

A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO PLANNING IN MEMPHIS, TN

“The city is a fact of nature but it is also a conscious work of art, and it holds within its communal framework many simpler and more personal forms of art. Mind takes form in the city; and in turn, urban forms the condition of the mind.” -

Lewis Mumford

TABLE OF CONTENT

- ◆ Introduction 1
- ◆ What is planning 2
- ◆ Why Planning is Important... 3
- ◆ The Planning Process 4
- ◆ Many Types of Plans 7
 - Quality of Life Plan 7
 - Land Use Plan8
 - Urban Design Plan 9
 - Transportation Plan10
 - Environmental Plan..... 11
 - Neighborhood Plan.....12
 - Comprehensive Plan.....13
- ◆ Building Community Support 16
- ◆ Zoning 17
 - What the Codes Mean..... 17
 - The Re-zoning Process..... 21
- ◆ Memphis Resources 23
- ◆ Glossary of terms 24



{ INTRODUCTION }

This document was created by Community LIFT in the hopes that it will serve the residents of Memphis by breaking down the complicated process that is city planning and empower them to become engaged in the issues that affect their neighborhoods. Our goal is not to work *for* the residents, but to work *with* them to make Memphis the best that it can be. In order for that to happen, as Mayor Wharton put it, we have to have neighborhoods of choice.

Great neighborhoods and great cities do not just happen; they are planned. We hope this guide will encourage meaningful conversation and strategic action. Planning is an active process and must have resident participation in order for change to be meaningful and sustainable.



We will explain the basic planning process, define the different types of plans, review the zoning code and issues related to zoning, explain who the major players are and provide a glossary of common planning terms.

This guide is meant to serve residents by facilitating a better understanding of how planning decisions affect their community and help them to feel confident articulating their feelings towards a planning proposal.

{ WHAT IS PLANNING? }

“A city is not an accident but the result of coherent visions and aims.” - Leon Krier, The Architecture of Community

City planning is a way for cities and neighborhoods to plan for and manage future development and change. It is a technical and political process that is concerned with the physical development, as well as the social, economic and environmental well-being of an area. Planning helps to guide the growth and development of a city and the allocation of funds and programs in order to achieve long-term prosperity and sustainability. Good city planning maintains a careful balance between residential, commercial, recreational, and industrial needs of the community. Planning makes the best use of available resources, seeks to solve current community problems, protect important man-made and natural landmarks, all while considering the future needs of the city and its people.

There are many different types of plans that are specific to one aspect of development. The most common are land use plans, transportation plans, environmental plans, economic development plans, neighborhood plans, quality of life plans and comprehensive plans. As different as these plans are the process involved in creating them is very much alike. Every plan includes a study of the areas physical environment and demographic and social data collection. The current needs and future goals of the area are determined and strategies and objectives for reaching these needs and goals are created. Lastly, the parties responsible for carrying out the proposed programs are identified and specific task are laid out.

WHY IS PLANNING IMPORTANT?

“ My interest is in the future because I am going to spend the rest of my life there.” - Charles Kettering

Planning is a way for residents , planners and other stakeholders to set goals and priorities that will shape the future of a city and neighborhoods for years to come. Planning allows communities to be prepared for changing populations and needs. It provides the foundation needed to make informed decisions about how to direct development to the most appropriate locations. A plan will also ensure that development is designed to protect those features of the community that people value most. When done correctly, a plan can create places of

Insuring that residents and community stakeholders are involved in the process is the job of every city planner, city official and community organizer. The day-to-day experiences and the unique characteristics of each community are only fully understood by the people who live there. The knowledge that residents can provide is a valuable tool in the planning process. This is a unique opportunity for citizens to directly influence the decision making process that can determine future development and prosperity. When residents are not engaged in a meaningful way there is a good chance that the plan will become politically unpopular and with little chance of creating real and lasting change.

WHAT IS THE PLANNING PROCESS?

The process of creating a plan is part science and part art. The science involves research and data collection and making sure all the necessary elements are included and assembled in the most appropriate way. The art is in making sure that all voices are heard, meetings and planning charettes are meaningful and well-organized and all goals and objectives are met as quickly as possible.

Creating a well-crafted plan can be a lengthy process. Depending on how complex a plan is, the process can take anywhere from a few weeks to a few years. There are five basic steps in every planning process and those are explained below.

