CHAPTER 1: Planning Process

PURPOSE

The Mayor and the Alexandria City Council initiated this planning effort. A CDBG grant was received from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs to develop comprehensive planning for the City.

The City of Alexandria will under Indiana planning law (IC 36-7-4-501) prepare and approve by resolution a Comprehensive Development Plan "for the promotion of public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, or the general welfare and for the sake of efficiency and economy in the process of development." The Plan is based on a thorough evaluation of the existing environmental, social, and economic conditions which affect land use decisions. The Comprehensive Development Plan provides for future growth and development based on population and land use projections, and also provides for realistic goals and objectives to achieve the City's vision and the maintenance of small town quality of life values within the community.

This Comprehensive Development Plan is based on community input, existing land uses, development trends, suitability of land uses, economic feasibility, natural land features, and the requirements of Indiana law. Indiana statute, Title 36, Article 7, as amended, empowers cities and towns to plan:

  ➢ That highway systems and street systems be carefully planned

  ➢ That new communities grow only with adequate public way, utility, health, educational, and recreational facilities

  ➢ That the needs of agriculture, industry, and business be recognized in future growth

  ➢ That residential areas provide healthful surroundings for family life

  ➢ That the growth of the community is commensurate with and promotive of the efficient and economical use of public funds" (IC 36-7-4-201)

The Plan will, at a minimum, under Indiana planning law (IC 36-7-4-502) include in the Comprehensive Development Plan "a statement of objectives for the future

development…a statement of policy for the land use development…and a statement of policy for the development of public ways, public places, public lands, public structures, and public utilities." The Alexandria Comprehensive Development Plan meets these requirements by providing for:

➢ A summary of goals and objectives for the future development of the City of Alexandria;

➢ A summary of policy for development keyed to these goals and objectives for community facilities and the public/private infrastructure; and

➢ The land use goals and objectives illustrated on the Future Land Use Plan map in order to better understand the spatial representation and interactions.

Public law further states that a city or town may establish planning and zoning entities to fulfill this purpose (IC 36-7-4-201). Furthermore, while residents of Alexandria support the comprehensive planning process, such action is required by legislative mandate. The Indiana statutes provide for and require the development and maintenance of a comprehensive plan by a Plan Commission (IC 36-7-4- 501). IC 36-7-4-502 and 503 state the required and permissible contents of the plan.

PLANNING AREA

The planning area for which the Comprehensive Development Plan has been prepared includes the City of Alexandria. Areas outside the City boundaries are only included for planning purposes, as the City has no jurisdiction over these areas presently. However, if the City annexes additional areas, it would obtain jurisdiction. Also, if the City enters into an intergovernmental agreement with neighboring political entities, the City would gain certain types of jurisdiction. The planning area selected will accommodate additional growth and development during the projected twenty-year planning period without the necessity of altering that planning area.

PLANNING PERIOD

Even though the planning process is a continuing responsibility of the Plan Commission, Mayor and the City Council, it is necessary to identify the planning period which this Comprehensive Development Plan covers. Traditionally, the planning period is divided into both a short- and a long-range planning period. For the purposes of this Plan, the short-range planning period would be the five-year period from July 31, 2009 through July 31, 2013. The long-range period would extend the time an additional fifteen years into the future to July 31, 2029.

Planning and land use projections become increasingly subject to modifications because of changing socioeconomic trends which cannot be accurately predicted. It should be emphasized that this Comprehensive Development Plan, in addition to other ordinances designed to implement the Plan, should be reviewed annually and revised as needed after five years.

PREVIOUS PLANNING

1969 Comprehensive Plan

In 1969, the City of Alexandria through a grant from the Indiana Department of Commerce Division of Planning through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, completed a Comprehensive Plan. This Plan was authored by Beckman, Swenson & Associates out of Fort Wayne, Indiana. This Plan contained plan elements for land use, thoroughfares, public utilities, community facilities and the central business district. The Comprehensive Plan was a total of 33 pages in length.

Here is a synopsis of the 1969 Alexandria Comprehensive Plan:

The Comprehensive Plan for Alexandria, Indiana presents plans and proposals to guide and shape the future growth of the City until the year 1990. Plans for future land use, thoroughfares, public utilities, community facilities and business district improvements are presented and also interrelated as the Comprehensive Plan these plan elements contain recommendations for individually and also interrelated as the Comprehensive Plan. All of these plan elements contain recommendations for the disposition of existing conditions, facilities and as well as the proposals for future development.

