

Section II: Introduction to Urban Planning



Lecture Outline

1. What is Planning
2. Goals of Planning
3. Tools of Planning
4. Major actors in Planning Process
5. Planning in Practice: Plan review process.

What is Planning

What is the purpose of Planning? Why does it exist?

Planning exists to improve the built and social environment of communities.

Planning enables civic leaders, businesses, and citizens to play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people's lives.

Good planning helps create communities that offer better choices for *where* and *how* people live.

More than most other areas of government, planning **heavily** involves citizen input.

What is Planning

Urban Planning involves a variety of different areas that impact a community, including:

Economic Development,

Crime & Safety,

Sustainability and Environmental Quality,

Health Issues,

Transportation,

Affordable Housing,

Historic Preservation,

Land Use,

Aesthetics and Design

What is Planning

Importantly, there are several main areas of focus that together encompass Urban Planning:

- **City and Town Planning:** Focuses on the built and social environments of local communities
- **Transportation Planning:** Focuses on transportation of all types.
- **Regional Planning:** Focuses on city/town planning, economic development, and transportation across political lines.

Goals of Planning

What is the goal of planning?

What is the final outcome they are looking for?

Lexington Planning Department Mission Statement:

“To provide a vision and strategy that will allow Lexington to grow and prosper while preserving, protecting, and enhancing existing neighborhoods, downtown, and the rural Bluegrass cultural landscape”

Vision and goal encompass a wide array of things, but the overall goal is to make places that are sustainable.

Socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable.

Goals of Planning

- 1. Maintain Property Values:** Based on the theory that building and land use values are preserved and enhanced by orderly development.

Increasingly, the preservation and enhancement of the tax base is becoming a major goal of planning.

- 2. Stabilize Neighborhoods and Preserve their Quality:**
The quality of neighborhoods is not determined only by the standard at which one person maintains a house, but by the desirability of all the homes surrounding a home.

Includes the creation and maintenance of historic neighborhoods and civic institutions and landmarks.

This leads to a battle between quality of neighborhoods and the quality and health of a city.

Goals of Planning

- 3. Provide Uniform Regulations throughout each District:** Similar properties situated similarly should be treated similarly.

While zoning changes are allowable and often occur, they require support of a commission or council.

- 4. Move traffic rapidly and safely:** Traffic safety is the most often used argument against non-residential development in residential areas.

Regulation and design of traffic is one of the most important roles of planners, as unsuccessful road planning can lead major problems within a city or urban area.

Crime, decreased development, economic problems, etc.

Goals of Planning

- 5. Control aesthetics and architectural harmony:** One of the most important aspects of planning is to ensure the aesthetics and architectural integrity of urban areas.

Zoning and architectural review boards play a large role in maintaining these standards.

Courts have consistently upheld the denial of permits for structures that are so at odds with existing structures or the nature of the district that they cause a depreciation of property values.

- 6. Safety:** This includes safety from environmental as well as human problems.

Planning cities so that they are free of floods, fires, etc.. As well as assisting in the development of neighborhoods and communities that are low in crime.

Goals of Planning

7. Economic development: The economic development of an area is intimately tied to its planning and zoning schemes.

Areas must be smartly designed and planned so that industry, agriculture, service industries, and other economic modes can function effectively and efficiently for the community.

Roads, housing, set backs, environmental concerns, power, sewers, utilities, etc.. All must be planned in a manner that they work together to achieve the most for the community, without costing more than they bring in.

WHERE IS THE CONSIDERATION OF CRIME AND SAFETY?

Tools of Planning

Within Urban Planning there are 3 main tools that planners have at their disposal to shape the built and social environment.

1. Zoning
2. Subdivision of Land
3. Comprehensive Plan

These 3 tools are designed to work in concert to help regulate and shape a community in the manner that the community feels is best for its present and future.

