

Rolla Comprehensive Plan Update, 2005

City of Rolla, Missouri Comprehensive Plan Update, 2005/2006

A Recipe for Comprehensive Planning- 9/28/2004

PART ONE: PROJECT INITIATION AND ORGANIZATION

This phase deals with getting things organized before the planning process starts on substantive work.

Task 1.1 Identify and confirm principal client for the plan and their potential uses for the plan

The persons or entity responsible for adopting/implementing the plan (usually the City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission) plus public officials and outside organizations with an interest in the plan – such as the chamber of commerce, UMR, Phelps County Commission, civic clubs, school district, utility companies, others. Who uses the plan should strongly influence which topics are covered and the degree of generality/specificity required in the plan. Clients often use plans to raise awareness of important community issues and solutions. Identify what the appropriate channels of communication between staff and the people/agencies listed above.

Task 1.2 Confirm basic planning parameters with the client – perhaps at a retreat

Identify the “other” users of the plan, if any, the time frame for the plan (short term-5 years or long term 15 to 20 years), the planning area boundary, the critical topics to be addressed, any state imposed legal requirements for planning, any constraints imposed by the client such as a final completion date desired. The level of desired specificity should be determined. Prepare a scope of work.

Draft a memorandum confirming the planner’s understanding of the assignment, the nature of the plan to be prepared, scope of work, planning area boundary identification, recognizing possible topics or chapter headings that may be included and any legal or other constraints. Discuss with client before initiating meetings with the Planning Advisory Committee, et al.

Task 1.3 Assemble and evaluate existing community planning resources

Task 1.3.1 Review status of existing plans and the extent/success of past planning efforts in the community.

Review existing plans for the community, including relevant reports or studies. These include the current and past comprehensive plans, district plans (e.g. downtown), functional plans (e.g. park plan), transportation studies, market

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studies, community profile, etc. Identify existing plan-implementation programs and potential programs available to the community.

- Task 1.3.2 Review readily available secondary data relating to plan topics and identify possible issues

“Issues” are general discussion topics (such as annexation, growth management or urban redevelopment) and perceived community problems (e.g. lack of standard or affordable housing) to be addressed. Interview a number of knowledgeable local people about issues (Mayor, Planning Commission Chairman, RMU, UMR, School District Superintendent, chamber executive, etc.) and determine most frequently mentioned issues, issues that are essentially local, issues that are more “external” in nature, and issues not mentioned but thought to be potentially important by City staff. Data sources include the US Census, city permit records, real estate sales records, demographic statistics/projections, etc.

Draft an initial data analysis and issues memorandum. Review with client(s) before other meetings occur.

- Task 1.3.3 Evaluate and adapt the existing community mapping system resources.

Base maps and current aerial photographs are essential planning tools. The ability to use or adapt the existing mapping system for use in the planning effort is a critical capability that, if not available, will result in significant additional expense and time delay to correct.

- Task 1.4 Plan for community input and further issue identification

Community participation may include:

- Conduct “Visioning” process with decision-makers.
- Informational meetings for the general public, scheduled at key points in the planning process (workshops/open houses). It may be desirable to conduct open houses in the various City wards.
- Public hearings as prescribed in State law.
- Planning Advisory Committee meetings, in which selected participants identify current issues, discuss goals, recommend priorities and review staff reports. These meetings will be on going through the planning process and open to the public.
- Technical Advisory Committee for various subject areas.
- Citizen attitudinal survey.
- Focus groups.
- Internet web site development.
- Periodic newsletters sent to all Rolla households.

Draft a memorandum outlining the proposed citizen involvement strategy and plan approval process for review and discussion with client.

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Task 1.4.1 Identify and establish a Planning Advisory Committee; a Technical Advisory Committee consisting of key City staff, and establish any subcommittee structure based on topics, if desired; develop committee meeting schedule (these are always subject to change!).

The client(s) should select participants based on their ability to represent diverse elements within the community; such as elected/appointed government officials, persons involved with development, businesspersons, media representatives, community organizations (e.g. chamber of commerce), major land owners/investors, minority representatives, etc.

