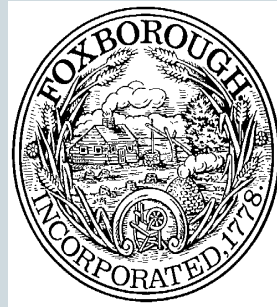


APA Sustaining Places Initiative



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APA is considering a program to designate comprehensive plans as meeting certain sustainability goals and objectives.

APA's Sustaining Places Task Force was charged with exploring the role of the comprehensive plan as the leading policy document and tool to help communities achieve sustainable outcomes.

Background: APA Sustaining Places Initiative



- Sustaining Places Task Force (2010-12)
- *Sustaining Places: The Role of the Comprehensive Plan* (PAS 567) (2012)
- Sustaining Places Working Group (2012-13)
- Comprehensive Plan Sustainability Standards
- Comprehensive Plan Designation: Issues and Benefits
- Plan Standards Workshop 1: Chicago (2013)
- **Pilot Communities (2013/14)**
- **Test Communities (2014)**
- **Plan Standards Workshop 2: Atlanta (2014)**
- Forthcoming PAS Report: *Sustaining Places Comprehensive Plans: A How-to Guide* (2014)



Ten communities participated across the country; two additional cities were “scored”

Foxborough was selected as New England pilot community



2010 Population



• Auburn, Washington	71,517
• Foxborough, Massachusetts	16,865
• Goshen, Indiana	31,934
• Memphis/Shelby County, TN	927,644
• New Hanover County, NC	206,189
• Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	551,967
• Rock Island, Illinois	39,018
• Seattle, Washington	608,660
• Savona, New York	822
• Wheeling, West Virginia	28,486

2014 Pilot Communities



- Diverse! range in size from 800 residents to nearly 1 million people
- Geographic differences span the country from east to west
- Plans range in scale from town/city/county/regional
- Differing state laws and plan requirements
- Most communities chosen are at the beginning stages of the plan
- “One community hopes to build on another planning process under way to advocate for the benefits of updating a comprehensive plan that has not been updated for more than 30 years.”

Existing Certification or Designation Programs



- **State-level programs:**
 - Sustainable Jersey
 - Minnesota GreenStep Cities
 - Sustainable Maryland Certified
- **STAR communities – Sustainability Tools for Assessing and Rating communities**

The STAR Community Rating System

Goal Areas & Objectives are mapped and rated in the online system, helping local leaders set goals and measure progress across areas.

Built Environment	Climate & Energy	Economy & Jobs	Education, Arts & Community	Equity & Empowerment	Health & Safety	Natural Systems
Ambient Noise & Light	Climate Adaptation	Business Retention & Development	Arts & Culture	Civic Engagement	Active Living	Green Infrastructure
Community Water Systems	Greenhouse Gas Mitigation	Green Market Development	Community Cohesion	Civil & Human Rights	Community Health & Health Systems	Invasive Species
Compact & Complete Communities	Greening the Energy Supply	Local Economy	Educational Opportunity & Attainment	Environmental Justice	Emergency Prevention & Response	Natural Resource Protection
Housing Affordability	Industrial Sector Resource Efficiency	Quality Jobs & Living Wages	Historic Preservation	Equitable Services & Access	Food Access & Nutrition	Outdoor Air Quality
Infill & Redevelopment	Resource Efficient Buildings	Targeted Industry Development	Social & Cultural Diversity	Human Services	Indoor Air Quality	Water in the Environment
Public Spaces	Resource Efficient Public Infrastructure	Workforce Readiness		Poverty Prevention & Alleviation	Natural & Human Hazards	Working Lands
Transportation Choices	Waste Minimization				Safe Communities	



*The following slides are from
an APA staff person's conference presentation*

How Can the Programs Work Together?



