

Plan Overview

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan is the City of Columbus's guide to community physical, social, and economic development. This plan is not intended to serve as land use regulations in themselves; instead, it will provide a rational basis for local land use decisions with a twenty-year vision for future planning and community decisions. This plan will address the nine (9) elements all of the nine elements below as defined by Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law (s. 66.1001).

Planning Area

The study area for the Columbus 2040 Comprehensive Plan has been selected to include all lands in which the City has short-term and long-term interest in planning and development activity. The General Planning Area includes all lands within The City of Columbus municipal limits and within the City's 1½-mile Extraterritorial Zoning jurisdiction as depicted on Map 1 (Note: As of 7-7-20 Map 1 has not been completed).

History

The City of Columbus lies in the far southeastern corner of Columbia County, with a small portion of the city limits crossing into Dodge County to the east. The development of the Columbus began in the 1830's as an outpost for lumber milling and agricultural support. The city has been incorporated since the 1874 City Charter. The city has been an agriculture-based community, with banking facilities, commercial endeavors, housing and educational institutions to support the surrounding farming activities.

The area now known as the City of Columbus was part of the Michigan territory until 1836 when the Wisconsin Territory was formed by act of Congress. At that time, the area of Columbus was part of Milwaukee County. Columbia County was created in 1846 when it was divided from Portage County. Columbus was initially designated as the county seat for Columbia County. However, a general election in 1851 gave the permanent status to Fort Winnebago, later renamed Portage.

Elbert Dickason is recognized as the first settler in the area of Columbus. He first arrived in 1839 as the owner of a significant tract of land along the Crawfish River. He built a log cabin not far from the current site of the railroad depot, and proceeded to dam the Crawfish River and build a sawmill. Several years later, the mill was purchased by Lewis Ludington, a lumberman based in Milwaukee.

Beginning in 1843, Lewis Ludington and his son James and nephew Harrison developed much of the original town center, and street names bear out their imprint on the community. The original street of Ludington Avenue was laid on the Madison to Fond du Lac trail which entered the city on the slight ridge still visible.

Many of the original settlers of the area were pioneers from New England states. Early residents arrived for a variety of trades, not only the farmers, but also potters, blacksmiths, lumbermen and merchants. Several banks and commercial establishments were established early on to serve the residents and surrounding new arrivals.

The first school building was erected in the city limits in 1846 at 426 Ludington Avenue, a building which still stands as a residence. The 1850 population of the City was 164 men and 124 women. The railroad connected Columbus to the outside world on May 25, 1857, with links to Watertown, Oconomowoc and Milwaukee.

The City of Columbus was chartered in 1874 and municipal improvements began almost immediately. A fire department purchased 2 extinguishers hand pumpers and a hook and ladder truck in 1877. In 1893 the City Hall building was constructed. In 1896 the City received a \$25,000 loan for the construction of a water system, and in 1899 a \$45,000 loan for the development of a direct current steam generated power plant. The main sanitary sewer system in the downtown area was constructed in 1908.

A much lengthier and thorough history of the City of Columbus is available in the Columbus Public Library. The four-volume set, written as a newspaper column over several years by Fred A. Stare provides much detail and anecdotal information on the setting, history and personality of Columbus.

Demographics

The review of the demographic trends for the City of Columbus and surrounding units of local government are critical to understanding what has occurred and what is likely to occur in the future for the Columbus Area. This section will examine population, age distribution, educational levels, and income. The data shows nearly 20 years of past trends and projections 20 years into the future. The data for this section was provided by the US Census Bureau or the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) Demographic Services Center. American Community Survey (ACS) data from the US Census was used to provide the most current estimates for this section. The estimates are derived from surveys over a 5-year period; the current estimate is from surveys completed from 2014 to 2018.

