

Chapter 2

Comprehensive Plan and Planning Process

Purpose of a Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is an official public document adopted by a local government to serve as policy to guide decisions about the development of the community. As a policy, the Plan must recognize the interdependence of land use decisions, resource management, the process of governing, and the physical infrastructure of the built environment. Representing the voices of a wide range of citizens who have been active participants in the planning process, this Plan attempts to identify the interests of Madison County's current and future citizens.

Because it is *comprehensive*, the Plan guides decision making by the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, and the County Commissioners. These officials have been charged and empowered to protect agricultural and natural resources, to ensure efficient expenditure of public funds, and to promote the health, safety, convenience, and general welfare of those living in Madison County. To that end, this Plan's policy, the Goals and Objectives, have been designed with the following general principles in mind (As specified by Indiana Code IC 36-7-4-201):

- The community will grow only with adequate provision of public way, utility, health, and educational and recreational facilities.
- The needs of agriculture and industry must be recognized in future growth decisions.
- Residential areas must help to create healthful surroundings for family life.
- Transportation systems must be carefully planned.
- The growth of the community must be proportionate and in keeping with an efficient and economic expenditure of public funds.

Madison County Comprehensive Planning

1983 Comprehensive Plan

The previous Madison County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1983. At that time, the State's minimum requirement for such documents consisted of a compilation of the zoning ordinances and amendments. The former Plan did not provide an overall vision or guiding policy statements for land development or preservation in the unincorporated areas of the County. Some of the concerns expressed in the 1983 Plan provide a testimony for the significance and need for a *comprehensive* approach to planning. Issues raised in the 1983 plan include:

- Reducing strip development along highways.
- Providing open space corridors between communities.
- Preventing urban development in flood plains areas.
- Creating separate identities for each community.
- Permitting rural areas to retain their rural character.
- Encouraging people to locate in and adjacent to existing communities.
- Preserving farming as a significant economic activity and protecting prime agricultural land.
- Encouraging people in the community to work together to decide the best use of the land and its related resources.

After reviewing these statements and surveying the county landscape, it is clear that many of yesterday's problems have remained today's (2001) concerns.

1999 Comprehensive Plan Update

In the sixteen years since the last Madison County Comprehensive Plan, many communities across the nation have realized that planning with community participation is the most effective way to plan. The residents of Madison County are the true experts on community issues within the County. The assembled planning team members for the Update Plan served only as facilitators and information transmitters to guide the community and its leaders in identifying, revising, and formalizing the informal planning that they undertake in their daily lives.

The planning process was designed to enhance day-to-day planning efforts by increasing the information available to leaders and citizens so that they might make informed decisions about the future. The intent was to establish a dynamic planning process that would continue to facilitate and stimulate communication among community stakeholders well beyond this publication. This dynamic approach to planning assures that the development of Madison County will continue to adapt to the changing needs and demands of the community as a whole.

The 1999 Comprehensive Plan Update serves as a means to document the results of the initial planning process as outlined below. The Planning Team and Community Leaders intend for the document to remain alive and to evolve with subsequent modifications to the current situations (Section A), stated policies (Section B), and implementation measures (Section C) as outlined in this publication.

1997 - 2000 Comprehensive Planning Process

Project Setup

The first phase of the planning process started with resolving to begin work on a new comprehensive plan, building support, and gathering resources. Subsequently, the planning team and officials dealt with administrative tasks and setting up the project framework. The preparation phase included:

- Securing funding
- Conducting educational workshops
- Hiring a planner as Executive Director
- Assembling and briefing the planning team
- Creating base maps to record data and researching relevant publications
- Gathering materials and equipment for field inventories
- Contacting local media for project publicity
- Coordinating focus group participants and establishing meeting schedules

Data Gathering and Analysis

The second phase of the planning process involved implementing a variety of data gathering techniques. The existing conditions of facilities, services, and land development were inventoried and analyzed, with projections based on current patterns. The majority of this data was assembled to form the 'Existing Conditions and Trends' portions of the 'Community Profile' (Chapter 4 – Section A). Some of this data gathering included:

- Conducting an inventory of current land uses (each parcel classified by principle use) and housing stock condition in the unincorporated county.
- Distributing and receiving a *Community Needs Survey* to and from all unincorporated county households (Chapter 3 – Section A) for a description of this participation tool).
- Reviewing US census and county records to construct a community profile based on socio-economic and development related information (Chapter 4 – Section A).