- APA program sets framework for successful implementation, other certification programs help achieve that vision
- Developing and implementing the strategies set forth in the comp plan positions the community for certification at the community level

Similarities to Other Certification Programs



- Focus on sustainability – take steps to sustain quality of life over the long term
- Voluntary programs that recognize leaders in the field
- Principles and standards align
- Make guidance and resources available to anyone interested
- Encourage innovation
- Rigorous procedures – meaningful designation
- Similar processes: apply, demonstrate how you meet a certain level of standards, have application reviewed, reviewers determine whether to designate/certify and at what level

How Does the APA Program Differ?



- Designates comprehensive plan (not community as a whole)
- Not everything relevant to a state certification program belongs in a comp plan
- Not intended for traditional comp plans, but comp plans aimed at sustaining places
- Purpose is to serve as the concise, go-to resource for desired content for comprehensive plans for sustaining places
- Describes desired content but provides flexibility to design a plan that best meets the needs of each individual community

Why Designate Comp Plans?



- Assert planning profession leadership in sustaining places
- Broaden plan-making practice to include sustainability goals
- Improve plan quality through comparison with best practice standards
- Encourage local governments to vie for designation

Standards Framework

Principles:

- Built environment
- Nature
- Economy
- Equity
- Health
- Region

Processes:

- Participation
- Implementation

Attributes:

- Content
- Characteristics

Guiding Principles



- Livable built environment
- Harmony with nature
- Resilient economy
- Interwoven equity
- Healthy communities
- Responsible regionalism

Processes



Authentic Participation

- Diverse participation
- Transparent decisions
- Disadvantaged leadership
- Ongoing information
- City & neighborhood involvement
- Social media use

Accountable Implementation

- Involve public in goal setting
- Use indicators/metrics
- Monitor outcomes & goal progress
- Commit resources
- Assign responsibilities
- Report during budgeting

Attributes



Consistent Content

- Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities & threats
- Set measurable objectives
- Layout future vision
- Maps, tables, graphics, & summaries

Coordinated Characteristics

- Comprehensive--cover all relevant topics
- Coordinated--vertically & horizontally
- Integrated—include other plans' recommendations
- Persuasive-- communicate clearly

How Would Designation Work?



Community: Employs standards in plan making
Self-scores plan
Applies for designation

Plan Review: Trained 2-person teams reviews plans
Determine plan score
Write review narrative

APA: Train reviewers
Assign plans to be reviewed
Report final plan review and score to applicant
Maintain database of designated plans

Scoring



- NA = Not Applicable (not counted against total)
- 0 = Applicable but absent
- 1 = Low
- 2 = Medium
- 3 = High

Bonus Points – reviewers may assign up to 15 bonus points for outstanding innovation

Possible Designation Levels



Plan score as % of total applicable practices, processes, & attributes, plus any bonus points:

Designated (Basic) = 70%

Silver (Medium) = 80%

Gold (High) = 90%

Changes Made to Program



- Added content to application to supplement scoring matrix (added a qualitative component to the process)
- Developed a Plan Designation Procedure that provides details on scoring (when to assign a “2” vs. a “1”)
- Require community to undertake a self assessment as a part of the application
- Development of a “How-to-Guide” PAS Report to help communities through designation process (forthcoming)
- Added bonus points for innovation
- Added a N/A Category (prevents community from being penalized for practices that do not apply)
- Concluded designation needed to be determined by an impartial review team

Outstanding Items



- Securing reviewers
- The specifics of the reviewer training (content, process, timeframe)
- Funding to support program
- Costs to apply for designation
- Organization of plan database and plan resources
- Finalize standards and designation program and launch program
- What to do if reviewers cannot agree on plan score
- How to keep standards relevant over time
- Designation Maintenance



End of APA materials

Thoughts



- Can “one size really fit all?” Urban/rural, very large/very small
- Are criteria universally applicable?
- Most communities will incorporate sustainability into a “master plan,” not do a stand-alone sustainable community plan. Are APA criteria flexible and malleable enough to fit fifty different state requirements for a master plan?

(cont.)



- Process ends with report and score. Should there be the ability to discuss findings or explain conclusions?
- What is the advantage of being designated (other than where it might replace state reviews?)
- To what extent can the principles, processes, and attributes be used without going through designation process?
- Why?

contact



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