Stage 1—Identify Problems, Needs and Assets

- Determine the scope of the plan
- Gather baseline data including a demographic profile, physical profile, employment profile, crime statistics and transportation data
- Hold resident and stakeholder meetings to gather community input to assess current physical and social conditions
- Conduct physical surveys and interviews

Stage 2—Develop Goals and Objectives

- Goals are broad statements of desirable outcomes (Ex: improve quality housing)
- Objectives are specific, measurable accomplishments (Ex: develop 100 affordable housing units)
- Hold resident and stakeholder meetings to gather community input

WHAT IS THE PLANNING PROCESS? cont.

Stage 3– Develop Initial Strategies

- Investigate ways that other communities are achieving similar goals
- Hold resident and stakeholder meetings to generate ideas based on personal experience
- Use knowledge gained from pilot programs & best practice research that offer possible solutions

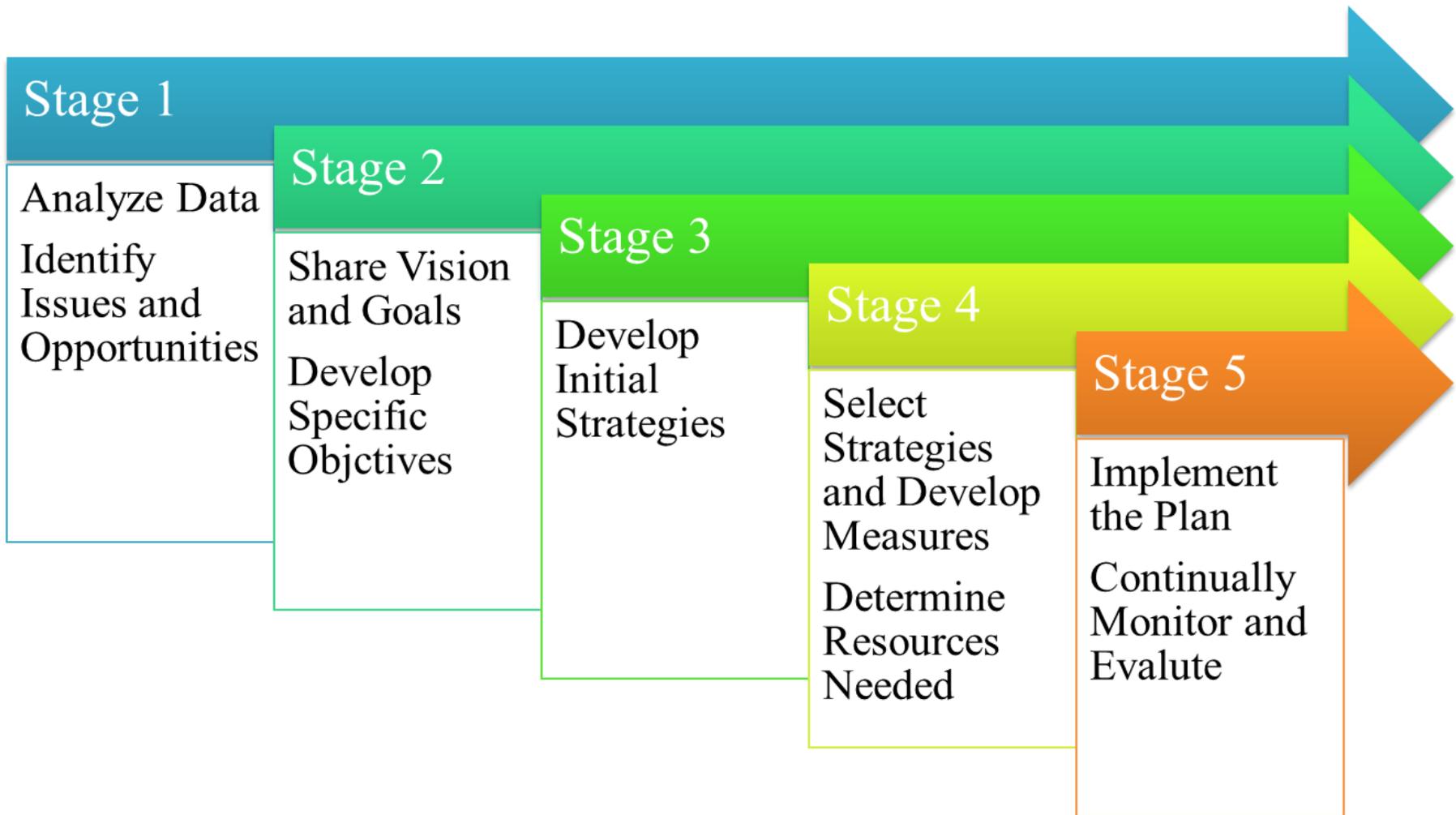
Stage 4– Select Strategies and Develop the Plan

