

CHAPTER 9: Implementation

9.1 Background

This is the final chapter of the City of Wisconsin Rapids Comprehensive Plan. This chapter outlines plan adoption and monitoring procedures, as well as plan amendment and update procedures, and reviews plan implementation tools. This chapter also includes the overall recommendations to implement this plan.

City staff, the Plan Commission, the City Council and its various committees, boards, and commissions will use the Comprehensive Plan to guide the physical development of the City. In addition, developers and landowners will use the document.

A. Plan Adoption

The adoption process requires that the Plan Commission review the Comprehensive Plan and pass a resolution by a majority vote to recommend the adoption of the plan to the City Council. That recommendation is forwarded to the City Council, which must adopt the Comprehensive Plan, by ordinance.

Prior to the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, a public hearing is required to be held to solicit public comment. That public hearing must be advertised with at least 30 days notice. Adoption formalizes the plan document as the framework to guide local development decisions over the next 20 years or more. The adopted plan should also be recognized as a tool for communicating the community's land use policy, goals, and objectives related to the City's growth and development.

B. Plan Monitoring

As part of the comprehensive planning process, a number of goals, objectives, and policies were developed. Once implemented, these are intended to provide direction to local leaders and staff, as well as citizens of the city.

To measure progress towards meeting these goals, objectives, and policies, a variety of actions need to take place. Therefore, the task to measure plan progress is as simple as determining if any action was taken on the various goals, objectives, and policies. Many of these

actions would be completed at the department level, and by various committees and agencies.

It should be noted that many of the policies identified in the plan are continuous or on going, and should be monitored to measure the plan's overall success. In addition, many of the objectives and their related actions can be accomplished in the short term, within 1 to 5 years. However, some will take longer to accomplish, perhaps 6 to 10 years or more.

It is recommended that a periodic "Plan Status" report be prepared to summarize the progress toward implementation. This report can be jointly developed by various city departments, as related to their involvement in the implementation of the goals, objectives, and policies developed within the plan. These goals, objectives, and policies should also be monitored on a regular basis to determine how well they are guiding the community in light of changing conditions that impact Wisconsin Rapids' growth and quality of life.

At a minimum, this plan should be evaluated at least every five years and, by law, updated at least every ten years. Members of the City Council, Plan Commission, and other local decision-making bodies should periodically review the plan and identify areas that might need to be updated. The evaluation should involve reviewing the goals and objectives to ensure they are still relevant and reflect current community desires. Then the policies should be reviewed and refined to eliminate completed tasks, and identify new approaches if appropriate.

9.2 Plan Amendments and Updates

A. Amendments

The plan may be amended at any time upon the recommendation of the Plan Commission and approval from the City Council, following the same statutory process described for initial plan adoption. The procedures are the same regardless of how minor the proposed amendment or change. Amendments may be appropriate throughout the lifecycle of the plan, particularly if new issues emerge or trends change. These amendments will typically consist of minor changes to the plan text or maps. Large-scale change or frequent amendments to meet individual development proposals should be avoided, or the plan may lose integrity.

General criteria to consider when reviewing proposed amendments to the comprehensive plan include:

- ✓ The plan amendment corrects an error made in the original plan.
- ✓ The amendment is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Wisconsin Rapids Comprehensive Plan.
- ✓ The amendment does not create an adverse impact on public facilities and services that cannot be mitigated.
- ✓ The change does not have a significant adverse impact on the natural environment, including surface water quality and groundwater, or the impact can be mitigated by improvements on the site or in the same vicinity.
- ✓ The change does not adversely impact any landmarks or other historically significant structures or properties, unless mitigated through relocation, commemoration, or dedication.
- ✓ The change allows a more appropriate transition or buffer to the planned uses on adjacent properties than the current land use.
- ✓ The resulting new development should be compatible with the existing land uses and physical character of the surrounding neighborhood, or upgrade and improve the neighborhood.
- ✓ There is a significant change in the neighborhood's characteristics that would justify a plan amendment.

The Plan Commission must review proposed amendments prior to the public hearing and adoption by the City Council. The public should be notified of proposed plan changes and have an opportunity for review and comment. For major amendments, it may be desirable to solicit public opinion through surveys and/or community meetings prior to a public hearing.

B. Plan Updates

According to the state's comprehensive planning law, comprehensive plans must be updated at least once every ten years. As opposed to the more routine amendments described above, plan updates will likely involve re-writing entire chapters of the plan document. A plan update should include a thorough examination of the community's goals and objectives, through analysis of current growth trends and major changes that have occurred since the plan was initially adopted or last amended. Plan updates must be formally adopted following the same procedure described above for initial plan adoption.

It is important that the public be involved in the update process. To ensure that the public is engaged in plan amendments, the same procedure used for initial plan adoption must be followed. (See Wisconsin Statute s.66.1001). Upon Plan Commission review and a resolution to make recommended changes to the plan, the City Council shall call a public hearing to allow property owners and citizens time to review and comment on recommended plan changes. The public hearing shall be advertised using a Class I notice.

9.3 Implementation Tools

Having the appropriate tools to implement the recommendations in this comprehensive plan is critical. The most common implementation tools are the City's official controls or regulatory codes; these include the zoning ordinance and map, subdivision regulations, and official map. These regulatory tools are used to protect existing development and guide future growth and development. There is also a non-regulatory approach to implementing the comprehensive plan; this generally involves decisions as to how the community will spend its limited financial resources on staffing and various capital improvements.

