

11 Implementation

This chapter presents an implementation framework that the City can use to initiate and undertake key recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. The actions and strategies identified in this section set forth the “next steps” to be taken in continuing the process of community planning and enhancement.

For the Comprehensive Plan to be successful, it must be based on support and participation between the City, other public agencies, various neighborhood groups and organizations, the local business community, property owners, developers, and residents. The City should be the leader in promoting cooperation and collaboration with these and other community stakeholders to implement the Comprehensive Plan.

This chapter briefly highlights several steps that should be undertaken to initiate and sustain the plan implementation process. These include:

- » Adopt and use the updated Comprehensive Plan on a day-to-day basis;
- » Prepare an implementation action agenda;
- » Review and update the Zoning Ordinance and other development controls;
- » Review and update the Capital Improvement Program (CIP);
- » Annually, prepare a 5-year action plan to prioritize objectives for the future and list accomplishments of preceding years;
- » Promote cooperation among various agencies, organizations, community groups, and individuals;
- » Enhance public communication;
- » Update the Comprehensive Plan on a regular basis; and,
- » Explore possible funding sources and implementation techniques.



The Fox River dam, an iconic part of the Downtown scenery

The guardianship of his four sons is now testamentary to the will of Charlemagne.

-Legend of the Fours Sons of Charlemagne

Adopt and Use the Plan on a Day-to-Day Basis

The Comprehensive Plan was adopted in accordance with the statutes of the State of Illinois. In June 2011, the City Council appointed a citizen Task Force to oversee the drafting of a new Comprehensive Plan. The Task Force submitted a complete plan draft to the City Council in December 2012. The City Council referred the plan for review and recommendation by the Plan Commission. The Plan Commission reviewed and recommended approval of the plan, subject to revisions, in March 2013. The Planning and Development Committee of the City Council recommended approval of the plan, subject to revisions, in July 2013. A formal public hearing was held by the City Council on August 5, 2013. The Comprehensive Plan was adopted by City Council ordinance on September 3, 2013. The Comprehensive Plan will be used as the City's guide for administering City Code Title 16 "Subdivisions and Land Improvement" and Title 17 "Zoning".

The Comprehensive Plan should serve as the City's official policy guide for land use, development, and community improvement. It is essential that the Plan be used on a regular basis by City staff, boards, and commissions to review and evaluate all proposals for improvement and development within the community in the years ahead.

Community Development staff should meet with Department heads to explain the purpose and benefits of the Comprehensive Plan. To further educate the community about the Plan, the City should:

- » Make copies of the Plan available online for free, provide hard copies at City Hall for purchase, and have a copy on file at the public library for reference;
- » Provide assistance to the public in explaining the Plan and its relationship to private and public development projects and other proposals, as appropriate;
- » Assist the City Council in the day-to-day administration, interpretation, and application of the Plan;
- » Maintain a list of current possible amendments, issues, or needs which may be a subject of change, addition, or deletion from the Comprehensive Plan.

Review of Zoning and Development Controls

Zoning is an important tool in implementing planning policy. It establishes the types of uses allowed on specific properties and prescribes the overall character and intensity of development to be permitted.

Adoption of the new Comprehensive Plan should be followed by a review and update of the City's various development controls including the zoning ordinance, the subdivision ordinance, and other related codes and ordinances. It is essential that all development controls be consistent with and complement the new Comprehensive Plan.

CIP - Capital Improvement Program

Another tool for implementing the Comprehensive Plan is a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The CIP addresses the procurement, construction, and maintenance of capital assets, including buildings, infrastructure, technology, and major equipment. The CIP is critical to water, sewer, transportation, and other essential public services. The CIP establishes schedules, priorities, cost projections and funding options for public improvement projects within a five-year period.

The CIP typically schedules the implementation of a range of specific projects related to the Comprehensive Plan, particularly the restoration and upgrading of existing utilities and infrastructure facilities, expansion of infrastructure into developing areas, construction and development of new facilities (i.e. fire stations, public works facilities, etc.), and can include such items as the water system, sanitary sewers, stormwater facilities, the street system, and streetscape enhancements.

The CIP aims to reflect and help implement the City Council's goals, of which the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan should be a part.

As financial resources in St. Charles will always be limited and public dollars must be spent wisely, the City should continue to use the CIP to provide the most desirable public improvements and stay within budget constraints.

Implementation Table/Action Agenda

The City should prepare an implementation table that identifies projects and activities to be undertaken, the priority of each project or activity, the role of the City and other participants, and potential funding sources and assistance programs that might be available. This table should be updated annually to coincide with the annual updates to the Capital Improvement Plan and the City's annual budget plan.

