

General Information on Comprehensive Planning

Planning Terminology Glossary 1

- **Cluster subdivision:** a subdivision in which the lot sizes are reduced below those normally required in the zoning district in which the development is located, in return for the provision of permanent open space.
- **Comprehensive plan:** a county development plan or city, village, town, or regional planning commission master plan prepared under and meeting the content requirements outlined in s.66.1001, *Wis. Stats.* Comprehensive plans provide a vision and general idea of how land should be used to assure public health, safety, and welfare.
- **Conditional use:** a land use, construction activity, or structural development, which must be tailored to the site conditions and adjacent property uses through a public and technical review process, that is listed as a conditional use in a zoning district.
- **Conservation areas:** environmentally sensitive and valuable lands protected from any activity that would significantly alter their ecological integrity, balance, or character except in cases of overriding public interest.
- **Conservation easements:** a recorded legal agreement between a landowner and a qualified conservation agency that transfers development rights from the owner to the agency to protect natural or historic features. See s. 700.40, *Wis. Stats.*
- **Conservation subdivision:** a housing development in a rural setting that is characterized by compact lots and common open space, and where the natural features of land are maintained to the greatest extent possible.
- **Downtown revitalization:** improve the economic or social environment of downtowns by involving all facets of the community.
- **Economic base:** the economic base of an area consists of those activities that provide the core employment and income on which the rest of the local economy depends.
- **Elements:** planning themes required in the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law – Issues & Opportunities, Housing, Transportation, Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural, Economic Development, Intergovernmental Cooperation, Land Use, and Implementation elements.
- **Environmental corridor:** linear areas of natural resources that are critical to maintaining water quality and quantity and to providing habitat linkages that maintain biological diversity. Environmental corridors are often associated with rivers and streams.
- **Environmental sensitive areas:** areas such as wetlands, steep slopes, waterways, underground water recharge areas, shores, and natural plant and animal habitats that are easily disturbed by development.

- **Extraterritorial zoning:** a local government's authority to zone areas outside its boundaries. Under Wisconsin law, the extraterritorial zone for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd class cities extends 3 miles beyond the corporate limits. The limit extends 1-½ miles beyond the municipal boundary for 4th class cities and villages. *See s. 62.23(7a), Wis. Stats.*
- **Forecasts:** a statistical technique projecting past trends to estimate future trends.
- **GIS:** computer technology, tools, databases, and applications that provide spatial (geographic) data management, analysis, and mapping capabilities to support policy evaluation, decision-making, and program operations.
- **Goals:** a desired state of affairs to which planned effort is directed.
- **Growth management:** the pacing of the rate or controlling of the location of development via law enactment to manage a community's growth.
- **Historic preservation:** the research, protection, restoration, and rehabilitation of historic properties.
- **Implementation tools:** programs, incentives, activities, regulations, etc communities use to implement their plan.
- **Land trust:** a private, nonprofit organization that protects natural and cultural resources through conservation easements, land acquisition, and education.
- **Land use classification:** a system for classifying and designating the appropriate use of properties.
- **Mixed-use development:** a development that allows multiple compatible uses to be in close proximity to one another in order to minimize transportation infrastructure impacts and to create a compact, efficient neighborhood; for example, single family, multifamily, commercial, and industrial uses are located within a reasonable proximity to each other.
- **Natural resources inventory:** a statistical survey of land use and natural resource conditions and trends
- **NIMBY:** not in my backyard
- **Nonconforming use:** a use (or structure) that lawfully existed prior to the adoption or amendment of an ordinance but that fails to conform to the standards of the current zoning ordinance.
- **Non-profit organization:** any person(s), partnership, association, corporation or other group whose activities are conducted for unselfish, civic, or humanitarian motives, or for the benefit of others, and not for the gain of any private individual or group and may include, but shall not be limited to, patriotic, philanthropic, social service, welfare, benevolent, educational, civic, fraternal, cultural, charitable, scientific, historical, athletic, or medical activities, e.g., The Nature Conservancy.

