

# **LEAN COMP PLAN TOOL**

## INCREMENTAL POLICY REPAIR

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the project for  
**LEAN**  
URBANISM  
MAKING SMALL POSSIBLE  
[leanurbanism.org](http://leanurbanism.org)

# **LEAN COMP PLAN TOOL**

## INCREMENTAL POLICY REPAIR

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Written by  
Susan Henderson  
Matt Lambert

Edited by  
Brian Falk

With contributions from  
Jennifer Hurley  
Hazel Borys

the project for  
**LEAN**  
URBANISM  
MAKING SMALL POSSIBLE

More tools and information at

[www.leanurbanism.org](http://www.leanurbanism.org)

[info@leanurbanism.org](mailto:info@leanurbanism.org)

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# INTRODUCTION

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New planning policies are time-consuming and expensive to write, and they often sit on the shelf without implementation. Policies can be crafted in a more affordable manner that improves measurements, creates walkable, livable environments, prepares for climate change, and addresses affordability issues. This tool outlines a Lean process that planning staff can use to reduce the expense of policy development and increase the likelihood that it will be implemented.

Comprehensive planning, sometimes called general or master planning, is mandated by all states for local governments with zoning authority. While most comprehensive plans establish laudable policies, they are often poorly implemented and can stand in the way of small-scale, incremental development.

This tool provides methods for simplification and streamlined implementation of comprehensive/general/master plans. It also provides suggestions for improvements to the elements most commonly required in comprehensive plans for livability, equity, and resilience. Like the [Lean Code Tool](#), the suggestions here range from simple text amendments by staff to structural tactics for a complete update. For comprehensive plans, Lean Urbanism is not only concerned with leveling the playing field for small-scale actors, but also with directing investments toward areas of greatest impact.

Lean Urbanism is focused on enabling small-scale players in the areas of development and business establishment. This logically extends to removing barriers for and providing resources to other historically disinvested and discriminated communities. In fact, these are the communities whose grit and ingenuity in the face of oppression brought about the Lean Urbanism movement. At the zoning level, the Pink Zone is

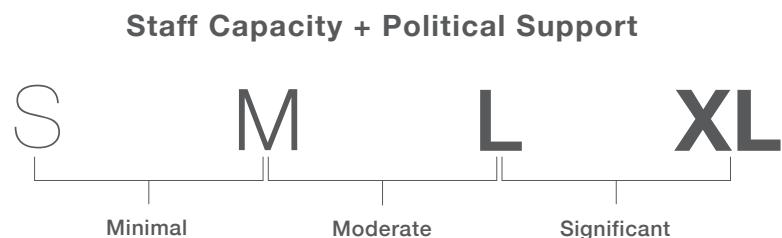
Lean Urbanism's primary means of influence. At the comprehensive plan level, Lean Urbanism not only offers methods to streamline the process and product of comprehensive planning, but also touches most policy areas, refocusing municipal programs, goals, and funding to be more equitable, just, and productive.

This tool categorizes recommendations by common comprehensive plan elements and grades them based on staff capacity and the political difficulty of each: Small, Medium, Large, and Xtra Large. Not every topic will have options across all ranges of reform.

The tool begins with a decision point that helps the reader select the best strategies for incremental comp plan reform. Is staff capacity and political will in place for Lean comprehensive plan reform?

- Significant Support: Select from all options listed
- Moderate Support: Select from S & M, consider L
- Minimal Support: Select from S, consider M

Letters indicating difficulty accompany each action.



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# PROCESS

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*This section reviews general changes in the process of developing a policy plan. It considers the most effective outcomes and how to achieve them without undue waste.*



## ENVISION

A community needs a shared vision of the future they hope to reach. The community's vision is not merely an amalgamation of many individuals' visions but is something larger, built through group efforts. A concrete, articulated vision gives people a goal, a collective sense of direction, and a reason for moving forward through hard work. Achieving that specific vision is not actually the objective; in fact, the changing environment almost guarantees that any vision articulated today will be out of date in the time it takes to achieve it. What is important is the motivation and collective goal the vision provides. A clear vision enables the community to focus.



