

# Planning Facts

## Portage County comprehensive plan

### Fact Sheet 1

## What's all the Talk about Planning, Anyway?

Everybody plans. We make financial plans, vacation plans, plans for retirement, even plans for an evening out. Planning helps each of us work toward achieving our personal objectives - and it helps us do it in an orderly and effective way.

Planning also allows communities to make better decisions. Our communities deal with constant change. Planning is a process that helps communities prepare for change rather than reacting to it. Planning aids communities in assessing where they are now, where they are going given the trends present, what they'd like to be in the future, and how they can get to that desired future state.

Planning is an orderly, open approach to determining local issues

and needs, and it helps communities establish priorities and actions to address those issues most important to their future vitality.

Planning is also a concentrated effort to reach a balance between the natural environment and residential, industrial, commercial, and agricultural development.

Finally, a plan is a guide for public officials and the citizens who they represent to use in making informed decisions about issues affecting their community.

So, why all the talk about planning?

The State of Wisconsin enacted new legislation with the 1999-2001 budget that requires communities across Wisconsin to plan.



Called the "Smart Growth" Law, this new legislation requires that "any program or action of a local unit of government that affects land use shall be consistent with that local governmental unit's comprehensive plan."

A **comprehensive plan** is the adopted official statement of a local government that sets forth (in words, maps, illustrations, etc.) goals, policies and guidelines intended to direct the present and future physical, social, and economic development within the community.

**"Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."**

*John Fitzgerald Kennedy*

# Benefits of planning

If your community wants to change, preserve, or create something for the future, planning can be a great benefit.

Planning can:

- Lead to more consistent and better decision making over time
- Help manage growth so that it does not happen in a haphazard way
- Help define the future character of a community
- Protect agricultural and natural resources
- Provide predictability regarding future development
- Open up the decision making process to include citizen input on a regular basis

- Save taxpayer money by avoiding duplication and waste, and by avoiding costly mistakes.

Planning, however, does not come without certain costs and limitations. If an effective plan is to be developed, citizens, organizations, and local elected officials must spend a great deal of time and energy throughout the planning process.

Finally, a plan is only as good as the measures put into place to achieve what has been laid out in the plan.

**“Would you tell me which way to go from here?” asked Alice in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*.**

**“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” answered the Cheshire Cat.**

Excerpts taken from *Comprehensive Planning Fundamentals*, UW-Extension Fact Sheet G3746, authored by Mike Koles.

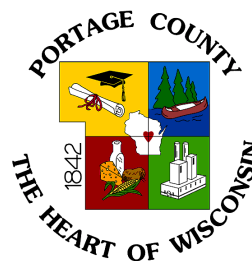
YOUR LINK TO UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION ON THE PORTAGE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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