Task 1.4.2 Further refine the community participation process outline

Prepare an outline for the participation program, to include an anticipated schedule of the Planning Advisory Committee meetings, Technical Advisory Committee meetings for specific topics (e.g. transportation), and general informational meetings for the public. The outline should address the role of staff members in this process, assigning responsibilities for implementing the planning participation program. It may also be appropriate to schedule targeted meetings to gain input from the board of education, county commissioners, homebuilders association, realtors/developers, neighborhood organizations (if any), and others.

Review outline with client for approval.

Task 1.4.3 Prepare a brochure to explain the process for the plan update

The purpose of this exercise is to give citizens a brief description of what is to be accomplished and what results are anticipated. The brochure should address:

- What the planning process is.
- What a comprehensive development plan is and its use by local government.
- How people outside of local government will use the plan.
- Why it is important to update the old plan.
- What local issues will be considered and what issues are beyond the scope of the plan.
- The process for preparing the plan.
- The geographic area to be considered in the plan.
- A proposed table of contents (if known).
- The community participation process.
- Preliminary time schedule, budget.

Draft planning process brochure and discuss with client. The brochure will be used throughout the planning process as an informational handout for the public.

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Task 1.4.4 Convene the Planning Advisory Committee for project orientation and begin the process of identifying and refining a community growth vision statement, principles for goal and policy development, issue identification with priorities.

Before the first meeting of a Planning Advisory Committee, planning staff must:

- Compile mailing/e-mail lists of participants, media contacts.
- Prepare materials assembled earlier to assist committee members in better understanding the planning process and the socio-economic characteristics of the community. Major plan topics, such as public infrastructure, transportation, housing, etc. should be discussed during an initial series of committee meetings.
- Draft agendas for each meeting and brief the news media.

Prepare a notebook for use by committee members.

Task 1.4.5 Design citizen attitudinal survey (optional)

Prepare and pretest (optional) a mailed or phone survey to measure citizen perspectives that could be addressed in the plan. Design a sample frame and size.

Draft a survey instrument and review with client and the Planning Advisory Committee.

Task 1.5 Refine the original scope of work and budget

Refine the original scope of work based on the inputs from the previous steps, a review of probable issues, the client's expectations for the plan and its use, staffing that reflects needed expertise, the extent of the citizen involvement program, and the topics to be researched. The budget should outline what is to be produced by task, how this task relates to others, the person(s) responsible for this work, man-days/hours to complete, needed supplies/data, and supervision responsibility.

Draft a refined scope of work and budget, review with client.

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PART TWO: COLLECT AND ANALYZE DATA

This phase of the planning process primarily addresses issue identification. The process of issue identification raises two questions: 1. Have we identified broadly based community concerns or are there groups that have been overlooked? 2. Which issues are truly relevant to the local planning process? Which are global, national, or regional in scale and beyond the city's influence? Are there issues so local or trivial that they concern only a few people and are irrelevant to the community as a whole? Information collection and analysis must focus on quality not quantity.

Task 2.1 Conduct the citizen attitudinal survey and compile the results in a report

This task addresses the first question. If properly designed and administered, the survey results should give a clear picture of the issues and some perspective on community priorities. The compiled report should determine:

- Who's affected by the issues- what groups or individuals.
- The relative importance of issues, and the priority for their resolution.
- The causes of the issues- this can be difficult!

Task 2.2 Collect and analyze data

This task description outlines the subjects normally analyzed for a comprehensive plan. It is extremely important to correlate the topics and degree of detail researched with the time, budget, and geographic scale of the plan you intend to produce. The real temptation for planners is to spend large amounts of time collecting vast amounts of data that is of very limited use in the actual preparation of the plan. The goal should be:

- To provide a solid, factual basis for the policies and actions proposed in the plan.
- To understand (and help others to understand) the community for which the plan is prepared.
- To communicate timely and pertinent data to policy-makers and implementers concerning important planning issues.

Task 2.2.1 Collect data on local development history, annexation trends, archaeological sites, historic districts and buildings

Understanding the history and past development patterns of the community is an important early step in planning for the future. It is presumed that the plan will address at least the recognition if not the preservation of many of these locations.

Draft a report on these findings and prepare a map for inclusion in the plan.

