decisions. For instance, the plan should be referred to for decisions about locating, financing, and sequencing public improvements, devising and administering regulations such as zoning and subdivision controls, and redevelopment. In so doing, the plan provides a way to coordinate the actions of many different agencies within local government.

Give Guidance to Landowners and Developers

In making its decisions, the private sector can turn to a well-prepared comprehensive plan to get some sense of where the community is headed in terms of the physical, social, economic, and transportation future. Because comprehensive planning results in a statement of how local government intends to use public investment and land development controls, the plan can affect the decisions of private landowners.

Establish a Sound Basis in Fact for Decisions

A plan, through required information gathering and analysis, improves the factual basis for land-use decisions. Using the physical plan as a tool to inform and guide these decisions establishes a baseline for public policies. The plan thus provides a measure of consistency to governmental action, limiting the potential for arbitrariness.

Involve a Broad Array of Interests in a Discussion about the Long-Range Future

Local comprehensive planning involves the active participation of local elected and appointed officials, line departments of local government, citizens, the business community, nongovernmental organizations, and faith-based groups in a discussion about the community's major physical, environmental, social, or economic development problems and opportunities. The plan gives these varied interests an opportunity to clarify their ideas, better envisioning the community they are trying to create.

Build an Informed Constituency

The plan preparation process, with its related workshops, surveys, meetings, and public hearings, permits two-way communication between citizens and planners and officials regarding a vision of the community and how that vision is to be achieved. In this respect, the plan is a blueprint reflecting shared community values at specific points in time. This process creates an informed constituency that can be involved in planning initiatives, review of proposals for plan consistency, and collaborative implementation of the plan.

PLAN ELEMENTS

The scope and content of state planning legislation varies widely from state to state with respect to its treatment of the comprehensive plan. The American Planning Association has developed model state planning legislation in its *Growing Smart℠ Legislative Guidebook* (2002).

Required and Optional Elements

The guidebook suggests a series of required elements and optional elements. Required elements include:

- Land use
- Transportation
- Community facilities (includes utilities and parks and open space)
- Housing
- Economic development
- Critical and sensitive areas
- Natural hazards
- Agricultural lands

Optional elements addressing urban design, public safety, and cultural resources, for instance, may also be included. Moreover, the suggested functional elements are not intended to be rigid and inflexible. Participants in the plan process should tailor the format and content of the comprehensive plan to the specific needs and characteristics of their community.

According to the guidebook, comprehensive plans should include two "bookend" items: an issues and opportunities element at the beginning in order to set the stage for the preparation of other elements, and an implementation program at the end that proposes measures, assigns estimated costs (if feasible), and assigns responsibility for carrying out proposed measures of the plan. The level of detail in the implementation program will vary depending on whether such actions will be addressed in specific functional plans.

Issues and Opportunities Element

The issues and opportunities element articulates the values and needs of citizens and other affected interests about what the community should become. The local government then interprets and uses those values and needs as a basis and foundation for its planning efforts.

An issues and opportunities element should contain seven items:

- A vision or goals and objectives statement
- A description of existing conditions and characteristics
- Analyses of internal and external trends and forces
- A description of opportunities, problems, advantages, and disadvantages
- A narrative describing the public participation process
- The legal authority or mandate for the plan
- A narrative describing the connection to all the other plan elements

Vision or Goals and Objectives Statement

This statement is a formal description of what the community wants to become. It may consist solely of broad communitywide goals, may be enhanced by the addition of measurable objectives for each of the goals, or may be accompanied by a narrative or illus-

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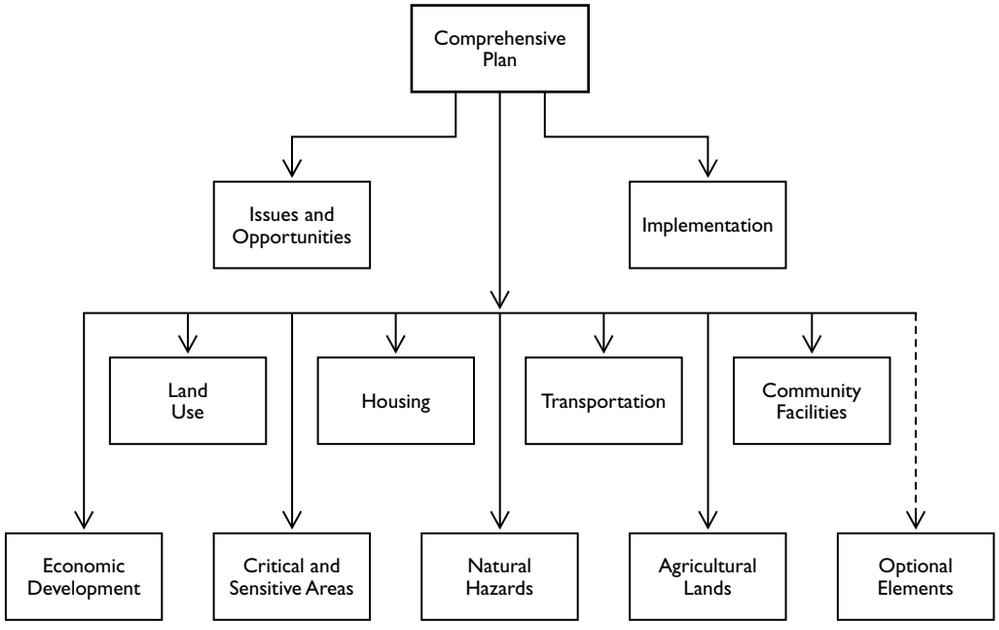

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENTS

Source: American Planning Association.

tration that sets a vision of the community at the end of the plan period.

Existing Conditions and Characteristics Description

This description creates a profile of the community, including relevant demographic data, pertinent historical information, existing plans, regulatory framework, and other information that broadly informs the plan. Existing conditions information specific to a plan element may be included in that element's within the plan.

Trends and Forces Description

This description of major trends and forces is what the local government considered when creating the vision statement and considers the effect of changes forecast for the surrounding region during the planning period.

Opportunities, Problems, Advantages, and Disadvantages

The plan should include a statement of the major opportunities, problems, advantages, and disadvantages for growth and decline affecting the local government, including specific areas within its jurisdiction. This is often referred to as a *SWOT analysis*—a description of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Public Participation

This summary of the public participation procedures describes how the public was involved in developing the comprehensive plan.

