


Comprehensive Plan Checklist

Towns & Cities with a Population of 2000 Persons or More

Town / City:

Plan Dated:

Reviewed by:


 = State Requirement under Title 22, Section 702 Del C.

 = Strongly Suggested

★ = Encouraged but Optional


Public Participation


Summary: All plans should have some provision for input by the public. Public input is most useful early in the planning process, and should help form the plan's goals and recommendations. The development of a community vision for the future is a useful exercise.


Public Participation Summary and Results. The plan should include a section which describes the public participation process and summarizes the results. If developed, the vision statement could be contained in this section. 

Population Data and Analysis

Summary: The following population data is important to characterize the residents of the town or city, and will inform land development plan recommendations, especially in regards to housing and social services.


Past Population Trends. Historic population data from past Census reports should be reported, and trends analyzed. It should be sufficient to go back 30 or 40 years (in 10 year increments), although older data may be informative in certain cases. 

Population Projections. Recent population projections should be reported and analyzed. For larger cities, these can be obtained from the Delaware Population Consortium. For smaller towns, projections may be unavailable or difficult to obtain. It may be necessary to conduct mathematical projections based upon available data. 

Demographics. Demographic information about the population should be reported and analyzed. In the larger cities the Delaware Population Consortium can be a good resource. For smaller towns, the most recent Census summary files can be used. 

Housing

Summary: A description of the housing styles, housing stock, and conditions **must** serve as a starting point for evaluating the residential uses in the town. This information, in concert with the population and employment projections, will provide the basis for land use plan recommendations. Information about low to moderate income housing needs will allow for the provision of affordable housing.

Housing Stock Inventory. An inventory of the housing stock in the community, including the number and type of dwelling units. An inventory of the affordable housing resources should also be included. 


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Housing Pipeline. How many housing units are approved and pending construction [by housing type and density.](#) 

Housing Needs Analysis. How many housing units, of which type, will be required to accommodate the existing and future population? Be sure to include affordable housing needs in the analysis. [DSHA has “A Guide for Delaware Municipal Comprehensive Plans” to help assist the town with their affordability analysis.](#) ★

Affordable Housing Plan. The Affordable Housing Plan must include *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* which serve to define the community’s strategy for providing affordable housing for current and future residents. 

[DSHA has designed an Affordable Housing Resource Center website as a resource for local government officials and planners to aid in meaningful strategies to encourage affordable housing. Below provides a menu of housing options that local governments can choose to utilize to create, preserve, and promote affordable housing development in their respective jurisdiction and to meet the housing needs of the community. However, every community has different needs and not all options may pertain.](#)

Menu of Housing Options:

- **Incentives that create additional affordable housing units such as density bonuses, expedited review, or tax and fee waivers or requirements for additional affordable housing units in annexation agreements.**
- **Permitting accessory dwelling units in residential areas as a matter of right to encourage social- and economic-integration, and to provide life-cycle housing.**
- **Regulatory changes that will reduce housing costs, such as reducing parking requirements for housing developments where studies have shown that less is needed (elderly) as well as on transit corridors.**
- **Tax abatements for owners of elderly and disabled and other low-income homeowners to keep them in their home.**
- **Facilitate perpetually affordable homeownership units by partnering with the Diamond State Community Land Trust. As a non-profit organization, they own the land under the affordable housing and preserve the affordability of housing after the building changes hands. There is broad flexibility in how this partnership can be structured.**
- **Participation in an Employer Assisted Programs to provide much needed assistance to homebuyers and to employers in recruiting and retaining employees.**
- **An examination of barriers faced in the creation and maintenance of affordable housing (i.e. administrative processes; fees and dedications; tax policies; building and housing codes; and, zoning, land development, construction and subdivision regulations) along**


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with strategies to assist in removing those barriers that unnecessarily impact housing affordability.


- **Proactively Rezone to ensuring sufficient land supply to provide the full range of housing choices including but not limited to, multifamily housing, mixed uses, manufactured homes, and attached homes. Particularly around town centers and along transit corridors.**
- **Vigorously enforce property maintenance codes to protect all members of a community from those few who allow their properties to deteriorate to substandard conditions. However, relocation issues should be considered.**

- Quantifiable performance objectives. [An annual analysis for addressing affordable housing should be included in the Implementation Plan.](#)**

Annexation

Summary: The annexation section should discuss the desired uses for the lands immediately surrounding the town or city, and designate lands which are desirable for annexation by the town. Expansion plans should be coordinated with adequate public facilities for the new area.


- Analysis of Surrounding Land Uses.** A map and analysis of the land uses surrounding the town or city. Particular attention should be paid to existing or proposed land uses which will affect the town.  

- Annexation Plan.** The Annexation Plan must include *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* which serve to define the community's strategy and desires for expansion through annexation. Capacity of public facilities and services should be analyzed as a part of this plan. 

Redevelopment Potential

Summary: An analysis of areas in the municipality that need revitalization and redevelopment, and a strategy to accomplish those goals.

