

SMART GROWTH

A BRIEF PRIMER

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Alder and Mayor – City of Verona

Dane County Board (five terms)

Dane County Regional Plan Commission

Chair – ***On Common Ground*** – a land use think tank

Commissioner – Wisconsin Land Council – state commission created to oversee Smart Growth

Commissioner - Wisconsin Historic Review Board

Government Affairs Director - REALTORS® Assoc. of South Central Wi.

Pres. – Archaeological Consulting and Services, Inc. (since 1976)

Pres. – Salkin and Associates, Inc.

WHAT IS THE SMART GROWTH LAW? COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

- **BASICALLY:**

Requires that by 2010, most municipalities develop a comp. plan – a 20 year planning document

Defines a comprehensive plan (14 state goals and 9 elements)

Defines how a plan is adopted

Attempts to define “consistency” – how land use planning should be consistent with the adopted plan

Provides grants and technical support to municipalities

WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS?

1. Issues and opportunities – background information, community goals, desires and objectives
2. The Housing Element
3. The Transportation Element
4. Utilities and Community Infrastructure Element
5. Agricultural, Natural Resources, Cultural Resources (primarily archaeology, history, architecture) Element
6. Economic Development Element
7. Intergovernmental Cooperation Element
8. The Land Use Element (including the map)
9. Implementation Element

Note: The elements are not hierarchical – elements may be more important in some communities than in others. Large cities would probably place more emphasis on housing and infrastructure than on agriculture.

SOME QUESTIONS

- How will a plan adopted and amended?
 - * A public participation plan should be adopted – at least one public hearing
 - * The plan should be sent to “every government body that is located in whole or in part within the boundaries of the local government unit.” – for example, a plan might be sent to school districts, tech schools or universities. It should also be sent to adjoining municipalities.
 - * After all the work is done and comments received – the plan should be reviewed for completeness
 - * The plan is then adopted as an ordinance.
 - * The plan can be amended as frequently as desire, just as an ordinance can be amended. The comp. plan should be revisited at least at the ten year point.

- ***What must be in the plan?***

- * The plan must address the nine elements.

- Smart Growth requires that a municipality consider the nine elements, but not how. A plan can be as detailed or ephemeral as a community wishes.

- * A plan developed with grant money will be reviewed for completeness and content within the bounds of the grant application.

- ***Who will write the plan?***

- * The municipality will designate authorship. It could be a plan committee, staff, a special citizens group, staff or a consultant.

- * A community does not have to hire a consultant. A series of tool kits have been created by state agencies to help communities create different portions of their plans.

- ***What is the penalty for not preparing a plan?***

A community could lose its ability to regulate land use within its borders if it fails to develop, plan and implement a plan.

- ***How does a Smart Growth Plan impact other community ordinances?***

While there is on-going conversation on the issue of consistency, relevant ordinances (such as zoning) should reflect and support the comprehensive plan.

Ex. If the plan encourages the creation of affordable housing, the zoning ordinances should not discourage such efforts.

WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT SMART GROWTH?

- Almost all communities plan. There are economic development plans, housing plans, zoning plans, transportation plans, farmland preservation plans, stormwater plans, etc., etc., etc.
- The value of comprehensive planning is that it offers the opportunity for a community to consider where it wants to go and then coordinate all of their plans to support their goals.

A community may have a plan that aggressively seeks economic growth, without considering the need for sufficient sewer capacity, or sufficient workforce housing to attract workers for the new businesses. A good comprehensive plan considers all of the elements that make up our quality of life together in an integrated manner.

A FEW MYTHS

- The State can and will change our plans when we submit them.
No. The state will review the plans for completeness (did you cover the all the elements) and stamp it in. If you used a grant, it will check that the plan matches the grant proposal.
- Once we pass a plan, we are locked into it.
No. Comprehensive plans are just like any other ordinance. They can be constantly reviewed and amended. In fact, a good plan always should be reviewed and amended as necessary.
- There will be a comprehensive planning police.
No. The state won't be reviewing local decisions to insure compliance with comp. plan. A citizen does have the right to challenge whether a community's decisions are not consistent with its comp. plan.

A FEW MORE MYTHS

- When we create a comp. plan, we have to throw out all our other plans. No. If a community has an economic development plan – use it. It should be reviewed to make sure it fits with the other elements of the plan.
- A community should complete one element and then go to the next. You can, but it kind of misses the point. In this way, you can spend time and money on the housing element only to find later that it cannot be supported by the transportation element, the utilities element or the land-use element. **However, the goals and opportunities elements comes first.**

Many communities group the elements into related clusters like housing and economic development and utilities and transportation. The clusters are then considered together to create the plan.

A FEW MORE, MORE MYTHS

- Creating a plan must be expensive and consultant-driven.
No. Many small communities can adopt relatively simple plan that they produce themselves.
 - * The state and U.W.-Extension can help with the tool kits.
 - * Most communities have some plans that can be worked into the comprehensive plan.
 - * All communities have local talent. Comprehensive plans are supposed to be bottom-up, citizen driven plans.

- Comprehensive Plans should be complex.
Only if you want it that way. A comp. plan probably works best when a community does not lock itself in to too many details. The details are best located in community ordinances, policies and codes.