A major proposal of the Plan is a Federally-assisted Neighborhood Development Program for the central portion of the City. This program proposes the removal of the dilapidated housing and commercial uses in the area and the development of new housing, commercial, and industrial blocks. The proposed new housing is intended for low income families and elderly persons.

Another major proposal contained in the Plan is several miles of controlled open space running along the City's watercourses. This open space system is composed of both public and privately owned open space and recreation areas. Incorporated within the system are existing and proposed parks, schools, and other community facilities. The open space also acts as a buffer between areas of differing land uses.

Along with the Comprehensive Plan, there were two related publications. The first was titled 'Background for Planning' which concentrated of the evaluation of existing conditions in land use, housing, natural features, thoroughfares, public utilities, community facilities and business districts. It then looked at the current

population and economic statistics and developed a series of goals and objectives many which are relevant to the goals and objectives in this Comprehensive Development Plan of 2009!

Here are those goals and objectives set in the 1969 Comprehensive Plan:

Goals

At the outset of Alexandria's planning program, certain goals for community development and improvement were established by the Plan Commission. These goals are:

1. to plan the future growth of the City so that land uses will be appropriate and compatible locations;

2. to establish a program which will result in a modern, attractive central business district with adequate traffic circulation and parking facilities;

3.   to reserve appropriate land areas for the expansion of existing industries and for the location of new industries;

4.   to identify Alexandria's role in the region in order to take advantage of the City's geographic location;

5.   to promote the development of public parks and recreation facilities;

6. to establish standards for sound housing in order to maintain and develop residential neighborhoods;

7. to analyze present and future traffic circulation needs in order that adequate roads might be constructed in proper locations;

8. to predict future requirements for public buildings, schools and utilities so that they may be programmed into the future growth of the City;
9. to prepare or amend codes and ordinances in order to establish proper development standards;

10. to prepare a feasible financial schedule for future community improvements which suggests methods of financing each project; and

11.   to insure the continuation of sound planning by establishing policies and procedures for the administration and updating of the plan.

Objectives

The objectives of the Alexandria planning program as determined by the Plan Commission are:

1. to prepare a revised zoning ordinance based on the comprehensive plan to guide future development and to guard against the incompatibility of land uses;

2. to revise the subdivision control ordinance to insure proper land subdivision and sound development practices ;

3. to expedite the adoption of building and related codes which will insure the safe and durable construction of new buildings;

4. to develop and implement a plan for the improvement of the physical appearance and arrangement of the business district;

5. to develop and implement a plan providing for adequate parking facilities and improved traffic circulation within the central business district;

6. to plan the future expansion of public utilities in accordance with topography and proposed land use patterns;

7. to select specific sites for the development of and recreation areas appropriate public parks and for waterways;

8. to project future growth in order to program and select sites for additional public buildings and schools;

9. to reserve, through zoning controls, appropriate land areas for the expansion of existing industries and for the development of new industries;

10. to encourage programs for the improvement of blighted neighborhoods through rehabilitation and the adoption of housing codes;

11. to establish a plan which designates the locations of future traffic arteries and proposes improvements in existing arteries in order to capitalize on the regional highway system; and

12. to prepare a long-range Capital Improvements Program and Budget which will be a feasible financial schedule for future community improvements and which will suggest methods of financing each project.

Economic Objectives

1. to encourage and promote the establishment of stable, diversified, high value added industries in Alexandria and throughout the region, and to support and assist other organizations concerned with industrial development;

2. To sponsor and guide improvements to the central business district which will eliminate obsolescence and congestion and provide new vitality for business enterprises located there;

3. To encourage the adoption of controls that will protect residential investments and municipal structures, and will ensure an attractive, stable residential environment; and

4. To promote and protect the transportation systems serving the County and Alexandria so as to exploit their advantageous geographic location.

The other publication was titled 'Guide for Action – Annexation Study'. This report contained two major sections, the Guide for Action and Annexation Study. The Guide for Action section included a series of administrative procedures and a Capital Improvements Program. The Annexation Study examined the fringe areas around the City and assessed the suitability for those areas to be annexed into the City.

Two other documents were also used as part of this planning study. The Madison County Council of Governments 2030 Transportation Plan and the Madison County 2000 Comprehensive Plan.

1995 Total Quality of Life Action plan

In 1995 the Indiana Department of Commerce contracted with the Indiana Economic Development Academy at Ball State University to provide a community action planning process called the Total Quality of Life Initiative (TQLI). Alexandria was one of the initial seventeen (17) communities that participated in the Total Quality of Life Action Planning process in the spring of 1995.

