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OVERVIEW OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Why Prepare a Comprehensive Plan?

Communities seldom stand still; they are continually growing, changing, and evolving as places of human interchange and capital investment. Wilmington is no exception. The Comprehensive Plan will address a number of pressing issues facing our city that require considerable attention and concerted action. Among these issues are:

- Dealing with growing traffic congestion on major streets – currently increasing at a pace well in excess of population growth.
- Improving neighborhood areas hampered by limited investment, and associated housing, economic, and social challenges.
- Encouraging mixed use development and housing densities that allow residents to live close to services and jobs, thereby reducing dependence on the automobile.
- Providing for the expansion of walking and biking facilities, and inter and intra-city transit services.
- Continuing downtown area revitalization and reinvestment, while preserving the historic and cultural character of the heart of our city.
- Addressing stormwater and drainage issues that are exacerbated by increased urbanization.
- Creating new parks, recreation and open space facilities to promote the health and well-being of multiple generations of our citizens.
- Supporting the development of commercial and economic development that offers greater prosperity to our citizens while complementing the city’s unique sense of place.

Your City Council must make difficult decisions about how to manage growth and about how to allocate the City’s resources to deal with these many growth-related issues. The Comprehensive Plan helps guide those difficult decisions—about future development and redevelopment, and about priorities for City government in response to the demands brought about by constant change. The intent of the plan is to create a shared vision for the City to preserve and build on its heritage while giving direction for desirable growth and development. The Comprehensive Plan presents an opportunity to demonstrate that Wilmington residents, businesses and elected officials are committed to working together for the best possible future for our community.
Who will be responsible for preparing the Comprehensive Plan?

A City Council-appointed Steering Committee made up of 15 interested citizens will guide the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan. Other appointed boards, including notably, the Planning Commission, will be invited to provide input to the Steering Committee as the plan is developed. The Steering Committee will receive technical and administrative assistance from a City staff support team. City Council will provide leadership and direction at strategic benchmarks during the plan’s development.

How will the community be involved?

A critical part of plan development will be the involvement of property owners, residents, business owners, and other stakeholders in the community. The development of the Comprehensive Plan will start ‘from the ground up’; i.e., community involvement will be the foundation of the plan. Starting early in the process, and continuing throughout the development of the plan, the Steering Committee will host a series of town meetings. Public input gleaned from these meetings will be reviewed during committee work sessions over a period of several months. Public involvement will also include an “open house” format near the end of the planning process in which the draft plan will be presented for public comment. In general, the study process will proceed from the broad to the specific, and from objectives to actions. Approval of the plan will conclude with a formal public hearing and adoption by City Council.
YOUR ROLE AS A STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER

Your role as a Steering Committee member is critically important to the success of the Comprehensive Plan:

► UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE:
You hold a unique viewpoint within the Wilmington community. You have been selected as a steering committee member because of your knowledge of the community, your interest in its future and your willingness to help create a new vision for our city in the 21st century.

► PLAN DEVELOPMENT:
You should provide perspective and insight on information gathered as well as feedback on draft policies and implementation actions. In doing so, you will play an important role in shaping guidelines for urban growth over the next twenty years or more. At the same time, you are not being asked to be a planner or writer; rather, you are to be a sounding board for the citizens of Wilmington.

► LEARNING AND SHARING INFORMATION:
Over the course of the plan’s preparation you may be introduced to new ideas about urban development, demographic trends, new technologies and other information. You may also come across other ideas that you want to share with your fellow committee members and staff support team—ideas that you believe may have merit for Wilmington.

► NETWORKING AND RECRUITMENT:
You know others in the area that have a keen interest in the way in which our city should grow. These others may include friends, neighbors, business associates, or others vitally interested in the future of Wilmington. By inviting these individuals to participate in the planning process, you can help make sure that all important viewpoints within the community are heard.

► PUBLIC MEETINGS FACILITATION AND SUPPORT:
During the course of the plan’s development, you may be asked to take a leadership role in facilitating public meetings. Specific roles will be discussed before each meeting and may include: greeting/ signing people in, working with small groups, promoting discussion, summarizing meeting input and interpreting meeting results.

► PLAN PRESENTATION AND RECOMMENDATION:
At the conclusion of the planning process, you may be asked to participate in the presentation of the Comprehensive Plan to City Council for their consideration of adoption.
City Council provides direction to Steering Committee, early in the process as well as during review of draft plan; near the end of the planning process, they also hold a formal public hearing to consider adoption of the plan.

Steering Committee guides preparation of the Comprehensive Plan and recommends plan to City Council.

Planning Commission provides input on draft plan to Steering Committee.

Citizen Advisors and Resource Advisors provide input and perspective at organized public input meetings, focus groups, as well as by social media, letter, personal contact, etc.

Support Team provides technical and administrative assistance, facilitates communications to the public, organizes civic engagement process, and prepares draft and final plan.
Your Time Commitment as a Steering Committee Member

The following presents a rough gauge as to the minimum time commitment of Steering Committee members over the course of the plan’s preparation:

**Project Duration:** (18 months)
Plan preparation normally runs about 18 months from the date of the “kick off meeting” until the draft plan is presented to City Council in a concluding joint work session.

**Monthly Committee Meetings** (2 hours)
One 2-hour meeting per month. Typically, these meetings will start at 6 pm and end promptly at 8 pm, though the chosen 2 hour window could vary according to the Committee’s wishes. These meetings will normally be held in City Hall.

**Monthly Review of Draft Materials** (1 hour)
Committee members will receive a draft section of the plan 1 week before each monthly Committee meeting. Committee members should expect to spend about 1 hour before each meeting reviewing the materials, writing notes in margins, etc. This advance review is critical to the efficient work of the Committee in the monthly meetings.

**Special Town Meetings** (3-4 hours per quarter)
Special public meetings held for the plan may take about 3 to 4 hours during any three-month period. If a series of public meetings are held around town, it is sometimes recommended that the 15-member committee “divide and conquer” by making assignments as to who will attend each meeting.

**Other** (also 3-4 hours per quarter)
Though not required, Committee members may want to allow time to make special appearances at civic club meetings, neighborhood meetings, focus group meetings, or other unanticipated events during the course of the plan’s preparation.