- Identification of Redevelopment Areas and Issues.** An inventory of areas within the community in need of revitalization or redevelopment, and a discussion of the issues which have led to their decline. 

- Redevelopment Strategy.** A set of *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* to encourage and enable the redevelopment and revitalization of the areas described above. 


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Community Development Strategy. A strategy which lists policies and actions which serve to improve the quality of life in the community. This can be combined with the affordable housing element, or can be strategies which serve to complement housing activities (such as community policing, community facilities, infrastructure enhancements or economic development). 


Community Character


Summary: A community's character is defined by its history, urban form, natural environment, and other features that make the community unique. Plans should identify these elements, and include strategies to enhance them.


History of the Town or City. It is important to note when the community was established and what the historical factors in its growth and development were. Also, what features from the early period of growth are still existing and valued by the community? 

Physical Conditions. A description of the general layout of the town and the physical condition of major elements in the built environment. 

Significant Natural Features. Describe the overall topography and geology of the town. Also, note significant features such as woodlands, wetlands, streams, lakes, rivers, prime agricultural soils or other notable natural features. 

Community Character. Describe what is unique about the community. 

Historic and Cultural Resources Plan. The Historic and Cultural Resources Plan must include *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* which serve to define the community's strategy and desires to preserve and enhance important community resources. 

Community Design Plan. The Community Design Plan must include *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* which serve to define the community's strategy to encourage or require urban design methods which preserve and enhance the community's character. Often this plan element can be accomplished in conjunction with other relevant plan elements such as transportation (interconnectivity and sidewalks, for example) or historic preservation (design guidelines, for example). 


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Environmental Protection Plan. The Environmental Protection Plan must include *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* which serve to define the community's strategy to preserve important natural resources, and prevent development activities which are detrimental to the natural environment. 

Land Use Plan


Summary: The land use plan evaluates existing land use within a municipality, then recommends proposed land use categories for all parcels in the community. The land use plan should be expressed as both text and a map or map series. The Land Use Plan represents a composite of recommendations for the community, and should be derived after an analysis of all relevant data found elsewhere in the plan.

Existing Land Use. A survey of the existing land uses in the town or city. Land which is currently vacant and developable should be identified. This element should be expressed as a map, although some text may be included. The existing land use element should provide existing land use information for each parcel as a result of a recent windshield survey or reliable parcel based building information. 

Land Use Plan. The Land Use Plan must include *policies, statements, goals, planning components and a map* which serve to define the proposed land uses for all areas within the municipality's jurisdiction. Particular attention should be given to the recommended land uses for lands which are vacant and likely to be developed. The Land Use Plan must show the desired future land uses for each parcel in the municipality. This data will form the basis for the required update of the zoning ordinance within 18 months of plan adoption. 

Critical Community Development and Infrastructure Issues

Summary: This section involves an evaluation of the community facilities and major infrastructure of a town, primarily its water and wastewater system. Transportation infrastructure should also be considered. The systems should be evaluated for their adequacy and capacity to serve current and future growth. In addition, the municipality should review items and facilities which will improve the community as a whole. These programs may include such things as housing assistance or rehabilitation, replacement of infrastructure, or economic development activities intended to provide enhanced job opportunities. Few small municipalities will be able to accomplish these activities alone, so intergovernmental coordination will be important.

Review of Community Conditions. The Comprehensive Plan should identify any critical community development issues that are present in the town. 


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Inventory of Community Infrastructure. An inventory of the community's water, wastewater, transportation, open spaces, recreational facilities, schools, public buildings and other community infrastructure. For water and sewer systems, treatment methods, capacities, and allocations should be considered. 

Inventory and Analysis of Community Services. An inventory of the services offered by the municipality, including any services (such as snow removal or trash pick – up) that have land use implications. 

Water and Wastewater Plan. The Land Use Plan must include *policies, statements, goals, planning components and a map* which serve to define and critical infrastructure issues and describe the future enhancements and expansion of these systems to serve current and future growth areas. The ability of these systems to serve undeveloped areas in the town and any land desirable for annexation should be considered. 

Transportation Plan. The Transportation Plan must include *policies, statements, goals, planning components and a map* which serve to define any critical transportation issues and strategies and actions to improve the transportation system which serves the town. This plan should be written in close coordination with DelDOT, and include descriptions of applicable programs such as Corridor Preservation. 

Community Development Plan. The Comprehensive Plan should include *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* detailing a strategy for addressing any critical community development concerns. Coordination with other government and non-profit agencies may be necessary to develop an effective strategy, especially in municipalities with limited resources. 

Community Facilities Plan. The Community Facilities Plan must include *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* which serve to improve and maintain the quality of public facilities and services. The plan should evaluate the adequacy of community facilities, and recommend improvements as necessary. This plan may be accomplished through the other relevant plan sections, such as water and wastewater and transportation. 


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Intergovernmental Coordination

Summary: The plan should describe the municipality's relationship with other government jurisdictions and state agencies, and specify strategies for improving those relationships.