The TQL Action Planning process centered around three forums that were held in the community. As a result of this process the following major items were accomplished:

• A broad-based group of community representatives were gathered to share ideas and concerns.
• The group developed specific projects that could address community needs as well as criteria on how to measure the viability of those projects.
• The projects were analyzed via community criteria to identify those projects that were the most viable for the community to pursue.

• Action plan teams were formed around specific projects and began to write action plans to implement the projects.

Through this planning process, priority projects were identified in six specific areas of:

1) Business Development
2) Youth
3) Beautification
4) Community Development
5) Seniors
6) Social Activities

These projects were then set into an Action Plan which designated what action would be taken; how will the action take place; who will do it; and when will it be done.

PLANNING PROCESS

The process by which this Comprehensive Development Plan was developed is virtually one of the most important elements of a Plan. For without a good process, the plan will not contain the goals and objectives necessary for it to be used to its fullest extent.

The term planning can be defined as being a goal-directed problem solving activity. Planning typically includes problem identification, goal setting, design of alternative solutions, evaluation of potential impacts, decision-making and implementation. (See **Appendix D** for a glossary of selected planning terms.)

How should Alexandria manage orderly, long-term growth and development? Are community services and facilities adequate to serve current and future populations? Where should future residential, commercial, and industrial development locate? Are there sensitive, natural features within Alexandria that need to be protected or enhanced? These are just some issues addressed in this Comprehensive Development Plan.

The act of planning reflects the community's fundamental desire for a better future. Alexandria recognizes the strategic advantage of anticipating change, identifying problems, and capitalizing on opportunities. The Plan seeks to make the most efficient use, as defined in this document, of investments in land, utility services, streets, and public parks for the good of the entire community. In addition, Alexandria must balance the impact of the built environment with the protection and enhancement of the natural landscape and its agricultural heritage.

The planning process generally incorporates three separate but interrelated phases:

1) general data collection
2) public input
3) plan development and adoption

Since the Comprehensive Development Plan addresses community issues, it was essential that citizens have a voice in shaping their community. Public input was vital to creating a plan which reflects the vision and goals of the community. To this end, a Steering Committee of twenty-seven people was formed to serve as a sounding board for the community throughout the planning process. In addition, four public workshops and interviews with key groups were held to gather additional information and ideas from the residents of Alexandria.

Steering Committee

In the City of Alexandria, it was decided to have a comprehensive invitation list to participate in the planning process and be part of the Alexandria Comprehensive Development Plan Steering Committee. This included not only residents of the community, but many stakeholders who participate in community life who reside outside the community.

The initial kick-off planning meeting was held on March 3, 2009 at the Alexandria City Hall. There were twelve attendees whom were introduced to the planning process and the duties of being on the Steering Committee. (Agendas and sign-in sheets for all meetings are shown in **Appendix B**.)

At the second meeting on April 8th, the Steering Committee met and reviewed the current goals and objectives that had already been identified by two different entities, the Alexandria Community Visioning group and through the Hometown Competitiveness process. The steering committee then engaged in a SWOT exercise which identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT's) related to the community. The Steering Committee members were also introduced to baseline inventory data. They were then briefed on the upcoming first Public Meeting to be held on April 22nd.

The third Steering Committee meeting was held on June 10th. The first item was the review of the Transportation and Land Use issues that were identified through the steering committee and public meeting SWOT exercises and the Web Survey results. Then a discussion of the location of future land uses was held. The initial point of this meeting was to then develop the Goals and Objectives for the transportation and land use sections of the plan. This meeting was then continued on June 24th to finish the selection of the Goals and Objectives for the remaining three categories.

The fourth meeting of the Steering Committee was held on June 24th. At this meeting, the Goals and Objectives were developed for the community facilities, quality of life and economic development sections.

The fifth Steering Committee Meeting was held on July 8 to finalize the Action Plans. We then went over the issues to be discussed at the second and last of the Public Meetings scheduled for July 15th.

Public Meetings

The first of two Public Meetings was held at the Emory Lee Auditorium in Beulah Park on April 22nd. Two separate meetings were conducted, the first at 2:00 P.M. and then another at 6:00 P.M. The meetings were advertised in the local paper and announcements were posted at various locations throughout the City (examples can be found in **Appendix C**). Approximately 17 people were in attendance for the 2:00 PM meeting and 19 in attendance for the 6:00 PM meeting. Introductions were made and then an overview and PowerPoint presentation was given showing what a comprehensive development plan consisted of and why the City of Alexandria was developing a comprehensive plan. Tasks performed up to that date were then presented including the background information data. The public then participated in an exercise which identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT's) related to the community. The results were much the same as when the Steering Committee performed the SWOT exercise.