Public Participation

The residents of Madison County were consulted throughout all the phases of the planning process. Throughout the various stages of the planning process, citizens and community leaders were afforded many opportunities to discuss issues important to them and their community. Residents played active roles, participating in brainstorming sessions on critical issues, assisting in the development of the land use concept map (**Map E-1-22**), and providing feedback on the evolution of policy statements. The major source of participation came from twenty-five Focus Group Meetings, twenty Public Workshops, and numerous Follow-up Sessions (refer to these sections in the Chapter 3 – Section A).

Plan Conceptualization [December 1998 to April 1999]

This planning phase included creating and revising the land use concept map, and organizing information to create a draft plan document. Comments gathered at public workshops provided the essential information for the textual components of the Plan. Further refinement of the concept map resulted in a detailed analysis of specific areas in the County, drawing precise lines around distinct districts. The County Commissioners and the Planning Commission were given an opportunity to review the draft plan document and offer comments.

Plan Finalization [April 1999 – December 1999]

In the final comprehensive planning phase, the plan document was revised and edited, based on comments and feedback from community members. Additional information, maps, and graphics were added to the document, and a proposed land use map was generated. The document was divided into five sections for better organization and use of material.

- **Section A:** background information of the planning process and findings (approved October 1999)
- **Section B:** policy statements – goals and objectives (approved October 1999)
- **Section C:** policy implementation – strategies (approved December 1999)
- **Section D:** Land Use and Growth Management Plan (tentative approval, February 2001)
- **Section E:** Transportation Plan (tentative approval, February 2001)

Zoning Ordinances [Spring/Summer 2001]

The Comprehensive Plan Update for Madison County is the guide for development and zoning policies. As a result, the County Planning Commission has the responsibility of updating the existing zoning ordinances, subdivision review procedures, and all other planning procedures to be in compliance with the adopted plan.

Planning Management Structure

Local Government Structure

Madison County is governed by a Board of Commissioners, which consists of three elected officials who are responsible for the administration of County business. The powers and duties of the Commissioners (related to planning and development) include the following: managing County property, constructing and maintaining County roads, operating and funding services/programs, approving and passing ordinances, levying taxes for public services, and sitting on or making appointments to various boards.

Madison County is comprised of a county government structure consisting of fourteen townships, three cities, eight towns, and seventeen villages. Each of these districts bears a degree of responsibility in the development of the overall planning area. The management structure directly responsible for undertaking the update of the Comprehensive Plan include the following key entities:

Madison County Commissioners

The County Commissioners hold the legislative authority, under the Indiana Code, to adopt the Comprehensive Plan Update and are the ultimate implementer of all planning-related policies and strategies for the unincorporated area. Madison County Commissioners are responsible for the adoption of the final version of the plan. Implementation of this plan took place with assistance and guidance from the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA), and the Planning Department.

Madison County Council

The Madison County Council is the fiscal authority for local county government. The Council provided funds for the completion of the Comprehensive Plan document and will assist in the ongoing implementation of the Plan through the Planning Commission's operating budget. This body provides guidance in matters of planning and development by appointing a member to sit on the Planning Commission.

Madison County Planning Commission

The County Planning Commission is comprised of a nine-member board with jurisdiction in the unincorporated areas of the County. Their membership consists of five citizens (appointed by the Commissioners), a County Commissioner, a County Council member, the County surveyor, and the County Agricultural Extension educator. The responsibilities of this group include the formulation and recommendation of long range and comprehensive plans, approvals for location improvement permits, approvals for plans for sub-divisions outside corporate limits, and the administration of zoning ordinances. Upon review and approval of the Madison County Comprehensive Plan Update, it is the Planning Commission's responsibility to recommend the adoption of the document to the County Commissioners.

Madison County Planning Department

The Madison County Planning Department, as the staff of the Planning Commission, acts as administrator and coordinator for the completion of the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Department staff is responsible for the drafting of ordinances, the enforcement of those ordinances, and the implementation of updates to the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Department will take the lead in drafting the zoning ordinances with the assistance of a consultant.

Madison County Comprehensive Planning Team

The Madison County Council of Governments (MCCOG) was the primary consultant for the Comprehensive Plan Update under the direction of the County Planning Department. MCCOG provided the services of its Executive Director, Project Planner, Landscape Architect, GIS Specialist, and college interns. The Planning Team gathered and processed the data for the community profiles, facilitated workshops and meetings, provided expertise in all phases of the project, and drafted the comprehensive planning document.