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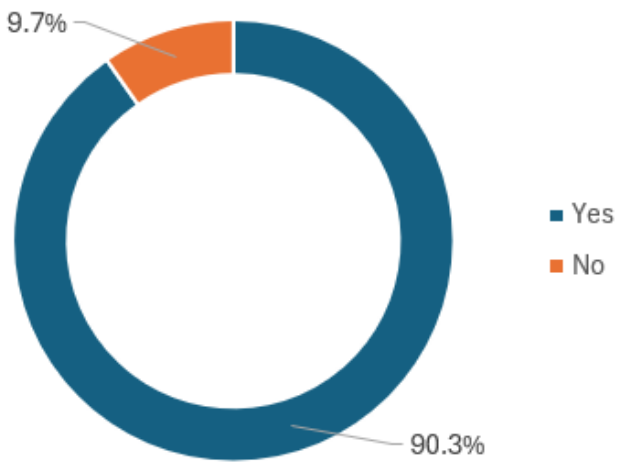
2025 Comprehensive Planning Survey Results

Survey Respondents:

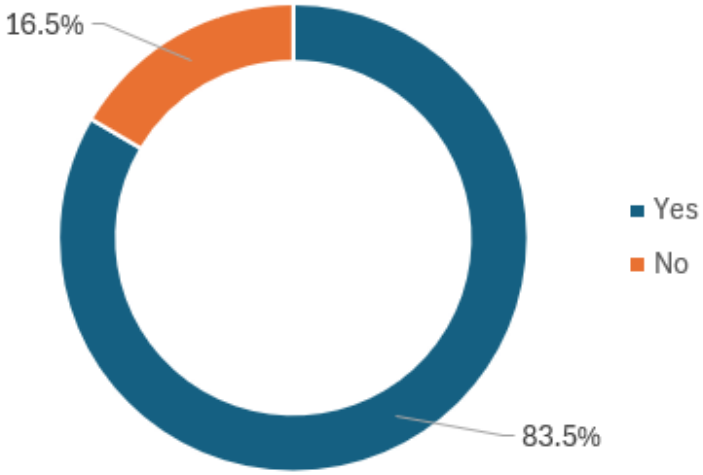
- Total Respondents: 154 Cities and Villages
- Average Population Size: 19,266 Residents
- Median (50th Percentile) Population Size: 7,655 Residents
- Range of Population Sizes: 166 Residents to 577,222 Residents
- Combined Population of Respondents: 2,982,820 Residents
    - Represents 50% of Wisconsin's Population

Does your municipality have an up to date comprehensive plan?

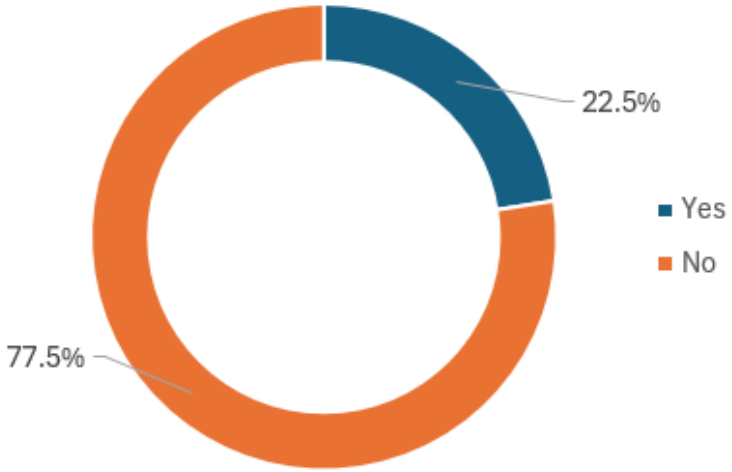
- *'Yes' Includes Cities and Villages Presently Working on Updating their Plan*



