

Village of Brookfield Comprehensive Plan - Q&A

DRAFTING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (THE PROCESS)

1. What is a comprehensive plan?

Strictly speaking, the State of Illinois defines a comprehensive plan or “comp plan” as a land use “plan for the present and future development or redevelopment of the municipality.” However, a comp plan often becomes the Village’s key strategy document. Since few localities have a strategic plan – and nearly all have a comp plan – the comp plan serves a dual purpose laying out the fundamental strategies and specific land use recommendations for the community.

2. What does the state require for comp plans?

Illinois law requires that a comp plan contain at least the following elements:

- a) A statement of authority to prepare and adopt the plan
- b) Background data and analysis
- c) Documentation of stakeholder’s interests
- d) Vision statement
- e) Evaluation of the selected plan
- f) Future land use plan including transportation, housing, economic development and natural resources
- g) Implementation plan.

In addition, a comprehensive plan may include other elements such as community facilities and historic preservation.

3. How does the Village’s Comprehensive Plan differ from other communities’ comprehensive plans?

The Brookfield Comprehensive Plan document is unique in having very specific, practical strategies that can be implemented in the near future. To be sure, like other communities it has a vision statement and it lays out broad goals for the community, but it is also a “real world” document that has practical, useful guidance for policymakers to consider. To cite three examples, the Brookfield Comprehensive Plan has (a) multiple strategies to strengthen stormwater management and (b) expand our economic development program such as creating a downtown development entity (used in Naperville and elsewhere) and (c) includes an Implementation Matrix for putting the plan concepts into effect. Additionally, according to the Village’s planning consultants Ratio Design, Inc., the Village’s plan differs in terms of the process being very open with multiple opportunities for public comments at all phases of the process. (See #5 below).

4. What kind of stakeholders have provided feedback on the Comprehensive Plan?

Stakeholders include: Village residents, small business/property owners, Chamber of Commerce, community groups, large employers such as the Brookfield Zoo, Village staff, Village elected officials and the Planning and Zoning Commission. In addition, the Village created a Steering Committee to coordinate various stakeholder comments and providing a dual level of community input.

5. What outreach has been done to get the input of Village residents and other stakeholders?

While tried-and-true forums have been used such as public meetings, open houses, and charrettes, other avenues have been used for gaining public input. These include neighborhood meetings (termed “office hours”), social media forums, and events that piggyback on holiday events (e.g., the 4th of July, where the Village staff entered a float into the parade to raise awareness of/encourage participation in the Comprehensive Plan drafting).

6. What kinds of input have we received from the public and other stakeholders?

Because of public interest and extensive outreach, the Village has been able to get input on the vision statement, certain goals and objectives and “visual preference surveys.” The latter gives the Village officials feedback on how the residents want certain areas or business districts to look. Additionally, the Village is currently compiling public feedback in a “comments matrix” or public registry that can be reviewed by officials and residents.

7. What was the methodology used for crafting a sound plan?

While the Brookfield Comprehensive Plan is custom-designed to meet community needs, nearly all follow a similar method:

- a) Issue identification
- b) Evaluation and analysis of existing conditions, including community character, demographics, land use, transportation, natural features, etc.
- c) Community input

- d) Statement of Vision and Goals for the future
- e) Objectives for achieving that vision
- f) Strategies including adopting tools to implement the plan (zoning, subdivision control, capital improvement programming, etc.)
- g) Approval and adoption by the local jurisdiction

Regarding a) and b), the Village leveraged Ratio Design’s expertise to gain a deep understanding of complex challenges, with Ratio Design consultants bringing experience on economic development finance, land use planning, and transportation engineering. The Ratio Design group was unique in having a multi-disciplinary team with different skills sets to make the document technically sound.

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DOCUMENT (THE PRODUCT)

8. So what is the Vision Statement as required by state statute?

The Comprehensive Plan states that Brookfield will be a community that:

- is accessible to all generations,
- offers affordable and quality housing,
- supports small business,
- values economic vitality, and
- is welcoming and inclusive.

Additionally, it says that Brookfield “celebrates its rich history that contributes to pride of place. We are connected to the region through train and trail; value our natural resources; and prioritize a more sustainable quality of life.”

9. What is the core statement about future land use?

At the heart of every comp plan is a statement or set of guidelines regarding future land use. Accordingly, the Brookfield Comprehensive Plan spells out a vision for future land use (depicted in a map, see page 63), along with goals, objectives and strategies to help realize that vision. For example, Goal 1 (page 64) has several accompanying objectives and strategies as noted below:

- Improve the appearance and competitiveness of retail and commercial shopping areas in existing commercial nodes in the Village.
 - One of several objectives tied to Goal 1 is: Encourage high-quality site development and amenities in commercial areas by enforcing existing zoning and developing form-based code
 - One of several strategies is: “Uniformly regulate signage while providing for the identification of Village businesses.”

10. What are some key strategies currently utilized and newly proposed for encouraging more economic development?

Currently, the Village has an economic development strategy based upon the existing Village plans (the Master Plan and TIF Plans for Ogden, Congress Park and 8 Corners). This strategy utilizes legal tools available to non-home rule town such as TIF Districts, parcel assembly using cost-efficient techniques such as the Cook County no-cash bid program, and other tools. The Comprehensive Plan calls for their continued use.

Under the proposed Comprehensive Plan, new recommendations for consideration include:

- Incentives to encourage high school graduates to return to Brookfield (e.g., get RBHS and LTHS graduates who leave town for college to come back to Brookfield)
- Expansion of existing signage programs for improving the appearance of business signs (via incentives, code enforcement)
- Explore establishing a downtown development entity to do further marketing/event planning on par with similar downtown organizations in Naperville, Elmhurst, Evanston and Downers Grove.

11. What are some key recommendations for advancing public art in Brookfield?

Public art and beautification in general is a priority of the Village Board and the commissions that advise the board (the Beautification Commission and Conservation Commission). The Comp Plan recommends considering public art and/or other improvements at gateways to the Village (see p. 51 of the Plan), reviewing benefits and costs associated with smaller and temporary public art installations versus larger and permanent ones (p. 53), working with businesses and others to install interactive and temporary public art projects on the facades of vacant buildings (p. 67), and beautifying Congress Park with landscaping and/or public art (p. 143).

12. There are separate Design Guidelines that complements the Comprehensive Plan. What is this to be used for?

The Village was fortunate to get some “extra” guidance from the Village’s consultant on this project. This resulted in a separate document concerning the design of building and public infrastructure in four business districts (downtown, 8 Corners, 31st Street corridor and Ogden Avenue). This will be helpful in certain situations – for example, if the Planning & Zoning Commission is tasked with reviewing a special use permit for a new structure, this would give some well-crafted criteria for Village staff to rely upon and expedite permit reviews. Additionally, it will be helpful in devising better standards for signage and streetscaping.

13. What is the “shelf life” of a comp plan?

Comp plans often last about 10 years before it becomes necessary to update. Brookfield enacted a similar master plan in 2004.