Table 1-1: Historic Population Trends

Unit of Government	Population					Percent Growth			
	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census	2010 Census	2019 Estimate	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2010	1980-2019
City of Columbus	4,049	4,083	4,443	4,991	5,173	0.8%	8.8%	12.3%	27.8%
Town Columbus	704	838	711	646	651	19.0%	-15.2%	-9.1%	-7.5%
Town of Elba	1,028	964	1,086	996	998	-6.2%	12.7%	-8.3%	-2.9%
Village of Fall River	850	842	1,097	1,712	1,781	-0.9%	30.3%	56.1%	109.5%
Columbia County	43,222	45,088	52,468	56,833	57,282	4.3%	16.4%	8.3%	32.5%
Dodge County	75,064	76,559	85,897	88,759	90,032	2.0%	12.2%	3.3%	19.9%
Wisconsin	4,705,642	4,891,769	5,363,715	5,686,986	5,843,443	4.0%	9.6%	6.0%	24.2%

Source: US Census and DOA Estimate as of 1/1/2019

The City of Columbus has experienced population growth since 1980, since then the city has added approximately 1,047 residents. The majority of the growth during this period occurred after 1990 which coincides with Highway 151 being expanded to 4 lanes from Sun Prairie to Columbus in 1991.

The City of Columbus has experienced a similar growth rate in comparison to the State of Wisconsin. From 1980 to 2019 Columbus experienced a growth of 27.8% and the state grew at a 24.2% rate. Growth in the City of Columbus lagged behind the population growth of Columbia County since 1990. The only exception is the 2000's where Columbus had a growth of 12.3% compared to 8.3% for the county. A comparison of population growth in neighboring municipalities shows that growth in the area is primarily occurring in the City of Columbus and the Village of Fall River. The Towns of Elba and Columbus both experienced a loss in population since 1980. When comparing the growth between Fall River and Columbus you will notice that Fall River has seen a population growth of 109.5% since 1980 compared to Columbus with a 27.8% growth. However, when you look at the raw numbers it shows that Columbus has outpaced Fall River totaling 1,124 new residents compared to 931 new residents.

Table 1-2: Population Projections

Unit of Government	2010 Census	2020 Projection	2025 Projection	2030 Projection	2035 Projection	2040 Projection	% Growth 2010-2040
City of Columbus	4,991	5,495	5,835	6,120	6,250	6,290	26.0%
Town Columbus	646	650	650	645	625	595	-7.9%
Town of Elba	996	985	990	985	960	920	-7.6%
Village of Fall River	1,712	1,960	2,140	2,300	2,400	2,465	44.0%
Columbia County	56,833	61,410	64,745	67,455	68,460	68,450	20.4%
Dodge County	88,759	92,035	94,820	97,020	97,190	95,650	7.8%
Wisconsin	5,686,986	6,005,080	6,203,850	6,375,910	6,476,270	6,491,635	14.1%

Source: US Census and WI DOA

The Wisconsin Department of Administration projects that the population of the City of Columbus will grow by 26.0% by the year 2040. The projection is similar to the population growth that Columbus experienced from 1980 to present day. The projections show that population growth for the City will outpace Columbia County and the State of Wisconsin. The projections also show the surrounding Towns of Columbus and Elba will experience a decline in population over the next 20 years.

Figure 1-1 charts the historic trends and the future population projections for the City of Columbus. The figure clearly shows the historic and project growth for the City of Columbus following a linear trajectory.