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Task 2.2.2 Collect and analyze land use data

This task consists of describing in mapped, numerical tabulation, and text format how lands is currently used in the planning area. The development and implementation of a land use survey is the central component of this task. The existing land use map is, particularly if you have access to a previously completed survey, one of the most important visual and statistical tools for land use planning.

Draft a land use report and the preparation of an existing land use map.

Task 2.2.3 Collect and analyze data on the natural environment

This task consists of gathering and reviewing data on many aspects of the natural environment correlated to the other topics you deem important and are researching. Many aspects of the environment are attractive and beneficial, while others may represent hazards to a community. The general categories of data usually include:

- Topography and slope (areas above 15% slope are particularly important to identify).
- Drainage features, such as the location of streams, flood plain boundaries, and drainage basins.
- Basic soil types and capabilities, depth to bedrock (remember- all soil types can be engineered to eliminate most problems).
- Climate - precipitation, wind patterns, temperature patterns
- Geologic hazards – sink holes, landslide potential, contaminated sites.
- Forested areas or areas of dense vegetation.

Draft an environmental report and prepare appropriate maps to illustrate key issues. Address development opportunities and constraints.

Task 2.2.4 Collect and analyze information on housing

This task normally involves the use of secondary data sources; such as the US Census and local building permit data as well as the development and implementation of a housing field survey. The survey should be conducted with the land use survey. In this task the planner collects and analyzes data concerning:

- The supply and type of existing housing – under or oversupply, why?
- The condition of that housing.
- The vacancy rate.
- The affordability of housing, including rental and sales data.
- The location of desirable potential sites for new housing.
- A review of public/private programs to promote affordable housing.

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- Constraints for housing development, such as the lack of qualified builders, finished lots, adequate utility service capacity, etc.

Draft a report on housing trends and needs, including projections and a map of priority available land for housing development.

Task 2.2.5 Collect and analyze information on transportation

Information on transportation is closely linked to every aspect of community planning. It may be desirable to consider forming an advisory committee (or at least work with a qualified civil engineer) for this topic due to the overall importance and complexity of transportation issues. Ultimately, the plan should contain a major thoroughfare plan component based on a functional street system classification review for the existing and future road system. This task involves the identification of transportation issues that have priority for analysis and resolution, such as traffic congestion, impacts on neighborhoods from non-local traffic, parking, etc.

Prepare a report that evaluates and maps the existing transportation system and outlines needed improvements, including a major thoroughfare plan.

Task 2.2.6 Collect and analyze information on utilities

Topics to be considered include water supply, sewage disposal, electric power system, natural gas lines, telephone/cable system, storm water management, and solid waste management. For each topic, identify any local issues and collect information on the existing system capabilities/usage, any physical constraints to the expansion of the system (e.g. areas that cannot be served by gravity-flow sewers, areas where water service cannot be extended without new pumps and storage tanks), and a summary of utility policies concerning the design and construction of the utility system.

Draft a report that analyzes and maps the existing and future utility system.

Task 2.2.7 Collect information on community services and facilities

The subject “community services and facilities” traditionally considers public buildings and sites for educational facilities, parks and recreation, libraries, fire and police stations, health facilities, etc. For each topic considered, the plan should inventory existing facility use and adequacy/capacity, recognize operational responsibility, funding levels/cost, and establish measures or standards for quality service. The plan will focus on the future needs of the community for public facilities and provide perspective or guidelines to help identify locations.

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Produce a report mapping and analyzing the physical issues (e.g. number, location, adequacy of the facility based on standards, etc.) Program issues should be addressed in functional plans (e.g. Park Plan)

Task 2.2.8 Collect and analyze data on population and economic conditions

Population and economic factors, such as employment growth, drive development and directly impact housing demand, transportation, and commercial activity. The preparation of population projections is the goal of this exercise. This task involves the analysis of data for:

- Population size and characteristics (e.g. number, sex distribution, age distribution, ethnic composition, income, etc.).
- Migration data.
- Vital statistics
- Population projections
- Employment characteristics (e.g. % unemployed over time).
- Size of the labor force.
- Employment by sector.
- Retail sales.

Draft a report that addresses population and economic trends and translate this information in terms of physical development or growth factors, constraints to development, location advantages for economic development.

