

The Polk County Comprehensive Planning Process---An Eight Step Checklist:

1) Getting Organized.

In the Summer of 2007, we hold several informational meetings/workshops to explain the process as a whole, lay out a timeline, and answer questions.

2) Establishing a Plan Commission.

If your township does not have a Plan Commission prior to this program, state statute says one is required to draft a Comprehensive Plan. The next step is to work with local governments to understand the function of a Plan Commission and provide sample ordinances for them to modify and adopt allowing them to seat a Plan Commission. This shows a true commitment.

3) Public Participation.

Local units understand the need to plan but in a lot of cases do not have a vision or a direction to pursue. A requirement of the process is to adopt written public participation procedures. Next step is to provide sample procedures, which local governments, edit and adopt. With this in place they can take that first step, creating a Vision Statement. This is accomplished through public opinion surveys and local visioning sessions.

4) Data and Analysis.

Once the local Plan Commission understands the general concerns of the public they begin collecting statistical data, looking for trends and patterns. The next step is to do an inventory local, regional and state resources to understand what their community has and what is available elsewhere. Data is analyzed against the vision statement to form goals.

5) Goals.

Comparing the results of their analysis against the vision statement, survey results and general knowledge of their community leads to goal setting sessions. After the goals have been reviewed, edited and rearranged into their final form the Plan Commissions starts looking at ways to achieve the goals.

6) Objectives.

Achieving community goals is the basis for planning, once goals are set they can be further refined into reality by setting a strategy to meet them. An objective becomes the formula to meet a particular goal. They are the detailed step-by-step instructions, benchmarks and schedules to do something and to gauge progress.

7) Implementation.

Knowing when to start, when to stop something and how to evaluate its success is the mark of good plan. Having clear goals and objectives does not insure that a plan will be followed. However, if the goals are prioritized and contain enough details (objectives) then the local unit of government is armed with enough information to at least start, stop and evaluate a particular objective. Through implementation a process to amend or change the plan is also developed.

8) Adopting a plan.

Hopefully, each local unit of government will craft its plan with local input. The plan will reflect the important issues facing their particular community. Since they have been actively involved in its creation they will be in a good position to present it to their community. If we have done a good job the document will become theirs, and supported by the community. This support will allow the Town / Village Board or the City Council to adopt its plan.