Cooperation

The City of St. Charles should assume the leadership role in implementing the new Comprehensive Plan. In addition to carrying out the administrative actions and many of the public improvement projects called for in the Plan, the City may choose to administer a variety of programs available to local residents, businesses, and property owners.

For the Comprehensive Plan to be successful, however, it must be based on a strong partnership between the City, other public agencies, various neighborhood groups and organizations, the local business community, and the private sector.

The City should be the leader in promoting the cooperation and collaboration needed to implement the new Comprehensive Plan. The City's partners should include:

- » Other governmental and service districts such as the school district, park district, Kane County, private utility companies, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the Forest Preserve District of Kane County, etc;
- » Builders and developers, who should be encouraged to undertake improvements and new construction that conform to the Plan and enhance the overall quality and character of the community; and,
- » The St. Charles community, since all residents and neighborhood groups should be encouraged to participate in the on-going planning process, and all should be given the opportunity to voice their opinions on improvement and development decisions within the community.

Public Communication

Implementing the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan will require the support and extensive participation of the community. Successfully communicating with local residents, businesses, and property owners should be a priority of the City.

The City should prepare a brief summary version of the new Comprehensive Plan and distribute it widely throughout the community. It is important that all local residents, businesses, and property owners be familiar with the Plan's major recommendations and its "vision" for the future.

The City should also consider additional techniques for responding quickly to public questions and concerns regarding planning and development. For example, the City might consider a special newsletter or website feature that focus on frequently-raised questions and concerns regarding planning and development or new City projects.

Regular Updates

It is important to emphasize that the Comprehensive Plan is not a static document. If community attitudes change or new issues arise which are beyond the scope of the current Plan, the Plan should be revised and updated accordingly.

Although a proposal to amend the Plan can be brought forth at any time, the City should regularly undertake a systematic review of the Plan. The City should initiate review of the Plan at least every three to five years. Ideally, this review should coincide with the preparation of the City's budget and Capital Improvement Plan and the preparation of an annual action agenda.

In this manner, recommendations or changes relating to capital improvements or other programs can be considered as part of the commitments for the upcoming fiscal year. Routine examination of the Plan will help ensure that the planning program remains relevant to community needs and aspirations.



Potential Funding Sources

A description of potential funding sources currently available is summarized below. It is important to note that because the following sources are subject to change, the City should continue to research and monitor grants, funding agencies, and programs to identify new opportunities as they become available.

General Funding Sources

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

There are currently six TIF districts of St. Charles: Hotel Baker, Foundry Business, St. Charles Mall, First Street, Lexington Club, and St. Charles Manufacturing Redevelopment TIF Districts. The City may continue to use the provision of TIF funding to incentivize and attract desired development within key commercial areas. TIF funds can typically be used for infrastructure, public improvements, land assemblage and in offsetting the cost of development – including, but not limited to engineering, stormwater, and other site related issues.

TIF utilizes future property tax revenues generated within a designated area or district to pay for improvements and incentivize further reinvestment. As the Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) of properties within a TIF District increases, the incremental growth in property tax over the base year that the TIF was established is reinvested in the area. Local officials may then issue bonds or undertake other financial obligations based on the growth in new tax revenue within the district. The maximum life of a TIF district in the State of Illinois is 23 years although the TIF district can be extended via approval from the Illinois state legislature. Over the life of a TIF district, the taxing bodies present within the district, such as school or park districts, receive the same amount of tax revenue that was generated in the base year in which the TIF was established. There are provisions that allow for schools to receive additional revenue.

Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is a flexible program that provides communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community development needs. St. Charles is not an entitlement community and must apply to receive funds via the Kane County CDBG Program. The CDBG Program provides annual grants on a formula basis to 1,225 general units of local government and States. A grantee must develop and follow a detailed plan that provides for and encourages citizen participation. This integral process emphasizes participation by persons of low or moderate income, particularly residents of predominantly low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, blighted areas, and areas in which the grantee proposes to use CDBG funds. Over a one-, two- or three-year period, as selected by the grantee, not less than 70 % of the funds must be used for activities that benefit low-and moderate-income persons.

Façade and Site Improvement Programs

Façade and site improvement programs can be used to help improve and retain existing business by offering low interest loans or grants earmarked for improving the exterior appearance of designated properties. In addition to existing businesses within the City's Downtown area, where it is already in place, this program should also be considered for businesses in other areas of the City including the commercial corridors and aging commercial centers.

Signage and Awning Program

The Downtown St. Charles Partnership (DSCP) administers this grant program to Downtown businesses wishing to improve signs, awnings, lighting, and other external appearance features. Funding for the program comes from a city-authorized Special Service Area (SSA) that applies to downtown properties. The City should consider adopting a similar program in other districts with heavy pedestrian-oriented commercial use.