Task 2.2.9 Collect information on City land use regulations

Government regulations, such as zoning codes, control how land in specific locations may be used. This task begins with the assembly of regulations that impact growth and the evaluation of their effectiveness – strengths and weaknesses.

Produce a report that summarizes the findings of the analysis of land development regulations.

Task 2.3 Assess land availability and capability for development

Land planning requires an understanding of the potentially available tracts that may be attractive for changes in land use and the capacity of those areas to support urban-scale development. The basic procedure is to identify tracts based on tract size, current development status, ownership, availability of utility and transportation systems, with consideration for any apparent physical constraints (e.g. excessive slope, flooding potential, sewer availability/feasibility, etc.).

Prepare a work map showing lands that are potentially available.

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Task 2.4 Review vision statement, planning principles, issues, data, and priorities

The purpose of this task is to reconsider the vision statement, principles, and issues initially identified in Task 1.4 against the data collected to ascertain whether the vision statement/principles and issues are supported or need to be revised. Particularly, are the issues and priorities previously established still valid? Which issues can be dropped, retained, or added? Is the data adequate to support this conclusion – if not, now is the time to collect it. Have the priorities changed based on the information developed?

Draft a memorandum summarizing and updating the local planning issues and re-stating the priorities established by the advisory committee and staff. Review with Planning Advisory Committee.

Task 2.5 Publish a data book on significant conditions and trends (optional)

In many comprehensive plans the bulk of the document consists of descriptive statements, tables, graphs, and maps. This data is extremely important as a basis for comprehensive planning, consuming much time and budget, and is also useful to the general public. This data, however, does not necessarily have to be published as part of the adopted plan. The data book should present significant information distinguishing between trends caused and controlled by outside forces and those controlled locally. A possible outline would include:

- A brief history of the community.
- Population characteristics and trends.
- Land use trends.
- Circulation conditions and trends.
- Housing statistics and trends.
- Economic conditions and trends.
- Environmental conditions and trends.

Task 2.6 Review and amend the work program (optional)

It is important that the planner, the client(s), and other program participants agree on priorities and the scope of future work. It may be desirable, therefore, to end this part of the planning process with a review of the program direction and work already completed to make any needed changes in terms of program content, timing, budget, or other matters. Obviously, it is essential that all parties agree to any changes to be made.

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PART THREE: PREPARE, REVIEW, AND ADOPT THE UPDATED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

This phase is the fun part of the planning process. Here the plan, in cooperation with other participants, comes together with any tweaks so that it becomes a guide that the community can endorse and use. Of course, the plan must be adopted following all state laws and requirements. In Missouri state law does not specifically define the content of a plan, requiring only that it promote the general welfare, efficiency and economy while addressing physical development and land use. The statute does specify a public hearing process.

Task 3.1 State assumptions concerning external forces

In this task the planner identifies trends and events caused by external forces that may affect the future economic, physical, and social condition of the local community, but are beyond its direct control (e.g. highway development, plant closures, storm water management regulations, etc.). Many decisions made in a local community are strongly influenced by events that take place outside the community and are also largely beyond its control. In some cases the community can influence the course of events that originate outside its borders; in other cases all the community can do is adapt!

Task 3.2 Draft development goals and policies

It is important to link the goals statements, which are long term and general in nature, to policies that describe a specific course of action. It is also important to remember that the plan is long-range. Avoid getting sidetracked by focusing on too narrowly defined topics or having to formulate detailed and specific policies. District or functional plans will accomplish this in subsequent short-term planning efforts. The topics considered for goal and policy statements should be related to the issues that were identified, such as:

- Land use – residential, commercial, and industrial.
- Annexation.
- Transportation.
- Housing.
- Economic development.
- The environment.
- Community facilities.
- Other topics as needed/requested.

This task should produce a summary report concerning the issues, general goals on which consensus has been reached, and setting forth the policies that the local government should follow to attain the goals. The text should be capable of being inserted, with minimal changes, as an integral part of the plan to be prepared at a later date.

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Draft a goal and policy report for review by the Planning Advisory Committee and client(s).

