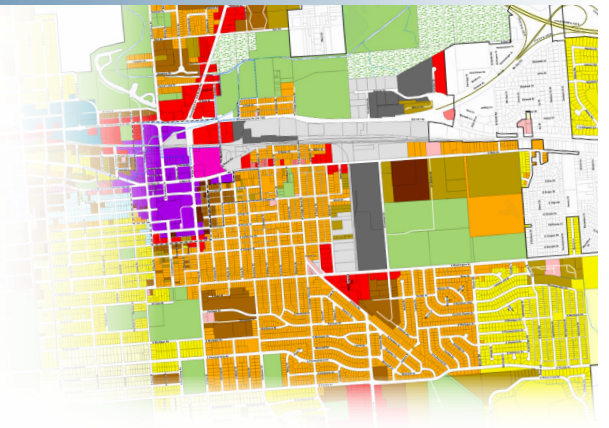


# DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Pursuant to [65 ILCS 5/11-12-6](#), a municipality may develop a comprehensive plan. This plan is an official map that designates the types of land uses the municipality would like to see developed on specific properties. It may also include requirements for the size and materials used in streets and alleys, the location of parks, playgrounds and school sites and standards for drainage and sanitary sewer facilities.

A comprehensive plan is an advisory document and map. Unlike a zoning ordinance, the comprehensive plan does not regulate or control the particular use of property. Instead, the comprehensive plan sets goals for the development or redevelopment of the community.

Adopting a comprehensive plan that incorporates proper zoning goals can increase the likelihood that a court will uphold the validity of the zoning of a particular parcel, if challenged, where that zoning is in conformity with the comprehensive plan.

When a community is considering creating a comprehensive plan or learning more about planning and zoning, please refer to the Illinois Municipal League (IML) *Zoning Handbook for Municipal Officials*, available at [iml.org/zoning](http://iml.org/zoning). This handbook is written for officials who are involved in the zoning decision-making process. It also provides guidelines and explains key concepts such as the distinction between variances and special uses and the different functions of a plan commission, also referred to as a planning commission, and a zoning board of appeals.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) may be a consideration in your community's comprehensive plan deliberations. TIF is a mechanism for municipalities to spur economic development in specific geographic areas that are blighted and deteriorating. TIF is a vital economic development tool for Illinois cities, villages and towns. IML works to support, improve and protect TIF through our advocacy efforts. IML has developed a dedicated webpage that provides resources and additional information regarding TIF, available at [iml.org/tif](http://iml.org/tif).

## PROCESS

The process for a municipality to adopt a comprehensive plan is governed by the Illinois Municipal Code ([65 ILCS 5/11-12-5 through 5/11-12-12](#)). The plan serves as an advisory guide for zoning, subdivision of land parcels or real property, capital improvements and other municipal policies but it is not self-executing law. Zoning ordinances and other regulations must be enacted separately.



First, the corporate authorities must have a plan commission or plan department or both, created by ordinance. The commission is responsible for preparing the proposed comprehensive plan or amendments and is given wide latitude for what can be included: land use, streets, public facilities, parks, zoning policy, utility systems and anticipated annexation areas. The comprehensive plan can cover the municipality and its extraterritorial jurisdiction: the surrounding unincorporated territory within 1.5 miles of municipal boundaries, unless another municipality already has jurisdiction there.

Before adoption, the plan commission must conduct a public hearing, providing at least 15 days' notice of the hearing. The notice must include the time and place of the hearing and be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the county or counties in which the municipality and contiguous unincorporated territory are located.<sup>1</sup>

Following the hearing, the plan commission may vote on a recommendation to adopt the plan (possibly with amendments) and send that recommendation to the city council or village or town board. "Within 90 days after the conclusion of the hearing, the corporate authorities, after consideration of the recommendation of the plan commission and such information as shall have been derived from the hearing, shall either adopt the comprehensive plan or amendment in whole or in part or reject the entire comprehensive plan or amendment."<sup>2</sup>

## CONSULTANTS

Consultants can be a valuable partner in preparing a comprehensive plan to bring specialized expertise and experience, process management skills and objective perspectives that municipal staff or officials may not have time or resources to provide. Consultants may assist by structuring the comprehensive plan process to ensure legal compliance and stakeholder and public engagement to ensure the final adopted plan is a reflection of the community's objectives. In addition, consultants will have technical expertise that may be useful: data collection and analysis, mapping and GIS services and conducting any special studies (for example, housing needs or transportation modeling) that may be useful. Consultants will also have information about best practices or case studies from other municipalities and can assist with drafting and compiling the final materials. Request for proposals (RFP) is a suggested course of action when conducting a search for a qualified consultant.

## LIFE SPAN, COSTS AND TIMELINE

The typical life span of a comprehensive plan ranges between 15 and 20 years, with costs ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000 or more to develop, especially if using a consultant. These prices will vary depending on the municipality's size and input from the plan commission and community. A comprehensive plan could take 12 to 18 months or longer to develop and adopt.

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<sup>1</sup> [65 ILCS 5/11-12-7](#)

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