A FEW MORE, MORE, MORE MYTHS

- Comprehensive Planning is land use planning.

No. Land use planning is a subset of comprehensive planning. It is important not to simply let everything follow a land use map. The land use map should support the plan and not vice-versa.

A community may draw a land use map and discover that the map does not support the housing, transportation or economic development goals of the community.

The Housing Element

Housing is a pivot part of any comprehensive plan. It is a quality of live issue.

- * Housing is a necessity.
- * Housing composes a significant or dominant portion of the tax base.
- * Housing availability and options enables or discourages economic growth.
- * Housing options allow for community stability and encourage retention of families and future generations.
- * Housing encourages or discourages population growth – in turn, impacting retail viability and the school districts.
- * Home Ownership factors into student achievement, crime and neighborhood stability.
- * Housing choices significantly impact land use and infrastructure decisions.

CREATE THE PROFILE

Create the housing profile for your community. With a couple of clicks on the computer we know:

- * The total of number of units in the structure (how many single family detached, duplexes, multi-family, etc.)
- * Percent of home ownership (72.3%)
- * Types of ownership – owner occupied, condo, rental
- * Year of construction
- * Number of rooms
- * Length of occupation by present owner
- * Nature of heating source
- * Number of occupants
- * Assessed value, mortgage status, percent of monthly income used
- * Gross rents for rental properties

CREATE THE PROFILE – PART II

Sauk County:

	2004	2005	2006	2007
Number of Home Sales	642	763	766	696
Median Sale Price	\$143.6K	\$154.3K	\$160K	\$158.5K

Dane County:

Number of Home Sales	7154	7503	6841	6468
Median Sale Price	\$196.9K	\$208.7K	\$214.6K	\$218.7K

Lafayette County:

Number of Home Sales	19	?	94	85
Median Sale Price	\$65K		\$82.3K	\$87.3K

CREATING THE PROFILE III

With the data in hand, a community can assemble its profile. Such as:

Rural Township:

We are a community of single-family, owner-occupied homes relating to farm families. There is no multi-family and few leased units. Most units are 30+ years old. There is little turn-over, little new construction and sales prices are stable.

Small City:

We are a community, largely of single-family, owner-occupied homes. There is an increasing number of rental units as younger individuals cannot find affordable housing. There is some new construction, most of it higher priced units and some of it condos. A new business is bringing in many new families who want and can afford higher priced homes. Compared with other communities, our housing is newer but still relatively affordable.

WHAT'S ARE THE COMMUNITY GOALS?

Based on the first chapter of your comprehensive plan, what are the community goals that should help mold the housing element?

Ex. We are a rural township. We want stability and to retain an agricultural lifestyle and landscape. We only want new housing that will support agriculture and a few new houses a year for other residents. These should be higher end homes to bring in tax base.

We are a slow growing village concerned with our retail/commercial community and the declining enrollment in our schools. We want to aggressively pursue economic development but think that we will not get many companies offering high salaries. We will need more affordable housing including rental units and condos.

WHAT ARE THE COMMUNITY GOALS?

Ex:

We are an urbanizing town near a small city. We want some growth to increase our tax base and perhaps some reasonable commercial growth.

We will want to focus on a rural, if not agricultural lifestyle. We do not want to have to pay for urban services.

Ex:

We are a rapidly growing small city. There is increasing interest from commercial and retail developers. We have a lot of available housing, but much of it is old and in poor repair. We have plenty of affordable housing, we need more upscale housing.

WRITE THE PLAN THAT WORKS FOR YOU!

You now understand the housing profile of your community. You know where you want to go. Select those goals, objectives and policies that get you there.

- * Many plans use this statement as a starting point:
“Insure an adequate amount of housing for all citizens at all price points.”
- * Ask if this is relevant for your community. An agricultural township may not want to plan for affordable, multi-family rental housing. A community with little affordable housing may wish to focus on enabling multi-family rental and condo projects.
- * Look through your existing codes, policies and ordinances to support the community goals. Be prepared to enact new ones when necessary.

A FEW EXAMPLES

A town that wants some development, but wants to remain largely rural might:

- * Create a conservation sub-division ordinance what clusters growth.
- * Encourage small lot growth in and around around existing unincorporated hamlets and crossroads.
- * Allow some use of duplexes.

A small city that needs affordable housing might:

- * Create a housing rehab. program to enhance the existing housing stock.
- * Partner with other entities on downpayment assistance projects.
- * Create incentives for apartment-to-condo conversions.
- * Create volunteer partnerships with developers providing incentives in return for creating units to be sold at a certain price (AMI)
- * Reconsider ordinances that drive up the price of housing – ex. Requiring park dedication when the community already has adequate parks.

THE LAST STEP - COORDINATE

Coordinate your housing element with the other elements:

- Is there enough land dedicated to provide all of the housing you need?
- Are there sufficient roads and other transportation modes to serve the houses?
- Is there enough sewer and water capacity to serve the homes?
- Does the plan make the best use of existing housing?
- Do the schools have a plan to handle a successful community?
- Is the housing a fit for the desired forms of economic development?
- Does the types of housing respect environmental and agricultural concerns – even if in other communities?
- Does the plan respect the community image and historic resources?

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER AND YOU HAVE A WINNER!