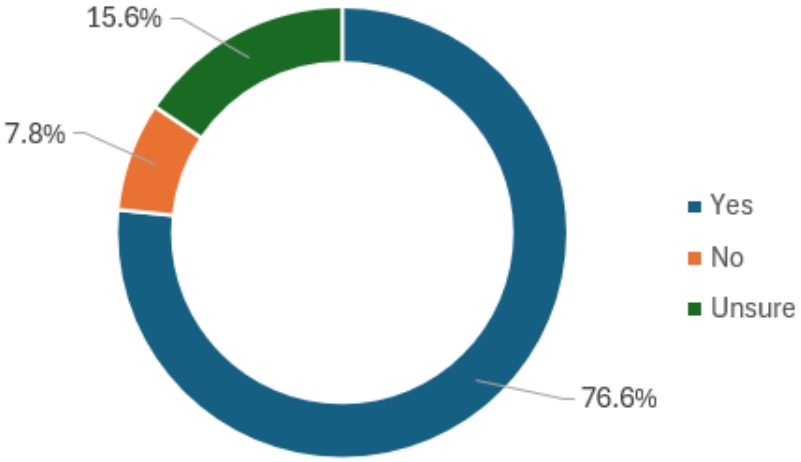
Does your municipal zoning code reflect your comprehensive plan?



Was your municipality's comprehensive plan completed jointly with a neighboring local government or governments?



In your professional opinion and setting aside considerations of cost and workload, is comprehensive planning a valuable tool for municipalities?



In short, how has your comprehensive plan informed your municipality's growth and development over the past decade? Please include examples.

Sampling of Responses:

- "We have completed updates to zoning code to address housing affordability, completed an aging in place initiative, invested in quality of life attributes, defined and promoted economic development assets to target industry sectors, developed a streetscaping/placemaking plan for downtown, identified and sought grant funding for infrastructure projects, currently planning for new residential and industrial sites for future growth, in process on consolidation discussions for fire service with surrounding townships."
- "It has provided a base line of development and growth, coupled with a community inventory, to chart future growth. Demographics in the Plan are very helpful. The Plan has assisted developers by providing vital information on past growth, current growth, and anticipated growth. Development and infrastructure decisions are made after referencing this document!"
- "During our current renewal of the plan, we have hit 90% of the milestones listed in the current plan being replaced. We had a growth in industry, created new TIFs, and replacing of roads and infrastructure."

- “The Comprehensive Plan has been a helpful tool to drive our redevelopment efforts. We recently approved a redevelopment project in the downtown that contains some elements of what was created in 2016. We have also recently amended the plan with a new redevelopment opportunity due to a former manufacturing site becoming vacant. We show the amendment to interested developers.”
- “Future land use mapping has been helpful, but also required multiple amendments in recent years.”
- “It was never looked at until the Village needed to update it.”
- “Past public participation has been weak. Only special interest groups tend to participate. Feedback isn't always consistent with reality and what the market will bear. People tend to cherry pick the plan to argue their agenda.”
- “It helps to set priorities such as downtown revitalization and code updates. The plan also helps to qualify for grants where the applicant is the city and also a private business. Examples include Vibrant spaces grant and Community Development Investment Grant – WEDC.”
- “Definitely used to identify locations for growth!”
- “It has been used to meet grant requirements, create projects, and establish priorities. While I am not a particular fan of our current plan that was completed 5 years ago (already outdated and missing key opportunities), it has some value. I wouldn't say that it is as valuable for growth and development due to being a smaller community and the inability to be too selective.”
- “It really hasn't. We are a small, rural landlocked municipality, completely surrounded by a town. There's little growth, other than some building developments, but it's not something that was dictated by the comprehensive plan whatsoever. This is information that could easily be combined with a strategic plan instead of wasting time on yet another state requirement.”
- “We use our comprehensive plan regularly at the Plan Commission level when reviewing all zoning and land use permits (rezoning, conditional use permits, etc.)”
- “It is like everything else at first people are excited to work on getting items accomplished and there is excitement for the future and growth in the City. Then we run into money and how to fund everything. It helps give people a plan for the future, but people have to be willing to change as time goes along because what sounded good 5 years ago isn't practical now. we had to turn a developed industrial park into R-3 and R-2 housing. The infrastructure was there the road was built. Housing was a priority over new business, and we received pushback because that was an industrial park.”
- “It has allowed small businesses as well as larger businesses to move into the city and create jobs in the area.”
- “We use our comprehensive plan future land use map to guide development in the Village. We recently amended our comp plan to include findings from corridor plans we had completed over the last 5 years. Our comp plan has also been used to guide zoning changes and increase housing density in targeted areas of the Village.”
- “The Housing element contains policies and recommendations to increase the diversity and supply of housing. Our zoning code was then amended to make it easier to develop housing included reducing minimum lot sizes and setbacks, increasing density of multifamily housing, adding accessory dwelling units to certain district, and other changes related to housing. The Transportation element included various street connections that were recommended to help traffic flow. The City then acquired the right-of-way for two of those street connections and is working on acquiring a third one. The Land Use element contains a map of recommended future land use. The Plan Commission reviews consistency with the future land use map when considering zoning actions. The Plan Commission and Common Council take the comprehensive

