Comprehensive Plan Policies that support Infill and Mixed Use

Introduction

A comprehensive plan provides a broad vision for the future growth of a community. It is often formulated using community visioning exercises. Idaho code §67-6508 requires comprehensive plans to *"Prepare, implement, and review and update a comprehensive plan, hereafter referred to as the plan. The plan shall include all land within the jurisdiction of the governing board. The plan shall consider previous and existing conditions, trends, desirable goals and objectives, or desirable future situations for each planning component. The plan with maps, charts, and reports shall be based on the following components unless the plan specifies reasons why a particular component is unneeded."* Cities and counties are asked to consider 14 specific elements, listed in the statute and may consider additional elements, such as infill and mixed use. Effective comprehensive plans indentify specific strategies and recommendations to implement the plan. The comprehensive plan is typically implemented through zoning codes and subdivision regulations.

For communities who are interested in encouraging infill and mixed use development the comprehensive plan should establish a policy basis, goals and objectives for the infill and mixed use strategy. It should also identify desired characteristics of and locations for infill and mixed use. Policies can accommodate and encourage infill and mixed use within designated zones, for example using the mixed use zones in this guide by including a policy that permits infill and mixed use development when the following conditions are found to exist: …" The plan will need to then identify the conditions that support infill and mixed use development for your community. Consistency with the comprehensive plan and zones may reduce potential conflicts later in the development process.

This guide offers three areas below to consider adding to your comprehensive plan if it doesn't already reflect them. CP-1 and CP-2 can be listed under Land Use and CP-3 under Transportation if you organize your plan according to the 14 elements described in the statute. If you have chosen to organize your plan in a different way you will need to determine where these fit best.

Comprehensive Planning Guide

Comprehensive Plan vision

CP - 1. Envision Compact Communities – Adopt goals and objectives that support growth within a compact area. This will save costs over time as services will be provided to a smaller area, it will also require less land and offer the opportunity to keep more of your productive land in production. Implementation would include zones that allow for higher density and a mix of uses. In order to support these principles the Comprehensive Plan should include goals that address community pattern, infill, redevelopment, higher density and mixes of uses while reflecting the communities' values. In addition, goals that specify a desire to see increased pedestrian and bicycle travel are important to support the integration of travel choices into mixed use centers.

Comment: *Examples of such policies exist in Comprehensive Plans across the state. A small sampling of policies from around the state is included at the end of this section to help you understand how Idaho communities are implementing these ideas. There is no perfect language. The words you choose should reflect your community's values.*

Activity Centers (Priority Infill Areas)

CP - 2. Set Goals and objectives for Priority Infill Areas or Activity Centers. **Designate areas for Priority Infill Areas or Activity Centers** – A land use map is required to be included in Idaho Comprehensive plans. It allows the identification of locations where you prefer to see new mixed use activity centers; neighborhood marketplace districts or areas of more intense housing. This creates certainty for everyone and encourages development within the existing community.

One way to identify areas ripe for infill and redevelopment in general is to determine the availability of developable or redevelopable land within the city or the Area of City Impact (ACI) using the following list of data points as a guide. Collect information on these as available, add to or subtract from this list as local conditions require:

- Total acres of developable land within the city limits and ACI, this may be based on vacant land, land where the improvements are worth less than the land value and land that is currently underutilized (i.e. low intensity development and/or disinvested.)
- Map the location and size of vacant, infill, and potentially redevelopable sites as identified above. Identify any hazardous or environmentally sensitive areas within the areas mapped.
- Determine the general availability and capacity of utilities and other services such as schools and fire protection to the sites identified.
- Determine the current zoning for sites identified.
- Review recent housing sales and trends and pending and proposed developments on or near the sites.
- Conduct a public process to gather neighborhood input and values about the area around the sites and the sites identified.