Task 3.3 Draft desired development standards

It is essential to define terms and identify standards for development. For example, if an area is determined to be appropriate for “apartment” use, it is important to define what the word apartment means in terms of density. Standards for park and recreation development, street design capacity, sight clearance, what constitutes the downtown, public services and facilities, excessive slope, etc. should be addressed if they impact plan development.

Draft a summary of standards and definitions to be used in the various plan elements or as a glossary for the plan.

Task 3.4 Make projections of future development

The purpose of this task is to establish baseline projections of population growth in the planning area that will lead to estimates of future housing demand and other land use calculations. It is important to consider historic data, as well as current statistics on growth working down from countywide projections. This “step-down” technique is very useful given the quality of projections available from the Missouri Department of Economic Development and others. The planner should use development assumptions and policies established in Task 3.2 and apply them to the community given the population forecast.

Task 3.5 Prepare a concept plan(s) for future land use

A concept plan is a quickly made, preliminary graphic representation of the location of land uses and transportation facilities in a geographic setting. This task is intended to enable the review of alternatives concerning which lands are to be developed, the amount of development, and the character of development. The technique used should involve the advisory committee as a review body and should reflect the general assumptions about growth, the goals and policies, development standards, population projections, etc. The planner should consider:

- The goals for the area, what do the residents want? What would be in the best interests of the present and future residents?
- Which existing land uses should be retained, which replaced by more intensive uses? How much open space? Are there redevelopment areas? Are there notable natural or man-made features that should be preserved?
- What about the terrain – are there steep slopes or natural hazards like flood plains?
- Where are the main movement corridors – any barriers to movement? What about utility availability?
- What are the planning options for the community?

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The final step is to translate the projected land uses into space requirements for each category and apply them to the concept plan map. Reflect a transportation system, particularly roads, that can accommodate this level of anticipated growth. Prepare several alternative concept plans considering the major development options considered realistic for the community.

Prepare several concept plan options for review by the Planning Advisory Committee.

- Task 3.6 Review concept plan and evaluate impacts; select desirable elements for further development

This task involves the consideration of the potential impact of the concept plan(s) on the community in terms of environmental, economic development, transportation, housing, utilities and public facilities. The advisory committee will be asked to review the concept plan based on this assessment and reach consensus concerning desirable features.

- Task 3.7 Refine the concept plan and produce a preliminary comprehensive development plan

The concept plan should be revised and prepared for publication using the input from the advisory committee. It is useful to develop an outline of topics to be included in the plan. Each community has its own needs that should be reflected in the organization of the comprehensive plan. The elements selected for development in the plan should reflect this need and are prepared at this point in the planning process. The Land Use and Transportation elements are essential; they serve as the foundation for all the other elements and should be prepared first and concurrently, if possible.

A plan outline might include, in addition to the Land Use and Transportation elements:

- Introduction
- The planning process
- Background
- Assumptions
- Overview of the plan
- The elements:
 - Land use and growth management/annexation
 - Natural resources and environment
 - Public facilities
 - Utilities
 - Transportation options
 - Housing and neighborhoods
 - Community design
 - Economic development

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Implementation

The product that results from this task should be a preliminary long-range plan. Topics within the elements may be limited to those that have long-term impacts.

The Land Use and all other element should address:

1. Historical background (only if relevant)
2. Relationship to other elements
3. Present conditions and trends
4. Current emerging issues
5. Major assumptions concerning external forces and local actions/policies, and demand.
6. Goals and policies
7. Plan proposals
8. Actions to be taken to implement the plan

The final organization of each element will vary based on the topics addressed.

The transportation element should consider only major arterials and collectors.

Task 3.8 Review plan-implementing methods or strategies

The final chapter of most comprehensive plans deal with potential implementation strategies. Strategies should be selected that are considered most appropriate for local conditions and capabilities.

Task 3.9 Formally adopt the comprehensive plan

This task involves formal public hearings and formal adoption by the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council. The plan, to be effective, requires official status. It is a statement of the plans and policies that have been carefully considered and specifically endorsed by the local legislative body. The plan represents a commitment to a series of actions; it should be made a part of the official record.

Task 3.10 Publish the adopted plan

If the plan is to be effective, it must be available to all interested persons. Copies of the plan should be readily available at the library and City Hall. The plan should also be provided using a summary brochure format and should be provided via the internet.