

Vierbicher *Bulletin*

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Information for Municipal Officials

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Plan Implementation

So you have a comprehensive plan. Now what?

To comply with the state's smart growth legislation, land use rules and regulations at the local level must be consistent with the adopted smart growth plan. Likewise, if the community's vision as described in the comprehensive plan is to be achieved, a wide variety of other tasks must likely be undertaken.



For these two reasons, completion of a comprehensive plan marks a new round of effort - it's the beginning, not an end.

The list of tasks outlined in a plan could be short or it could be lengthy, depending on your community's situation. Some of the tasks might call for a more detailed look at a pressing issue, other tasks might be more action oriented. But more than likely, implementation would occur over a number of years.

The intent of this Bulletin is to describe some common implementation activities, along with some unique approaches.

Land Development Regulations

A comprehensive plan in and of itself is not a regulation. It provides a vision as described by goals and objectives and through the maps showing future conditions. Quite often, zoning regulations will need to be adjusted to reflect the intent of the plan.

Completion of a comprehensive plan is not an end, rather the beginning.

Communities have a choice when confronted with this task. They can use their existing code and make changes here and there. Many communities however take a more thorough look at the entire set of regulations that guide development activities. Local development regulations are often scattered throughout the municipalities code book and often contain conflicting provisions. To address this issue and to make it easier for residents and developers to comply, a unified set of regulations could be developed that covers the full range of development standards. This could include sign regulations, zoning, stormwater management, parking, landscaping, design review, and subdivision.

Design Guidelines

If your community has a downtown area or other commercial area, you may be looking at adopting a set of design guidelines to help ensure quality development to fit the character of the area. Design guidelines are intended to help architects and others design buildings that fit the character of the area.



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Paying for Implementation

Comprehensive plans often identify needed infrastructure to accommodate a growing population or to replace obsolete facilities. But the big question is: "How are we going to pay for that?" There are a number of tools and programs available to help fund implementation activities.

- **TIF** - Wisconsin's tax increment financing law was recently revised to make it a much more flexible tool for funding development activities in promoting smart growth.
- **Stormwater utility and transportation utility** - In order to help pay for needed infrastructure, you may want to look at creating a stormwater utility to help pay for projects and/or to more equitably distribute the costs to all property owners. Likewise, creating a transportation user fee can be used to fund transportation facilities at the local level.
- **Infrastructure grants** - The state and federal government have several programs that can provide grants or low-interest loans to help pay for infrastructure.
- **Impact fees** - This can be an effective tool to generate revenue to help fund the cost imposed by new development.

Boundary Agreements

Boundary agreements can be effective tools to create predictability for the city/village and the surrounding town as development occurs in and around the area.

Market Analysis

Municipalities are just beginning to use the power of market analysis in their housing, downtown, and economic development efforts. This can help with determining market niches that are not being provided, recruiting new businesses, and to also facilitate redevelopment.

It's a Big Elephant

If your community is to realize the vision articulated in your comprehensive plan, the list of tasks could be daunting. Given this array of demands it's important to prioritize efforts and develop a long-term work program. Then start at the top of the list and work your way down.

Implementation Tasks

- Boundary agreements
- Revenue sharing agreements
- Development of park areas
- Infrastructure (streets, water and wastewater systems)
- Creation of a stormwater or transportation utility
- Sharing of municipal services
- Fiscal impact analysis
- Neighborhood plans
- Develop a website or newsletter
- Develop an industrial park
- Creation of a detailed marketing plan for economic development
- Adopt a capital improvement plan
- Apply for state and federal grants
- Create a tax increment financing (TIF) district
- Establish a revolving loan fund to help rehabilitate and/or maintain housing
- Establish a facade improvement program for downtowns
- Condemn dilapidated buildings to make way for new development
- Write a housing action plan
- Adopt impact fees

Vierbicher Can Help!

Vierbicher Associates, Inc., has extensive experience assisting communities with planning projects - from initial funding and plan preparation to implementation.

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