plan seriously and will require amendments to the comp plan if the proposed zoning action doesn't already conform to the plan."

Rank the three most useful of the nine required elements of a comprehensive plan.



What are some of the biggest barriers in updating your municipality's comprehensive plan?

- 80.5%: Staff Capaity/Resources
- 64.3%: Consultant Cost
- 64.3%: Municipal Cost of Updating Plan
- 64.3%: Lack of Funding to Implement New Plan Elements (After a Plan has been Adopted)

Do you have recommendations for how the comprehensive planning process may be improved or otherwise revised?

Sampling of Responses:

- "I would recommend as follows: (1) a funding program whereby smaller communities with fewer resources (especially those in rural areas) can obtain funding support toward updating or creating a comprehensive plan; (2) provide a way to connect the local plan with outside elements so that the plan has an ability to be implemented; (3) the plan itself should include an "interoperability" to it - not another element, but that the elements relate to each other; (4) plans should be required to provide that each community provides its "fair share" and that communities don't exclude particular groups, and that there are rational reasons for creating equitable results."
- "1. Applying for WHEDA programs should not be dependent upon updating Comprehensive Plan every 5 years. High expense for small communities resources, and time, needs to be changed by agency and legislature for future WHEDA funding. 2. The City is currently updating comprehensive plan, it is expected to take 18 months to complete, seven meetings with communities and residents. Shorter strategic priorities for next 5 years much more effective, period of 20 years many priorities can change."
- "The City's consultant recommended reorganizing the Comprehensive Plan and instead of individual chapters, we did "pillars" and then acknowledged and discussed the 9 elements throughout the document. Costs can be a negative factor as the City's price doubled from 2013-2015 to 2023-2024 (over $100,000.00 dollars during the last update)."
- "Grants should be offered with bonus funds for multi-jurisdictional plans of two or more. With my next recommendation for revisions is based on my previous work as a UWEX agent in a rural county. Small town (townships) have different needs than cities with thousands of people. The Comprehensive plan requirement should be scaled by unit of government based on population size. It would not remove the option of a community doing more if they determine they need it. Option for revision: Municipalities (towns, villages, and cities) 2,500 or fewer people would be required to only have a future land use map. (small towns of 500 often don't need more than this); Municipalities over 2,500 to under 5,000 people would be required to have a future land use map and three other elements. Municipalities 5,000 and over would need to adopt plans with all nine elements. The scale approach would give small communities option to do more if they like but also respect their challenges such as finding people to serve on a plan commission that is larger than their town board. it would also provide fiscal relief. If a small

community of 500 people has growth issues, then they can opt into doing more long range planning."