- **Objectives:** are specific, measurable statements that provide a means to ends (the goals).
- **Official map:** a legally adopted map that conclusively shows the location and width of proposed streets, public facilities and public areas, and drainage rights-of-way.
- **Parcel:** any legally described piece of land designated by the owner or developer as land to be used or developed as a unit, or that has been developed as a unit.
- **Purchase of Development Right (PDR):** a public or private government initiative that acquires the development rights of property to limit development and protect natural features or open space.
- **Planning commission:** an appointed local government commission authorized to make and adopt a master plan, consistent with s. 66.1001, *Wis. Stats.*, for the physical development of the city. *See* s. 62.23, *Wis. Stats.*
- **Planning process:** the process of developing a plan. Usually includes the following stages – visioning, data collection and analysis, issue identification, goal and objective development, strategy formulation, plan review and approval, implementation, and monitoring and assessment.
- **Plat:** a map of a lot, parcel, subdivision, or development area where the lines of each land division are shown by accurate distances and bearings.
- **Policy:** a specific statement of principle or of guiding actions that implies clear commitment but is not mandatory.
- **Prime farmland:** land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and is also available for these uses (the land could be cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land, or other land, but not urban built-up land or water).
- **Public participation:** the involvement of the public in the planning process, with the following purposes: educate the public, reach those that rarely get involved, thwart misinformation efforts, understand what people value, seek feedback from people, and build support for a plan.
- **Regional planning commission (RPC):** a body of individuals that advises local governments and officials within its region on land-use planning. There are nine Wisconsin RPCs; and, even though Wisconsin law enables the formation of RPCs, no county, city, or village is mandated to participate in their formation or advisories. *See* s. 66.0309(2)(a), *Wis. Stats.*
- **Smart growth:** an approach to land-use planning and growth management that recognizes connections between development and quality of life. The features that distinguish smart growth approaches vary. In general, smart growth invests time, attention, and resources in restoring community and vitality to center cities and older suburbs. In developing areas, the approach is more urban-centered, is transit and pedestrian oriented, and has a greater mix of housing, commercial, and retail

uses. Smart-growth approaches preserve open space and other environmental amenities.

- **Stakeholders:** those who have an interest in a particular decision, either as individuals or representatives of a group. This includes people who influence a decision, or can influence it, as well as those affected by it.
- **Subdivision:** the description (usually by survey) and recording of separate land parcels or lots.
- **Sustainable development:** development that maintains or enhances economic opportunity and community well-being while protecting and restoring the natural environment upon which people and economies depend. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- **SWOT:** an analysis tool often used by planners to identify the strength, weakness, opportunities, and threats of a community.
- **Traditional neighborhood development:** a development that exhibits several of the following characteristics; alleys, streets laid out in a grid system, buildings oriented to the street, front porches on houses, pedestrian-orientation, compatible, mixed land uses, villages squares and greens.
- **Transfer of development rights (TDR):** a technique, involving the designation of development (receiving) zones and protected (sending) zones, for guiding growth away from sensitive resources and toward controlled development centers by transferring development rights from one area to another via local law authorization such as a deed or easement.
- **Trends:** the general movement in the course of time of a statistically detectable change.
- **Urban growth boundary:** a perimeter drawn around an urban growth area.
- **Village power:** found in sec. 61.34(1), *Wis.Stats.*, village power provides village board with general authority to act for the good of the community, which includes the “police power” authority to adopt regulatory ordinances. It provides clear authority to engage in planning activities and for appointment of a plan commission. Annual or special town meeting may authorize the town board to exercise village powers.
- **Visioning:** a process by which a community defines the future it wants. Through public involvement, communities identify their purpose, core values, and vision of the future.
- **Zoning:** a police power measure in which the community is divided into districts or zones within which permitted and special uses are established as are regulations governing lot size, building bulk, placement, and other development standards.