

A graphic for Chapter 2 featuring the word "Chapter" in a green, cursive font and a large green number "2" with a drop shadow, set against a textured, light green and yellow background.

# The Land Use Element within the Comprehensive Planning Process

Included in this chapter:

- The Land Use Element: Framework and Requirements
- Using the Land Use Element to Integrate Elements
- Developing Consistency Between Plan Elements
- Designing a Public Participation Plan

## Introduction

The land use element is one of nine required elements within Wisconsin's comprehensive planning law. The major goal in completing this element is to create a useful tool for decision makers (elected officials and plan commissioners) to guide growth and development in their communities, for developers as they seek planned areas to advance projects, and for residents and others to make known their desire for growth and change in the future.

The land use element is often lengthy as it serves as a centerpiece of the comprehensive plan and ties together many other elements. This chapter includes a discussion of the statutory requirements, a section on how to use the land use element to integrate other plan elements, and public participation essential to the development of the plan.

### **Land Use Element (§66.1001(2)(h)) - Statutory language**

*A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to guide the future development and redevelopment of public and private property. The element shall contain a listing of the amount, type, intensity, and net density of existing uses of land in the local governmental unit, such as agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, and other public and private uses. The element shall analyze trends in the supply, demand and price of land, opportunities for redevelopment and existing and potential land-use conflicts. The element shall contain projections, based on the background information specified in par. (a), for 20 years, in 5-year increments, of future residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial land uses including the assumptions of net densities or other spatial assumptions upon which the projections are based. The element shall also include a series of maps that shows current land uses and future land uses that indicate productive agricultural soils, natural limitations for building site development, floodplains, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive lands, the boundaries of areas to which services of public utilities and community facilities, as those terms are used in par. (d), will be provided in the future, consistent with the timetable described in par. (d), and the general location of future land uses by net density or other classifications.*

### **The Land Use Element: Framework and Requirements**

To help understand the land use element requirements, the statutory language is explained below. Specific headings are provided to help you organize what you need to accomplish. The statutory language is written without a requirement of what to do first, second, third, etc. in your planning process. Subsequent chapters include information about the recommended steps to prepare this element.

#### **Explanation of the Land Use Element:**

- Compile objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to guide the future development and redevelopment of public and private property.

#### **Current Land Uses:**

- List the amount, type, intensity, and net density of current land uses, such as agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, and other public and private uses.

**TIP:** Another way to think of “intensity” of land uses is to think of how particular parcels of land are used - coverage, height, type, etc.

#### **Trends:**

- Analyze trends in the supply, demand and price of land.

#### **Opportunities for Redevelopment:**

- Analyze opportunities for redevelopment.

**TIP:** If your community is rural, there may not be obvious areas of your community that need redevelopment; however, there may be vacant farmhouses, or underserved four corners areas that may be discussed in your plan.

#### **Existing and Potential Land Use Conflicts:**

- Analyze existing and potential land-use conflicts.

#### **Projections for Future Land Uses:**

- Provide projections, based on the information in the issues and opportunities element, for 20 years, in 5-year increments, of future residential,

agricultural, commercial and industrial land uses.

- ✓ Include in projections the assumptions of net densities or other spatial assumptions upon which the projections are based.

### Maps:

- Provide current and future land use map(s) that indicate:
  - ✓ Productive agricultural soils,
  - ✓ Natural limitations for building site development,
  - ✓ Floodplains, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive lands,
  - ✓ Service area boundaries for public utilities and community facilities (i.e. public sewer or water),
  - ✓ The general location of future land uses by net density or other classifications.

An example outline for a land use element is provided in the box on the right. The example shows how the City of Ashland structured its element. Your community should develop a land use element tailored to fit local needs.

It is important for your community to complete the minimum statutory requirements of the land use element (§66.1001(2)(h)).