## FOCUS

Policy plans should be results-oriented. Too often plans follow technical means of categorizing information, which distracts from the plan's purpose. Plans that lack clarity sit on the shelf. They can be organized by big ideas, by metrics the plan intends to impact, or by physical area when focused on location-based effects. A plan's purpose should be clear and infused into its primary recommendations. Clarity helps focus a plan, and helps staff and the public grasp the intended outcomes. Focus informs decision making, both what should be in the plan and as a means to evaluate unforeseen conditions that arise during implementation.



## MEASURE

Communities should hold themselves accountable to their vision by tracking results, particularly in regard to equity, affordability, climate change, and return on infrastructure investments. It's quite easy to establish a lofty vision, but another thing to develop the tools and policies to implement it. Residents who participate in creating the vision should be able to track the success of implementation through performance measures.

To do this, municipalities must identify attainable data to track the performance of the plan's primary goals. Some data sets are expensive; some do not exist and must be created. Prioritize funds to acquire data as needed, but keep it simple and straightforward. Track only the most important measures for your most important results. Your tracking dashboard should fit easily on one page.

Many plans remain unused because the community does not have access to information about how effectively it is being implemented by elected officials and staff. In rural and small communities, data may be difficult to acquire, but a significant resource is the U.S. Census and American Community Survey. In this context performance measures should be developed that leverage the available data sets.

Some local data sets that are available and important to track are land use patterns, permits issued, and units of housing available. The community can observe the types of new development being approved by the Planning Commission and Municipal Legislature. They can also track rezoning decisions to determine if the vision is being maintained. This requires time and active cataloging by staff, but can be developed and maintained without outside resources.

Another data set that is important is the [Housing + Transportation Affordability Index](#). This can track improvements to neighborhood affordability. However, it can take time to see improvements, as it's tied to housing prices plus transit availability and multi-modal access to jobs, education, services, and resources such as groceries and parks. Development of transit and services can take years, so large changes will not be visible in the short term.



## ORGANIZATION

Most states have a list of individual elements and background information that must be addressed through policy. The elements should be connected and cohesive, but due to state requirements, many plans are written strictly to match the list of required elements.

Integration of related elements can simplify the plan, avoid redundancies, and assure coordination. While background information is important to inform a plan, including these with recommendations can obscure the plan's intended outcomes. The most effective framing connects elements to the community's vision. If specific elements must be addressed to conform to state requirements, they can be included as an appendix.

## EMBED IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation strategy is often developed at the end of the planning process and is relegated to the appendix of the plan. A more effective implementation adds the goals and actions within each sub-section so they are easily identified and acted upon. An implementation matrix may be included in the appendix to consolidate all of the actions in a single location.

### **REDUCE DATA**

Some states list extensive data sets required for a plan update. This can be informative, but if it can be reduced to freely available data, communities with fewer resources have a better opportunity to plan effectively.

### **SEPARATE BACKGROUND ANALYSIS**

Data collection and analysis is often presented along with plan recommendations. This obscures and buries recommendations, making the plan less clear and effective. Data and analysis can be relocated to an appendix or companion document to clarify the plan purpose and recommendations.

### **MAKE A SHORT SUMMARY SHEET**

The best comprehensive plans are persuasive, enticing decision makers to refer to them frequently. Make a very short version that has just the most important points: a statement of community vision or values, the dashboard of success measures, and one or two maps illustrating the desired future state. This short, easy-to-understand, visually appealing document will be read and used by many more people than will ever read the complete plan.

# ADJUSTMENTS

*The following sections address adjustments needed within the common elements of planning policy. As mentioned earlier, these elements should never be developed independently of each other or within silos. However, since most states require this element structure, recommended adjustments will be made within the common element structure.*

# 1.0 LAND USE

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Most states and municipalities have tools in place to allocate investments. These usually include metropolitan redevelopment areas, community development block grants, and resources from community foundations. Forward looking land use planning can help match investments with the types of places they are best suited. Major land use change to enable this connection is a heavy lift. A new and incremental tool that can augment land use and leverage private investment is the Pink Zone.

