

Comprehensive Plan Standards for Sustaining Places

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American Planning Association
Making Great Communities Happen

Comprehensive Plan Standards for Sustaining Places

The ultimate aim is to help planners and the communities they serve realize the powerful potential of the comprehensive plan to sustain twenty-first century places.

*-American Planning Association,
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Sustaining Places Background



Pilot Communities

Pilot Community	Population
Savona, NY	822
Foxborough, MA	16,865
Wheeling, WV	28,213
Goshen, IN	31,719
Rock Island, IL	39,018
Auburn, WA	70,180
New Hanover County, NC	202,677
Oklahoma City, OK	599,199
Seattle, WA	634,535
Memphis/Shelby County, TN	927,644

Comprehensive Plan Standards Framework

Principles: *normative statements of intent* that underlie a plan's overall strategy, including its goals, objectives, policies, maps, and other content.

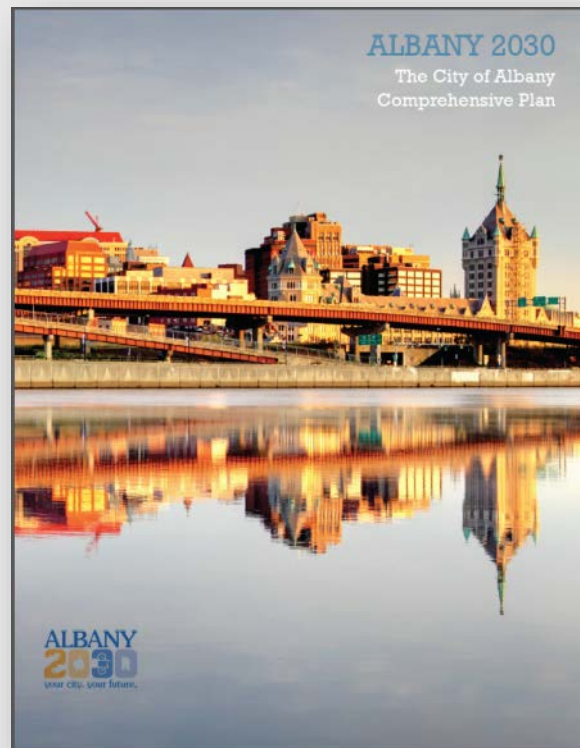
Processes: *planning activities* that take place during the preparation of a comprehensive plan and define how it will be implemented.

Attributes: *plan-making design standards* that shape the content and characteristics of comprehensive plans.

Best Practices: *planning action tools* that activate the principles, processes, and attributes.

Plan Principles

1. Livable Built Environment
2. Harmony with Nature
3. Resilient Economy
4. Interwoven Equity
5. Healthy Community
6. Responsible Regionalism



1. Livable Built Environment

Ensure that all elements of the built environment, including land use, transportation, housing, energy, and infrastructure, work together to provide sustainable, green places for living, working, and recreation, with a high quality of life.



Livable Built Environment: Best Practices

1.1 Plan for multi-modal transportation.

1.7 Encourage design standards appropriate to the community context.

1.2 Plan for transit-oriented development.

1.8 Provide accessible public facilities and spaces.

1.3 Coordinate regional transportation investments with job clusters.

1.9 Conserve and reuse historic resources.

1.4 Provide complete streets serving multiple functions.

1.10 Implement green building design and energy conservation.

1.5 Plan for mixed land-use patterns that are walkable and bikeable.

1.11 Discourage development in hazard zones.

1.6 Plan for infill development.

Plan for Multi-Modal Transportation

A multimodal transportation system allows people to use a variety of transportation modes, including walking, biking, and other mobility devices (e.g., wheelchairs), as well as transit where possible. Such a system reduces dependence on automobiles and encourages more active forms of personal transportation, improving health outcomes and increasing the mobility of those who are unable or unwilling to drive (e.g., youth, persons with disabilities, the elderly). Fewer cars on the road also translates to reduced air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions with associated health and environmental benefits.

2. Harmony with Nature

Ensure that the contributions of natural resources to human well-being are explicitly recognized and valued and that maintaining their health is a primary objective.



