

CHECKLIST FOR COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

It is recommended that the following topics be addressed in a community comprehensive plan. This checklist is provided as a tool for communities to use in evaluating their current comprehensive plan, and deciding when it is the appropriate time to update the plan. It is not intended as a substitute for professional planning assistance in preparing and evaluating comprehensive plans.

1. Overall parts of the plan addressed. The following overall elements of the plan should be present. See additional checklist areas below for more detailed evaluation elements.

- Rationale: Background, reason for doing the plan now.
- Purpose: Purpose of the plan.
- Vision: community vision for the future.
- Goals and objectives: leading to strategies and action steps
- Analysis of Assets and Challenges: including ranking of issues according to importance to the community
- Projections and analysis of future scenarios or alternatives
- Implementation: strategies and action steps, timeline, responsibility, measurability for each action step.
- Benchmarking: an approach for ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and benchmarks for judging action step accomplishment, should be included.
- Public Engagement: Evidence of meaningful public engagement and a relationship between public input and the conclusions/recommendations.

2. General Topics addressed. Maps should be included where appropriate to illustrate each topic. Each topic should include an assessment of existing conditions, identification of assets and challenges, projections of future conditions/scenarios, and recommendations that are framed to lead to action steps. Some of these areas may be of significant enough priority to the community that they may warrant a more detailed look as a separate planning effort (such as hazards, schools, parks/recreation, housing, wastewater treatment), but the comprehensive plan should identify the broad issues and point to future studies that are needed.

- Population, households and demographics. Household information is important to understanding housing and economic conditions in the community.

- Plans of others: adjacent communities, county, regional, transportation, infrastructure, parks, schools.
- Zoning and Land Use. Existing zoning and land use should be evaluated in light of how well it is currently meeting community needs.
- Economics: status of business and commerce, economic base, market assessment for residential/commercial/retail/office/industrial, needed infrastructure, match of jobs to population and workforce.
- Housing: condition, types, match to population and household needs by price point (rental and ownership) and household type.
- Natural Resources and Open Space: sensitive areas, stream corridors, source water protection, watershed protection, habitat, restoration, woodlands, soils, geologic conditions, natural areas management. Potential for gas/oil drilling, bedrock conditions, and known geologic fault lines should be addressed.
- Flooding, streams, wetlands and stormwater.
- Community Health, hazards and emergencies. Community health indicators can be obtained from the County Health Department and services providers. More and more information is available on community responses to hazards and emergencies.
- Cultural Resources, Civic and Community Facilities. Condition, anticipated future needs.
- Parks and Recreation. Quantity and quality of facilities for both active and passive recreation.
- Agriculture. Where applicable. Economic base and resources needed, land protection, soils.
- Transportation: auto, commercial/truck/rail/freight, public transit, seniors, schoolchildren, bike, pedestrian, recreational, commuters.
- Infrastructure: water, sewer, electrical power, gas, wireless/broadband, and other issues appropriate to the community.
- Overall land use: priority development, conservation and agricultural areas should be identified, and if there is an endorsed Balanced Growth Watershed Planning Partnership plan, relation to the partnership's identified priority areas should be addressed.
- Historic Preservation. Opportunities and needs for preservation of important community resources – landscapes, buildings and neighborhoods.
- Quality of Place: community character, design and scenic resources.
- Regulation: Recommendations for zoning, subdivision, development and resources protection regulations, integration of best local land use practices. (see balancedgrowth.ohio.gov/bestlocallandusepractices for more information).
- Schools: land use issues affecting school population, facilities needs, and costs/taxes.

3. Current issues: Many communities are grappling with certain current issues and trends. These should be addressed, as applicable to the community.

- Residential and commercial vacancy
- Aging population
- Nonresident and temporary workers
- Affordable housing
- Changing schools needs
- Oil/gas drilling
- Changing real estate market conditions (buyers' preferences, products, market strength, financing availability)
- Low-income household needs
- Reduced community budgets and funding sources
- Changing environmental regulations and applicability
- Others as identified by the community

4. Projections. Projections usually are done related to high, medium and low growth scenarios; and/or related to alternative land use choices.

- Population projections should be based on the 2010 census or later data if available.
- Population, ages, households, income, education level, other factors important to the community should be addressed.
- Past looks should go back 20 to 30 years
- Future scenarios should go forward 15 to 30 years, depending on plan purpose
- High, medium and low growth scenarios should be presented
- Future needs for transportation, infrastructure should be addressed
- Future land needs for various scenarios should be identified

5. Fiscal Analysis

- The overall fiscal condition of the community should be considered
- The tax base should be assessed and projected
- Fiscal costs and revenues for various land uses should be addressed.
- The cost to revenue ratio should be identified for various land use scenarios

6. Public Engagement. A meaningful public engagement process should be an important part of every community comprehensive planning process. At least two meetings should be held to weigh community assets and challenges, and to test the desirability of possible future scenarios. In addition, many community public engagement processes include a special workshop focused on developing a community vision. Meetings should be well-advertised with plenty of advance notice. Many communities choose to also conduct community surveys and/or key informant interviews, and provide web-based

interactive communication and other means for public input to the process. The following questions should all be answered “yes”.

- Has the public been involved in the comprehensive planning process?
- Were adequate attempts made to solicit all sectors of the public’s input?
- Were meetings noticed properly?
- Was the public presented with alternative scenarios to consider?
- Was the public given the opportunity to identify issues of concern to them?
- Was the public given the opportunity to prioritize the solutions to problems?
- Do the findings and conclusions of the plan incorporate and flow from input received from the community?

7. **Implementation.** An implementation section of the plan should provide, for each action step, the following:

- Who is responsible
- Level of priority/urgency
- Time frame for completion
- Potential approximate cost
- Sources of funding
- Measures of success
- A framework for periodic review and evaluation of success