

PLAN INTRODUCTION

Albany is located in the approximate geographic center of the Willamette Valley. Its ideal location between the Cascade and Coast mountain ranges and the state's major metropolitan areas has brought many changes to the community over time. Periods of rapid growth, such as that experienced between 1960 and 1980 and in the mid-1990s, and the annexation of North Albany in 1991, have brought about the need to rapidly and efficiently provide necessary services. Periods of slowed economic growth have added a new challenge: finding ways to continue to provide high quality services as well as pay for these needed services and plan for future growth.

By the year 2020, it is projected that Albany will be home to 53,000 people. These people will earn their livelihood, shop and enjoy the city's amenities. What will Albany be like in twenty years? Or even five years? What will be the needs and concerns of the city and its residents? The Albany Comprehensive Plan is an effort to shape and guide the development of the city in a positive and productive manner. The success of this effort depends on the ability of Albany's citizens and leaders to envision the future and prepare for its challenges.

PURPOSE

The Albany Comprehensive Plan provides a framework for making better decisions about the uses of land and its resources. It is a guideline for both short- and long- term development. The Plan identifies existing assets, problems, and needs in the community; it projects future conditions; and it sets forth City policy for dealing with these elements. Also adopted are implementation methods that suggest the means to implement policy statements.

The Plan is intended for use by local officials, people with development interests, neighborhood community groups, state and federal agencies, and citizens of all interests. The Plan provides interesting and factual information about community under numerous topics ranging from wildlife to economic development. But it is essential to recognize that the Plan is comprehensive and has no parts that can be viewed without consideration of interrelationships with other areas of the Plan.

Change is an inherent part of any community. To keep the Plan responsive to changing conditions, it needs to be periodically updated. State law also recognizes this fact and requires jurisdictions to periodically review and update their Comprehensive Plans. The City of Albany first initiated review and update of the Plan in August 1987. The City began the second required review of the background data in 1998, with Plan updates in 2002. This Plan complies with this state mandated review and has been updated and modified to address changes in circumstances, Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR), state and federal regulations, citizen concerns, intergovernmental agency review, and City Council direction.

It can be anticipated that this Revised Comprehensive Plan will also need to be updated periodically (every 5-7 years). New values, concerns and opportunities will need to be incorporated into the plan. This continuing cycle of review and update will assist in making the Comprehensive Plan and the planning process more reflective of the needs, desires, and goals of Albany's citizens.

PLAN FORMAT

The Plan occupies the center stage for directing Albany's future, but other planning documents are equally important. The foundation of the Albany Comprehensive Plan is the Background Reports. These documents provide specific and detailed information on each of the statewide Land Use

Planning Goals applicable to Albany. The Background Reports provide the factual basis from which all the Plan statements are derived. The Background Reports will be updated periodically and will be used as the basis again for updating and revising the Plan.

Of course, the Background Reports and the Comprehensive Plan have little value unless the ideas expressed in them are put in a format that accomplishes these ideas. The most important document affecting the future quality of the city is the Development Code. The Development Code outlines procedures and standards used in the review of new development and modifications to existing development. By adopting specific development standards, all development efforts will continue to enhance the viability and aesthetic quality of the community.

The Comprehensive Plan document is divided into four parts. Chapter One addresses the environmental setting of the community, including its natural resources and special features, aesthetic qualities, limitations on development and special areas (historic resources, Willamette River Greenway, and wetlands).

Chapter Two deals with community needs; both now and in the future. The chapter addresses population projections, economic development, housing, transportation, public services, and social amenities.

Chapter Three discusses the growth management process and sets forth City direction to effectively deal with growth and redevelopment. Chapter Three also considers such areas as siting characteristics, energy conservation, and citizen involvement.

Chapter Four discusses the Urban Growth Boundary, land use and zoning designations and other community design features. The Plan narration constitutes findings that are adopted in support of Plan goals, policies, implementation methods, and recommendations.

DEFINITIONS AND OBLIGATIONS OF PLAN STATEMENTS

Plan statements (goals, policies, implementation methods, and recommendations) identify the intent of the City to accomplish certain results. The different types of statements vary in specificity, with goals being the most general and implementation methods being the most specific. The City's obligation under these statements also varies according to the type of statement.

All of the Plan statements relate to each other. The Goals are tied to supportive policies. The policies, in turn, are supported by implementation methods. It is not necessary for an implementation method to be based on a specific policy as long as it supports a goal statement.

The Comprehensive Plan is the general guide for the City for all activities relating to land use. Several other facts must also be recognized:

1. It is not the only document establishing City policies and planning activities.
2. If a project or process is not discussed in the Plan, the City may still take appropriate action to address it. However, the Plan should be amended where applicable in this circumstance.
3. Although the Plan does not specifically address disaster situations (floods, fire, broken utility lines, etc.), City responsibility for safety and public health may occasionally require emergency actions that would otherwise require adherence to specific permit requirements and findings of Plan compliance.

GOAL

Definition - A general statement indicating a desired end or the direction the City will follow to achieve that end.

Obligation - The City cannot take action that opposes a goal statement unless:

1. It is taking action that clearly supports another goal.
2. Findings indicate that the goal being supported takes precedence (in the particular case) over the goal being opposed.

POLICY

Definition - A statement identifying a course of action or City position. Although more specific than goals, policies usually do not explain the exact method of implementing a goal.

Obligation - The City must follow relevant policy statements in making a land use decision or show cause why the Comprehensive Plan should be amended consistent with statewide goals. Such an amendment must take place following prescribed procedures prior to taking a land use action that would otherwise violate a Plan policy. However, in the instance where specific Plan policies appear to be conflicting, then the City must seek solutions that maximize each applicable policy objective within the overall content of the Comprehensive Plan and in a manner consistent with the statewide goals. In balancing and weighing those statements, the City can refer to general categories of policies and does not have to respond to each applicable policy. Also, in this weighing process, the City must consider whether the policy contains mandatory language (e.g., shall, require) or more discretionary language (e.g., may, encourage).

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

Definition - A statement that outlines a specific City project or standard to implement a goal or policy. Projects are statements that would require expenditure of funds and/or staff time, are specific as to what is to be done, and have a starting and ending point. Standards are statements indicating a proposed regulation or guideline.

Obligation - Completion of any project will depend on a number of factors such as specific City priorities, City financing, grant availability, etc. The City must periodically review project statements as part of a process to determine a priority list of projects to be completed. The list can be any length, and inclusion of an item on the list does not obligate the City to complete that project within the time period allocated.

Since implementation methods are suggestions to future City decision-makers to implement the goals and policies set forth in the Plan, the listing of any particular implementation method in this Plan does not, by virtue of the listing alone, obligate the City to undertake any particular implementation method.

Standards will be incorporated into City regulations and policies by separate action, given the constraints of staff time and City priorities, and will not be put into effect by virtue of this Plan alone.

It may not be necessary for the City to incorporate a specific implementation method where it can be demonstrated that an alternative action or no action at all will better or equally accomplish the intent of the related goals or policies.

The list of implementation methods is not exclusive, and the City will always have the power to adopt alternate methods for implementing the Plan's goals and policies.

RECOMMENDATION

Definition - A statement that identifies a recommended course of action, position, or implementation method for a non-city organization.

Obligation - The recommendation section of the Plan allows the City an opportunity to express courses of action, ideas, and programs that the City would like to see implemented or to better facilitate existing programs. These statements are not binding upon other agencies but provide a forum for stating City direction and action. [Ord. 5543, 10/23/2002]