- Programming: Identify the activities that need to be completed to accomplish each objective
- Allocating Resources: Determine and assign the resources needed to implement the activities, human resources, materials and financial resources
- Scheduling: Establish the required time needed to complete each objective

Stage 5– Monitoring and Evaluation

- This step helps guide the following decisions:
 - continue or dis-continue a program or component of the plan
 - improve existing programs and plans
 - the reallocation of resources
- Continuously referring to the goals, objectives and strategies identified in the plan

WHAT IS THE PLANNING PROCESS? cont.



{ MANY TYPES OF PLANS }

There are many different types of plans that communities can use to create the future they want. Here, we will just cover the seven most common. Depending on immediate needs and interests, planners and city officials will choose which type of plan(s) best suit the community.

QUALITY OF LIFE PLAN

“Growth is inevitable and desirable, but destruction of community character is not. The question is not whether your part of the world is going to change. The question is how.” - Edward T. McMahon

A quality of life plan is a way for communities to plan for and manage the physical and the non-physical aspects of the area. For example, quality education and safe communities are common themes. Creating a meaningful quality of life plan depends heavily on resident involvement. Quality of life plans tend to be less technical and more compelling than most plans. This is possibly because it deals directly with the way residents interact with their physical surroundings and each other.

Common elements of a QOL include a brief history of the area and a current assessment of the people and environment. Community assets are mapped and priority areas are identified. These can be things that some communities take for granted like affordable, attractive housing, thriving commercial corridors, clean and safe streets, family and youth empowerment and plenty of open space for recreation. These are unique to each community and can vary greatly even from one neighborhood to another in the same city.

{ MANY TYPES OF PLANS cont. }

LAND USE PLAN

“A community has to have the capacity to envision a future they want, and not just the one they are likely to get.” - Unknown

Almost every community, no matter how small, has some form of a land use plan. The simplest form of a land use plan is a municipal zoning code. A good land use plan balances the needs of both urban development and land conservation. This balance is necessary for meeting the needs of the people while safeguarding resources for the future. Planning for future population growth and changing business needs are also important things to consider when crafting a land use plan. Having a thoughtful land use plan is the most effective way for communities to protect themselves against unwanted development.

In urban development, the most common land uses are residential, commercial, industrial and open space which are the basic zoning categories. These are described in detail in a later section of this guide.

