



## Focus On Comprehensive Planning



For the next few years, the Community Development Education pages of *The Foghorn* will emphasize land use education and information.

UWEX educational support for local and county comprehensive planning projects will include work-

shops and presentations about a variety of planning, development and conservation topics.

So, if you're active in a comprehensive planning project, or just want to learn more about land use issues, be watching for each *Foghorn* issue!

## INFILL DEVELOPMENT

### INTRODUCTION

Although Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law leaves the content of local plans to communities, the state has adopted broad goals and themes for local planners to address, among them:

- Promote redevelopment with existing infrastructure and public services
- Protect natural areas, and economically productive areas, such as, farmland and forests.
- Encourage land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and limit utility and development costs.
- Preserve cultural, historic and archaeological sites.
- Build community identity & revitalize main streets
- Plan and develop land uses that create/preserve unique communities.

These goals underscore the opportunity for communities to use planning and regulation to create compact development patterns while minimizing impacts on valued economic and environmental resources. This approach is called "infill development."

Although typically applied in Wisconsin by cities, villages and urbanizing towns, the intergovernmental cooperation element of every Comprehensive Plan provides an opening for urban-rural dialogue and shared planning around these goals. Some urban municipalities in Wisconsin are developing and adopting joint comprehensive plans with their rural neighbors.

One definition of infill development is: *Building homes, businesses and public facilities on unused and underutilized lands within existing urban areas. In almost every city or suburb there are empty lots, once-active businesses and underutilized land, such as abandoned parking lots, that provide locations for new housing and mixed-use developments with stores and apartments. Infill development keeps resources where people live and supports rebuilding. Infill development is more economical than scattered development at the edge or out in the countryside because it uses existing infrastructure rather than requiring more tax dollars for new sewers and roads. Properly designed infill development can make for safe, revitalized, attractive neighborhoods and business areas.*

According to the Urban Land Institute, less compact development may eventually cost from 40-400% more than infill development due to the costs of building and maintaining new roads, sewers, fire stations and schools.

Although infill development contributes to a more compact form of development, a community should provide incentives for landowners and developers to pursue the infill strategy. Many developers logically bypass vacant urban area land for less expensive land beyond the community's edge.

### PLANNING FOR INFILL DEVELOPMENT

Infill approaches can address any type of development. Therefore, any of the "functional" elements of your plan – Utilities & Community Facilities, Transportation, Housing, etc. – can help address infill opportunities.

One of the strongest components in the Comprehensive Planning law is that starting in 2010 a municipality's land use actions – zoning and subdivision regulation, the official map – must be consistent with its adopted plan. **Think about that. Plan/Action Consistency** is one ingredient in the recipe for a successful comprehensive planning program.

To achieve infill development consistency, the language of your plan – Vision, Goals, Policies, Development Criteria, and Implementation Strategies

– must match the content of your ordinances and programs used to take action on infill projects.

If infill development is a focus in your community's plan and actions, review the language of your local plan to ensure that:

- **Vision and long-term Goals** resonate with state goals listed at the beginning of this article. For example, long-term Goals for Residential Development or Open Space Preservation can address your municipality's sustained infill interest. **SAMPLE language** For Residential Goal: *Limit future residential development to those areas best suited for development, where services are presently located, or can be economically provided.*

Within a Comprehensive Plan, a **Policy Framework** provides background, related land use & development trends, principles that guide decisions on the issue. Having a separate Policy Framework addressing infill development in your plan will help establish a focus for implementation. Policies must be consistent with your related Goals.

**Development Criteria** are more specific standards for certain types of development. So, for example, Residential Development Criteria might include something like: *Maximize the use of "infill" areas in existing residential and commercial zones and minimize the distance between existing and future development so as to:*

- o *Limit costs of extending new infrastructure to serve new households;*
- o *Minimize the loss of valued resources;*
- o *Minimize the distance between commercial development and placement of new residential development in order to minimize driving and walking distance, particularly for elderly residents*

The **Implementation Strategies** identified in your plan will point towards the regulations and pro-

## What's a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a legal document that serves as long-range guide for physical development &/or conservation of resources in your community.

Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning law – found in Chapter 66 of the State Statutes – defines the types of content that local plans must address – economic development, transportation, etc. – but leaves it up to citizens, officials and other plan participants to de-

fine actual plan content.

A good comprehensive plan has a strategic focus – it provides a basis for action. Beginning in 2010, the law requires consistency between your municipality's adopted Comprehensive Plan and land use actions handled through local zoning and subdivision ordinances, and the official map. Managing land use plan-action consistency is a challenge faced by all Kewaunee County municipalities.

grams you will use to address development projects, including carrots and sticks supporting your local infill focus. So, Strategies for Achieving Residential Development or other Goals might look like the following:

**Strategy #1:** For economic efficiency, and to minimize open space and natural resource impacts, residential growth should be directed towards undeveloped areas of existing sanitary districts. .



These "infill" developments can be encouraged by:

• Rewarding developers with "density bonuses;"

• Educating residents, landowners and developers about open space, natural resource, and dollar impacts of extending services and homes into new areas of the community; and

• Providing the following types of services to the development community in infill areas:

• Create area development plans for infill areas.

• Find ways to limit regulatory obstacles, e.g., streamline the approval process or reduce permit fees for projects that meet infill development criteria.

• Reduce the supply or slow down the creation of developable land in fringe areas

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ment. A "traditional neighborhood" is "a compact, mixed use, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood where residential, commercial and civic buildings are close to each other. It is a planning concept that is based on traditional neighborhood development principles, neighborhood designs that were once common in Wisconsin and other states. Conservation Subdivision Design (CSD) is another approach that local units can use to address infill development. A conservation subdivision is a housing development that is characterized by compact lots and common open space, and preservation valued resources and features.

### INFILL DEVELOPMENT AS PART OF PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Remember, with the Plan/Action consistency requirement under state law, each community developing and adopting a Comprehensive Plan under current law will need to upgrade existing ordinances and programs and/or develop new ordinances to ensure consistency with plan content.

**Here are some resources available to cities and villages considering an Infill Development program. You can find these resources on the Web at the locations listed, or call/email me (Merritt at 920-388-7136 or [bussierem@kewauneeeco.org](mailto:bussierem@kewauneeeco.org) and I'll email/snail-mail you a copy.**

Dane County's sample *Land Use Codes* supporting infill development. While Kewaunee County communities exist in a different development world, many of the same dynamics apply. Find sample ordinance language here: <http://www.co.dane.wi.us/plandev/build/codes.asp>

Municipal Research & Services Center of Washington (state) has created an on-line guide: *Infill Development Strategies for Shaping Livable Neighborhoods*. You can find here: <http://www.mrsc.org/Publications/textfill.aspx#E19E1>

UW-Extension developed, and the Legislature adopted a *Model Ordinance for a Traditional Neighborhood Development*, found here: <http://www.wisc.edu/urpl/people/ohm/projects/tndord.pdf>

A national leader in Traditional Neighborhood Design created a SmartCode system. Available free for download here: <http://www.dpz.com/pdf/SmartCodeV7.0-6-06-05.pdf> Warning: SmartCode is a complex approach to infill and traditional neighborhood development. Not for the faint of heart!

**SOURCES:** Sections 16.965, 66.1001 & 66.1027 of the Wisconsin Statutes.; *Brownfields Initiative*, Wisconsin Dept. of Commerce website, 2005; *Model Ordinance for a Traditional Neighborhood Development*, By Ohm, LaGro & Strawser, UW-Extension, 2001. *Infill Development Fact Sheet*, Greenbelt Alliance, 2005. *Infill Development Strategies for Shaping Livable Neighborhoods*, Municipal Research & Services Center, 1997. *BUILD Objectives & Great Neighborhood Principles*, Dane County, WI, 1998 – 2005.

### TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS & CONSERVATION SUBDIVISIONS

For more urban areas, traditional neighborhood plan/design (TNPD) is one way of addressing infill develop-