The second Public Hearing was held on July 15th at 6:00 P.M. at the Emory Lee Auditorium. Approximately 16 people were in attendance. A PowerPoint presentation was presented in which the whole planning process was described as well as the final planning results were unveiled for the public's review and comments. Review of the future land uses and transportation plan were also discussed. The meeting was then opened up for citizen questions.

Citizen Survey

In order to more fully determine the thoughts and desires of the community, a public opinion web survey was established and available during the month of May 2009. The local newspaper was used to advertise that the web survey was available on the City's website. The local library and community center was also enlisted as places where citizens could go and fill out the web survey using the facilities computers if they did not have access to a home computer. It was primarily targeted to the residents of Alexandria in order to help determine the major needs and identify issues which are important for the growth and development of the City.

PLAN COMPOSITION

Chapter 1: Planning Process

This chapter explains the Why's and How's of this Plan. It shows the planning area and period; the purpose for planning; previous planning efforts; how the plan was developed and the context of the plan; and how to use the plan.

Chapter 2: Historical Setting

This chapter explains the history behind Alexandria. It discusses the history of the community and contains an inventory of all the architectural and historic sites.

Chapter 3: Natural Environment

This chapter depicts the natural environment of the community. It examines the topography, soils, wetlands and hydrogeological characteristics of the community.

Chapter 4: Community Environment

This chapter depicts the quality of life issues of the community and the community facilities. It looks at such items as population statistics, social characteristics and the existing community facilities.

Chapter 5: Economic Environment

This chapter looks at the economic statistics and the commercial, industrial and downtown issues of the community.

Chapter 6: Land Use

This chapter looks at the existing land use conditions and provides a written summary of the future Land Use Plan, as well as providing the map for the plan.

Chapter 7: Transportation

This chapter provides a written summary of the Transportation Plan.

Chapter 8: Action Plan

The last chapter contains the implementation focus, Action Plans and conclusions which are essential to keeping the Comprehensive Development Plan current and up-to-date by responding to changing trends and socioeconomic conditions.

GOALS and OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives are the essence of this Comprehensive Development Plan. These help to determine the direction of the community during the planning period. These are also the part of the plan that meets the primary legal requirement of the State of Indiana's enabling legislation for comprehensive planning.

The goals and objectives reflect the input of the Steering Committee, the general public through Public Meetings and the results from the Web Survey.

The goals and objectives for this plan need to address the following criteria:

Goals

- Goals provide general direction and serve as the description of a desired future for the City of Alexandria.
- Goals typically address an unsatisfactory situation, an unmet need, or an unresolved issue.
- Goals are generally ongoing.
- Goals are fundamental and are timeless.
- Goals provide the big picture of what the City of Alexandria wants for its future.
- Goals are developed for the specific areas of development: land use, transportation, community facilities, housing, etc.

Objectives

- Objectives are achievable, measurable steps taken to achieve one or more goals.
- Objectives specify a single key result.
- Objectives explain concisely the quantitative terms of what, when, how much, and how many.
- Objectives can serve multiple goals.

IMPLEMENTATION

Once the Comprehensive Development Plan is completed, the single most important aspect of the Plan is implementation. Without implementation, the Plan has no meaning. The City of Alexandria is fortunate in that the Mayor and City Council and other City officials are very committed to implementing the Comprehensive Development Plan. Implementation is the final phase of the Comprehensive Development Plan process, i.e., the realization of the goals and objectives as set forth in the Plan.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This Comprehensive Development Plan is required by the State of Indiana as the basis for zoning and subdivision control ordinances. In addition to fulfilling this statutory obligation, Alexandria's Comprehensive Development Plan can serve as a valuable public management tool if used on a regular basis. This Plan can best be described as a community guidebook. It will help guide the Plan Commission in its decision making process. However, it addresses many other community issues as well. When reviewing development plans, making budgets or setting priorities, this document should be used to help make decisions. Because of its emphasis on public participation this Plan gives City leaders knowledge of what the community wants and needs.

This Plan:

➢ Can help the Mayor and City Council when considering infrastructure or economic development decisions;

➢ Can give civic groups ideas on how to strengthen and enhance the community; and

➢ Gives the legal basis for protection and conservation of sensitive environmental areas.