Additional information, analyses, and maps that apply to your specific community's needs and issues can also be included in the element. For example, your community may wish to list and identify in the current land use map all the land in public forest or under government ownership. In another example, your community, after its discussion of goals, objectives, policies

### An Example Land Use Element

City of Ashland Comprehensive Plan

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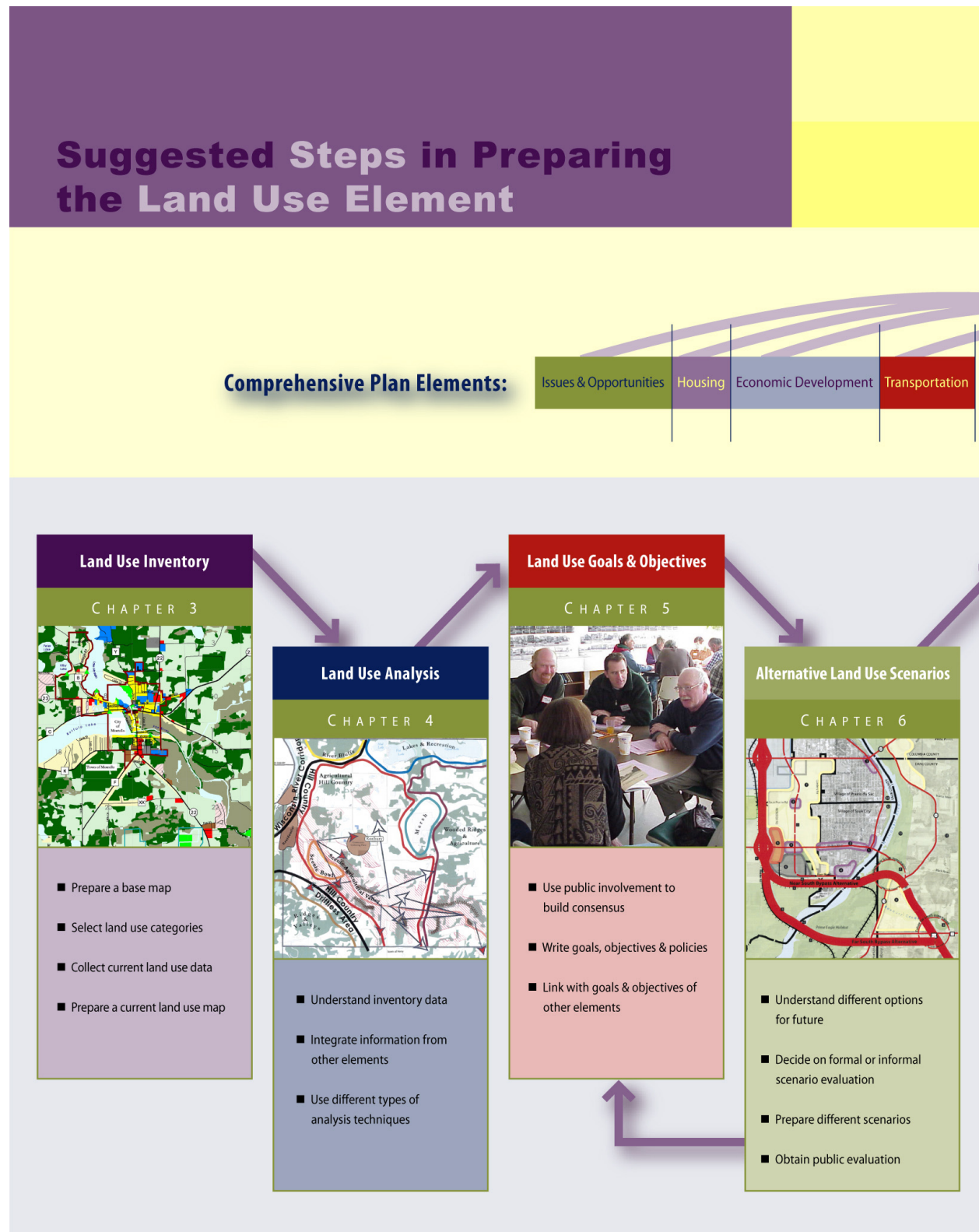
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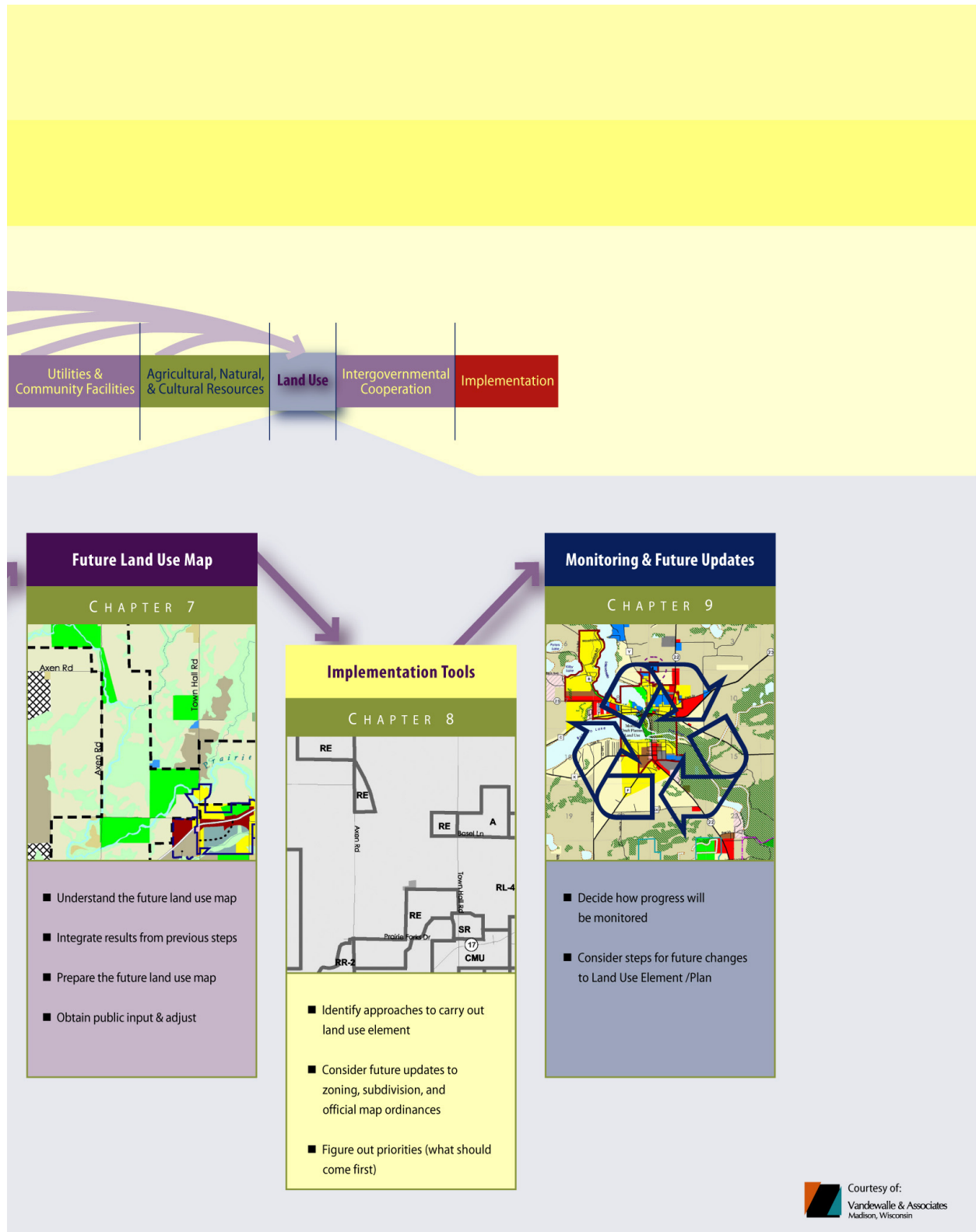
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## Chapter 2 – The Land Use Element within the Comprehensive Planning Process

This chart outlines suggested steps to complete the land use element. The following chapters will go into more detail.



