

Chapter

5

Creating Land Use Goals, Objectives, Policies and Programs

Included in this chapter:

- Defining Goals, Objectives, Policies and Programs
- Involving the Public to Build Consensus
- Writing the Goals, Objectives, Policies and Programs
- Integrating the Goals of Other Elements
- Implementing Goals and Objectives

Introduction

Creating goals, objectives, policies and programs is a critical step in the development of the land use element. Not only are goals, objectives, policies and programs required under the comprehensive planning statute, but these statements provide a basis for a community to make decisions about its future land use. Once your community has collected and analyzed information, it is time

to establish a framework for future decision-making.

About two-thirds of Wisconsin communities surveyed in January 2004⁷ indicated that the development of goals and objectives was a moderately easy process. However, respondents noted a number of challenges:

- The differences between and the actual function of goals, objectives, policies and programs were not well understood.

⁷ Roberts, Rebecca and Chin-Chun Tang. 2004. *The Wisconsin Planning Experience: Results from the Community Planning Survey*. www.uwsp.edu/cnr/landcenter/pubs.html.

- Articulating goals was difficult.
- Objectives were not measurable.
- There was a lack of public involvement.
- There was a difficulty in reaching consensus on goals, objectives, policies and programs.

This chapter will focus on these challenges, as they relate to the land use element. Many of the concepts offered in this chapter can be applied when creating goals, objectives, policies and programs for other comprehensive plan elements.

Defining Goals, Objectives, Policies and Programs

Goals and objectives are the things that a community hopes to accomplish—how the community would like to be in the future. They provide direction for community decisions. Land use policies are the rules or actions that a community intends to implement to meet the desired goals and objectives.

There are several ways to define goals, objectives, policies and programs for land use. Here are a few straightforward, planning definitions for each of the terms.

Goals are general statements of desired outcomes of the community. While often broadly written, goals should be stated specifically enough so that it is possible to assess whether progress has been made in achieving them.

Objectives are more specific and are a subset of goals, providing measurable strategies. Objectives should not stand alone without a goal. If an objective does not fit under a goal and it is considered important, then there is

a good chance the objective may actually be more appropriately written as a goal.

Policies are “operational” actions that a community will undertake to meet the goals and objectives. Communities have many policies; some will relate to the comprehensive plan, while others may not. Keep in mind these policies may be existing or can be newly created within the planning process. Some policies will require further action by the local government such as an ordinance or resolution. When drafting policies, it is best to identify in the plan which are existing policies, new ones that can be implemented immediately, or ones that need further approvals from the governing body.

Other Definitions

Goal: A desired state of affairs to which planned effort is directed. *From “Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook,” American Planning Association, 1998.*

Objective: A goal or end toward the attainment of which plans and policies are directed. *From “A Development Plan for Waukesha County, WI”, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, 1996.*

Policy: A general rule for action focused on a specific issue, and derived from more general goals. *From “Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook,” American Planning Association, 1998.*

Program: A group of related projects and activities with a specified set of resources (human, capital, and financial) directed to the achievement of a set of common goals within a specified period of time. web.idrc.ca/ accessed May 2005.

Programs are a system of projects or services necessary to achieve plan goals, objectives, and policies. (Grant Closeout Form, Department of Administration, June 2004)

Below is an example of a goal, objectives, policies and programs. It is meant to be illustrative.

Example from City and Town of Brillion Land Use Element

Goal: Promote the rural, farming atmosphere in the Town and the “small town” feel of the City.

City Objective: Promote dense residential development patterns in the City to encourage walking to shopping, work and community (i.e., parks/schools) destinations.

Policy a. Continue to maintain and extend sidewalks throughout the community.

Policy b. Coordinate with local students and parents to inventory, assess, and identify sidewalk and trail needs.

Town Objective: Improve the Forest Junction area so that it may become a community focal point for quality development.

Policy a. Work with the county to enforce existing and consider new overlay landscape and sign regulations to improve community appearance.

Policy b. Work with local property owners and Calumet County to encourage sidewalk development throughout Forest Junction.

Program would:

- Include information about the benefits of sidewalks in any newsletter or web page eventually

developed by the Town.

- Seek to encourage developers to install sidewalks in their new developments.
- Work with the County and other specialists to identify needed sidewalk routes to provide opportunities for safe pedestrian travel in Forest Junction.

Policy c. Maintain existing identification signage, including the water tower identification marker.