Corridor Improvement Grant

The Corridor Improvement Program is designed to enhance the physical appearance of private property along the City's most traveled corridors. Eligible businesses can receive grants for beautification and physical improvement projects.

Special Service Area (SSA)

SSAs can be used to fund improvements and programs within a designated service area. An SSA is essentially added to the property tax of the properties within the identified service area and the revenue received is channeled back into projects and programs benefiting those properties. An SSA can be rejected if 51% of the property owners and electors within a designated area object. SSA funds can be used for such things as streetscape improvements, extra trash pickup, or the subsidizing of staff to market a commercial area. The City currently uses SSAs to provide special services in the downtown (SSA #1A for public parking and SSA #1B for downtown revitalization) and as a back-up funding mechanism for the maintenance of stormwater detention areas.

Incubator Programs

Business incubators provide low-cost space and specialized support services to small companies. Such services might include administrative consulting, access to office equipment and training, and assistance in accessing credit. Incubators are typically owned by public entities such as municipalities or economic development agencies who then subsidize rents and services with grants. In addition to job creation and generating activity, the goal is to have startup businesses grow and relocate to larger spaces within the municipality.

Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)

Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) is a tool similar to tax abatement. The City can use PILOT to reduce the property tax burden of a desired business for a predetermined period. In this instance, a local taxing body and a property owner will agree to the annual payment of a set fee in place of the property taxes. Payments are typically made in the form of a fixed sum, but they may also be paid as a percentage of the income generated by a property.

In addition, PILOT can also be a means of reducing the fiscal impact on the City of a nonprofit, institutional use, or other non taxpaying entity locating to a key site. While such uses can be desirable as activity generators, they can also negatively impact municipal services. Provisions can be made to offset that negative impact by allowing taxing bodies to be compensated for at least a portion of the revenue that would otherwise be collected in the form of property tax.

Foundation and Specialized Grants

The successful implementation of the Plan requires realization of projects that range in scale and scope. One type of funding source that becomes increasingly significant when issue-specific projects or programs (tourism, performing arts, historic preservation, small business assistance, etc.) are considered is the foundation grant. The City should continue to dedicate resources to monitoring and exploring foundation grants as a funding tool.



Business District Designation

Business district development and redevelopment is authorized by Division 74.3 of the Municipal Code of the State of Illinois. A municipality may designate, after public hearings, an area of the municipality as a Business District.

Business district designation empowers a municipality to carry out a business district development or redevelopment plan through the following actions:

- » Approve all development and redevelopment proposals.
- » Acquire, manage, convey, or otherwise dispose of real and personal property acquired pursuant to the provisions of a development or redevelopment plan.
- » Apply for and accept capital grants and loans from the United States and the State of Illinois, or any instrumentality of the United States or the State, for business district development and redevelopment.
- » Borrow funds as it may be deemed necessary for the purpose of business district development and redevelopment, and issue such obligation or revenue bonds as deemed necessary, subject to applicable statutory limitations.

- » Enter into contracts with any public or private agency or person.
- » Sell, lease, trade, or improve such real property as may be acquired in connection with business district development and redevelopment plans.
- » Expend such public funds as may be necessary for the planning, execution, and implementation of the business district plans.
- » Establish by ordinance or resolution procedures for the planning, execution, and implementation of business district plans.
- » Create a Business District Development and Redevelopment Commission to act as an agent for the municipality for the purposes of business district development and redevelopment.

Community Development Corporations

Many communities use Special Service Areas or Tax Increment Financing (as appropriate) to fund the start up and/or operation of a Community Development Corporation (CDC) to oversee a range of redevelopment activities for a specific geographic area, particularly commercial areas and central business districts. A CDC is typically an independently chartered organization, often with not-for-profit status, that is governed by a board of directors. The directors typically bring expertise in real estate or business development along with a demonstrated commitment to the community. CDCs are often funded through public-private partnerships with financial commitments from local financial institutions or businesses and a public funding source (TIF, SSA, etc.) to provide for both operating expenses and programs, as appropriate. CDCs may undertake traditional chamber of commerce-like activities such as marketing, promotion, workforce development, information management, and technical assistance to small businesses, but may also administer loan programs or acquire and redevelop property in the community.

Many communities create CDCs under the umbrella structure of an established chamber of commerce in the community so that missions are complementary and do not overlap. An example of a distinctive CDC activity is the facilitation or administration of a revolving loan fund or a community lending pool capitalized by commitments from local financial institutions to provide low-interest/low-cost loans. Such funds typically target both new and expanding businesses for such redevelopment activities as interior improvements, façade and exterior improvements, building additions, site improvements, etc. Some state and federal small business assistance programs are structured to work in combination with CDC administered loan programs. Another distinctive activity of a CDC is property acquisition and redevelopment, which is most successful when the organization is mature in both expertise and capacity (particularly if the CDC intends to manage property after redevelopment).