Legal Authority or Mandate

This brief statement describes the local government's legal authority for preparing the plan. It may include a reference to applicable state legislation or a municipal charter. Summaries of past planning activities may be included here (if not included in existing conditions discussion).

Connection to Other Elements

The implications of the local government's vision on other required and/or optional elements of the local comprehensive plan, including the potential changes in implementation measures, should be described in this concluding section.

SAMPLE VISION STATEMENT: OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

The Vision for Oakland

In the year 2015, Oakland will be a safe, healthy, and vital city offering a high quality of life through:

- a dynamic economy that taps into Oakland's great economic potential and capitalizes on its physical and cultural assets;
- clean and attractive neighborhoods rich in character and diversity, each with its own distinctive identity, yet well integrated into a cohesive urban fabric;
- a diverse and vibrant downtown with around-the-clock activity;
- an active and accessible waterfront that is linked to downtown and the neighborhoods, and that promotes Oakland's position as a leading United States port and a primary regional and international airport;
- an efficient transportation system that serves the needs of all its citizens and that promotes Oakland's primacy as a transportation hub connecting the Bay Area with the Pacific Rim and the rest of the United States; and
- awareness and enjoyment of Oakland's magnificent physical setting—hills, views, water, estuary—in every district and neighborhood.

The Land-Use Element

The land-use element shows the general distribution, location, and characteristics of current and future land uses and urban form. In the past, comprehensive plans included color-coded maps showing exclusive land-use categories, such as residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, community facilities, open space, recreational, and agricultural uses.

Many communities today use sophisticated land-use and land-cover inventories and mapping techniques, employing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and new land-use and land-cover classification systems. These new systems are better able to accommodate the multidimensional realities of urban form, such as mixed-use and time-of-day/seasonal-use changes. Form and character are increasingly being used as important components of land-use planning, integrating the many separate components into an integrated land-use form.

One example of a process that can be used to create such multidimensional mapping is the system of Land-Based Classification Standards (LBCS), developed by the American Planning Association (APA). This system creates a current land-use map using a number of data sources, including orbital and suborbital remotely sensed data, tax assessor records, U.S. Geological Survey quadrangle maps, soils maps, and other county or state mapping data, which are field-checked on the ground.

Future Land-Use Map

Future land uses and their intensity and density are shown on a future land-use map. The land-use allocations shown on the map must be supported by land-use projections linked to population and economic forecasts for the surrounding region and tied to the assumptions in a regional plan, if one exists. Such coordination ensures that the plan is realistic. The assumptions used in the land-use forecasts, typically in terms of net density, intensity, other standards or ratios, or other spatial requirements or physical determinants, are a fundamental part of the land-use element. This element must also show lands that have development constraints, such as natural hazards.

Land-Use Projections

The land-use element should envision all land-use needs for a 20-year period (or the chosen time frame for the plan), and all these needs should be designated on the future land-use plan map. If this is not done, the local government may have problems carrying out the plan. For example, if the local government receives applications for zoning changes to accommodate uses the plan recognizes as needed, the locations where these changes are requested are consistent with what is shown on the land-use plan map.

The Transportation Element

The modern transportation element commonly addresses traffic circulation, transit, bicycle routes, ports, airports, railways, recreation routes, pedestrian movement, and parking. The exact content of a transportation element differs from community to community depending on the transportation context

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of the community and region. Proposals for transportation facilities occur against a backdrop of federally required transportation planning at the state and regional levels.

The transportation element considers existing and committed facilities, and evaluates them against a set of service levels or performance standards to determine whether they will adequately serve future needs. Of the various transportation facilities, the traffic circulation component is the most common, and a major thoroughfare plan is an essential part of this. It contains the general locations and extent of existing and proposed streets and highways by type, function, and character of improvement.

Street Performance

In determining street performance and adequacy, planners are employing other approaches in addition to or instead of level-of-service standards that more fairly measure a street's performance in moving pedestrians, bikes, buses, trolleys, and light rail, and for driving retail trade, in addition to moving cars. This is especially true for urban centers, where several modes of travel share the public realm across the entire right-of-way, including adjacent privately owned "public" spaces. Urban design plans for the entire streetscape of key thoroughfares can augment the transportation element. In addition, it is becoming increasingly common for the traffic circulation component of a comprehensive plan to include a street connectivity analysis. The degree to which streets connect with each other affects pedestrian movement and traffic dispersal.

Thoroughfare Plan

The thoroughfare plan, which includes a plan map, is used as a framework for roadway rehabilitation, improvement, and signalization. It is a way of identifying general alignments for future circulation facilities, either as part of new private development or as new projects undertaken by local government. Other transportation modes should receive comparable review and analysis, with an emphasis on needs and systems of the particular jurisdiction and on meeting environmental standards and objectives for the community and region. Typically, surface and structured parking, bikeways, and pedestrian ways should also be covered in the transportation element.

Transit

A transit component takes into consideration bus and light rail facilities, water-based transit (if applicable), and intermodal facilities that allow transportation users to transfer from one mode to another. The types and capacities of future transit service should be linked to work commute and nonwork commute demands as well as to the applicable policies and regulations of the jurisdiction and its region.

The Transportation/Land-Use Relationship

The relationship between transportation and land use is better understood today and has become a dominant theme in the transportation element. For instance, where transit exists or is proposed, opportunities for transit-oriented development should be included; where increased densities are essential, transit services might need to be improved or introduced. This would also be covered in the land-use element.

The Community Facilities Element

The term "community facilities" includes the physical manifestations of governmental or quasi-governmental services on behalf of the public. These include buildings, equipment, land, interests in land, such as easements, and whole systems of activities. The community facilities element requires the local government to inventory and assess the condition and adequacy of existing facilities, and to propose a range of facilities that will support the land-use element's development pattern.

The element may include facilities operated by public agencies and those owned and operated by for-profit and not-for-profit private enterprises for the benefit of the community, such as privately owned water and gas facilities, or museums. Some community facilities have a direct impact on where development will occur and at what scale—water and sewer lines, water supply, and wastewater treatment facilities, for example. Other community facilities may address immediate consequences of development. For example, a stormwater management system handles changes in the runoff characteristics of land as a consequence of development.