[S]

## 1.1 BROADEN LAND USE CATEGORIES.

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### PROBLEM:

Land use policy is usually tied to very specific uses and is not market-responsive.

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### STRATEGIES:

- Broaden land use categories.
  - Avoid assigning degrees of density to residential or commercial use categories.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

Redevelopment can respond more quickly to changing economic conditions if minor changes of use do not require burdensome approvals. Land use categories should not duplicate zoning; they should contain broader policies. Implementation can be simplified for the applicant if the policy structure isn't tied to a very restricted use. This is a good first step in municipalities with limited resources.

# [M]

## 1.2 ESTABLISH PINK ZONES.

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### PROBLEM:

Public funds for redevelopment are limited, and not available in some of the most challenged neighborhoods, yet regulatory and bureaucratic barriers restrict individuals from investing in their own properties or communities.

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### STRATEGIES:

- Develop policies to establish Pink Zones.
  - Map areas eligible for Pink Zones.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

Small-scale development may not require subsidies because it is done in smaller increments and redevelops scattered sites rather than aggregated properties. Depressed markets do not justify conventional investments, so barriers need to be lowered to allow locals to participate and attract small developers.

Pink Zones reduce regulatory and bureaucratic burdens in areas targeted for redevelopment but lacking public-sector funds. This can incentivize private investment in neighborhoods that lack resources. By maintaining critical standards for health, safety, welfare and walkability, but strategically reducing onerous regulatory and bureaucratic requirements, Pink Zones enable homeowners and small businesses to invest in their properties and businesses. Criteria for Pink Zone area selection should be established through the public process used during visioning.

# [L]

## 1.3 ADD MIXED-USE CATEGORIES.

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### PROBLEM:

Land use policy is tied to specific uses, frequently does not include mixed uses, and results in pods of single-use zones at the regulatory level.

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### STRATEGIES:

- Include mixed-use areas on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and provide policies for determination and implementation.
  - Develop an action to update the zoning code to include mixed-use.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

Land use policy sets the framework for zoning and subdivision regulation. Adding mixed uses to the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and policy sets the stage for mixed-use development.

# [L]

## 1.4 REMOVE AMBIGUOUS DENSITY CONTROLS: DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE (DUA) AND FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR).

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### PROBLEM:

Many policy plans are established on the framework of density, which can be ambiguous, hard to understand, and have a negative impact on desired redevelopment.

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### STRATEGIES:

- Replace density with intensity in the FLUM.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

While density is critical in planning for development, dwelling units per acre (DUA) and floor-area ratio (FAR) are not effective measurements, and may unintentionally restrict redevelopment in the areas where it is most needed. Frequently DUA and FAR frequently fail to reflect the bulk standards regulated by zoning. Establishing a policy framework around the intensity that a site is developed is more predictable and allows for mixed uses. Many states do not strictly require policy to specify density on a DUA basis. Visualizing density is challenging, and for most community members it usually causes fear. People can understand intensity or place types intuitively and are more supportive of allocating greater intensity where it can build community. For states that do require policy to specify density on a DUA basis, consider strategies to calculate density over a larger area rather than lot-by-lot.

# [L]

## 1.5 REPLACE FUTURE LAND USE MAP (FLUM) CATEGORIES WITH COMMUNITY TYPES AND AUGMENT IT WITH DEGREE OF CHANGE (MINIMAL, INCREMENTAL, TRANSFORMATIONAL).

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### PROBLEM:

- As previously mentioned, establishing specific densities of land use through policy complicates implementation.
- 

### STRATEGIES:

- Replace categories based upon use with community types.
  - Add a degree-of-change map that assigns minimal, incremental or transformational change to areas of the jurisdiction. This sets priorities and expectations of the community and can be the framework for a capital improvement plan. It also reduces the level of fear about unexpected changes.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

Providing an inherently mixed-use framework of community types removes the burden for small projects to deal with the hurdle of non-compliance that frequently occurs with a future land use map. This shortens the application time and reduces expense. It also encourages economic development by allowing small developers to deliver what the market is seeking.