- "I have always found more targeted studies to be more helpful (Housing Study, CORP, Infrastructure Master Planning). I believe substituting the larger comp plan with these is an adequate step vs. updating on a specific timeline."
- "The most significant barrier to comprehensive planning remains the persistent lack of adequate funding. While municipalities are expected to create and implement plans that meet all state-required elements, the financial resources to do so are often insufficient—particularly for smaller communities like ours. The ongoing pressure to "do more with less" forces us to allocate limited resources across competing needs, with planning activities frequently taking a backseat to more urgent matters such as infrastructure maintenance, public safety, and economic development. What should be a valuable guiding document for the city thus becomes a significant burden for city staff. The requirement for frequent updates, as mandated by state law, only compounds this issue. The costs associated with creating and updating comprehensive plans are substantial, especially when combined with the constraints of property tax levy limits. These levy limits, set without consideration for the unique planning and investment needs of municipalities, create a persistent budgetary challenge. The nine required elements, while useful for providing a comprehensive approach, may not be equally relevant to all municipalities. In smaller, rural communities like ours, elements such as "housing" or "economic development" may not require as frequent updates or the same level of detail as they would in urban areas. A more flexible approach that allows municipalities to focus resources on the most pertinent elements would not only help alleviate financial burdens but also allow for more effective planning. Lastly, I believe a more tailored approach to the comprehensive planning process would yield better results. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, municipalities could benefit from alternative, more flexible timelines for updates and adjustments to the scope of certain elements based on their unique needs. Not every community, especially one with a population of around 2,000 requires an exhaustive economic development plan. Allowing municipalities the freedom to tailor their plans would lead to more effective, efficient, and sustainable planning that better aligns with the community's resources and priorities. Thank you for your attention to these concerns. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input and look forward to working together to improve the comprehensive planning process in a way that benefits municipalities of all sizes."
- "For (us) it is the cost to update the Plan. We do 1-yr and 5-yr updates in-house when possible; however, our most recent 10-yr update was done by our planning consultant. The end cost was $90,000 and it took about 18 months. We are now updating our Code of Ordinances per the consistency law and this will be about $67,000 and take about 9-12 months."
- "The process seems appropriate, and nothing really served as an impediment to creating a new plan, which our Common Council will adopt two weeks from now after an 18-month process. Given the effort and expense, however, requiring a new plan every 15 years, rather than 10, would seem to make more sense. Our existing plan was adopted at the end of 2008. A comp plan is a good vision statement, but given the Legislature's refusal to acknowledge that the property tax levy is starving Wisconsin's municipalities financially, it will be extremely difficult to make the vision a reality. It will be hard enough just to retain our police officers, firefighters, and public works employees."
- "10 years is a long time for a plan to be relevant with our fast changing environment that we live in today. We are required to address 9 elements but typically many municipalities have more specific and frequently completed plans for some of those same elements that we actually use to guide our programming including housing studies/plans, boundary agreements with adjacent towns, bike/ped plans, transportation plan, economic development, downtown plan, etc. It would

be nice if we were able to use a plan that we already have created in place of that specific element in the Comp Plan. Also, for larger cities the Ag, Natural and Cultural Resources element is more for a formality because we don't have any ag land. The Comp Plan should not be a cookie cutter template for every single unit of government in the state as we are all so different. Instead of each local unit of government doing a comp plan, could the counties or else the regional planning commissions write the plans so it's more cohesive? Then each local unit of government could have a smaller action plan and Future Land Use Map that could guide development? Honestly, the only part of the Comp Plan that we use is the Future Land Use Map."

- "A majority of the nine areas just don't apply to a small municipality. We have 1600 people, and our town is 1.5 miles square. It's unnecessary. I look at it maybe once a year, and that's just because I know it needs to be updated."
- "Cost is an issue but if you do it cheap you get what you pay for. We looked at applying for the USDA funds. the price went from 30K to 55K, yes, it's "free money" but double the cost and longer time to complete. we chose to go it alone. If the updated comp. plan is going to be tied to grants, then the state needs to help with funding somehow and not make it cost more."