



IMPLEMENTING YOUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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A Comprehensive Plan Update is all words and hot air unless its ideas see the light in the real world. The process of updating your comprehensive plan can be fun and rewarding for those involved, but it goes nowhere if it doesn't get implemented. The Implementation Plan (or Action Plan, or Action Steps) is where ideas and policies meets the real world.

- **Implementation flows from the Plan.** What are the key actions or issues the Plan identifies? What needs to be done in terms of land use and zoning changes, park and trail connections, capital improvements, etc.? Implementation is rooted in the Plan, and is not a separate process. For communities in the metropolitan region, there are minimum requirements which are detailed in the *Local Planning Handbook*.
- **Organize Implementation Steps by topic or issue.** This should ideally follow the required elements – Land Use, Transportation, Parks, etc., or augment it with some other logical framework that will help those involved understand.
- **Identify who, when, how.** The Implementation Plan is a work plan for specific people at specific times in a specific way. Who will do it – the Planning Commission, staff (which), consultants, a special task force? When will this be done – next month, next year, in five years, ten years? How will it get done – does it need money, grants, people, space, equipment, some other decisions or actions first?
- **Some things will get done anyway.** There are certain functions and programs that will continue, with or without a line in the Plan's Implementation Plan. We know the streets will continue to be plowed and garbage will be picked up. Only include these routine things if there is something new and different about them that came out of the Plan.
- **“You can do anything, but not everything”.** This pithy quote from productivity consultant David Allen reminds us that resources and energy are finite, so don't overdo it. Your community might want to address all the great ideas in the Plan, but be realistic. Better to do a few things well than have a long list that gets done poorly or not at all. There are effective Plans with a simple 10-point Implementation Plan and others not so effective with hundreds of steps. Don't promise to do everything.
- **Prioritize.** When the Implementation Plan is drafted, be sure to set priorities. This can be done by staff, the Planning Commission, Advisory Committee, or some other group, but not all action steps are created equal. If there are no more than twenty steps in each element or topic area, a very effective technique is *forced pairs*. It is simple, understandable and can be done, even in a large group with many items, in an hour or less. Here's how: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_02.htm
- **Be specific.** There may be lots of general goals and policies in the Plan already; you don't need more generalities. Get specific with the wording and actions contained in the Implementation Plan.

Implementation is where the words and maps in the Plan meet the real world. Pick out the key actions that need to be taken, then organize, prioritize, and think through the specifics. Your community vision will then successfully move through the process from a written plan to implementation!