Most states are not specific about what a FLUM must consist of, and in those cases a definition of place types relative to land use will satisfy the requirements. For example, place types can list all the common uses found within a type, and thus point back to the state designations. However, most comprehensive plans use FLUM categories that closely match zoning categories. In these instances, rezoning also requires a time-consuming comprehensive plan amendment.

# 2.0 TRANSPORTATION

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Transportation planning is usually heavily automobile-oriented, which is antithetical to goals of walkability and economic development. Without changes to transportation systems, community reinvestment and responsible growth policies are less effective.

[S]

## 2.1 REQUIRE CONNECTED STREET NETWORKS.

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### PROBLEM:

- Policies promoting limited-access and hierarchical street networks increase traffic and reduce walkability.
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### STRATEGIES:

- Develop a policy that requires new development be designed with an interconnected network of streets. One simple way to do this is to establish a maximum length for block perimeters.
  - Require that new development connect to adjacent streets and undeveloped properties with internal streets.
  - Invest in a network of many lower-capacity (narrower) streets rather than a network of fewer higher-capacity (wider) streets.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

Limited-access and wider, hierarchical street networks create congestion by concentrating traffic into fewer streets. This also reduces pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access because trips that would be a short distance as the crow flies may be many miles long following the less-connected street network. In contrast, dense networks of small, interconnected streets distribute traffic by providing multiple ways to reach any point in the network.

For nearly a century, connected street networks have been discouraged, resulting in congestion. Places with dense, interconnected networks tend to manage large numbers of cars with relatively little traffic along most streets.

[S]

## 2.2 REQUIRE THAT PEDESTRIAN CROSSWALK SIGNALS BE AUTOMATIC IN WALKABLE AREAS.

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### PROBLEM:

- On-demand pedestrian signals disadvantage pedestrians in walkable areas.
- 

### STRATEGIES:

- In walkable areas, maintain existing signal systems that automatically include a pedestrian phase.
  - In walkable areas, convert signal systems that require pedestrians to activate the pedestrian phase to an automatic pedestrian phase.
  - In walkable areas, install automatic pedestrian phases at signals that do not include any pedestrian phase.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

In pursuit of efficiency for cars, many pedestrian crosswalk signals have been changed to require that pedestrians push a button to activate a walk signal. This practice does not account for the pace, environment, and trip process of walking. Oftentimes pedestrians approach an intersection just a few seconds before a light changes to green. If they were not already waiting at the intersection, on-demand signals require pedestrians to wait another light cycle to cross a street despite the condition being safe for crossing. In hot or cold extremes, or other inclement weather, this discourages walking and can even become dangerous. Additionally, on-demand pedestrian signals result in increased jaywalking. Within high pedestrian areas — walkable areas — pedestrian crosswalk signals should be automatic.

# [M]

## 2.3 MATCH THE CHARACTER OF TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS TO LAND USE CHARACTER.

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### PROBLEM:

- Many new transportation investments undermine walkability, redevelopment, and commercial activation.
- 

### STRATEGIES:

- Prioritize transportation modes that best support the type and intensity of surrounding land uses.
- Invest transportation funds in pedestrian, bicycle, and transit services within neighborhoods and walkable places.
- Include land use as a tool to address transportation congestion issues.
- Adopt context-sensitive transportation policies that have actionable steps.
- Map transportation context areas, either broadly (rural, suburban, walkable urban) or more specifically (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6).

---

**DISCUSSION:**

In most places, roads are designed exclusively for automobiles, even roads within downtowns and other pedestrian-dependent areas. Car-oriented roadways limit investment and redevelopment, especially along potentially walkable commercial corridors. Pedestrian-oriented main streets and districts financially outperform car-oriented areas.