Zoning

****** Zoning is arguably the most important tool available to planners.

Zoning defined: The dividing up of the community into districts or zones and regulating within such districts the use of land and the use, heights, and area of buildings for the purpose of conserving and promoting the health, safety, morals, convenience and general welfare of the people of the community.

Zoning is the instrument for giving effect to that part of the comprehensive or master plan that is concerned with the private uses of and the private developments on privately owned land.

Zoning

First zoning was created in early 1900's to prevent undesirable structures and industry in or near residential neighborhoods.

Very first zoning laws were primarily somewhat racist, preventing Chinese laundries from locating in certain neighborhoods.

In 1926 U.S. Supreme Court established the right of the government, or community as a whole, to restrict with ***reasonable*** regulations what happens on every piece of privately owned land under jurisdiction of any governmental units zoning ordinance.

Importantly, despite this Supreme Court ruling, there continues to be judicial review of the reasonableness of techniques and procedures used in zoning.

Zoning

Before any community can zone it must have the authority to do so granted by the state legislature. In each state the enabling acts a statement of purposes of zoning is set forth.

The most commonly used purposes are as follows:

- To lessen congestion in the streets
- To secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers
- To promote health, morals, or general welfare.
- To provide adequate light and air.
- To prevent overcrowding of land and buildings.
- To avoid *undue* concentration of population.

Zoning

It is the role of planning and the function of the planning commission to provide a means to avoid the danger of an undue and improper discretionary approach to zoning.

All zoning should be based on long range comprehensive planning.

Many states have revised their enabling acts to require that this process be followed and that planning commissions draft all new zoning ordinances.

While some cities and states allow for the creation of separate zoning and planning commissions, this is generally discouraged.

Focus of Zoning

What are some of the things that Zoning focuses on?

It is important to remember that zoning is about limiting or restricting the use of land within a zone, and thus zoning regulations focuses on defining how land can be used.

In THEORY zoning regulations are designed to prevent problems with health, safety, etc...

In REALITY, zoning deals largely with how you can use land, how large must a lot be, how high can fences be, etc..

In practice, not much thought goes into how these regulations actually crime issues.

Focus of Zoning

Typical Zoning Areas:

1. **Intent:** Purpose of the zone.
2. **Principal Uses:** What uses are allowed in the zone.
Example: Single family detached residences.
3. **Accessory Uses:** Uses and structures that are customarily associated with zone use.
Example: Private garages, swimming pools, etc..
4. **Conditional Uses:** Uses permitted only with board of Adjustment approval.
Example: Nursery school in R-1A zone.
5. **Prohibited Uses:** Uses not allowed in zone.

Focus of Zoning

6. Lot Sizes: In residential areas this focuses on:

minimum lot sizes,

minimum frontages

Minimum Front and rear yards

Maximum building heights

Maximum lot coverage

7. Parking Requirements: Usually regulated elsewhere in the document, but referred to here.

Common Zoning Types

A-R Agricultural Rural
A-B Agricultural Buffer
A-N Agricultural Natural Areas
A-U Agricultural Urban
R-1A Single Family Residential
R-1B Single Family Residential
R-1C Single Family Residential
R-1D Single Family Residential
R-1E Single Family Residential
R-1T Townhouse Residential
R-2 Two-Family Residential
R-3 Planned Neighborhood Residential
R-4 High Density Apartment
R-5 High Rise Apartment
P-1 Professional Office
B-1 Neighborhood Business
B-2 Downtown Business
B-2A Downtown Frame Business
B-2B Lexington Center Business
B-3 Highway Service Business
B-4 Wholesale and Warehouse Business
I-1 Light Industrial
I-2 Heavy Industrial
P-2 Office, Industry and Research Park

MU-1: Mixed Use Neighborhood Node
MU-2: Mixed Use Neighborhood Corridor
MU-3: Mixed Use Community Zone
M1-P: Mobile Home Park
ND-1: Neighborhood Design Character

Zoning Types



Subdivision of Land

Definition: The act of dividing land into pieces that are easier to sell or otherwise develop, usually via a plat or parcel.