Figure 1-1: Population Trends

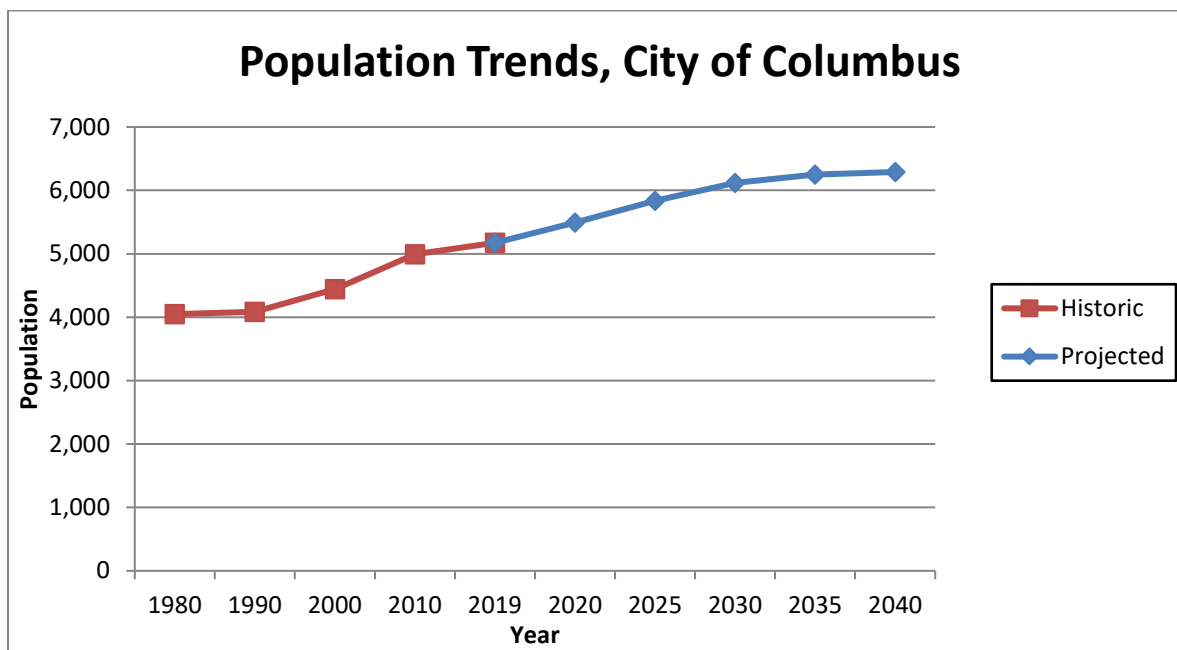


Table 1-3: Age Distribution

Age Group	2000				2018			
	City of Columbus		Wisconsin		City of Columbus		Wisconsin	
	Population	Percent	Population	Percent	Population	Percent	Population	Percent
Under 5	281	6.3%	342,340	6.4%	349	6.9%	335,920	5.8%
5 to 19 years	979	21.9%	1,189,753	22.2%	906	18.1%	1,109,349	19.2%
20 to 24 years	202	4.5%	357,292	6.7%	323	6.4%	402,236	7.0%
25 to 34 years	583	13.0%	706,168	13.2%	870	17.3%	729,904	12.6%
35 to 44 years	757	16.9%	875,522	16.3%	494	9.8%	694,344	12.0%
45 to 54 years	535	11.9%	732,306	13.7%	606	12.1%	777,676	13.5%
55 to 64 years	369	8.2%	457,741	8.5%	728	14.5%	804,270	14.0%
65 to 74 years	305	6.8%	355,307	6.6%	343	6.8%	527,368	9.1%
75 to 84 years	322	7.2%	251,621	4.7%	284	5.7%	271,312	4.7%
85 years and over	146	3.3%	95,625	1.8%	119	2.4%	126,015	2.2%

Median Age	37.5	36.0	36.5	39.3
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Source: US Census and American Community Survey 2014-2018

Table 1-3 shows the population by age group for the City of Columbus and for the State of Wisconsin in 2000 and 2018. The median age for Columbus has gotten younger decreasing from 37.5 in 2000 to 36.5 in 2018. This is stark contrast with the state of Wisconsin, which has seen the median age increase from 36.0 in 2000 to 39.3 in 2018.

The age group in Columbus that had the largest increase in terms of percent of the population was the 25 to 34 year old age bracket. In Columbus, the 25 to 34 year old age bracket increased from 13.0% of the population in 2000 to 16.5% in 2017. Wisconsin experienced a decrease in the percent of total population for the 25 to 34 age group from 2000 to 2017, going from 13.2% to 12.7% of the total population in Wisconsin.

The percent of the population over the age of 65 in Columbus has decreased from 17.3% in 2000 to 14.9% 2018. During that timeframe, the state saw an increase in the percent of the population over the age of 65 from 13.1% in 2000 to 16.0% in 2018.

Table 1-4: Education Attainment

Educational Attainment Population 25 years and over	City of Columbus			Columbia County			Wisconsin		
	2000	2010	2018	2000	2010	2018	2000	2010	2018
Less than 9th grade	5.5%	4.8%	1.2%	4.7%	3.0%	2.0%	5.4%	2.4%	2.8%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	9.9%	6.2%	3.8%	9.1%	6.4%	5.1%	9.6%	8.4%	5.3%
High school graduate or equivalency	37.8%	36.5%	30.6%	39.7%	38.7%	33.9%	34.6%	35.2%	30.9%
Some college, no degree	21.9%	20.0%	21.3%	21.7%	22.4%	22.9%	20.6%	16.3%	20.7%
Associate's degree	5.1%	8.7%	11.7%	8.0%	9.6%	13.0%	7.5%	11.4%	10.7%
Bachelor's degree	13.9%	16.5%	23.1%	11.5%	13.8%	16.3%	15.3%	15.1%	19.4%
Graduate or professional degree	5.8%	7.3%	8.4%	5.3%	6.2%	6.9%	7.2%	11.2%	10.1%
Percent high school graduate or higher	84.5%	89.0%	95.1%	86.2%	90.7%	93.0%	85.2%	89.2%	91.9%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	19.7%	23.8%	31.5%	16.8%	20.0%	23.2%	22.5%	26.2%	29.0%

