

## **SUMMARY OF WISCONSIN COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING REQUIREMENTS**

In 1999, the Wisconsin Legislature enacted legislation that greatly expanded the scope and significance of comprehensive plans within the State. The legislation, often referred to as the State's "Smart Growth" law, provides a new framework for the development, adoption, and implementation of comprehensive plans by regional planning commissions and by county, city, village, and town units of government. The law is set forth in Section 66.1001 of the *Wisconsin Statutes*. The law has been amended periodically, most recently in June 2010 through enactment of 2009 Wisconsin Act 372.

The law does not require the adoption of county and local comprehensive plans. However, Section 66.1001(3) of the *Statutes* requires that county and local general zoning ordinances; county, city, and village shoreland and floodplain zoning ordinances; county and local subdivision ordinances, and local official mapping ordinances enacted or amended on or after January 1, 2010, be consistent with the comprehensive plan adopted by the unit of government enacting or amending an ordinance.

### **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENTS**

The law requires that the following nine elements be addressed in a comprehensive plan:

- Issues and Opportunities
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources
- Economic Development
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Land Use
- Implementation

### **REGIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

The regional plan for Southeastern Wisconsin contains extensive and detailed inventory information relating to existing land use and natural resources; population and employment information and projections; and regional land use, transportation, and other plan elements that provide an areawide, or metropolitan, planning framework for the preparation of county and local comprehensive plans. County and local plans should refine and detail the recommendations set forth in the regional plan. A summary of regional plan recommendations is available from the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), which serves county and local governments in Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha Counties.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Section 66.1001(4)(a) of the *Statutes* requires that the governing body adopt written public participation procedures, designed to "foster public participation, including open discussion, communication programs, information services, and public meetings for which advance notice has been provided, in every stage of the preparation of a comprehensive plan." Proposed plan elements must be widely distributed, and opportunities must be provided for written comments to be submitted by the public to the governing body. A procedure for the governing body to respond to those comments must also be identified.

## **PLAN OVERSIGHT**

Preparation of a comprehensive plan may be guided by the governing body, the local plan commission, or an advisory committee created by the governing body to oversee preparation of the plan. The public participation plan adopted by the governing body should specify the roles of staff, consultants, and local boards and committees in preparing the comprehensive plan.

## **PLAN ADOPTION**

A comprehensive plan must be adopted by an ordinance enacted by the governing body. All nine elements must be adopted simultaneously. At least one public hearing must be held by the unit of government prior to adopting the plan. Section 66.1001(4)(b) of the *Statutes* requires that an adopted comprehensive plan, or an amendment to a plan, be sent to all governmental units within and adjacent to the county or local government preparing a plan; the Wisconsin Department of Administration; the regional planning commission; and the public library that serves the area in which the county or local government is located.

## **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

2009 Wisconsin Act 372 changed the consistency provisions of the comprehensive planning law. Section 66.1001(3) now requires that general zoning, shoreland zoning, subdivision, and official mapping ordinances enacted or amended on or after January 1, 2010, must be consistent with the comprehensive plan adopted by the governing body of the unit of government.

## **PLAN UPDATES AND AMENDMENTS**

The comprehensive planning law requires that adopted comprehensive plans be reviewed and updated at least once every 10 years. County and local governments may choose to update the plan more frequently. While there is no limit on the number or frequency of amendments that may be made to a comprehensive plan, the public participation, public hearing, and plan adoption procedures required for a full comprehensive plan also apply to plan amendments.

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*Additional information regarding the preparation of comprehensive plans in Southeastern Wisconsin is available from the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC). Commission staff may be contacted by telephone at (262) 547-6721, or by e-mail at [sewrpc@sewrpc.org](mailto:sewrpc@sewrpc.org).*