Harmony with Nature: Best Practices

2.1 Restore, connect, and protect natural habitats and sensitive lands.

2.6 Encourage climate change adaptation.

2.2 Plan for the provision and protection of green infrastructure.

2.7 Provide for renewable energy use.

2.3 Encourage development that respects natural topography.

2.8 Provide for solid waste reduction.

2.4 Enact policies to reduce carbon footprints.

2.9 Encourage water conservation and plan for a lasting water supply.

2.5 Comply with state and local air quality standards.

2.10 Protect and manage streams, watersheds, and floodplains.

3. Resilient Economy

Ensure that the community is prepared to deal with both positive and negative changes in its economic health and to initiate sustainable urban development and redevelopment strategies that foster green business growth and build reliance on local assets.



Resilient Economy: Best Practices	
3.1 Provide the physical capacity for economic growth.	3.5 Encourage community-based economic development and revitalization.
3.2 Plan for a balanced land-use mix for fiscal sustainability.	3.6 Provide and maintain infrastructure capacity in line with growth or decline demands.
3.3 Plan for transportation access to employment centers.	3.7 Plan for post-disaster economic recovery.
3.4 Promote green businesses and jobs.	

4. Interwoven Equity

Ensure fairness and equity in providing for the housing, services, health, safety, and livelihood needs of all citizens and groups.



Photo: City of Austin

Interwoven Equity: Best Practices

4.1 Provide a range of housing types.

4.6 Upgrade infrastructure and facilities in older and substandard areas.

4.2 Plan for a jobs/housing balance.

4.7 Plan for workforce diversity and development.

4.3 Plan for the physical, environmental, and economic improvement of at-risk, distressed, and disadvantaged neighborhoods.

4.8 Protect vulnerable populations from natural hazards.

4.4 Plan for improved health and safety for at-risk populations.

4.9 Promote environmental justice.

4.5 Provide accessible, quality public services, facilities, and health care to minority and low-income populations.

5. Healthy Community

Ensure that public health needs are recognized and addressed through provisions for healthy foods, physical activity, access to recreation, health care, environmental justice, and safe neighborhoods.



Photo: City of Austin

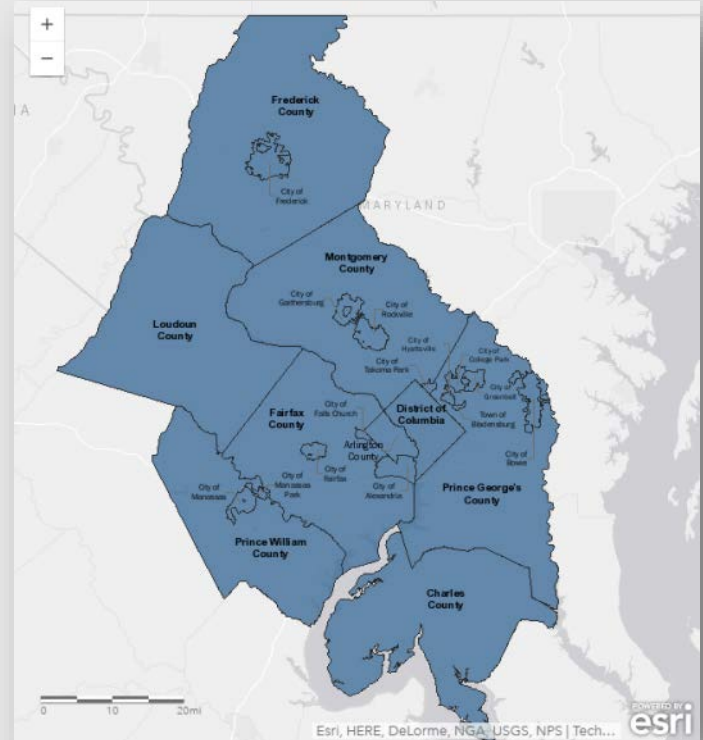


Photo: East Donegal

Healthy Community: Best Practices	
5.1 Reduce exposure to toxins and pollutants in the natural and built environment.	5.5 Provide accessible parks, recreation facilities, greenways, and open space near all neighborhoods.
5.2 Plan for increased public safety through reduction of crime and injuries.	5.6 Plan for access to healthy, locally-grown foods for all neighborhoods.
5.3 Plan for the mitigation and redevelopment of brownfields for productive uses.	5.7 Plan for equitable access to health care providers, schools, public safety facilities, and arts and cultural facilities.
5.4 Plan for physical activity and healthy lifestyles.	

6. Responsible Regionalism

Ensure that all local proposals account for, connect with, and support the plans of adjacent jurisdictions and the surrounding region.