Still other facilities are necessary for the public health, safety, and welfare, but are more supportive in nature. Examples in this category would include police and fire facilities, general governmental buildings, and elementary and secondary schools. A final group includes those facilities that contribute to the cultural life or physical and mental health and personal growth of a local government's residents. These include hospitals, clinics, libraries, and arts centers.

Operation by Other Public Agencies

Some community facilities may be operated by public agencies other than the local government. Such agencies may serve areas not coterminous with the local government's boundaries. Independent school districts, library districts, and water utilities are good examples. In some large communities, these agencies may have their own internal planning capabilities. In others, the local planning agency will need to assist or coordinate with the agency or even directly serve as its planner.

Parks, Open Space, and Cultural Resources

A community facilities element may include a parks and open-space component. Alternatively, parks and open space may be addressed in a separate element. The community facilities element will inventory existing parks by type of facility and may evaluate the condition of parks in terms of the population they are expected to serve and the functions they are intended to carry out. To determine whether additional parkland should be purchased, population forecasts are often used in connection with population-based needs criteria (such as a requirement of so many acres of a certain type of park within a certain distance from residents). Other criteria used to determine parkland need may include parkland as a percentage of land cover or a resident's proximity to a park.

Open-space preservation may sometimes be addressed alone or in connection with critical and sensitive areas protection and agricultural and forest preservation. Here the emphasis is on the ecological, scenic, and economic functions that open space provides. The element may also identify tracts of open land with historic or cultural significance, such as a battlefield. The element will distinguish between publicly held land, land held in private ownership subject to conservation easements or other restrictions, and privately owned parcels subject to development.

The Housing Element

The housing element assesses local housing conditions and projects future housing needs by housing type and price to ensure that a wide variety of housing structure types, occupancy types, and prices (for rent or purchase) are available for a community's existing and future residents. There may currently be a need for rental units for large families or the disabled, or a disproportionate amount of income may be paid for rental properties, for example. Because demand for housing does not necessarily correspond with jurisdictional boundaries and the location of employment, a housing element provides for housing needs in the context of the region in which the local government is located. In some states, such as California, New Hampshire, and New Jersey, there may be state-level or regional housing plans that identify regional needs for affordable housing, and the local housing element must take these needs into account as part of a "fair-share" requirement.

Jobs/Housing Balance

The housing element can examine the relationship between where jobs are or will be located and where housing is or will be available. The jobs/housing balance is the ratio between the expected creation of jobs in a region or local government and the need for housing expressed as the number of housing units. The higher the jobs/housing ratio, the more jobs the region or local government is generating relative to housing. A high ratio may indicate to a community that it is not meeting the housing needs (in terms of either affordability or actual physical units) of people working in the community.

Housing Stock

The housing element typically identifies measures used to maintain a good inventory of quality housing stock, such as rehabilitation efforts, code enforcement, technical assistance to homeowners, and loan and grant programs. It will also identify barriers to producing and rehabilitating housing, including affordable housing. These barriers may include lack of adequate sites zoned for housing, complicated approval processes for building and other development permits, high permit fees, and excessive exactions or public improvement requirements.

The Economic Development Element

An economic development element describes the local government's role in the region's economy; identifies categories or particular types of commercial, industrial, and institutional uses desired by the local government; and specifies suitable sites with supporting facilities for business and industry. It has one or more of the following purposes:

- Job creation and retention
- Increases in real wages (e.g., economic prosperity)
- Stabilization or increase of the local tax base
- Job diversification (making the community less dependent on a few employers)

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A number of factors typically prompt a local economic development program. They include loss or attraction of a major employer, competition from surrounding communities or nearby states, the belief that economic development yields a higher quality of life, the desire to provide employment for existing residents who would otherwise leave the area, economic stagnation or decline in a community or part of it, or the need for new tax revenues.

An economic development element typically begins with an analysis of job composition and growth or decline by industry sector on a national, statewide, or regional basis, including an identification of categories of commercial, industrial, and institutional activities that could reasonably be expected to locate within the jurisdiction. It will also examine existing labor force characteristics and future labor force requirements of existing and potential commercial and industrial enterprises and institutions in the state and the region in which the local government is located. It will include assessments of the jurisdiction's and the region's access to transportation to markets for its goods and services, and its natural, technological, educational, and human resources. Often, an economic development element will have targets for growth, which may be defined as number of jobs or wages, or in terms of targeted industries and their land use, transportation, and labor force requirements.

The local government may also survey owners or operators of commercial and industrial enterprises, and inventory commercial, industrial, and institutional lands within the jurisdiction that are vacant or significantly underused. An economic development element may also address organizational issues, including the creation of entities, such as nonprofit organizations, that could carry out economic development activities.

The Critical and Sensitive Areas Element

Some comprehensive plans address the protection of critical and sensitive areas. These areas include land and water bodies that provide habitat for plants and wildlife, such as wetlands, riparian corridors, and floodplains; serve as groundwater recharge areas for aquifers; and areas with steep slopes that are easily eroded or unstable, for example. They also can include visually, culturally, and historically sensitive areas. By identifying such areas, the local government can safeguard them through regulation, incentives, purchase of land or interests in land, modification of public and private development projects, or other measures.

The Natural Hazards Element

Natural hazards elements document the physical characteristics, magnitude, severity, frequency, causative factors, and geographic extent of all natural hazards. Hazards include flooding; seismic activity; wildfires; wind-related hazards such as tornadoes, coastal storms, winter storms, and hurricanes; and landslides or subsidence resulting from the instability of geological features.

A natural hazards element characterizes the hazard; maps its extent, if possible; assesses the community's vulnerability; and develops an appropriate set of mitigation measures, which may include land-use policies and building code requirements. The natural hazards element may also determine the adequacy of existing transportation facilities and public buildings to accommodate disaster response and early recovery needs such as evacuation and emergency shelter. Since most communities have more than one type of hazard, planners should consider addressing them jointly through a multihazards approach.

The Agriculture Element

Some comprehensive plans contain agriculture and forest preservation elements. This element focuses on the value of agriculture and forestlands to the local economy, although it can also include open space, habitat, and scenic preservation. For such an element, the local government typically inventories agriculture and forestland, and ranks the land using a variety of approaches, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) system. It then identifies conflicts between the use of such lands and other proposed uses as contained in other comprehensive plan elements.