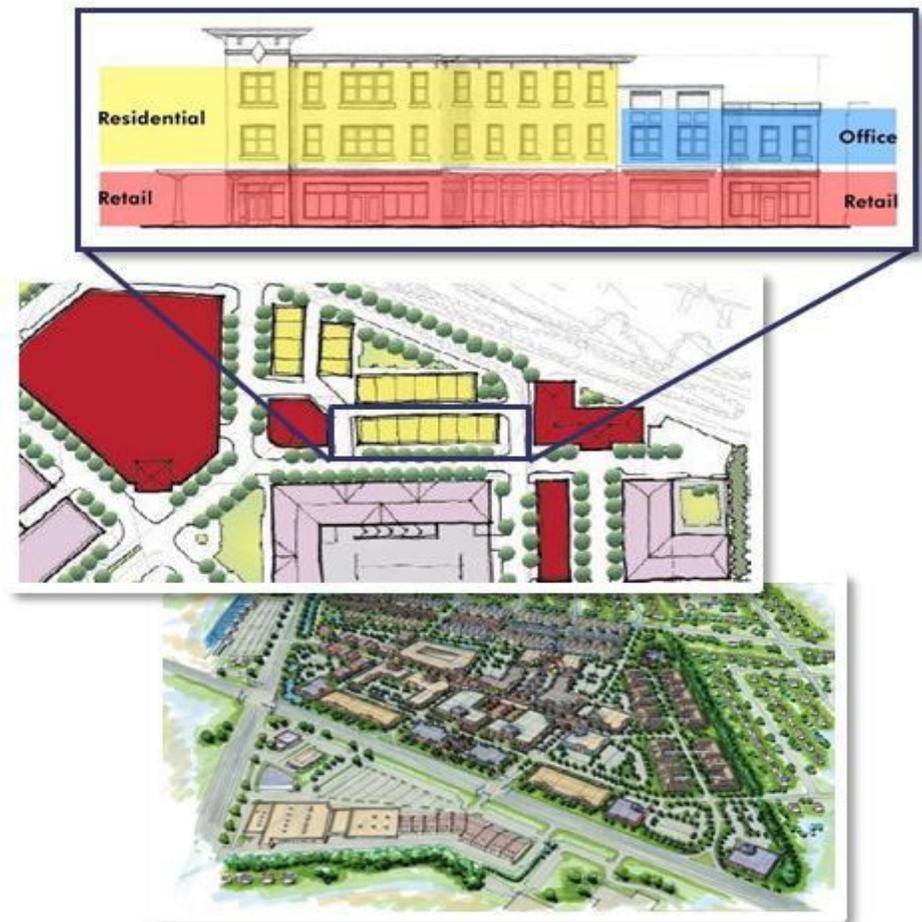


Figure taken from MPO's *Direction 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan*

{ MANY TYPES OF PLANS cont. }

URBAN DESIGN PLAN

“It is difficult to design a place that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished.” - William Whyte

An urban design plan is exactly what it sounds like. It is a plan for controlling and managing the design and coordination of all of the elements that make-up an area. The main elements of urban design are buildings, streets, public spaces and landscape. Urban design is concerned with not only how these elements look but how they function and where they are located. Having a nice park is not enough; that park has to be in a convenient and safe location; it has to be large enough to accommodate a variety of activities and the landscape and lighting have to be warm and welcoming. Planners and architects call this “place making”.

Good urban design is about making connections between people and places. Every community can benefit from good urban design, from the largest cities to the smallest neighborhoods. Urban design is what makes a place unique and it can be used to preserve the character of historical districts.

{ MANY TYPES OF PLANS cont. }

TRANSPORTATION PLAN

“There is no lack of space in cities. It is just that most of it is in the form of vacant parking lots and extra wide roads.” - Michael Ronkin

Transportation plans are typically the most technical of all plans and they play a huge role in the course of future development. For example, new roads and highways encourage new development, which can prompt cities to expand their boundaries by annexation and thus put a strain on city services; or the new development can encourage people to move out of the city limits.

Transportation plans are typically done for an entire region . A metropolitan planning organization and the state Department of Transportation are usually the parties responsible for the plan’s creation. Transportation plans must consider many different variables including current traffic patterns, congestion, road conditions, noise and air pollution, population changes and environmental impacts just to name a few. Like most other plans, transportation plans are long-range projects that must balance current and future needs. Population data is studied to predict what the future population will look like and what they will need. In most American cities the population is aging and the Baby Boomers will have special transportation needs that must be carefully planned for, like more public transportation and greater walkability.

{ MANY TYPES OF PLANS cont. }

ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN

“Density and environmental protection are not incompatible. If they are, we are in very deep trouble.” - Patrick Condon

Environmental planning is all about sustainability and conservation. The scope of environmental plans is broad and encompasses physical, social and economic issues, as well as the ecological issues. Even the most developed urban areas have environmental plans. In fact, developers must produce environmental impact studies for every construction project. Environmental planning focuses on how communities can achieve sustainable development and use resources in a way that is good for the ecosystem and the people. In Memphis for example, there are many natural water resources Mississippi, Wolf and Loosahatchie Rivers and their watersheds, as well as many tributaries that flow into these great bodies of water. Memphis also has a mature urban forest that must be protected. Maintaining these natural resources is the job of every citizen and city planner.

The issues of environmental sustainability create a unique problem for every city and neighborhood, but planners work with residents and other stakeholders to create unique solutions. Urban sprawl, deforestation, litter, air and water pollution can all have a negative impact on the environment which negatively affects the population. Managing the solid waste, sewage and yard debris of an entire city is a monumental task. Residents play an important role in environmental planning, from influencing the policies that planners and city officials enact to doing their part to keep their neighborhood clean. A few pieces of litter or a couple of abandoned tires may not seem like much but when all of this debris is added together the environmental impact can be huge. Resident engagement can help planners to determine how a community can change their habits in ways that will positively affect the environment and in turn will increase the quality of life for all residents.

MANY TYPES OF PLANS cont.