Transportation Funding Sources

MAP-21

On July 6, 2012, President Obama signed into law Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), a two-year transportation reauthorization bill. MAP-21 replaces the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which expired in September 2009 and was extended nine times. The goal of MAP-21 is to modernize and reform the current transportation system to help create jobs, accelerate economic recovery, and build the foundation for long-term prosperity. MAP-21 continues funding for numerous programs previously funded through SAFETEA-LU.

Given the recent passage of MAP-21, it is still uncertain how changes in Federal policy will ultimately impact existing funding programs. The City should continue to keep informed as to the status of these programs and any new funding sources that may be introduced in the near future as a result of MAP-21.

The following discussion summarizes grant programs covered under MAP-21 that could be utilized by the City to make enhancements to local transportation infrastructure, including roadways, bridges, sidewalks and trail.

Safe Routes to School

The SRTS program has provided funding for the planning, design, and construction of infrastructure-related projects that will substantially improve the ability of students to walk and bicycle to school, including:

- » Sidewalk improvements;
- » Traffic calming and speed reduction improvements;
- » Pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements;
- » On-street bicycle facilities;
- » Off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities;
- » Secure bicycle parking facilities; and,
- » Traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools.

Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)

The Illinois Department of Transportation administers the ITEP and has funded projects including bicycle/pedestrian facilities, streetscaping, landscaping, historic preservation and projects that control or remove outdoor advertising. In the past, federal reimbursement has been available for up to 50 percent of the cost of right-of-way and easement acquisition and 80 percent of the cost for preliminary engineering, utility relocations, construction engineering and construction costs.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) has been the administrator of CMAQ funds for the northeastern Illinois region. CMAP has supported a wide range of projects through the CMAQ program including improvements to bicycle facilities, commuter parking, transit facilities, intersections, sidewalk improvements, and signal timing. Funds have also been used to make transportation improvements to eliminate bottlenecks and limit diesel emissions, and to create promotional campaigns to enhance use of transit and bicycles.

Surface Transportation Program (STP)

In the past, these funds have been allocated to coordinating regional councils to be used for all roadway and roadway related items. Projects in this funding category have required a local sponsor and have been selected based on, among other factors, a ranking scale that takes into account the regional benefits provided by the project among other factors.

The Kane/Kendall Council of Mayors is the body designated to select and program local STP projects in the Kane County region. The Council's STP funds have been used to fund a variety of project types including roadway rehabilitation, reconstruction, and restoration; widening and adding lanes; intersection improvements; traffic signal improvements; and green infrastructure funding.

Parks and Open Space Funding

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

The City should work with the Park District to identify projects where a cooperative pursuit of parks and open space grants may be beneficial. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) administers seven grants-in-aid programs to help municipalities and other local agencies provide a number of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The programs operate on a cost reimbursement basis to local agencies (government or not-for-profit organization) and are awarded on an annual basis. Local governments can receive one grant per program per year, with no restrictions on the number of local governments that can be funded for a given location. IDNR grants are organized into three major categories: Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD); Boat Access Area Development (BAAD); and Illinois Trails Grant Programs.

OSLAD

The OSLAD program awards up to fifty percent of project costs up to a maximum of \$750,000 for acquisition and \$400,000 for development/renovation of such recreation facilities as playgrounds, outdoor nature interpretive areas, campgrounds and fishing piers, park roads and paths, and beaches. IDNR administers five grant programs to provide financial assistance for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of trails that are used for public recreation uses (bike paths, snowmobile, off-highway vehicles, motorized and non-motorized recreational trails, etc.).

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

Land and Water Conservation Fund grants are available to cities, counties, and school districts to be used for outdoor recreation projects. Projects require a 55 percent match. All funded projects are taken under perpetuity by the National Park Service and must only be used for outdoor recreational purposes. Development and renovation projects must be maintained for a period of 25 years or the life of the manufactured goods.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

The Recreational Trails Program is a federally funded grant program for trail-related land acquisition, development or restoration. The grants are awarded based on the results of a competitive scoring process and the application's suitability under funding provisions included in Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21). A minimum 20 percent match is required by the applicant. A funding requirement targets 30 percent of the funding for motorized trails, 30 percent for non-motorized trails and 40 percent for diversified trail use. RTP grants are to be used for motorized or non-motorized trail development or renovation and preservation. Projects require a minimum match of 20 percent. All projects must be maintained for a period of 25 years. Eligible applicants include cities and counties, schools, and private, non-profit and for-profit businesses.