

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING VS. ZONING

Differences between planning and zoning are not clear to every citizen or to all local units of government. Both planning and zoning are important elements in land use management efforts of local governments because an effective zoning decision should be based on a sound plan that is supported by the community. A comprehensive plan will, with all nine plan elements, focus on the future and establishes community goals and objectives regarding how land will be used in the next 20 years. Zoning on the other hand, is only one tool that can help communities achieve their respective goals and objectives through land use regulation. Presently, the Town of Swiss is under county zoning while the Town of Blaine has no zoning at this time. Shoreland zoning is already in effect for both towns as required by state mandate.

Comprehensive planning is focused on the future and helps establish community goals and objectives. It is visionary in that it identifies where and how citizens would like to see the physical development of the

community take place. Planning is a process that helps a community prepare for change, rather than react to it.

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

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

Civic Participation in Comprehensive Planning

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

Citizen participation in the development of comprehensive plans for the Towns of Swiss and Blaine is essential for a number of reasons:

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

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



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

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

Comprehensive Planning Survey

The Towns of Swiss and Blaine in Burnett County are in the process of drafting local comprehensive plans. The two governmental units worked together to obtain a grant in the amount of \$24,000 to help pay for the project. In addition, the Town of Swiss has received a \$12,500 grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to help offset costs associated with developing a lake protection and management section of the Town of Swiss's Comprehensive Plan. The Northwest Regional Planning Commission will be working with each community in the development of their individual plans.

To assist in the development of the comprehensive plans for each town, separate surveys will be sent to all recorded property owners. The survey will provide information relating to land use, housing, transportation, public services, environmental issues, and other topics relevant to the development of local comprehensive plans.

At the local level, comprehensive planning committees will utilize the information from the survey in developing goals, objectives, and strategies for implementing the nine elements required of the comprehensive plan. (See "Requirements of a Local Comprehensive Plan", page 3) As a result, it is important that residents and property owners respond to the survey, as this information will be used directly in the development of the comprehensive plan.

No address information is available that would allow renters to receive a copy of the comprehensive plan survey. Renters must contact Northwest Regional Planning Commission at 635-2197 to receive a comprehensive plan survey.



The Towns of Swiss and Blaine have contracted Northwest Regional Planning Commission to provide technical assistance in the development of the comprehensive plans for all participants.

Any questions or comments concerning the comprehensive planning process should be addressed to:

Sheldon Johnson or Rick Schneider
Northwest Regional Planning Commission
1400 S River Street, Spooner, WI 54801
715/635-2197

sjohnson@nwrpc.com or rschneider@nwrpc.com

During the comprehensive planning process, information pertaining to the plan will be available on NWRPC's website at:

www.nwrpc.com/nwrpc/communitydev/index.htm

REMINDER!!



Complete and return the enclosed survey in the business reply envelope by February 28, 2003.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING IN THE TOWNS OF SWISS AND BLAINE

Newsletter

January 2003

Volume I, No. 1

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

What will the Towns of Swiss and Blaine look like 20-years from now? What will be the implications of decisions made today without a vision for the future? The answers to these questions are many; but through the development of a comprehensive plan, your community will have the means to make more informed decisions about land use and development issues.

In October 1999, Wisconsin passed a new law related to planning termed "Smart Growth". This law elaborates on Wisconsin's 1928 and 1967 definitions of a plan. Nine different elements or chapters, which all relate to one another, make up the contents of a comprehensive plan. In addition, the law outlines plan adoption procedures and requires that beginning January 1, 2010, any program or action of a local unit of government that affects land uses must be consistent with an adopted comprehensive plan.

The planning process for the Towns of Swiss and Blaine began in the summer of 2001 when the Town of Swiss met along with representatives from other local units of government to discuss the possibility of seeking grant funding to develop a multi-jurisdictional planning effort. From meetings like these, representatives from the Town of Blaine agreed to participate with the Town of Swiss in a multi-jurisdictional effort to develop their comprehensive plans.

Because of those early planning discussions, the Towns of Swiss and Blaine submitted a multi-jurisdictional grant application in November 2001. In January 2002, the two towns were informed that they had received a grant award to be used in developing a comprehensive plan(s). This planning process began in September 2002 and will be completed by both participating units of government by April 2005.

Over the next 12-18 months, planning commission members, as well as residents and property owners in the two towns, will be meeting to discuss land use issues (present and future) and to develop goals, objectives, and policies related to the nine required elements of the comprehensive plan. The development of local comprehensive plans will help shape the development of future land uses at the local level.