Comment: *Communities may want to do a deeper assessment of market potential to understand how much retail or commercial development will be successful in a particular activity center. In some locations it may be helpful to conduct brownfields and environmental assessments. Small communities will already have one identified activity center in downtown. There will not likely be enough market potential to support another activity center. Nonetheless these tools can help you understand the opportunity sites for development and redevelopment in those downtown centers. They may also help you identify other skipped over parcels that may be appropriate for more intense use such as a live/work unit or duplex or other small multi-family. Allowing for those uses may stimulate redevelopment.*

Develop a set of goals that reflect the community input and existing conditions and how you will respond to them to support more compact and intense development in activity centers. Determine the locations of likely activity centers based on the data and goals. Evaluate proposed activity center locations based on the information gathered above combined with the location specific criteria listed below. Give priority to proposed activity centers that are located in areas where the potential for development and redevelopment has been identified. Look for activity center locations that:

- Already have some mix of uses and are of a scale that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood (whether existing or proposed);
- Are located where there is sufficient or potential access (i.e. with access to collectors or arterials); for transit, walking and biking as well as vehicles.
- Are located in an area where the topography supports higher-intensity development;

- Where a range of commercial/retail services are not currently available in the immediate neighborhood (there is market potential);
- Are located where other public or private space is identified as lacking for existing residents.
- Are located where there is sufficient existing or planned housing nearby to support walking and biking trips to the center and/or focused around an existing or planned transit stop.
- Are located where the # of residential units and the network and access for walking and biking can reduce the demand for parking and improve overall design of the activity center to create a public space.

The last step is to finalize and map a list of proposed site(s) for activity centers for inclusion in the Future Land Use Map.

Comment: *Understanding the locations where there is enough market potential, enough nearby residents and community support is a key to making these activity centers successful. Work toward agreement from the community on locations where they can understand that change would be positive and would help clean-up or redevelop disinvested areas.*

Complete Streets

CP - 3. **Develop goals and objectives for a street system that serves all users well.** Often called 'Complete Streets', in practice it is integrating the design of the transportation network to serve all users with strategies for pedestrians, bicyclists, people with disabilities, transit users, drivers, and freight haulers and citizens of all ages. In addition it creates appropriate scale and size of transportation facilities within communities, and often supports economic development better than the system we have today. Adopt goals that support 'right=sizing' streets or and designing for lower speed (rather than using conventional design) to create a safer more pleasant environment for people.

Many streets and roads built over the last 50 years are only safe and comfortable for travel by motor vehicle. They have wide travel lanes that encourage higher speeds, have few sidewalks, bike lanes and connections, and have poorly marked or unmarked dangerous pedestrian crossings. The maintenance and rebuilding of these roads provides an opportunity to design and implement "complete streets". Such a street system would provide a seamless network of driving, on-street walking, transit and bicycling facilities, and trails connecting schools, homes, shopping, employment centers, recreation areas and other destinations.

Comment: *Adopting a Complete Streets policy can end the project-by-project struggle for better facilities by requiring all road construction and improvement projects to begin with evaluating how the street serves all who use it. You can also adopt many of these principles separately if that is a better fit for your community.*

An effective complete streets policy contains the following provisions:
- Vision, Describe how and why your community wants to complete its streets.
- Be clear and specific, specify 'all users' - include pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transportation passengers, people of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, public transportation vehicles, and automobiles and describe how you will serve them. Strive to create an integrated, connected network for everyone.
- Apply to all roadways. The policy should cover both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations, for the entire right-of-way, including pedestrian and a bike facilities.

- Allow exceptions, develop specific clear procedures with criteria for when and why an exception may be granted, require a high-level approval, such as the governing board.
- Establish performance standards and develop measurable outcomes.
- Develop an action plan for implementation of the policy.