“Livable neighborhoods with a vibrant street life will stimulate our economic life as well.” - Gavin Newsom

NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

A neighborhood plan is a comprehensive program for improving and preserving a community based on the participation of residents, civic organizations, business and property owners. Most neighborhood plans include a description of the area and the residents who live there. Through charettes and community meetings residents and other stakeholders discuss the neighborhood’s current and future needs. Participants also discuss the neighborhood’s assets and opportunities.

Next, residents and stakeholders work with planning professionals to come up with goals and strategies that best fit the needs of the neighborhood. A neighborhood plan can help communities address issues such as housing types and density, allowed zoning uses, design and development standards and transportation needs like better sidewalks and bike lanes. Planning can also help communities address social issues such as crime and safety. Implementation is the final step in any planning process and can also be the most lengthy. This step requires that the plan be adopted by the city planning department. After the plan is approved specific roles and responsibilities are assigned and city funds are allocated.

The benefits of neighborhood planning are many. When the planning process is successful, meaning the plan is thorough and thoughtful and funds are allocated, a neighborhood can have a variety of housing options, fewer deteriorated and dilapidated structures, more transportation options, increased density and increased property values. There are non-physical benefits to planning as well. Through out the process neighbors get to know one another, city planners and officials learn more about the neighborhood’s assets and needs, the character of the neighborhood is preserved and stakeholders work together to create the neighborhood they want.

{ MANY TYPES OF PLANS cont. }

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

“Successful City Planning: Public action that generates a desirable, widespread and sustained private market reaction.” - Alexander Garvin

A comprehensive plan, or master plan, generally encompasses a large geographic area and focuses on long-term goals and strategies. Comprehensive plans help dictate public policy in terms of transportation, utilities, land use, recreation and housing. This process is lengthy and time consuming but it is necessary if a city wants to manage future development and preserve the existing character of the area.

A comprehensive plan is general in nature. It does not call for any specific action of legislative strategy. Instead, it provides a framework that guides all decisions relating to land use and future development. When cities grow, either through population increases or annexation, it puts a strain on public resources. Having an updated and well-constructed comprehensive plan allows cities to manage growth while maintaining the current level and quality of public resources. Balancing growth and limited resources is known as *smart growth*.

MANY TYPES OF PLANS cont.

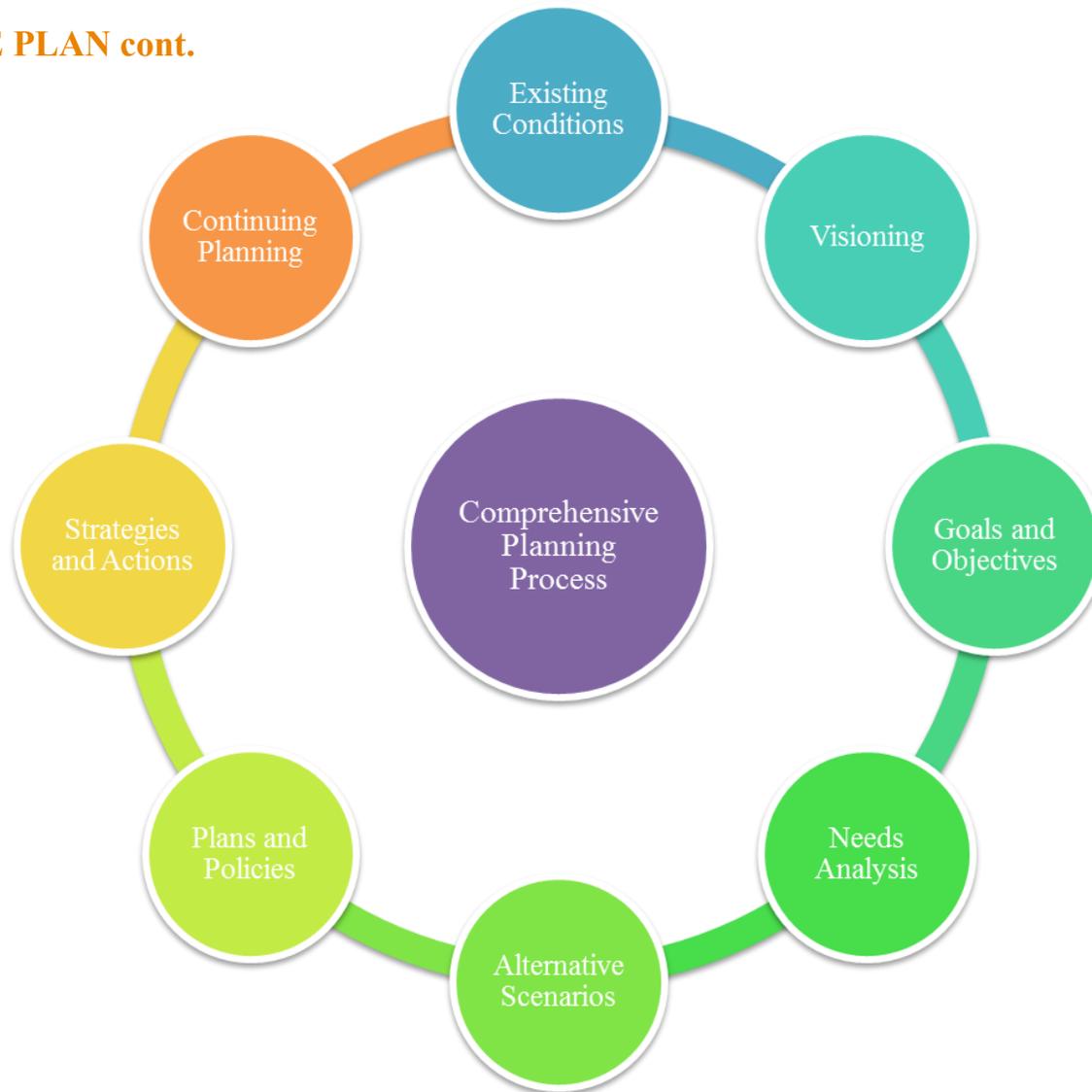
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN cont.