For example, if an area were to be preserved for agricultural purposes, but the community facilities element proposed a sewer trunk line to the area, that would be a conflict, which if not corrected would result in development pressure to the future agricultural area. Implementation measures might include agricultural use valuation coupled with extremely large lot requirements (40 acres or more), transfer of development rights, purchase of development rights, conservation easements, marketing programs to promote the viability of local agricultural land, and programs for agricultural-based tourism.

IMPLEMENTATION

A local comprehensive plan must contain an implementation program to ensure that the proposals advanced in the plan are realized. Sometimes referred to as an "action plan," the implementation program includes a list of specific public or private actions organized by their scheduled execution date—short-term (1 to 3 years), medium-term (4 to 10 years), and long-term (11 to 20 years) actions. Typical actions include capital projects, changes to land development regulations and incentives, new programs or procedures, financing initiatives, and similar measures. Each listed action should assign responsibility for the task and include an estimate of cost and a source of funding.

Some communities produce comprehensive plans that are more broadly based and policy-driven. These plans will require a less detailed implementation program. The individual functional plans produced as a result of the comprehensive plan address the assignment of costs or specific tasks.

REFERENCE

Meck, Stuart (gen. ed.). 2002. *Growing Smart℠ Legislative Guidebook: Model Statutes for Planning and Management of Change,* 2 vols. Chicago: American Planning Association.

See also:

Critical and Sensitive Areas Plans
Economic Development Plans
Housing Plans
Mapping
Parks and Open-Space Plans
Participation
Plan Making
Projections and Demand Analysis
Regional Plans
Transportation Plans
Urban Design Plans

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URBAN DESIGN PLANS

Urban design is the discipline between planning and architecture. It gives three-dimensional physical form to policies described in a comprehensive plan. It focuses on design of the public realm, which is created by both public spaces and the buildings that define them. Urban design views these spaces holistically and is concerned with bringing together the different disciplines responsible for the components of cities into a unified vision. Compared to comprehensive plans, urban design plans generally have a short time horizon and are typically area or project specific.

Key elements of an urban design plan include the plan itself, the preparation of design guidelines for buildings, the design of the public realm—the open space, streets, sidewalks, and plazas between and around buildings—and the "public interest" issues of buildings. These include massing, placement, and sun, shadow, and wind issues.

Urban design plans are prepared for various areas, including downtowns, waterfronts, campuses, corridors, neighborhoods, mixed-use developments, and special districts. Issues to be considered include existing development, proposed development, utility infrastructure, streets framework, open space framework, environmental framework, and sustainable development principles. Urban design plans require interdisciplinary collaboration among urban designers, architects, landscape architects, planners, civil and environmental engineers, and market analysts. The central role of the urban designer is to serve as the one who can often integrate the work of a diverse range of specialists.

REASONS TO PREPARE AN URBAN DESIGN PLAN

An urban design plan must respond to the circumstances under which the project will be conducted, including the goals of the sponsors of the plan, the political or social climate in the community, and financial and marketing realities. Below are a few examples of reasons to prepare an urban design plan.

Forging Visions

Urban designers are often asked to provide a vision for communities to attract investment and coordinate many disparate and even discordant interests. By providing such a vision, urban designers can bring individual efforts together to create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Creating such a vision needs to be a public process, to cultivate widespread enthusiasm for the vision and build a "bandwagon" of support.

Devising Strategies

In addition to an overall vision, an urban design plan must also include a strategic implementation plan, with both short- and long-range initiatives. To keep the momentum going, it is also important to assign specific tasks or projects to groups conducting implementation.

Creating Good Locations

Many projects begin with sites that are compromised or deteriorated. An urban design plan illustrates how a site is linked to surrounding strengths, and it can show how the site can become a great location.

Marketing Sites or Areas

Urban design plans often work to transform an area, creating a new image for an area once overlooked or blighted. Urban design documents, illustrations, and publicity around the process all become part of the overall marketing effort to attract development and residents.

Forming "Treaties"

Urban design plans are sometimes born as a result of a conflict; for example, a proposed redevelopment project may result in displacing existing businesses or residents. An urban design document can serve as a "treaty," to bring about a truce among warring parties. By focusing on the issues, presenting thoughtful analysis, and urging parties to come forward with their concerns and ideas, urban designers can use an urban design plan to help resolve problems in a nonconfrontational way.

THE URBAN DESIGN PLANNING PROCESS

An urban design planning process has much in common with a comprehensive planning process; both include basic elements such as data collection and analysis, public participation, and involvement of other disciplines. However, urban design differs in the use of three-dimensional design tools to explore alternatives and communicate ideas. Below are the essential attributes of an urban design planning process.

Public Outreach

Because urban design plans usually involve multiple stakeholders, public participation in the planning process is essential. A representative steering committee is one mechanism to ensure involvement of a cross section of interests. Among the various public outreach techniques used are focus groups and public meetings. Input from the public informs the urban design team about assets, liabilities, and visions for the project area.

Involvement of Major Stakeholders

In addition to the public outreach process, one-on-one meetings with key representatives of the major stakeholders, such as elected officials, community leaders, and major institutions, are important for both sides—the urban design team gains insight into the stakeholders' concerns and goals, and the major stakeholders develop confidence in the team and the planning process.

Features such as waterways and adjacent land features influence street grid orientation.

EXISTING STREET PATTERNS

Source: Urban Design Associates.

Don Carter, AICP FAIA, Urban Design Associates, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Raymond L. Gindroz, FAIA, Urban Design Associates, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Multi-Disciplinary Team

Urban design is a collaborative process involving urban designers, architects, planners, and landscape architects. However, other disciplines are usually required, such as transportation planners and engineers, civil and environmental engineers, residential and commercial market analysts, construction cost consultants, and public/private finance consultants. When such a team has been assembled, the individual consultants should be coordinated so that their expertise permeates the planning process from beginning to end.

Focus on Implementation

Urban design projects are often complicated plans with multiple projects and participants. Implementation can be difficult, even when all the forces are aligned properly. The process should begin with implementation in mind. Develop a plan that is tied to the realities of receiving funding, obtaining approval, and getting the project built.