Source: US Census and American Community Survey 2014-2018

Table 1-4 displays educational attainment for residents 25 years and older in the City of Columbus, Columbia County and Wisconsin. The table shows US Census data for educational attainment for each area in 2000, 2010 and 2018. The City of Columbus has seen an increase in percent high school graduate or higher from 84.5% in 2000 to 95.1% in 2018. The increase in the percent of the population over 25 with a high school graduate or higher shows that the City of Columbus exceeds the percentage for Columbia County and Wisconsin in 2018.

The City of Columbus has also experienced substantial growth in population who have a bachelor's degree or higher. The percent of Columbus residents 25 years or older with a bachelor's degree or higher jumped from 19.7% in 2000 to 31.5% in the 2018. The county and state also had growth in those with bachelor's degrees or higher during this period. Often there is a strong correlation between income levels and educational attainment; it is noteworthy that Columbus has surpassed the state average for those with a bachelor's degree or higher.

Table 1-5: Per Capita Income

Unit of Government	2000	2010	2018
City of Columbus	\$21,435	\$26,333	\$30,908
Columbia County	\$21,014	\$26,993	\$33,012
Wisconsin	\$21,271	\$26,624	\$32,018

Source: US Census and American Community Survey 2014-2018

Table 5 shows the per capita income for the City of Columbus in comparison to Columbia County and the State of Wisconsin. Per capita income measures the average income earned per person in a given area in a specified year. The data shows that each place in Table 1-5 has experienced a similar growth of per capita income. The per capita income for the City of Columbus has lagged behind Columbia County and Wisconsin in 2010 and 2017.

Table 1-6: Median Household Income

Unit of Government	2000	2010	2018
City of Columbus	\$42,667	\$48,063	\$57,976
Columbia County	\$45,064	\$55,910	\$65,348
Wisconsin	\$43,791	\$51,598	\$59,209

Source: US Census and American Community Survey 2014-2018

Table 1-6 shows the median Household income for the City of Columbus in comparison to Columbia County and the State of Wisconsin. The data shows that the median household income for each place has increased over this period. The median household income for City of Columbus lags behind the state of Wisconsin and Columbia County during this period

Table 1-7 - Percentage of people below the Poverty Level

Unit of Government	2000	2010	2018
City of Columbus	5.4%	15.5%	8.7%
Columbia County	5.2%	8.7%	8.2%
Wisconsin	8.7%	11.6%	11.9%

Source: US Census and American Community Survey 2014-2018

Table 7 shows the percent of population whose income is below the poverty level. The US Census uses a set of annual income levels to establish poverty thresholds. The thresholds represent an estimate of the point below which a household of a given size has pre-tax cash income insufficient to meet minimal food and other basic needs. The data shows that the percentage of people living below the poverty level has increased in Columbus, Columbia County and Wisconsin. The increase is likely due to the great recession that crippled our nation's economy in the late 2010's. The City of Columbus experienced a large increase in people below the poverty level between 2000 and 2010. Columbus rebounded from this trend in 2018 with a poverty level below the state.

Impact of Highways

The development of the Federal and State Highway system has had a lasting impact on the City of Columbus. Columbus benefits from having five highways pass through its municipal limits. US Highway 151 and State Highway 16 have had the greatest impact on the growth of Columbus. The entire route of State Highway 16 through the state was once part of the route of US-16, which originally stretched from Detroit, Michigan on the east to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming on the west.

In 1926, Highway 16 was commissioned to enter the state at La Crosse, run along an east-southeasterly course to Milwaukee where a railroad carferry was available to connect motorists with the section of Highway 16 in Michigan at Muskegon. The route ran from La Crosse through Sparta, Tomah, Mauston, Wisconsin Dells, Portage, Columbus, Watertown and Milwaukee.