A comprehensive plan is one document with many distinct sections and while these sections cover different aspects of the city they are all related. A typical comprehensive plan includes a brief history of the city and a demographic study. It also includes a study of the current conditions and issues that the city is facing. There are a number of areas that a plan will address and this is how it gets the name *comprehensive*. The most common areas that are covered include land use, transportation, parks and open space, housing, urban design, economic development, historical preservation, and utilities and services. In essence, all of the previous plan discussed in this guide are combined into one large comprehensive plan.

Most large cities have a comprehensive plan. They set long-term policy and development goals and are updated frequently. Unfortunately, Memphis and Shelby County do not have a true comprehensive plan. The closest thing to a comprehensive plan that the area has was last updated in the 1980's.

MANY TYPES OF PLANS cont.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN cont.



{ BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT }

Building community support is arguably the most important factor in determining the success of a community plan. City planners, city officials and others responsible for creating the plan must always be mindful of what the community wants and needs. Community engagement is important to the planning process and to the public. Effective public participation helps to create better decisions and a more thoughtful plan. Participation is meaningful when the community has an opportunity to influence decisions that affective their daily lives.

The following are strategies that planners and city officials use when building community support. These techniques can be used by neighborhood associations, community development corporations and block groups. The strategies are helpful reminders that ensure all voices are heard and all reasonable opinions are considered.



{ ZONING }

Zoning is the process by which a community is divided into districts, or “zones”. Each zone has a different set of uses, densities, dimensional requirements and other development standards that are determined through a planning process. Zoning helps protect public and private interests, preserve critical areas, promote orderly and desired growth and encourages development to occur at a rate and manner that the community sets.

In 2011, Memphis and Shelby County developed new zoning codes. This planning process resulted in the Unified Development Code (UDC). The new UDC distinguishes between six different districts; open districts, residential districts, mixed use districts, industrial districts, special purpose districts and overlay districts.

WHAT THE CODES MEAN

While some of the codes are easy to understand, others can be more difficult. For example, Residential Estate is for areas where single-family homes sit on large lots. Residential Single-Family 15 is not as easy. Residential zones R-15, R-10 and R-8 are virtually the same; they are differentiated primarily on the basis of minimum lot size and setback requirements. Residential zones R-6 and R-3 are generally part of an infill development and are closer to a commercial or business area. A good example of R-6 and R-3 is the new homes built in the Uptown area. Residential Urban zones (RU-1, RU-2, RU-3, RU-4 &RU-5) are also part of infill development projects but the RU zone allows for multi-family housing like townhomes and apartments.

{ ZONING cont. }

Mixed-use districts are fairly new to Memphis. Other cities have used them for years as a way to curb sprawl, control growth and to get more use out limited space. In the new UDC there are no longer exclusively commercial districts. Now commercial districts have to accommodate other uses such as multi-family residential and to a limited degree single-family homes. This will help to create live/work zones that are common in large cities like New York and Chicago. This typically means commercial/office space on the ground floor with apartment units above.