Description of Intergovernmental Relationships. A description of the municipality's relationships with various other levels of government, such as counties, nearby towns, and the state. Also, it will be desirable to detail the relationships with important state agencies, such as DeIDOT and DNREC.





Intergovernmental Coordination Strategy. A strategy for coordinating planning actions with other government jurisdictions and agencies, as defined above. 


Analysis and Comparison of Other Relevant Planning Documents. The Comprehensive Plan must include an analysis and comparison of the proposed land use and annexation plan with other relevant planning documents. These documents may include but are not limited to the State Strategies for Policies and Spending, the most up to date County (and/or municipal) plans, State Transportation Plans, etc. The analysis must demonstrate that the proposed Comprehensive Plan is compatible with the other relevant plans, or provide a compelling case for the proposed deviation. 

Economic Conditions

Summary: The following economic and employment data is important to characterize the economic base of the town or city, and will inform land development plan recommendations, especially in regards to industrial lands, employment centers, and economic development.

Economic Base / Major Employers. Detail the major industries and employers in the town or city, including the number of employees in each. 

Labor Market. What are the characteristics of the local labor market? The labor market will most likely include the city or town and a large surrounding area. What is the unemployment rate for the area, as compared to the state and the county? 

Income and Poverty. Income characteristics of the resident population, as compared to the county and the state. Also, the percentage of the population living below the poverty line should be detailed. This information may most easily be derived from the most recent US Census. 


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- Economic Development Plan.** The Economic Development Plan must include *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* which serve to define strategies and actions for attracting and retaining businesses and job opportunities to the community. [The economic development strategy should contain a provision for affordable housing within reach of working households.](#) 

Open Space and Recreation


Summary: An analysis of the parks and recreation facilities available to the community. These facilities may be maintained by the municipality or other state or county agencies. Important open spaces should also be discussed, such as farmland, preserved lands, wetlands, or other environmentally sensitive lands that are important to the community in their natural or undeveloped state.

- Inventory of Open Space and Recreation Facilities.** Inventories of parks and recreational facilities. Also, an inventory of other open spaces that have been deemed important by the community. Areas which have important natural features that make development upon them undesirable for ecological reasons should be listed as well. This element may be accomplished through the other relevant plan sections, such as the community facilities plan. 

- Open Space and Recreation Plan.** The Open Space and Recreation Plan must include *policies, statements, goals, and planning components* which serve to improve and maintain the quality of parks, recreation areas, and open spaces. The plan should include an analysis of the adequacy of recreation facilities for the community, and a plan for expansion if necessary. 

Implementation Strategies

Summary: Plans should be systematically implemented through a series of policies and regulations. The plan should identify how existing regulations support the plan, and suggest new policies and regulations as needed to implement the plan. In some cases, where more research or study is required, additional plans or plan elements may be recommended for completion after plan adoption.

- Evaluation of Current Codes and Ordinances.** Evaluate the municipality's current codes and ordinances to determine whether or not they support the intent and goals of the plan. A listing should be made of codes and ordinances that do not, and these should be scheduled for revisions. 

- Zoning Map Revisions.** The zoning map is a key implementation tool which should be consistent with the Land Use Plan. Zoning maps should be revised as needed concurrently or shortly after plan


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adoption. The zoning map must be revised to comply with the land use plan within 18 months of plan adoption. 


Zoning and Subdivision Code Revisions. These codes are also critical implementation tools, and should be revised as needed. In some cases, the recommendations of the Land Use Plan will require the addition of new regulations in these codes. 


Implementation Plan. It may be very helpful to develop an implementation work plan which lists actions and policies that the municipality can take to systematically implement the plan. 

Coordination with Other Government Agencies. Interactions with other government agencies, such as the county and the state, are often necessary to help municipalities achieve their goals. This section should list the types of coordination foreseen. 

Other State Programs, Policies, and Issues. The Comprehensive Plan should take address or otherwise consider relevant state programs, policies and issues that are relevant to the individual municipality based on geographic location, public service arrangements, or other factors. These items may be explored through the intergovernmental coordination process, as well as through direct interaction with the Office of State Planning Coordination and / or the individual State agencies. In some cases it will be necessary to address these items as conditions for certification. These programs, policies, and issues include but are not limited to the following:

The **Total Maximum Daily Loads** program through the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control. This program will be relevant to municipalities adjacent to significant watercourses or located in “impaired” watersheds. 

The **Corridor Capacity Preservation Program** through the Department of Transportation. This program will be relevant to municipalities near Routes 1, 13, and 113 in Kent and Sussex Counties and Route 52 in New Castle County. 

The **Agricultural Preservation** program through the Department of Agriculture. This program will be relevant to municipalities with agricultural preservation areas adjacent to their boundaries, or within their proposed annexation areas. It will also be relevant to municipalities in rural areas where farming is still an active land use near or within their jurisdiction. 


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The **Wellhead Protection** program through the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control. This program is relevant to municipalities with public water systems. Although the regulations will not be enforced until 2007, it is desirable to identify appropriate land uses for wellhead areas as soon as is practical. 

Other Comments:

Summary: