



Introduction to Comprehensive Planning



Community Workshop

February 27, 2008

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

DEFINITION

A Comprehensive Plan is an officially adopted, long-range plan used to guide or direct the growth and physical development of a community for an extended period of time (5-25 years).

“It can be considered a road map leading public decisions to the achievement of community goals.”

WHAT DOES A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DO?

The Plan will guide policies relevant to diverse elements including but not limited to land use, transportation, public facilities & services, economic development, environment & natural resources and housing.

COMMUNITY VISION

The plan represents a community's vision which addresses desirable future development of a community. This vision is best constructed through a government and community consensus. This “Vision” should be all-encompassing in scope, general in nature and long-range in perspective.

THE PLAN IS SUSTAINED BY GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The Goals & Objectives are based on:

- present conditions,
- the needs of the citizens,
- existing policy plans and
- future forecasts.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

TEXAS LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROVISIONS

Texas Local Government Code, Chapter 213 gives both general law and home-rule cities the authority to adopt a comprehensive plan and to define the content and design of the comprehensive plan.

A comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries. However, the plan may be used to coordinate and guide the establishment of development regulations. A municipality may also define the relationship between its comprehensive plan and the development regulations.

A comprehensive plan may be adopted or amended by ordinance following a public hearing and review by the municipality's Planning commission or department.

A municipality may also define the relationship between the plan and development regulations through revisions to the Charter or by ordinance

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

COMPARABLE COMMUNITIES

Despite the fact that Texas law does not require communities to adopt a comprehensive plan, many municipalities throughout the state have realized what a profound result a master plan can have on the future of their community.

Realistically, the comprehensive planning process is often more effective when the community or local public officials call for it, rather than when it is mandated by the state government.

A few of the comparable Texas Gulf coastal communities that have chosen to adopt and follow comprehensive plans are Port Aransas (pop. 2,507), Rockport (pop. 7,950), Portland (pop. 14,000) and Galveston (pop. 59,700). The Town of South Padre Island is also working on the preparation of a Comprehensive Plan.

In the case of Port Isabel the Comprehensive Planning process was recently completed in 2005, this should serve as the basis for reexamining this process. Furthermore, in order to remain effective, a comprehensive plan will require periodic updating and revisions.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

WHY PREPARE AND ADOPT A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is an important tool for managing the physical growth of a community.

- It allows government officials and taxpayers to have control on what, where and when funds are spent with common direction and long term purpose. Orderly development can help a community absorb population increases, provide for needed infrastructure and increase the quality of life while maximizing limited resources.
- Long-term planning will save the tax payer money by increasing the efficiency of decision making. Ex: necessary drainage projects or funded landscaping enhancements can be planned with paving projects in order to achieve improvements most economically.
- Comprehensive planning helps to coordinate the decisions of individual city officials, whereby individual projects are based on researched criteria and established community needs.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

WHY PREPARE AND ADOPT A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN? (Cont')

-Comprehensive plans also provide credible objectives that current and future elected officials support since the plan is created through, a joint effort between citizens and the government official participation via costly studies dedicated citizen efforts or the tedious work of a previous administration.

-Another potential benefit from a comprehensive plan is increased eligibility for available money. Most grant applications require that funds are allocated on projects or enhancements, concurrent with a municipality's comprehensive plan

- Bond ratings are also influenced by the existence of a comprehensive plan. The city's bond rating will be improved if a well-written plan is implemented for the enhancement of the community.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

WHY IS IT TIME TO PLAN IN PORT ISABEL?

There are several indicators that identify when a community is ripe for comprehensive planning and Port Isabel is faced with more than one of them. The following are a few examples:

Major infrastructure investments are needed or discussed within the next 5 to 10 years –

There is a significant change in population –

There has been a major increase or decrease in sales tax and/ or property tax –

The city staff and/or city council are new –

There has been a loss of downtown businesses –

A highway bypass or other major infrastructure investment is being proposed or built -

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

DATA GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

The first step of the comprehensive planning process is preparation of a community inventory which analyzes and evaluates the current conditions of the community. The purpose of the community report is to establish and evaluate the condition of Port Isabel, note deficiencies and assess needs.