(OMNNI & Associates)

The key to developing goals, objectives, policies and programs is to remain flexible enough in the process, understand and embrace the differences between people’s ideas and visions, and make sure that the language is consistent with other plan goals.

Involving the Public to Build Consensus

An overall challenge of the planning process is involving the public to help build consensus. The challenge for developing goals, objectives, policies and programs is that people often have a difficult time understanding how they will work in real-life. Sometimes the thought is that goals, objectives, policies and programs do not really matter. To a large extent, developing goals and objectives should be thought of as your community stating its values. These statements will create a lasting impression through short sentences of what your community cares about. Identifying objectives and specific policies also bring the broad goals to life.

In some communities, people will have many differing views. Friction can occur quickly, making building consensus a challenge. Although views are often not far apart from each other, the reality of developing the appropriate language to describe those values can become controversial. However, developing consensus on goals and objectives is not an impossible task. It sometimes takes a more iterative approach to accomplish, meaning a community needs to revisit its goals, objectives, and policies as it moves through the process. Discussion, negotiation and compromise are expected when developing goals to achieve a broad range of community interests.

Reaching Consensus

A good facilitator enables a community to step back from the emotions and focus on the content of the disagreement. Setting ground rules for discussion before major disagreements are raised is critical to advancing the discussion. Once ground rules

Example Ground Rules for Reaching Consensus:

- Respect others and their opinions.
- There is no such thing as winners or losers in these discussions.
- Everyone will be offered an opportunity to add comments, offer concerns, and make suggestions.
- Everyone must allow the person commenting to complete his or her thoughts, without interruption.
- Personally criticizing others for their opinions will not be allowed.
- If a person raises an issue, then a potential solution must also be given.
- Everyone should focus on completing the task at hand.
- No shouting.

have been set (see insert below), a facilitator can refer back to the rules and remind others to have patience with others' opinions.

Understanding where individual concerns lie is important to the process of building consensus on the goals. Disagreements can include serious fundamental differences with specific draft goals or be as simple as minor wording changes to improve goal language. Fundamental differences should be approached carefully, considering most differences are value based and can be quite personal. A good facilitator can offer a level playing field for participants by keeping the discussion moving forward, thwarting personal attacks, and offering feedback to the solutions offered by participants.

Writing Land Use Goals, Objectives, Policies and Programs

The goals, objectives, policies and programs for the land use element should focus on guiding “the future development and redevelopment of public and private property.” (s. 66.1001, (2)(h), Wis. Stats.) Goal language should be developed to be attainable, while keeping in mind how goals can be implemented.

In developing land use goals, there is a need to start with a base level of data to help shape what is desired for the future. For many communities, the development of land use goal language will include initiating draft language, discussing what each goal means to the community and identifying concerns, questions or unclear aspects of the goal. Often duplicative goals are combined, and more specific language is moved under a goal into an objective or policy. Developing

objectives often occurs simultaneously with goal development.

In setting goals, the community should answer the following questions: What does your community see as important land use issues? How should the community balance future development with other plan goals such as limiting traffic congestion and preserving farmland? How will your community’s land use affect the surrounding region?

The community also needs to establish objectives. Objectives are more specific statements that relate to a goal (see Table 4). In creating objectives, your community should think of them as stepping stones. How can a goal be achieved by a set of tangible and measurable statements?

After setting goals and objectives, the community then needs to establish policies. Policies are used to guide community decisions in pursuit of a goal and objectives. Policies should provide specific guidance to elected and appointed officials on what decision to make when confronted with specific land use issues following plan adoption.

In setting goals, objectives, policies and programs, communities need to rely on the information gathered in the earlier steps and then explore alternatives. Evaluation of

alternative ways to achieve community goals is a critical part of the planning process. The community also needs to establish indicators to measure the community’s progress toward achieving its goals.

Tips for Writing Goals, Objectives & Policies

- Focus on writing succinct language – keep it simple, but brief.
- Avoid writing too many goals and too few objectives and policies.
- Remember there are often multiple objectives and policies under one goal.

Techniques for Developing Goals, Objectives, Policies and Programs

There is no one correct way of developing goals, objectives, policies and programs. It is recommended that a trained, neutral facilitator with experience in developing goals, assists your community in this process. Facilitation assistance is available through your local planning office, some state agencies, the County Extension Office and other sources. Facilitating goal development can also be written into a contractual service agreement if your community is employing a consultant to assist in the preparation of your plan.