US Highway 151 was originally designated as a route from Madison to Fond du Lac in 1926. The route quickly expanded over the next decade with extensions to the northeast from Fond du Lac to Manitowoc and the southwest via Dodgeville, Platteville ending at the Wisconsin Iowa border outside of Dubuque.

The US-151 corridor from Madison to Fond du Lac has experienced ongoing highway upgrade over the past three decades or so. US- 151 was predominantly a two-lane highway in 1970. Presently US-151 is made up of several extended stretches of expressway- or freeway-grade highway. The growth of US-151 from a two lane road to a four lane road has had a large impact on the City of Columbus. The chronology for the upgrades between Madison and Fond du Lac can be found in the timeline below.

Figure 1-2: US Highway 151 Timeline

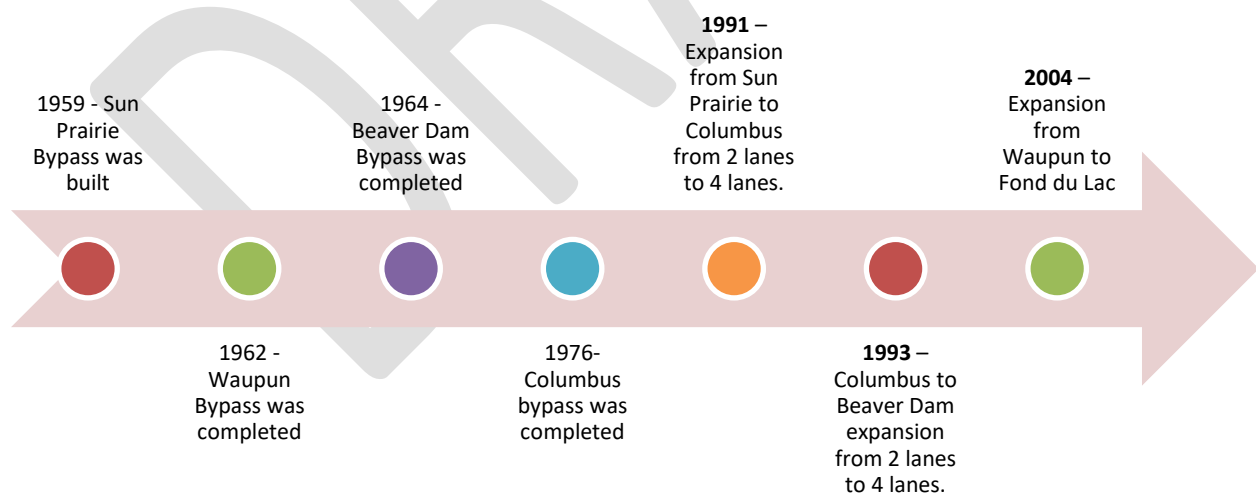


Table 1-8: Highway 151 Corridor Population Trends

Unit of Government	County	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census	2010 Census	2019 Estimate	% Change 1980 to 2017	Actual Growth 1980-2017
City of Madison	Dane	170,616	190,766	208,054	233,209	255,650	36.69%	85,034
City of Sun Prairie	Dane	12,931	15,352	20,369	29,364	34,926	127.08%	21,995
Town of Bristol	Dane	1,723	1,835	2,698	3,765	4,285	118.51%	2,562
Town of York	Dane	714	649	703	652	650	-8.68%	-64
Town of Columbus	Col	704	838	711	646	651	-8.24%	-53
City of Columbus	Col/Dodge	4049	4093	4479	4991	5173	23.27%	1,124
Village of Fall River	Col	850	842	1,097	1,712	1,781	101.41%	931
Town of Elba	Dodge	1,028	964	1,086	996	998	-3.11%	-30
Town of Calamus	Dodge	1,077	1,009	1,005	1,044	1,041	-3.06%	-36
Town of Beaver Dam	Dodge	3,030	3,097	3,440	3,962	4,045	30.76%	1,015
City of Beaver Dam	Dodge	14,149	14,196	15,169	16,214	16,928	14.59%	2,779
Town of Trenton	Dodge	1,319	1,299	1,301	1,293	1,305	-1.97%	-14
Town of Chester	Dodge	981	797	960	687	692	-29.97%	-289
City of Waupun	Dodge/ FDL	8,132	8,844	10,718	11,340	11,463	39.45%	3,331
Town of Waupun	FDL	1,492	1,368	1,385	1,375	1,410	-7.84%	-82
Town of Oakfield	FDL	833	822	767	703	719	-15.61%	-114
Town of Lamartine	FDL	1,749	1,607	1,616	1,737	1,790	-0.69%	41
Town of Fond du Lac	FDL	3,001	2,310	2,027	3,015	3,899	0.47%	898
City of Fond Du Lac	FDL	35,863	37,755	42,203	43,021	44,303	19.96%	8,440
Total USH 151 Corridor		264,241	288,443	319,788	359,726	391,709	36.14%	127,468