The state planning law requires that by January 1, 2010, certain programs and/or actions that affect land use must be consistent with the locally adopted comprehensive plan. To meet this deadline, the City should update related ordinances on or before the year 2010. Those sections of the existing zoning ordinance related to procedures and criteria for considering a zoning district map amendment, procedures and criteria for zoning ordinance text amendments, and procedures and criteria for granting conditional use permits should be carefully reviewed and amended where appropriate before 2010.

A. Zoning Ordinance and Map

The City Zoning Ordinance is an extremely detailed, comprehensive, locally adopted law that is used to regulate and control how land is used and developed. The zoning ordinance contains rules for building setbacks, the density of development, the height and size of buildings and other structures, and the types of land uses that are allowed on each piece of land in the city. The zoning ordinance consists of a written text and a map. The general purpose of zoning is to protect the public health, safety, and general welfare. This is accomplished by minimizing the undesirable effects resulting from high-density urban development. Some methods for this include segregating or buffering incompatible land uses, and by maintaining standards that ensure development will not negatively impact the community's character or environment.

The establishment of zoning districts and the zoning map indicate where specific types of development can and should be located. Zoning districts shown on the zoning map should be coordinated with the goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan and the future land use map. While the zoning map and land use map do not need to directly match at the time the land use map is adopted, the intent is that the land use map will guide how the property should eventually be zoned. However, the goal and objective statements in the comprehensive plan, as well as the

policies and strategies, need to be considered in guiding future land use in the community.

Indiscriminate zone changes may result in weakening the comprehensive plan since on a cumulative basis, they are likely to move the community away from its vision and stated goals and objectives. There will, however, be situations where changing the zoning district boundaries is in the best interest of the community. When changing the zoning would result in a conflict with the comprehensive plan, the plan should also be amended.

The City Council makes the final decisions regarding changes to the content of the zoning ordinance text and the zoning district assigned to each parcel of property. These decisions are preceded by public hearings held by the City Plan Commission. The Plan Commission also makes recommendations to the Common Council on all proposed zoning ordinance text changes and zoning district map amendments. Generally, zoning ordinance text changes have a much broader impact on land use than map amendments. Text changes can often apply to hundred or even thousands of properties in the community, while a map change generally involves one property. While zoning map amendments generally have a narrow geographic impact, the extent of the impact on certain properties can still be very significant.

B. Subdivision Ordinance

The subdivision ordinance establishes regulations on how large tracts of vacant land are to be split into smaller parcels. These regulations address design issues such as road access, street standards, public utility installation, storm water drainage, parks and open space, and other improvements necessary, to ensure that a new residential area will be an asset to the community, and a safe and desirable place for the people living in the neighborhood. The City Council makes the final decisions on the content of the subdivision ordinance text, and approves all subdivision plats with input from City staff, the Plan Commission, and other committees.

C. Official Mapping

Cities may adopt official maps. Adopted by ordinance or resolution, these maps may show existing and planned streets, highways, historic districts, parkways, parks, playgrounds, railroad rights of way, waterways, and public transit facilities. The map may include a waterway only if it is included in a comprehensive surface water drainage plan. No building permit may be issued to construct or enlarge any

building within the limits of these mapped areas, except pursuant to the conditions identified in the law.

Official maps are not used frequently because few communities plan anything but major thoroughfares and parks in detail in advance of the imminent development of a neighborhood. Following the planning process, it is important that the Official Map is reviewed, and changes made if needed.

D. Capital Improvement Program

A Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is simply a method of planning for and scheduling expenditures for public improvements over a period of several years in order to maximize the use of limited public funds.

Each year, the CIP is reviewed as part of the budget process and extended one year to compensate for the previous year that was completed. This helps keep the improvement program current, and allows modifications to meet changing needs. Typically, improvements or expenditures considered in the CIP process include:

- Public buildings (such as fire or police stations)
- Roads and highways (maintenance and new construction/paving)
- Utility system construction/expansion, treatment plants, water towers, wells, etc.
- Long-term equipment
- Park and trail acquisition and development

9.4 Consistency Among Plan Elements

The State of Wisconsin planning legislation requires that the Implementation Element describes how each of the required chapters will be integrated and made consistent with the other chapters of the plan. Since the City completed all planning elements simultaneously, no known inconsistencies exist. It is noted that some overlap occurs between the nine plan chapters. Where deemed appropriate, certain goals, objectives, and policies have been repeated or restated within multiple chapters of the plan.

This Comprehensive Plan also references previous and concurrent related planning efforts to ensure they are considered in the community's planning and development decisions. Recommendations from other plans have been summarized and incorporated in this plan, as deemed appropriate, to foster coordination and consistency between plans.

In the future, as plan amendments occur, it is important that city staff and the plan commission conduct consistency reviews. These reviews will ensure that the plan is up to date. It is also critical that if the plan and/or maps are changed, they do not conflict with other sections of the plan or other maps.

9.5 Recommended Actions

This section outlines some recommendations to implement the goals, objectives, and policies that are contained in the comprehensive plan. These recommendations are:

1. The Planning Commission should pass a resolution recommending adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.
2. The City Council should adopt the plan by ordinance, and use it as a guide for decision-making.
3. The City should incorporate changes to its Zoning Ordinance and other implementation tools to establish consistency.
4. The Planning Commission should become knowledgeable of the plan and use it to justify recommendations to the City Council on development issues.
5. The City's staff should incorporate the goals, objectives, and policies of the plan into annual work plans and budgets.
6. The City should encourage citizen awareness of the plan. It is also important that developers are aware of the plan. An initial step would be to have the document hosted on the city website.
7. The City should provide copies of the plan to the surrounding communities and Wood County.
8. The Planning Commission should review the Future Land Use Map at least annually, and make necessary amendment recommendations to the City Council.
9. The City should evaluate the plan every five years, and update the plan at least every ten years.