## Chapter 2 – The Land Use Element within the Comprehensive Planning Process





and programs may decide to include areas for mixed-use development (e.g., residential mixed with business) in its future land use map. There is no right or wrong way to include added information above and beyond the statutory requirements.

### Using the Land Use Element to Integrate Elements

The land use element is one of nine elements specified within the comprehensive planning law. In terms of the process for preparing a comprehensive plan, the land use element is discussed throughout the planning process and may be in preparation throughout the process.

All the other elements affect the land use element.

There is good reason to discuss land use throughout the planning process. The land use element uses data gathered from the other elements, such as population and housing projections, commercial and industrial trends, amount and health of agriculture and natural resources, and quality of cultural resources. The land use element also incorporates analysis and interpretation of data from other elements and public discussion to understand the amounts and types of development that are possible or desired within the community. The land use element places various uses – such as residential, commercial, and open space – on at least two types of maps, the current and future land use maps.

Because the land use element is critical to other elements of the comprehensive plan, integration between elements is essential.

Review Figure 3 on page 5 to see the relationship between land use and the other elements. If the housing element discusses the need to provide affordable housing near a downtown location, this objective would need to be integrated into the land use element so that current and future affordable housing areas can be mapped, and other policy considerations, such as density and mixed uses can be thought about within the context of related elements, such as transportation. In contrast, if the housing element discusses the need to provide financial mechanisms to promote affordable housing, this goal/objective does not need to be integrated into the land use element.

### Developing Consistency Between Plan Elements

Another critical feature necessary to the comprehensive plan is consistency between and among elements, particularly their goals and objectives. Because land use serves as an integrating element, it is important to understand the goals, objectives, policies and programs that have been identified in other elements, particularly if they address the physical development of the community. Consistency is broader than considering relationships between elements. It can also include:

- *Consistency with other existing plans*
  - During the inventory stage, identify and review as many existing plans as possible. Summarize the major goals and objectives of the plans, incorporating those that are still agreed upon into the element. Alternately, use the goals and objectives as a guide to ensure that new ones do not contradict pre-existing plans, such as open space plans, outdoor

recreation plans, and sewer service plans, or recommend amending those plans so they are consistent with the comprehensive plan.

- *Consistency within each element* – The goals, objectives, policies and programs within the land use element should not conflict with one another. If conflicting goals are identified, revise the goals and objectives until satisfied, based on mutual agreements among the stakeholders involved in this stage.
- *Consistency between elements* – Crosscheck if the goals and objectives in the land use element contradict with those in other elements.

### Designing a Public Participation Plan

In the planning law, Wisconsin Statutes section §66.1001(4)(a) public participation is the focus. Local government units must adopt written procedures that are designed to foster public participation in every stage of the planning process. Presumably once a community gets to the land use element of the planning process, the public participation plan has been articulated and various techniques have been used throughout the process.

Each community needs to develop a public participation plan as part of the requirements of law. (s. 66.1001 (4a), Wis. Stats.)

### Choosing Appropriate Public Involvement Techniques

A thorough plan process not only illustrates what must be accomplished and when, but also prompts the question, “What do we

need to accomplish a task?” The answer may include public participation when the planning group, committee, or planner needs the following:

- **Public Opinion:** More information about citizen’s values, desires, or beliefs, will ensure that planning products and decisions are representative of citizen interests.
- **Public Expertise:** More credible, locally realistic solutions may be reached verifying or supplementing factual information with citizen expertise and experiences.
- **Public Acceptance/Influence:** Acceptance of decisions may be gained by allowing citizens to participate or directly influence decision-making.

### Five Categories of Involvement

Identifying what is needed from citizens, whether it is their opinions, expertise, or acceptance, helps the planner decide how to involve them in planning. Citizen involvement is often classified into five categories: Awareness, Education, Input, Interaction, and Partnership. When public opinion is needed, planners will use input methods. If expertise is required, then citizens are best involved through interaction methods. If citizen influence is required to gain public acceptance, then the public can be directly involved in decision-making through partnerships. Whereas input, interaction, and partnerships use citizens to directly accomplish tasks, awareness and education do not. Rather, they work to create an opportunity for more effective involvement by building the capacity of citizens to participate.