If it is used for housing it is typically known as a housing subdivision or housing development, although some developers tend to call these areas communities.

Subdivisions may also be for the purpose of commercial or industrial development, and the results vary from retail malls with independently owned out parcels to industrial parks.

Subdivision of Land

Process: Very simplified version of complex process.

1. The owner of a large parcel of land wants to split it into smaller pieces. Can be for individual sale or building.
2. Zone determines what the use can be. If use is to be different you must get a zone change.
3. Plan must be made and filled describing how land will be divided (residential lots, commercial, etc..)
4. Numerous government agencies must approve subdivision before building (flood plain, tree plan, etc..)
5. Finally able to build.

Subdivision of Land

Standard Types of Regulation.

Streets, roads, sidewalks and road connectivity

Greenways, trails, and parks.

Storm drainage, floodplain, general environmental

Tree inventory

Historic preservation

Compliance with zone requirements

Compliance with Comprehensive plan

Importance of Subdivision of Land

Is subdivision of land important to crime?

Yes, because how we subdivide the land (residential, commercial, retail, mixed use, etc..) as well as how we place roads can significantly impact crime patterns.

Other “crime” factors:

Type of residential zone, nearest neighbor, density of housing, proximity to negative uses, permeability, affordability of housing

Comprehensive Plans

Definition: An attempt to establish guidelines for the future growth of a community.

It should be a comprehensive or all-inclusive approach at addressing the issue of the future growth of a community.

The document is official in nature, meaning that some form of local government should adopt it into local law.

The document should then be used as a policy guide to decisions about the development of the community.

In practice, a comprehensive plan should be a vision of what a community is to be in the future.

Comprehensive Plans

The contents of a comprehensive plan can vary from community to community but in most cases, it should consist of the following elements:

1. Land use -- both existing and future;
2. Demographics -- existing and projected;
3. Housing;
4. Infrastructure;
5. Education;
6. Recreation; and
7. Thoroughfares or roadways.

Requirements of Comprehensive Plans

1. Plan should be comprehensive.
2. Plan should be long-range.
3. Plan should be general in nature.
4. Plan should focus on physical development.
5. Plan should relate physical design proposals to community goals and social and economic policies.
6. Plan should be first a policy instrument, and second a technical instrument.

Creating a Comprehensive Plan

1. There should be only one official comprehensive plan.
2. Plan should be formally adopted by the legislative body.
3. There should be a lengthy period of public debate prior to adoption.
4. The plan should be available and understandable to the public.
5. Plan should be formulated so as to capitalize on its educational potential.

The process of developing this plan should be a community-wide effort, with all interest groups having a part in determining what this vision should be.

Creating a Comprehensive Plan

1. **Organization:** Committee should be selected with an eye towards diversity and professionalism.
2. **Data Collection:** Collection of data on existing conditions related to the elements of the plan.

Existing zoning maps, land use data, road data, housing, etc..

2. **Data Analysis:** Analyze everything with an eye toward determining trends.
3. **Goal Setting:** Goals should be set by the committee regarding all of the major elements of the plan.
4. **Citizen Participation:** Crucial to not only creating a sound plan, but having it implemented completely.

Actors in the Planning Process

1. Town Planner
2. Planning Commission
3. Architectural Review Board
4. Regional Planning Organization
5. Metropolitan Planning organization
6. Board of Adjustments
7. Neighborhood Associations
8. Developers and Special Interests
9. Other Government Agencies

Town Planner

Professional planners help create a broad vision for the community. They also research, design, and develop programs; lead public processes; effect social change; perform technical analyses; manage; and educate.

The basic element of their job is the creation of a plan. Planners develop a plan through analysis of data and identification of goals for the community or the project. Planners help the community and its various groups identify their goals and form a particular vision.

In the creation of a plan, planners identify the strategies by which the community can reach its goals and vision. Planners are also responsible for the implementation or enforcement of many of the strategies, often coordinating the work of many groups of people.