Responsible Regionalism: Best Practices	
6.1 Coordinate local land use plans with regional transportation investments.	6.6 Enhance connections between local activity centers and regional destinations.
6.2 Coordinate local and regional housing plan goals.	6.7 Coordinate local and regional population and economic projections.
6.3 Coordinate local open space plans with regional green infrastructure plans.	6.8 Include regional development visions and plans in local planning scenarios.
6.4 Delineate designated growth areas that are served by transit.	6.9 Encourage consistency between local capital improvement programs and regional infrastructure priorities.
6.5 Promote regional cooperation and sharing of resources.	

Plan Processes

7. Authentic Participation

8. Accountable Implementation



Image: City of Austin, Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan

7. Authentic Participation

Ensure that the planning process actively involves all segments of the community in analyzing issues, generating visions, developing plans, and monitoring outcomes.



Photos: City of Seattle



Authentic Participation: Best Practices	
7.1 Engage stakeholders at all stages of the planning process.	7.5 Provide ongoing and understandable information for all participants.
7.2 Seek diverse participation in the planning process.	7.6 Use a variety of communications channels to inform and involve the community.
7.3 Promote leadership development in disadvantaged communities during the planning process.	7.7 Continue to engage the public after the comprehensive plan is adopted.
7.4 Develop alternative scenarios of the future.	

8. Accountable Implementation

Ensure that responsibilities for carrying out the plan are clearly stated, along with metrics for evaluating progress in achieving desired outcomes.

The dashboard displays a list of metrics with corresponding icons and values for three scenarios: A, B, and C. The metrics are categorized into economic, social, and environmental impacts.

	A	B	C
NEW JOBS ADDED (SAME IN ALL SCENARIOS)	172,000	172,000	172,000
NEW RESIDENTS ADDED (SAME IN ALL SCENARIOS)	312,000	312,000	312,000
COST OF CITY SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE	\$53M	\$50M	\$70M
MORE/LESS AUTOMOBILE EXPENSE	+36	6	12
MORE/LESS TIME SPENT IN VEHICLE	+25	2	13
ADDITIONAL VEHICLE WRECKS	7	44	13
PUBLIC SAFETY OPERATIONS COSTS	\$40M	\$51M	\$69
ROAD MAINTENANCE COSTS	\$8M	\$3M	\$6M
UTILITIES OPERATIONS COSTS	\$20M	\$6M	\$3M
NEW DEVELOPED SQUARE MILES	191	119	26
PERCENT OF NEW HOMES THAT ARE SINGLE-FAMILY	78%	72%	67%
NEW ROADS BUILT	46	35	28
INFILL HOUSING	15	31	146
INCREASE IN ABANDONED HOMES	8%	2%	0
INFILL JOBS	71%	45%	105%
CHANGE IN DAILY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	8%	60%	139%
WALKING, BICYCLING, OR TRANSIT USAGE	6%	53%	8%
WATER USE FOR LANDSCAPING	340	57	158
INCREASE IN CARBON EMISSIONS	57%	40%	6%

Image: City of Oklahoma City

Accountable Implementation: Best Practices	
8.1 Indicate specific actions for implementation.	8.5 Identify funding sources for plan implementation.
8.2 Connect plan implementation to the capital planning process.	8.6 Establish implementation indicators, benchmarks, and targets.
8.3 Connect plan implementation to the annual budgeting process.	8.7 Regularly evaluate and report on implementation progress.
8.4 Establish interagency and organizational cooperation.	8.8 Adjust the plan as necessary based on the evaluation.

Plan Attributes

7. Consistent Content

8. Coordinated Characteristics



Plano Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan

9. Consistent Content

Ensure that the plan contains a consistent set of visions, goals, policies, objectives, and actions that are based on evidence about community conditions, major issues, and impacts.