Comment: *Links to Complete Streets policies in Idaho are included at the end of this document as examples of how Idaho communities are implementing this tool.*

With or without a formal Complete Streets policy you can support complete streets principles and integrate your transportation network by adopting some or all of the following policies as appropriate for your community. These policies provide support for good sidewalks, bike facilities, connectivity and pedestrian crossings:

Sidewalks: Sidewalks form the backbone of the pedestrian transportation network. Sidewalk installation and the linking of pedestrian routes to destinations and major corridors should always be a priority. The decision to install sidewalks should not be optional. "Sidewalks should be built and maintained in all urban areas, along (non-Interstate) public highway rights-of-way, in commercial areas where the public is invited, and between all commercial transportation stops and public areas" (Institute of Transportation Engineers, Technical Council Committee 5A-5, 1998).

Policies:
- Adopt a policy requiring sidewalks in all new and renovated development.
- Support development and implementation of a pedestrian master plan that identifies your current sidewalk network, major destinations and gaps and adopt it into your transportation policy.
- Adopt a policy that prioritizes streets that do not have sidewalks or other safe pedestrian passage and are likely routes to high demand destinations such as schools and markets as your highest priority for improvements.
- Develop a traffic management (traffic calming) policy to slow traffic and enhance pedestrian safety where needed.

Bicycles: A safe and successful bike network has a clear commitment to bicycles as a mode of transportation. This should be reflected in your vision statement, in all transportation plans and policies and acted upon with implementation strategies. While recreation is an important need, accommodations for recreational bicyclists are not adequate to serve the needs of transportation users.

Policies:
- Adopt a policy that requires all roadways to have facilities (e.g. sidewalks, bike lanes, pathways, sharrows) that meet the needs for bicyclists and pedestrians. List criteria for when exceptions will be allowed and only allow exceptions that meet the criteria.
- Adopt a policy that recognizes bicyclists as valid transportation users who will be accommodated on all transportation facilities.
- Support development and implementation of a bicycle master plan that identifies your current network, major destinations and gaps and adopt it into your transportation policy.
- Adopt a policy that prioritizes routes that do not have safe bicycle passage and are likely routes to high demand destinations such as schools and markets as your highest priority for improvements.
- Make sure that transit vehicles have racks for bikes so that integrated trips are possible.

Connectivity refers to the quantity or density of connections in path or road networks and the directness of links between connections. A well-connected road or path network has many short links, numerous intersections (nodes), and minimal dead-ends (cul-de-sacs). As connectivity increases, travel distances decrease and route options increase, allowing more direct travel between destinations and creating a more accessible and resilient system. Relative connectivity is an important predictor of the choice to walk. Pedestrian trips are 18% higher in areas where paths are relatively more direct to nearby destinations on foot than by car. They are also safer for all users.

Policies: Adopt a policy that recognizes the importance of a connected transportation system and supports improvements in your community. Implement that policy using the standards detailed in Z-4 of this guide.

Pedestrian Crossings: A person walking or biking to any local destination will likely cross one or more streets. Good, safe crossing design should keep the street crossing simple.

Principles to follow:

• Identify good crossing locations: Develop the shortest safe routes for crossing – do not ask pedestrians to travel out of direction to cross.
• Slow motor vehicle speeds: Pedestrians are much safer when motorists are traveling less than 25 mph.
• Reduce curb radius: Shorter curb radius at corners benefits pedestrians by shortening the intersection crossing distance, slowing the turning vehicles, and allowing a straighter path through the intersection for pedestrians
• Reduce crossing distances: Use curb extensions (curb bulb-outs) and median islands to reduce the crossing distance and length of time pedestrians are exposed to traffic
• Use appropriate signage: As recommended in the MUTCD signs can improve the rate and distance at which drivers yield.
• Use appropriate pavement markings and traffic controls: Utilize accepted pavement markings, warning signs, flashers and traffic signals when warranted by following the MUTCD. (Further guidance can be found in the Handbook for Safe routes to School listed in the Resources section.)