Source: US Census and DOA Estimate as of 1/1/2019

Since 1980 there has been substantial population growth along the Highway 151 corridor from Madison to Fond du Lac. Table 1-8 shows the population growth for units of local government along the 151 Corridor. The table shows the population growth has primarily occurred in cities and villages along the corridor. The population growth along the 151 corridor has outpaced the population growth for Wisconsin since 1980. During that time span, the 151 corridor grew by 36.1% while Wisconsin only experienced a population growth of 22.9 %.

Table 1-9: Highway 151 Corridor Population Projections

Unit of Government	County	2020 Projection	2025 Projection	2030 Projection	2035 Projection	2040 Projection	% Change 2020 to 2040
City of Madison	Dane	251,550	261,500	270,350	276,450	281,150	11.77%
City of Sun Prairie	Dane	34,770	37,880	40,830	43,330	45,580	31.09%
Town of Bristol	Dane	4,455	4,855	5,240	5,555	5,845	31.20%
Town of York	Dane	645	640	635	620	605	-6.20%
Town of Columbus	Col	650	650	645	625	595	-8.46%
City of Columbus	Col/Dodge	5,495	5,835	6,120	6,250	6,290	14.47%
Village of Fall River	Col	1,960	2,140	2,300	2,400	2,465	25.77%
Town of Elba	Dodge	985	990	985	960	920	-6.60%
Town of Calamus	Dodge	1,080	1,110	1,130	1,130	1,105	2.31%
Town of Beaver Dam	Dodge	4,220	4,425	4,610	4,690	4,690	11.14%
City of Beaver Dam	Dodge	17,340	18,090	18,740	18,990	18,900	9.00%
Town of Trenton	Dodge	1,335	1,365	1,385	1,380	1,350	1.12%
Town of Chester	Dodge	690	690	685	670	640	-7.25%
City of Waupun	Dodge/ FDL	11,810	12,160	12,445	12,480	12,330	4.40%
Town of Waupun	FDL	1,405	1,425	1,435	1,425	1,400	-0.36%
Town of Oakfield	FDL	690	680	665	645	615	-10.87%
Town of Lamartine	FDL	1,820	1,870	1,915	1,930	1,920	5.49%
Town of Fond du Lac	FDL	3,720	3,965	4,185	4,345	4,455	19.76%
City of Fond Du Lac	FDL	44,510	45,540	46,300	46,370	45,920	3.17%
Total USH 151 Corridor		389,130	405,810	420,600	430,245	436,775	12.24%

Source: WI DOA

Table 1-9 shows the Wisconsin Department of Administration projections local units of government along the Highway 151 corridor. The projections expect the majority of the growth to occur in the cities and villages along the corridor. The projections show that this corridor will grow at 12.2% rate over the next 20 years. The projected growth rate for the corridor lags behind the statewide projection of 14.1% (See table 1-2). Although the projected population growth is slightly lower than the projected growth statewide, the corridor is expected to experience a significant growth in population.

Goals, Objectives and Policies

Each of the following chapters will conclude with a set of goals, objectives and policies, which will be used to guide the future development of Columbus. For purposes of this planning process, goals, objectives and policies are defined as:

Goals: Broad statements that express general public priorities about how the community should approach development issues during the next 20 years. These goals are based on key issues identified by community stakeholders from the public outreach efforts for the plan.

Objectives: More specific than goals and are usually attainable through planning and implementation activities. The accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of a goal.

Policies: Rules or courses of action used to ensure plan implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives. Policies are intended to be used by decision-makers on a regular basis.

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