Starting with the development of a broad set of goals and then narrowing to objectives and specific policies is generally a good idea. If your community has never engaged in planning in the past, brainstorming and collecting many ideas will be most beneficial. If your community has previously developed a plan, it is recommended that the goals contained in the previous plan are examined and considered. When someone has an

Table 4

Basic Differences Between Goals and Objectives

Goals	Objectives
Broad	Narrow
General	Precise
Intangible	Tangible
Abstract	Concrete

idea or specific goal language, it should be documented. After reaching the end of brainstorming, goals can be sifted through to determine if there is overlap, duplication, conflicting statements, or goals in need of further consideration. Oftentimes, language will be too specific for a goal but may work as an objective or policy. Using a “parking lot” to place those ideas is helpful so that they do not become lost in the process. Policies are more commonly developed throughout the process, well outside of the brainstorming activities for goals. Having a good note taker to keep track of these ideas will be important when determining land use policies. There

Although the incorporation of the comprehensive planning goals is only a requirement for communities with a Comprehensive Planning Grant from the State’s Department of Administration, you may choose to include these as part of your community’s plan.

may also be policies developed outside of the land use element that will fit more appropriately under a land use goal or objective. Being flexible is important while keeping the process moving forward.

State Comprehensive Planning Goals

As a starting point, the State’s Comprehensive Planning law contains 14 goals. Although all of these goals may not apply to a particular community, they are worth reviewing.

A list of the goals:

1. Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial and industrial structures.
2. Encouragement of neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices.
3. Protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces and groundwater resources.
4. Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests.
5. Encouragement of land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state governmental and utility costs.
6. Preservation of cultural, historic and archaeological sites.
7. Encouragement of coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government.
8. Building of community identity by revitalizing main streets and enforcing design standards.
9. Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels throughout each community.
10. Providing adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial and industrial uses.
11. Promoting the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities at the state, regional and local levels.
12. Balancing individual property rights with community interests and goals.
13. Planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied and unique urban and rural communities.
14. Providing an integrated, efficient and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience and safety and that meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and disabled citizens.

Integrating the Goals of Other Elements

Another important part of goal development is making sure that land use goals do not conflict with other goals from the housing, transportation, or utilities and community facilities element, for example. When faced with multiple goals within a planning process, the language for each of the elements can appear to contradict one another.⁸

Land use goals should be shaped to support the goals from other elements. For example, if a community has included in its housing element the goal of improving the availability of senior housing, the land use element may include a broader goal of providing a sufficient supply of land for a range of housing choices.

Implementing Goals and Objectives

This chapter has addressed the issue of why goals are important, but they are only important if efforts are made to implement goals.

Prioritizing Goals

Naturally, there are priorities that surface throughout the process. Your community should spend some time discussing priorities and the approach you would like to take. To implement goals through objectives and policies, your community will need to prioritize action items. For example, if the plan goes into detail about ordinance revisions needed to address preservation of agriculture areas, you will need to identify

a reasonable timeline for when this will occur and who will be responsible for its development. Chapter 9 will discuss monitoring progress of your community's goals, objectives, policies and programs.

How Does Your Community Implement Goals?

Simply put, a community's actions, activities, policies, zoning decisions, and future land use map are ways to implement goals and objectives. Sometimes those actions may not be directly associated with a comprehensive planning effort; however, land use related activities and decisions should relate back to an adopted goal. Chapter 8 will discuss implementation in more detail.

One important way to ensure your community implements its desired goals and objectives is to continue to use the comprehensive plan to make land use decisions. Consistency between the comprehensive plan and zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations and the official map is required by 2010. Keeping elected officials and plan commissioners (especially newly elected or appointed officials) aware of the comprehensive plan, its content, and the legal requirements to make consistent decisions is critical to successfully implementing goals.

If a community is making decisions in conflict with plan goals, there is good reason to review those goals and revise the plan if necessary. Keep in mind that a combination of multiple actions and activities are usually necessary to implement a goal. Balancing various goals is a tricky but important aspect of implementing your community's plan.

⁸ See Tang, Chin-Chun. 2003. "Integrating the Local Economy and Natural Resources in the Planning Process," The Land Use Tracker, Volume 3, Issue 2, Fall. www.uwsp.edu/cnr/landcenter/newsletters.html.

Chapter 6 provides an overview of the process to create land use alternatives or scenarios. Although developing scenarios is not required in a comprehensive plan, it is a useful tool for quantifying the impacts of various land use scenarios, selecting the most appropriate alternative, and ultimately developing your community's future land use map.