Design as a Tool for Decision-Making

By exploring alternatives—the "what ifs" of a site or district—the design process allows for speculation, brainstorming, and innovative thinking. Alternatives can be tested against various factors, including physical constraints, regulatory controls, the market, overall costs and benefits, economic feasibility, property valuation, phasing, public input, and experience elsewhere. The consensus vision will then reflect those realities.

Block patterns of an area, presented here as a figure ground map, show the building coverage of a site.

BUILDING COVERAGE

Source: Urban Design Associates.

COMPONENTS OF AN URBAN DESIGN PLAN REPORT

As a general rule, an urban design report should be light on text and heavy on graphics. Diagrams, charts, rendered plans and sections, and perspective drawings are often the most effective communicators of the plan's elements. Below are brief descriptions of the typical sections of an urban design plan report.

Executive Summary

Key images from the body of the report and summary text can convey the "big ideas" of the plan in just a few pages.

Existing Conditions

Assemble all existing conditions data related to the project area, including streets, building coverage, land use, topography, vacant buildings and land, and environmental constraints. This information is documented in the report as the existing conditions "portrait" of the area.

Analysis Drawings

Analysis drawings can be some of the most influential materials of an urban design initiative. Creating these drawings involves professional review of existing conditions data and mapping, to translate this information into findings that will influence the plan. More information on analysis drawings can be found in *The Urban Design Handbook* (2003).

Summary of Issues

During the planning process, involve citizens and stakeholders in focus groups and public meetings to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of the project area and the community's vision for the future. The issues and opportunities that arise from these meetings are summarized in the report, in both narrative and diagrams.

Development Program

Market studies, forecasting demand for residential and commercial development, are frequently done concurrently with the urban design planning process. These studies are summarized in the urban design plan. If such studies were not commissioned, the client's development program is described in the development program.

Urban Design Plan

The urban design plan is a color rendered plan showing existing and new buildings, parking, streets, trails, and landscape planting. The urban design plan presents a two-dimensional vision of the final project build-out.

Streets Framework Plan and Street Sections

The streets framework plan identifies existing and new streets. It includes cross sections of streets indicating sidewalks, parking, travel lanes, and medians.

Open Space Framework Plan

The open space framework plan illustrates parks; trails; "green streets," which are streets designated for enhanced landscape planting and pedestrian amenities; plazas; public space; and the connections between them.

Perspective Drawings

Three-dimensional perspective drawings are essential in conveying the sense of place of an urban design plan. Often the general public cannot easily interpret plan drawings; however, eye level and bird's eye view perspectives are often more readily understandable.

Design Guidelines

Urban design plan reports often contain a section on design guidelines, including massing, height, building setbacks, architectural style, parking, streetscapes, signage, materials, and sustainable design.

Implementation and Phasing Plan

The implementation section details the mechanisms to make the plan a reality. Among the tools typically included are public and private partnerships, funding sources, regulatory issues, conceptual budgets, and a phasing plan with early action and long-range projects described.

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The street framework is upgraded to follow the patterns that the existing street patterns, building coverage, and open space framework define for the place.

STREET FRAMEWORK

Source: Urban Design Associates.

THE ROLE OF URBAN DESIGN IN IMPLEMENTATION

By translating general planning policies into three-dimensional form, urban design makes the connection between planning and architecture, this makes it possible to test the feasability of projects through a variety of mechanisms, described below.

Public Support

If the community perceives the various images and three-dimensional form of a development to be consistent with its goals and policies, then gaining support for the various public approvals needed for the development will be strengthened. Developing the urban design for a project in an open public forum helps to facilitate this outcome.

Zoning Enforcement and Regulatory Approvals

Use vivid and explicit representations of the proposed development to assist the various agencies responsible for zoning enforcement and regulatory approvals to support implementation. In many communities there are a number of agencies, with different mindsets, involved in administering the approval and implementation process The urban design plan, especially if developed in a process that engaged the approval agencies as a group, can provide a common framework within which governmental decisions can be made.

Investment and Finance

Urban designs are often developed to a level of detail sufficient to determine the amount of space being built and to develop conceptual cost estimates for buildings and public improvements. Therefore, the economic feasability and fiscal impact of developments can be effectively evaluated.

Marketing

A project's feasibility is directly related to the effectiveness of its marketing program. The character and quality of its address is one factor in how successfully a development can capture the market potential of an area. The products of an urban design project are often used in marketing programs to communicate the new image of the place and to promote the development.

Framework for Implementing Agencies

An urban design project often serves as a "road map" for the implementing agencies. It becomes a standard reference for developing budgets, setting priorities, funding projects, and granting regulatory approvals.

EXAMPLES OF URBAN DESIGN PLANS

Described below are three of the most commonly produced urban design plans: neighborhoods, downtowns, and mixed-use developments.

Neighborhood Plans

On the neighborhood scale, urban design plans often address the location and design of infill housing, new parks, and community institutions; main street revitalization; housing rehabilitation guidelines; and street reconfiguration. Sponsors of neighborhood plans include cities, community development organizations, foundations, and private developers.

Downtown Plans

Downtown urban design plans are usually part of a larger economic development strategy focused on attracting jobs, residents, and visitors to a downtown. The development scale is relatively dense and multistory, which requires sensitive treatment of the public realm for pedestrians. Topics covered in downtown urban design plans include mixed-use buildings, historic preservation, adaptive reuse, height and density, setbacks, views, parking strategies, transit corridors and nodes, streetscapes, waterfronts, street networks, highway access, redevelopment policies, zoning overlays, incentive districts, new stadiums and convention centers, and entertainment and cultural districts.

Cities, downtown organizations, business improvement districts, and regional agencies all may sponsor downtown urban design plans.

Mixed-Use Developments

Mixed-use developments are typically one-owner, site-specific projects. Among the various types are infill projects in downtowns, brownfield reclamation projects, lifestyle centers (also called specialty retail centers), and office/technology developments. Office, retail, and housing are among the typical uses in mixed-use developments. Project sizes can range widely, from a few acres to hundreds of acres. A central goal is to develop a pedestrian-friendly place to live, work, and play. Sponsors of mixed-use developments are often private developers, redevelopment agencies, and large institutions, such as universities and medical centers.