The Central Business District (CBD) encompasses all of downtown Memphis. The boundaries are I-40 to the north, Crump Blvd to the south, Danny Thomas to the east, and the Mississippi River to the west. The CBD is intended to accommodate high-intensity office and residential uses. When the term “high-intensity” is used in city planning it just means “more people”.

The Campus Master Plan zones are meant to accommodate the expansion of the various colleges and universities within the city and county. CMP-1 deals with colleges and universities in pre-dominantly urban areas, while CMP-2 is for more suburban areas such as University of Memphis satellite campuses.

The industrial districts are fairly easy to understand and they play a critical role in maintaining a high quality of life for residents. Planners recognize the noise and traffic nuisance that such uses can cause when they are located near housing and retail zones. Therefore, the following industrial zones can no longer be located near retail or residential zones.

{ ZONING cont. }

The Employment (EMP) zone allows for office, light manufacturing, warehousing and other commercial uses. Warehouse Distribution (WD) zones are intended to accommodate office/warehouse/distribution uses. These zones are typically around rail yards. The Intermodal Facility off Lamar is a good example of a WD zone. Industrial Heavy (IH) districts accommodate high-impact manufacturing and industrial uses, including ground extraction and waste related uses.

Special Purpose Districts are areas with their own unique zoning regulations. The South Central Business Improvement District (SCBID) is a large special purpose district that includes seven smaller districts. The seven small districts are: Beale Street, the South Main district, the South Downtown Residential District, Riverside Residential District, Bluff View Residential District, South Downtown Business Park District and the Commercial Gateway District.

The other special purpose district in Memphis is the Uptown area. Uptown is a mixed-use district with moderate and high-density residential, light industrial and hospital districts.

Overlay districts keep the basic zoning requirements laid out in the UDC but because of some unique characteristics of these areas they are regulated in a slightly different manner. When there is a conflict between UDC regulations and overlays regulations in an overlay district, the overlay regulations supersede all other zoning regulations.

ZONING cont.

Open Districts

P	Parks
OS	Open Space
FW	Floodway
CA	Conservation Agriculture
CIV	Civic

Residential Districts

R-MP	Manufactured Home Park
R-E	Residential-Estate
R-15	Residential Single-Family-15
R-10	Residential Single-Family-10
R-8	Residential Single-Family-8
R-6	Residential Single-Family-6
R-3	Residential Single-Family-3
RU-1	Residential Urban-1
RU-2	Residential Urban-2
RU-3	Residential Urban-3
RU-4	Residential Urban-4
RU-5	Residential Urban-5

Mixed Use Districts

RW	Residential Work
OG	Office General
CMU-1	Commercial Mixed Use-1
CMU-2	Commercial Mixed Use-2
CMU-3	Commercial Mixed Use-3
CBD	Central Business District
CMP-1	Campus Master Plan-1
CMP-2	Campus Master Plan-2

Industrial Districts

EMP	Employment
WD	Warehouse & Distribution
IH	Heavy Industrial

Special Purpose District

SCBID	South Central Business District
U	Uptown

Overlay Districts

MO	Medical Overlay
UDO	University Overlay
TO	Transitional Office Overlay
RC	Residential Corridor Overlay
H	Historic Overlay
AP	Airport Overlay
FP	Floodplain Overlay
FC	Fletcher Creek Overlay
NC	Neighborhood Conservation Overlay
MD	Midtown District Overlay

{ ZONING cont. }

THE RE-ZONING PROCESS

All properties in Memphis have a zoning classification assigned to them. These classifications not only regulate the type of land use but they also regulate building setbacks, building height, density, signs and other development controls. Requests to change a zoning classification can be a lengthy process, typically taking between 60 to 75 days. It begins with scheduling a pre-application meeting with the Land Use Control Department of Shelby County. At the meeting the applicant must identify the specific parcel they wish to re-zone and explain why they want the re-zoning. In some cases, the applicant must notify the surrounding neighborhood of the potential zoning change.

The next step is to file a Zoning District Reclassification Application with the Shelby County Land Use Control Department. The department staff review the applications and make a written recommendation to the Land Use Control Board. The Land Use Control Board then holds a public meeting to review all re-zoning applications and by the close of the meeting makes a decision based on the reclassification application and the recommendation from the Land Use Control staff. In some cases, the board may defer a decision until the next scheduled meeting. If the application is approved there must be three official “readings” before a resolution can be passed that authorizes the official zoning map to be changed. The most common reclassification is from agricultural zoning to residential or commercial zoning. This is typically done by real estate developers after they purchase agricultural zoned land.