- Information included in the community inventory references: the economy, population, physical environment, existing land use, traffic circulation, housing and public facilities.
- It is also necessary to obtain or create a base map which includes lot and block information, property lines and easements of record.
- Trends are then established and projections are made according to the scope of the plan.

The City of Port Isabel has an existing plan that was adopted in 2005. The Comprehensive Plan will encompass all other categorical plans and provide a means for relating them to one another (concurrency). The Comprehensive Plan is not designed to replace existing studies, but should be used to compliment them and serve as a unified vision of the future of Port Isabel. A well-written comprehensive plan must be developed in coordination with other state, regional and local government agencies.

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

FORMULATING COMMUNITY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- **GOALS** are the "general needs" of the Community and ,
- **Objectives** are the "specific projects accomplishing the goals"
- Goals & Objectives are developed by analyzing technical information and basic studies, but they will also reflect the local resident's needs.

This phase of comprehensive planning involves extensive community involvement by means of community workshops and surveys to create a community consensus among all stakeholders which will establish recommendations for future development policy.

- All citizens, business owners and public officials are encouraged to actively participate and contribute personal viewpoints. Active participation during the process will not only produce a better product in the end, but it will also ensure that the plan is implemented more effectively over time.
- The recommendations for future actions will be used to determine standards of service and the desired pattern of development, and this information will be used to form each element within the Plan.

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

PREPARING THE PLAN

The comprehensive plan must be based on the present and projected assets and needs of Port Isabel determined by:

- The community inventory,
- Combined with the goals and objectives established through a community consensus.

The Comprehensive Plan is not meant to be a wish list of civic improvements, but a broad-based blueprint used to help guide policy decisions regarding land use, infrastructure improvements, community enhancement, coastal preservation, emergency management and other development issues that are determined.

The plan will be composed of several chapters, but they must form a single concurrent document.

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

ADOPTING THE PLAN

Once the plan is completed, it is necessary for the preliminary product to be reviewed by several community entities including:

- The City Commission,
- The Planning and Zoning Board,
- The Economic Development Corporation
- City staff should extensively review the Plan for revisions
- Other community boards or committees are also encouraged to provide input.

The document must then be available for public perusal as a public hearing is required prior to approval.

Following this process the City is now able to establish, by ordinance, guidelines for adoption and future amendments of the Comprehensive Plan.

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of an adopted plan is an ongoing task and it is also the most critical step of the comprehensive planning process.

Once the plan has been adopted, the City's staff, Boards, Committees and citizens will serve as the ambassadors of the Comprehensive Plan overseeing and monitoring ongoing and proposed project's concurrency with the plan.

To better implement the Comprehensive Plan city officials may:

- Choose to establish procedures for periodic revisions to the plan.
- They may opt to enhance or change existing development regulations for consistency with the provisions of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Additionally, a concurrency management element or a capital improvement plan should be created and also adopted identifying funding sources, potential impact or user fees and public finance programs.

Summary of 2005 Plan Contents:

- Executive Summary
- Housing
- Population Characteristics
- Land Use
- Economic Development
- Central Business District
- Historic Preservation
- Street System
- Thoroughfare System
- Storm Drainage
- Recreation & Open Space
- Capital Improvements
- Subdivision Ordinance
- Zoning
- Maps: Existing & Future Land Use

Expectations for the Comprehensive Planning Process



Directive: The City Commission must determine the objective of this process and give the directive to staff and the Planning Committee...

- To review the current plan for compliance or concurrency with ongoing City action?
 - To review and revise the 2005 Plan and Maps?
 - To compile an entirely new Plan?
- Once the Directive has been determined the City Commission must prepare for the necessary investment to accomplish the desired outcome:



Professional Services will need to be acquired to compile: surveys, statistics, technical analysis, mapping, financial schedules. The cost will depend on the extent of the project.



Time is another investment, the average Comprehensive Planning Process can take anywhere from 12-18 months to complete depending on the extent of the complexity.