References and Examples
Complete Street Resources:
National Complete Streets Coalition: http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets

FHWA Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety: http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/

Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/

Walking, learn about: http://americawalks.org/

SACOG Complete Streets Toolkit; http://www.sacog.org/complete-streets/toolkit/START.html

Idaho Examples of Complete Streets policies:
ACHD Complete Streets Policy:
http://achdidaho.org/Departments/PP/Docs/TLIP/TLIP_cities_discussion_draft/Adopted_Docs/Complete_Streets_Policy_Resolution-895.pdf

COMPASS Complete Streets Policy:
http://www.compassidaho.org/documents/prodserv/reports/dmr/COMPASS%20_PolicyFinal.pdf

City of Coeur d'Alene Complete Streets Policy:

City of McCall Complete Streets Policy:
http://www.mccall.id.us/uploads/departments/community_development/documents/McCallCompleteStreets%20Policy.pdf

Idaho Examples of Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives that support Infill and Mixed Use

Infill/Mixed Use Comp Plan policies, City of Boise:

- **"….**The city will be home to a range of housing choices, retail and service uses, and employment centers that serve the community's needs. Activity centers throughout the city have been chosen…to potentially reduce vehicle miles traveled by single occupant vehicles, resulting in an increase in pedestrian/bicycle travel and transit users…."pg. 2-2
- The city will be home to a range of housing choices, retail and service uses, and employment centers that serve the community's needs. Activity centers throughout the city have been chosen for their ability to potentially reduce vehicle miles traveled by single occupant vehicles, resulting in an increase in pedestrian/bicycle travel and transit users. pg. 2-2
- ES1.4: Development Patterns: Promote compact, walkable development patterns that support transit and reduce carbon emissions from vehicles and discourage development patterns that rely solely on vehicles for transportation in an effort to reduce vehicle miles traveled. pg. 2-9
- Goals and policies to achieve a predictable development pattern are derived from the following principles:
  - Encourage compact growth;
  - Plan for and coordinate growth within the city's AOCI; and
  - Use and expand public facilities and services efficiently. pg. 2-23

City of Boise Comprehensive Plan, Blueprint Boise:
http://pds.cityofboise.org/planning/comp/blueprint-boise/

Infill/Mixed Use Comp Plan policies, City of Coeur d'Alene

- Objective 1.11, Community Design: Employ current design standards for development that pay close attention to context, sustainability, urban design, and pedestrian access and usability throughout the city. pg. 13
- Objective 1.12, Community Design: Support the enhancement of existing urbanized areas and discourage sprawl. pg. 13
- Objective 2.05, Pedestrian & Bicycle Environment: Plan for multiple choices to live, work, and recreate within comfortable walking/biking distances. pg. 16
- Areas of Coeur d'Alene Requiring Unique Planning: Infill Overlay Districts: Our infill overlay district code governs how land within these districts is developed. The goal is to encourage infill development while protecting neighborhoods. It is the intent of development standards to encourage a sensitive form of growth and to allow for use that complements the visual character and the nature of our city. pg. 31
- Neighborhood Service Node: An area, often at the intersection of two traffic arterials that contains the commercial elements helpful to neighborhoods (e.g., a small grocery store, drycleaners, cafes, laundromats, etc.). Two additional zones are available that support appropriate limited commercial activity adjacent to and within residential areas: *Community Commercial* (C.C.) and *Neighborhood Commercial* (N.C.). pg. 39

City of Coeur d'Alene Comprehensive Plan:
http://www.cdaid.org/mod/userpage/images/2007complan.pdf

Infill/Mixed Use Comp Plan policies, City of Driggs:

• Goal: Create an efficient, safe and attractive multi-modal transportation network.
   o Objective: Ensure Driggs develops as a "walkable community" with a safe, efficient and attractive network of sidewalks, pathways and trails. pg. 38
• Goal: Provide for a mix of land uses that meet the community's needs and are suitably related to each other and their natural setting, within an efficient pattern of development, with density generally greater at the city's core and decreasing toward the edges of the city, and nodes of higher density near primary services or other established intensive uses. pg. 95
   o Objective: Ensure that development occurs in a manner that is safe, that facilitates efficient delivery of public services and does not outstrip available or potential capacities. pg. 96