KEY AND EMERGING ISSUES

Housing Density

As the smart growth movement and rising housing costs have become determining forces in residential planning and development, density has emerged as a major issue. While there is still the great American desire for the single family home and the cul-de-sac subdivision, regulatory controls and environmental restrictions have begun to limit available land for such development. Smaller lot sizes, attached housing, and multi-family housing have become contentious issues in many communities. Urban design planning processes can help test different residential densities in the context of a holistic solution that includes housing, amenities, and place making.

Recognizing the Value of Urban Design

Urban design is a strong strategic planning tool. However, many cities and developers approach

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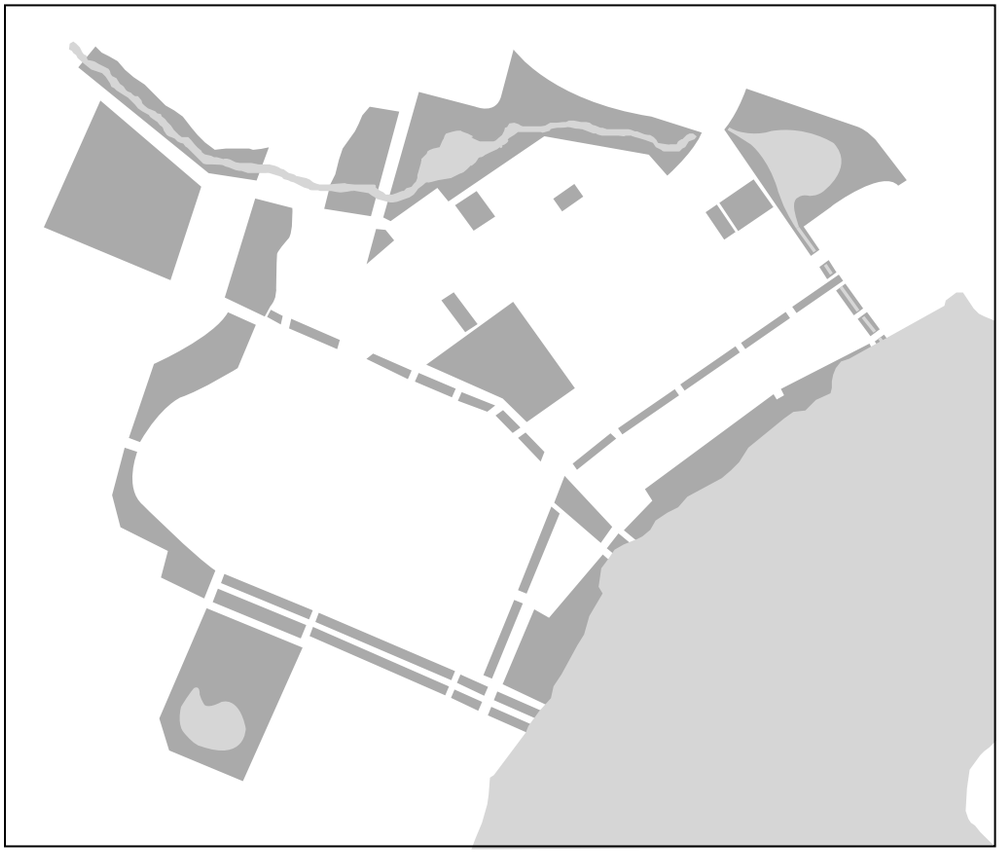

The open space of a site shows the green network that helps define a place.

OPEN SPACE FRAMEWORK

Source: Urban Design Associates

development on a project-by-project basis, often in isolation from adjacent uses and without a comprehensive view of all the forces impacting or impacted by the project. While urban design plans are not always regarded as essential pre-development projects, experience in the field has demonstrated that the new ideas and approaches that emerge from an urban design planning process can add significant value to a development and appreciably ease and shorten the public approval process.

Urban Design Education

Because of the three-dimensional building design and the physical transformation of the public realm aspect of urban design practice, an urban designer should have an architecture degree. Ideally, an urban designer has either received a master of architecture degree in urban design or has completed an internship in an urban design firm.

RESOURCE

Urban Design Associates. 2003. *The Urban Design Handbook: Techniques and Working Methods*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co.

See also:
Places and Placemaking
Viewshed Protection

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REGIONAL PLANS

Regional plans cover geographic areas transcending the boundaries of individual governmental units but sharing common characteristics that may be social, economic, political, cultural, natural-resource-based, or defined by transportation. They often serve as the skeleton or framework for local government plans and special district plans, supplying unifying assumptions, forecasts, and strategies. The information that follows is adapted from the American Planning Association's *Growing Smart℠ Legislative Guidebook* (2002).

DEFINING THE REGION

The following factors may define a region:

- Geographic and topographic features, especially watersheds
- Political boundaries, especially county boundaries
- Transportation patterns, especially those related to the journey to work
- Region-serving facilities, such as hospitals, airports, trail terminals, and wastewater treatment plants
- Interrelated social, economic, and environmental problems
- Population distribution
- Existing intergovernmental relationships, usually expressed in the form of written agreements
- Metropolitan area or urbanized area boundaries as identified by the U.S. Census Bureau
- Boundaries of existing regional or multijurisdictional planning or service provision organizations, such as regional sewer districts

REGIONAL FUNCTIONAL PLANS

Regional planning agencies may prepare regional functional plans to cover specific topics such as parks and open space, bikeways, water, sanitary sewerage and sewage treatment, water supply and distribution, solid waste management, airports, libraries, communications, and others. For example, a regional sewer plan is a device used to ensure that disputes can be resolved over which jurisdiction will provide sewers and sewage treatment facilities to developing areas. The most typical regional functional plan is a regional transportation plan; see Transportation Plans in this chapter for more information.

The Regional Housing Plan

A number of states, including California and New Hampshire, require the preparation of regional housing plans. In general, regional planning agencies prepare these plans to assess present and prospective need for housing at the regional level, particularly affordable housing. Typically, they establish numerical housing goals to be included in local government plans.

In New Jersey, regional housing planning is the responsibility of a state agency, the Council on Affordable Housing, which prepares "fair-share" housing allocations for affordable housing for each local government. Under New Jersey law, local governments then have an obligation to identify sites for affordable housing and take necessary steps to remove barriers in order to provide a realistic opportunity that such housing can be built or rehabilitated.