{ ZONING cont. }

“We need legislators who not only think it is their duty to listen to the people but to also become an expert on the subjects which they must decide upon.” - Andres Duany

If someone wants to protest a proposed zoning change there are a few steps that they must follow. First, they must get 20 percent of the adjacent property owners to sign a petition stating that they object to the proposed zoning change. The signed petition must be received by the Land Use Control Department at least five days before the scheduled public hearing. Just like in the case of re-zoning, the Land Use Control Board will handle all re-zoning protests and deliver a recommendation to the City Council.



MEMPHIS RESOURCES

- ◆ Memphis Landmarks Commission—tasked with preserving Memphis’ historic resources in Memphis neighborhoods; Contact Info: Nancy Jane Baker, Manager; 125 N.Main Street, Room 443; (901) 576-7191
- ◆ Metropolitan Planning Organization—responsible for planning long-range transportation facilities for the metro area (901) 576-7190
- ◆ Office of Land Use Controls—responsible for land development planning; Contact Info: City Hall 125 N. Main Street, Room 468; (901) 576-6619
- ◆ Office of Sustainability—responsible with carrying out the framework laid out in the Sustainable Shelby Implementation Plan which is a culmination of “green” initiatives in Shelby County; Contact Info: Paul Young, Administrator; 125 N. Main Street, Room 468; (901) 567-6601
- ◆ Comprehensive Planning—provides direction for future growth and develops long-term land use plans (901) 576-6610
- ◆ Code Enforcement (901) 576-7380 / www.memphistn.gov
- ◆ Memphis Animal Shelter (901) 636-1416, Humane Society (901) 937-3900
- ◆ MLGW
 - Street light outage (901)820-7878
 - In-home energy evaluation (901) 544-6549
 - Assistance programs (901) 544-6549
- ◆ 211 Hotline—Memphis Public Library Resource Center

{ GLOSSARY OF TERMS }

- ◆ Board of Adjustment-an administrative zoning board composed of eight members who serve three-year terms. Four members are appointed by the Shelby County mayor and four appointed by the Memphis mayor.
- ◆ Building Codes– a set of rules for architects, engineers and builders that specify the minimum acceptable level of safety for buildings and structures.
- ◆ Built Environment– everything in a neighborhood or city that is man-made, e.g. buildings, roads, sewer lines, street lights, etc.
- ◆ Charrette– an intensive planning session where citizens, planners, and stakeholders collaborate on a vision for current and future development
- ◆ Conditional Use Permit– written permission that allows for a land or building use that is inconsistent with the zoning code but is for the benefit of the community; also known as a special use permit
- ◆ Density– the number of people or housing units contained on a parcel of land
- ◆ Greenways– a strip of undeveloped land that is set aside for recreational use or environmental protection
- ◆ Infill Development– developing on vacant land that is within a built-up area; example– constructing a new building downtown
- ◆ Nonconforming Use- a use that violates zoning but is allowed to stay because it was originally legal but is now illegal according to the new zoning .
- ◆ Mixed-Use Development– a development that combines more than one use; the most common is retail on the ground floor with office space or residential apartment above

{ GLOSSARY OF TERMS cont. }

- ◆ Pilot Program– a new way to tackle an old problem
- ◆ Place Making– a new approach to planning that is people-centered and combines the skills of designers, architects and landscape architects to create a unique place that enhances the community’s assets
- ◆ Planned Unit Development– typically a large development that is characterized by a variety of uses such as housing, recreation and commercial centers; PUDs allow for more planning flexibility than the standard zoning code
- ◆ Set-back requirement– a building requirement that is part of the zoning code that calls for all buildings to be a certain distance from the roadway and adjacent property lines
- ◆ Smart growth– an urban planning and transportation theory that concentrates growth in urban centers to avoid urban sprawl
- ◆ Stakeholder– a group of people and organization that are directly and indirectly affected by a plan for a certain community; typically includes residents, business and property owners, churches, service providers and city/county officials
- ◆ Sustainability– a characteristic of a plan or development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs

“We neglect our cities to our peril, for in neglecting them we neglect the nation.” - President John F. Kennedy