It is important to recognize that a plan can take a variety of forms including: policy recommendations, community action plans, comprehensive plans, neighborhood plans, regulatory and incentive strategies, or historic preservation plans.

Other examples of plans include: redevelopment plans, smart growth strategies, economic development strategic plans, site plans, and disaster preparedness plans.

Planning Commission

Generally consist of citizens who are appointed or elected to the position for a period of between 4-8 years.

The commission meets regularly (generally weekly) to discuss and approve zoning and other development and planning related requests.

Examples include requests for changes in zoning, new development proposals, issues relating to the comprehensive plan, etc..

The Planning commission is also responsible for working on long-range and comprehensive/master plans for cities.

The commission is generally assisted heavily by professional planning staff who given recommendations about zoning changes and other issues.

Architectural Review Board

Group that is responsible for making decisions concerning whether or not houses are meeting architectural standards and fit into the community context.

They have the ability to deny renovations, demolitions, and any new construction.

Power of these boards varies by community and is stronger for historic neighborhoods, downtown areas, and places with active community groups.

Most powerful ARB is in Charleston SC, where they have denied paint colors and their denials have been held up in court.

Regional Planning Organization

Responsible for trying to coordinate planning and economic growth for a region. Importance is that these groups think beyond just the local community and try to coordinate planning for an entire area.

While main focus is usually economic development of the region, these groups also are very active in the areas of roads and transportation planning, zoning and variances, environmental issues, education, tourism and preservation.

In the Lexington area, there are two main organizations, the Bluegrass Area Development District and Bluegrass Tomorrow and that cover the MSA

Bluegrass Tomorrows goal is to “achieve regional solutions that enable the central Bluegrass to build a strong and efficient economy which respects the tradition of livable and distinct communities, surrounded by beautiful greenbelts of productive farmland and rich natural areas.”

Bluegrass ADD ADD's are a means by which local elected officials and citizens unite to provide for the planned growth of their area. An ADD is therefore a regional organization that assists in the formulation and implementation of human resource and infrastructure related plans.

Metro Planning Organization

A metropolitan planning organization (MPO) is a transportation policy-making organization made up of representatives from local government and transportation authorities

The Federal Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1973 required the formation of a MPO for any urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000.

MPOs were created in order to ensure that existing and future expenditures for transportation projects and programs were based on a comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing (3-C) planning process.

Federal funding for transportation projects and programs are channeled through this planning process.

The Lexington are MPO covers Fayette and Jessamine counties only and focuses on more than just roads.

Air quality, traffic congestion, bike and pedestrians.

Board of Adjustments

This is the board that actually makes decisions/ recommendations regarding changes in zoning.

This organization, although not as well known as the planning commission, is almost important given the specifics of their job.

All changes to a zoning location must be reviewed and decided upon or recommended by the BOA.

Thus when developers wish to build in a new area not zoned for commercial development, they must get it approved.

In some communities these agencies are very strict and keep with the comprehensive plan, whereas in others they are more likely to veer widely from the plan.

Neighborhood Organizations

Myriad of groups that represent the interests of local neighborhoods in a community.

Often very vocal and focus is almost completely on their neighborhood.

Developers and Special Interest Groups

These two groups are the ones that most often deal with planning organizations as they are trying to develop areas and or preserve them

SIG's run the gamut from non-profit development and historic preservation groups to home builders and trade associations.

Other Government Agencies

All of the other government agencies that have a hand or say in how neighborhoods and communities should be shaped.

Agencies such as Police, social services, traffic analysis, and parks and recreation all have a vested interest in how neighborhoods and the overall community is planned.

Importantly, many of these agencies are not consulted about areas that impact them despite the fact they are the ones most knowledgeable.

Plan Review

1. Zone review
2. Preliminary design review checklist
3. Final Development review
4. Subdivision committee review
5. Subdivision Public Meeting
6. Council Meeting