THE REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The regional comprehensive plan is intended to address facilities or resources that affect more than one jurisdiction and to provide economic, population, and land-use forecasts to guide local planning, so that local plans and planning decisions are made with a set of common assumptions. Consequently, a regional comprehensive plan will propose a more schematic pattern of development than provided in a local comprehensive plan.

For example, in a regional comprehensive plan, the land-use pattern is generally simple, demarcating land into urban and rural, with a general indication of a hierarchy of activity centers. Such centers may be targets for more intensive residential, office, commercial, and industrial developments, supported by transit, that are intended to serve a substantial portion of the region. Here, the intent is to use the regional plan as an device to direct both public and private investment to ensure that such development occurs.

Both public agencies and private organizations may prepare regional plans. Indeed, private groups prepared the first true regional plans, one in 1909 for the Chicago area and a second in 1929 for the New York City area. The Chicago plan was the work of planners Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett, with funding by the Commercial Club. The Committee for the Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs, a private group whose efforts were funded by the Russell Sage Foundation, produced a multivolume regional plan for the New York metropolitan area, beginning in 1929.

Regional Comprehensive Plan Elements

Typical Plan Elements

State statutes usually define which elements are required in a regional comprehensive plan. The following list is for guidance only; to determine which elements are required, consult state legislation.

- A narrative of planning assumptions, and their relationship to state and local plans
- Population trends and projections
- Regional economy
- Existing land use
- A transportation system overview
- Regional housing trends and needs
- Community facilities and services
- Natural features and cultural assets
- Agricultural lands
- Natural hazards
- Regional density study
- Public involvement
- Urban growth areas
- Regional growth policy statements
- Implementation recommendations

Urban Growth Areas

Some regional plans delineate urban growth areas, which are land areas sufficient to accommodate population and economic growth for a certain period, typically 20 years, and which will be supported by urban-level services. The purpose of an urban growth area is to ensure a compact and contiguous development pattern that can be efficiently served by public services while preserving open space, agricultural land, and environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for intensive development.

SAMPLE TABLE OF CONTENTS: THE METROPOLIS PLAN: CHOICES FOR THE CHICAGO REGION

Source: Chicago Metropolis 2020, 2003

Special Resource Areas

A regional comprehensive plan also identifies special resources areas, such as farmland, aquifers, and major wetlands. It may propose strategies for a particular watershed or basin to ensure that groundwater and watercourses are protected as supplies of potable water. The plan can also include actions to protect areas of biodiversity. Depending on the nature of the region, it may also identify the general location of natural hazard areas, such as earthquake zones or areas prone to wildfires.

Regional Facilities

The plan may contain proposals for new or upgraded regional facilities, such as multimodal transportation centers, new highways, transit, airports, hospitals, and regional parks or open space systems that link together. Functional plan elements may examine details of such proposals, such as road widening, highway safety improvements, and operational changes to mass transit systems, or the exact locations of regional wastewater facilities and major trunk lines.

Descriptive and Analytical Studies

In order to prepare a regional comprehensive plan, the regional planning authority or other suitable authority must undertake a series of descriptive and analytical studies. Such studies may cover the following topics:

- The economy of the region, which may include amount, type, general location, and distribution of commerce and industry within the region; the location of regional employment centers; and trends and projection of economic activity, both in terms of income growth and changes in the number and composition of jobs
- Population and population distribution within the

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region, as well as its local governments, including projections and analyses by age, education level, income, employment, or similar characteristics
- Natural resources, including air, water, forests and other vegetation, and minerals
- Amount, type, quality, affordability, and geographic distribution of housing among local governments in the region correlated with projected job and population change
- Identification of features of significant statewide or regional architectural, scenic, cultural, historic, or architectural interest, as well as scenic corridors and viewsheds
- Amount, type, location, and quality of agricultural lands
- Amount, type, intensity or density, general location of industrial, commercial, residential, and other land uses, and projections of changes in land use, correlated with projected job and population change

MAP COMPONENTS

The regional comprehensive plan provides a visual representation of the plan's objectives. The components of the map may include the following:

- Location of urban growth area boundaries
- Existing and proposed transportation facilities
- Other public facilities and utilities of extrajurisdictional or regionwide significance
- Potential areas of critical state concern (such as areas of significant biodiversity, scenic beauty, historic significance, or archaeological value, or areas around major facilities, such as military bases, airports, or national or state parks)
- Natural hazard areas
- Urban and rural growth centers
- Any other matters of regional significance that can be graphically represented.

THE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

A long-range implementation program for the regional comprehensive plan may include the following components.

An Implementation Schedule

The implementation program may include a schedule of development for proposed transportation and other public facilities and utilities of extrajurisdictional or regionwide significance. The schedule may include a description of the proposed public facility or utility, an identification of the governmental unit to be responsible for the facility or utility, the year(s) the facility or utility is proposed for construction or installation, an estimate of costs, and sources of public and private revenue for covering such costs.

Development Criteria

The program may include development criteria for use in local government and special district plans. Performance benchmarks may be defined to measure the achievement of the regional comprehensive plan by local governments and special districts.

Monitoring and Evaluation

A statement may be included to describe the criteria and procedures the agency creating the plan will use in monitoring and evaluating the plan's implementation by local governments, special districts, and the state.

Coordination

There may also be a statement of measures describing the ways in which state and/or local programs may best be coordinated to promote the goals and policies of the regional comprehensive plan

Legislative Changes

The program may also include proposals for changes in state laws to achieve regional objectives, such as regional tax-base sharing or procedures to review large-scale developments with multijurisdictional impacts or to consolidate existing planning organizations to improve services and coordination. Regional planning agencies may also propose interjurisdictional agreements to clarify responsibility for the provision of urban services.

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Committee for the Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs. 1929. *The Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs. The Graphic Plan*. Vol. 1. New York: The Committee.

Meck, Stuart (gen. ed). 2002. *Growing Smart℠ Legislative Guidebook: Model Statutes for Planning and Management of Change*. 2 vols. Chicago: American Planning Association.

See also:

Housing Plans
Population Projections
Regions
Transportation Plans
Watersheds

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NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS

A neighborhood plan focuses on a specific geographic area of a local jurisdiction that typically includes substantial residential development, associated commercial uses, and institutional services such as recreation and education. Many of the same topics covered in a local comprehensive plan are covered in a neighborhood plan.

REASONS TO PREPARE A NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

The neighborhood plan is intended to provide more detailed goals, policies, and guidelines than those in the local comprehensive plan. Neighborhood plans often emphasize potential partnerships among government agencies, community groups, school boards, and the private sector—partnerships that can act to achieve neighborhood goals. These plans are often developed through highly collaborative processes involving citizens, business, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the local government of the neighborhood.

Neighborhood plans describe land-use patterns in more detail than do comprehensive plans. They may even approach the specificity required for amendments to a zoning district map or street classification system. These descriptions and maps can be used for greenfield or developing areas in a manner similar to that used in sector or specific plans, an approach used in Florida and California.

These plans also often propose a program of implementation shorter in duration than is proposed in a comprehensive plan. For an established neighborhood, the plan may emphasize issues that can be addressed in one to two years. They may include actions to be taken by the local government, other governmental agencies, school boards, nonprofit organizations, or for-profit groups. In many respects, this reflects the nature of the neighborhood planning process itself, which often focuses on visible and politicized problems that can be resolved quickly, such as trash cleanup, park improvements, or specific code enforcement issues. For newer neighborhoods, the plan's content may be more far-reaching and functional.

Neighborhood planning succeeds when the process is cyclical, small successes are emphasized, and the issue of identifying neighborhood leaders and legitimacy is addressed at the onset.

PLAN ELEMENTS

The American Planning Association conducted research in the mid-1990s that identified more than 36 elements in neighborhood plans. This group of elements, which appeared in various combinations, suggests a realm of possibilities for a particular neighborhood plan. While no definitive recommendation can be made about which specific elements a neighborhood plan should contain, the plan's content should result from a process that assesses the neighborhood's specific needs, resources, and ideals.

While there is no definitive list of required elements for neighborhood plans, certain elements appear to be common and essential. They can be grouped into five categories, based on their relative purpose and sequence in the planning process:

- *General housekeeping:* Organizational items that make the plan readable and usable, and serve to encourage further involvement in the planning process
- *Planning process validation:* Elements that demonstrate the legitimacy of the research and consensus-building processes that led to the development of the plan
- *Neighborhood establishment:* Elements that serve to create a community image or identity distinct from the jurisdiction as a whole
- Functional elements: Substantive items that may vary widely from plan to plan (e.g., safety element, housing element)
- *Implementation Framework:* The goals, programs, actions, or schedules used to implement the plan

General Housekeeping

The elements in this category are used to create a clear, usable plan document. Because neighborhood residents may not be familiar with planning, this element is particularly important to include. More information on this element is covered in the Plan Making section of this book.

Planning Process Validation

Stakeholder participation is critical at the neighborhood planning level. Planning information must be accessible and comprehensible to all involved parties. Certain information should be made public throughout the planning process. In addition, placing some of that information directly in the plan allows other citizens to participate in the planning process more intelligently at a later time. This makes the plan a working reference document and validates the process that culminated in the plan.

The Neighborhood Organizational Structure and Planning Process

An important part of plan validation is how the planning process is initiated and carried out. Flow charts are often used to illustrate the sequence of events. This section may also reference the ordinance that adopts the plan, the community feedback that supported it, or the background information about why the process was initiated. Many jurisdictions require a formal neighborhood organization to be in place as a condition for planning assistance or plan adoption. Neighborhood leadership should be made clear in a plan or at least emerge out of the planning process. A legitimate, publicly accessible power structure gives the neighborhood-city relationship credibility, encourages neighbors to act responsibly with public resources, and facilitates a leadership development mechanism within the community.

The Mission/Purpose Statement

The mission/purpose statement establishes the importance of the neighborhood planning process. It should convey that the process is all-inclusive and in accordance with policies set forth in the jurisdiction's comprehensive plan, if one exists. The statement can also be linked to the municipal code or city charter.

The Participation Proclamation

This section documents the participation process as it actually happened for the plan. It should be located at the beginning of the plan, setting the stage for the policies and recommendations that follow. Local ownership of the planning process must be evident. Both positive and negative feedback is important to include. Meeting minutes, survey results, or local newspaper articles can document feedback.

Needs Assessment

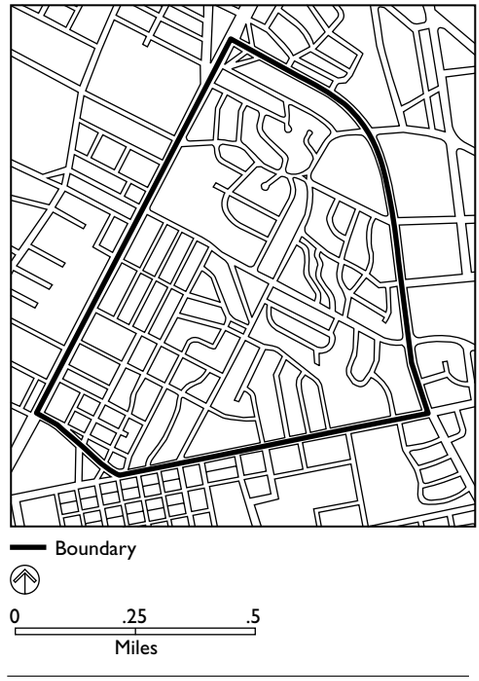
A needs assessment for services and facilities is a fundamental component of neighborhood planning, especially when it identifies underserved neighborhood groups. Needs assessments can measure social services, physical conditions, commercial resources, and cultural amenities. When assessing needs, it is important to take stock of existing community resources. Evaluating the positive aspects of a neighborhood can reveal unexpected opportunities for dealing with the negatives.

Defining the Neighborhood

In addition to securing the future, neighborhood plans fortify the present by defining the neighborhood.

Boundary Delineation

The neighborhood and the city departments should agree to, or at least accommodate, each party's perception of neighborhood boundaries. Boundary identification should involve representatives from the community, pertinent city departments, and, if possi-



NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARY DELINEATION

Source: Adapted from Upper Boggy Creek Neighborhood Plan, City of Austin, TX, 2002.

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