City of Driggs Comprehensive Plan:
http://www.driggs.govoffice.com/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={1FE48A47-9956-454C-90DC-DD7C3F4A0028}

Infill/Mixed Use Comp Plan policies, City of Garden City:

• 1.4.3 Amend the Land Use code to create more mixed-use and live-work uses. pg. 7
• 2.1.1 Amend the Land Use Code to adopt new neighborhood provisions for development, including:…pedestrian circulation, including sidewalks and trails, with inter and intra connectivity. pg. 7-8
• 3.2.1 Conduct an inventory of public and private property in locations that can become centers of neighborhood activity. These areas may be undeveloped or vacant property, parks, street ends, or plazas. pg. 8

Garden City Comprehensive Plan:
http://www.gardencityidaho.org/vertical/sites/%7BA16794C5-94AE-4C54-B8E9-ADC537012C3F%7D/uploads/%7B027E60FD-E457-4267-9D28-A4325DF4FB91%7D.PDF

Infill/Mixed Use Comp Plan policies, City of Meridian:

• Provide more transportation choices: Develop safe, reliable and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote public health. pg. 10
• Support existing communities: Target federal funding toward existing communities through such strategies as transit-oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling to increase community revitalization, improve the efficiency of public works investments, and safeguard rural landscapes. pg. 10
• Value communities and neighborhoods: Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe and walkable neighborhoods – rural, urban or suburban. pg. 11

City of Meridian Comprehensive Plan: http://meridiancity.org/planning.aspx?id=232 and
http://meridiancity.org/uploadedFiles/Departments/Planning/Comprehensive_Plan/Meridian-CompPlan-Full.pdf

Infill/Mixed Use Comp Plan policies, City of Salmon:

• The City of Salmon should explore non-traditional zoning methods, such as planned unit developments (PUD's), to encourage development on buildable lots within the city and innovative design and development strategies. This should be done to encourage diversity in the economy, connectivity of transportation systems, pedestrian access, and to respect traditional land use patterns that predominate in the area. pg. 21

• To accommodate growth in the near future, the City should encourage development on existing, buildable city lots within the city limits and impact areas first over expansion into the rural areas. pg. 22

City of Salmon Comprehensive Plan:
http://www.cityofsalmon.com/vertical/sites/%7BB1A822FF-B40A-4842-962C-94FCC967EFF1%7D/uploads/Comprehensive__Plan_8_4_2010.pdf

Infill/Mixed Use Comp Plan policies, City of Sandpoint:

• Encourage diversity in transportation modes; …residents wish to encourage increased use of bicycles…Sandpoint's land use arrangement and transportation network create patterns where residents and visitors choose to walk or ride instead of choosing to drive. pg. 3-7

• Direct growth into Downtown Sandpoint and other emerging higher intensity districts; …. focus a large share of that growth into the community's downtown and other designated higher intensity districts…. pg. 3-8

• Shape a Sandpoint that's easily served; … see the town served by all of its infrastructure and parks…and the services to be provided on an affordable cost-effective basis. This has direct implications on community design…. pg. 3-8

• Goal CD-2: Resource Conservation: Facilitate resource conservation and community development in Sandpoint's design.
  o Policies A) Locate population intensity in and near the downtown and where urban services are readily available… C) Encourage mixed use in CA-4 and CA-5 areas….F) Encourage small accessory dwelling units throughout Sandpoint. pg. 3-9

• Goal LU-1: Efficient Land Use: Achieve an efficient use of land in and around Sandpoint, reducing pressure to expand into the Area of City Impact to accommodate population growth. pg. 4-7

• Goal LU-2: Traditional Patterns: Emulate traditional neighborhood development in areas identified for more intensity; ensuring new population is housed close to services.
  o Policies: A) Mix land uses in CA3-B, CA4 and CA-5 areas. pg. 4-7

City of Sandpoint Comprehensive Plan: http://cityofsandpoint.com/ComprehensivePlan.asp