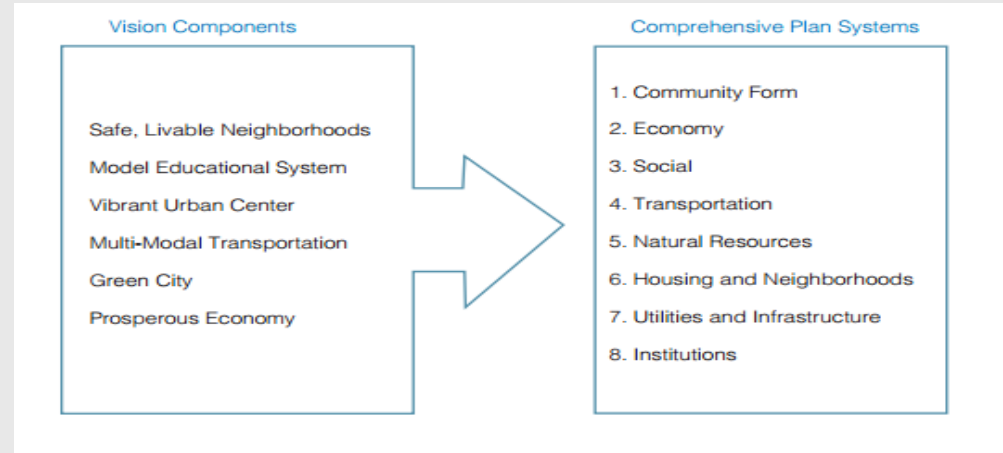
JUST THE FACTS

- Marin County's ecological footprint (i.e., the amount of land and sea needed to produce the resources to support one person) is estimated to be about 27 global acres per person. The U.S. average is about 20 acres, and the world average is 5.4 acres.¹
- Marin County generates more garbage per person than any other county in the U.S.²
- The 2012 annual Christmas bird count for southern Marin identified 72,624 birds and 185 different species in a single day - including 2,672 birds and 85 different species counted in Mill Valley and Mill Valley Marsh.³

Consistent Content: Best Practices	
9.1 Assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.	9.5 Set objectives in support of the goals.
9.2 Establish a fact base.	9.6 Set policies to guide decision-making.
9.3. Develop a vision of the future.	9.7 Define actions to carry out the plan.
9.4 Set goals in support of the vision.	9.8 Use clear and compelling features to present the plan.

10. Coordinated Characteristics

Ensure that the plan includes creative and innovative strategies and recommendations and coordinates them internally with each other, vertically with federal and state requirements, and horizontally with plans of adjacent jurisdictions.



Coordinated Characteristics: Best Practices	
10.1 Be comprehensive in the plan's coverage.	10.6 Coordinate with the plans of other jurisdictions and levels of government.
10.2 Integrate the plan with other local plans and programs.	10.7 Comply with applicable laws and mandates.
10.3 Be innovative in the plan's approach.	10.8 Be transparent in the plan's substance.
10.4 Be persuasive in the plan's communications.	10.9 Use plan formats that go beyond paper.
10.5 Be consistent across plan components.	

Plan Scoring System

Procedure to measure a comprehensive plan against a national standard

Establishes scoring criteria for best practices

- Not Applicable
- Not Present (0 points)
- Low (1 point)
- Medium (2 points)
- High (3 points)

APPENDIX C: SCORING MATRIX	
TOTAL SCORES	NOTES
PRINCIPLES	
1. LIVABLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT	
2. HARMONY WITH NATURE	
3. RESILIENT ECONOMY	
4. INTERWOVEN EQUITY	
5. HEALTHY COMMUNITY	
6. RESPONSIBLE REGIONALISM	
I. TOTAL PRINCIPLES SCORE (ADD 1-6)	
PROCESSES	
7. AUTHENTIC PARTICIPATION	
8. ACCOUNTABLE IMPLEMENTATION	
II. TOTAL PROCESSES SCORE (ADD 7 AND 8)	
ATTRIBUTES	
9. CONSISTENT CONTENT	
10. COORDINATED CHARACTERISTICS	
III. TOTAL ATTRIBUTES SCORE (ADD 9 AND 10)	
TOTAL PLAN SCORE (ADD I, II, AND III)	
TOTAL POINTS AVAILABLE	
<i>Count the number of applicable practices and multiply by 3. The maximum is 255 points (if all practices are applicable).</i>	
PLAN SCORE PERCENTAGE	
<i>(Total Plan Score/Total Points Available)</i>	
Level of Achievement (based on Plan Score Percentage)	
Designated: 70-79%	
Silver: 80-89%	
Gold: 90-100%	

Recognition Program Pilot



- [Envision Longmont](#)
City of Longmont, Colorado
- [Imagine 2040: Tampa Comprehensive Plan](#)
Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission and the City of Tampa, Florida
- [Bring It On Bloomington!](#)
McLean County (Illinois) Regional Planning Commission
- [Plan DSM](#)
City of Des Moines, Iowa
- [Plano Tomorrow](#)
City of Plano, Texas

- [Los Angeles County General Plan](#)
Los Angeles County, California
- [City of Issaquah Comprehensive Plan](#)
City of Issaquah, Washington
- [Monroe Comprehensive Plan](#)
City of Monroe, Wisconsin



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