1. **Awareness:** Awareness approaches are used to publicize upcoming participation

events or decisions already made. Awareness techniques are always needed for successful citizen involvement. Citizens cannot be involved if they don't know about an event or how to participate. Effective awareness tools not only state the 'when,' 'where,' and 'what' of the event, but also stimulate interest.

### **Example Awareness Tools**

- *Public notice*: the minimum legal requirement necessary to advertise opportunities for public participation. Notice is usually posted in public places and newspapers.
- *Direct Mail*: mass mailing of letters, brochures, or other promotional pieces to increase awareness or advertise a particular event. Little individual time commitment is necessary, but method is cost prohibitive as a general publicity tool. It works well to target specific groups.
- *Mass media*: the use of radio, television, newspapers, local publications, and other media sources to disseminate information. Used to keep the planning project in the public eye and inform the public regarding developments and decisions in the planning process. Able to reach a large number of people, but may suffer from editing or bad coverage.
- *Web page*: the use of the web to disseminate information, conduct surveys, and visualize aspects of a community, has become a growing trend as a public participation tool. It is largely passive with users receiving and downloading information, but can be made far more interactive with online surveys or discussion boards.
- *Planning Kiosk*: a display of planning

related materials such as background information, maps, plan goals, survey information, etc. Typically this would be placed in the town, village or city hall, the local public library, and other locations to inform the general public that a plan process is underway and how to get involved.

2. **Education**: Educational approaches provide citizens with balanced and objective information. Education is used to build a citizen's capacity to become more involved and help planners achieve specific tasks. Education should be used before citizens participate in decision-making. Untrained citizens will feel uncomfortable participating, or may wed themselves to decisions made from poor information, or worse, speculation.

### **Example Education Tools**

- *Newsletter*: local and regular source of information that is used to keep the public informed and educated about the stages of the planning project.
  - *Open house*: a semi-informal setting in which technical experts and displays are used to inform the public about the planning effort. Also serves as an opportunity for the public to ask questions, express concerns and provide feedback about proposals on a one-to-one basis.
3. **Input**: Public input provides a means for decision-makers to learn more about public sentiments and capture citizen values. Decision-makers gather information from public input before moving on to accomplish tasks that fit their desires, values, or beliefs.



### **Example Input Tools**

- *Survey*: used to systematically collect data or viewpoints from many people. Sample must be chosen carefully to represent appropriate population. Questions should be simple, jargon-free and brief. Mail and phone are typical ways of conducting surveys, but the internet is quickly becoming another method for collecting attitudinal data for a planning process.
- *Visual Preference Survey*: A tool to gauge citizen preference of various visual alternatives. Best used for site-specific applications, such as building selections for a subdivision or building project.

4. **Interaction:** Community planners sometimes cannot gather enough information to make an informed decision. Interaction tools provide an opportunity to exchange information and expertise openly between planners and citizens.
5. **Partnerships:** The public may demand more influence over decision-making. Planners invite citizens to collaboratively make decisions. Interaction and partnerships often go hand in hand to make decision-making more thoughtful and build rapport among citizens and planners. The result is citizen ownership and acceptance of planning decisions or products.

### **Example Interaction or Partnership Tools**

- *Workshop*: interactive meeting where a facilitator stimulates the flow of creative ideas among participants. Multiple methods may be used

including brainstorming, small group discussions and a variety of group process techniques. Presenters, panels, videos, maps, models and other visual or active devices may also be used to stimulate discussion.

- *Citizen Commission*: Citizen committee designed to make decisions regarding community planning. Provides recommendations to the governing body for final decision.

Chapter 3 discusses how to conduct a land use inventory. The chapter reviews steps in taking stock of current conditions such as collecting data and drafting a land use map of existing conditions. While it is one of the most basic steps in the process of developing the land use element, it is essential for your community in order to plan for the future.