Transportation priorities should align with the surrounding land uses. While this statement is always central in planning, the practice is rarely followed. Too often, transportation investments create pedestrian-hostile environments, causing the properties along those roadways to under-perform or languish. Rather than the one-size-fits-all transportation approach, roadways should be designed and prioritized according to the surrounding context.

Many cities have passed context-sensitive transportation policies, but most of those policies lack actionable detail. Contexts should be mapped, and transportation decisions made based on the character of context, including demoting the automobile as a priority in some areas.

# [M]

## 2.4 COORDINATE WORKFORCE HOUSING AND TRANSIT POLICIES.

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### PROBLEM:

Workforce housing needs transit access if it is available within the region, but policies are often misaligned.

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### STRATEGIES:

- Invest in workforce housing in transit-served areas.
  - Increase transit services to areas with workforce housing.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

Many cities decide to promote or invest in lower-cost housing only where they are able to easily accommodate the housing supply, either because of resident resistance or land availability. Such locations are often far from jobs and lack transit service, requiring residents to add the expense of a car or walk long distances along roads that are unfriendly and even dangerous to pedestrians.

Addressing this issue requires transportation and housing policies to be coordinated. New workforce housing should be located in places that are accessible by transit, if it is available. Existing workforce housing should have transit extended to it or increased in service, and transit should be planned for in areas targeted for new workforce housing.

# [M]

## 2.5 BASE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ON VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED (VMT)

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### PROBLEM:

Average daily traffic (ADT) transportation planning accommodates more congestion, while planning based on vehicle miles traveled (VMT) addresses the cause of congestion.

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### STRATEGIES:

- Use VMT instead of ADT as a means of evaluating the traffic impact of new development.
  - Establish goals to reduce VMT.
  - Evaluate VMT to promote investments that will reduce car dependence.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

Most transportation planning is based on the average daily traffic (ADT) produced by existing and new development, preferring low ADT over high. ADT measures the volume of traffic at a specific location. As a measure, ADT directs transportation planners to widen roads, build limited-access systems, and prefer low-intensity development. These activities result in higher and higher future ADT and VMT because this low-intensity development contributes to greater congestion over time than mixed-use and higher-intensity development.

When existing places and new growth are evaluated by vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per household, places where residents need to use cars less are preferred over those where residents are car-dependent. Reducing VMT through investments in land use patterns, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and transit reduces future system-wide ADT.

# [M]

## 2.6 CONSERVE CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND MAINTENANCE COSTS THROUGH INFILL PRIORITIES.

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### PROBLEM:

The cost to build and maintain roads at low densities is a burden on the local government.

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### STRATEGIES:

- Assess construction and maintenance costs of roads, water, and wastewater at cost per capita as well as by square foot per home.
  - Prioritize streets and roads that have reduced square footage of pavement per mile.
  - Prioritize capital improvement funds to infill locations.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

Many studies affirm that suburban development patterns cost much more to build and maintain than compact patterns. Smart Growth America determined sprawl costs 30% – 50% more to build than compact development and generates 1/10th the tax revenue per acre. (See [Building Better Budgets](#).) To balance the negative fiscal impacts of sprawl, infill development should be established as a priority. This will reduce the financial drain of building and maintaining sprawling infrastructure and conserve precious resources.

[M]

## 2.7 ESTABLISH A VISION ZERO PROGRAM TO ACHIEVE ZERO TRAFFIC FATALITIES AND SEVERE INJURIES AMONG ALL ROAD USERS.

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### **PROBLEM:**

Every year hundreds of thousands of people are killed and injured in transportation crashes (including people walking, biking, using transit, and driving).

---

### **STRATEGIES:**

- Include the establishment of a Vision Zero program to achieve zero traffic fatalities and severe injuries among all road users (including people walking, biking, using transit, and driving) within a set time frame as one of the goals of the comprehensive plan.
  - Prioritize transportation investments based on evidence of the greatest needs and impact for reducing traffic fatalities and injuries.
  - Within the comprehensive plan, analyze and share reliable data to understand traffic-safety issues.
- 

### **DISCUSSION::**

The road system and related policies should be designed to ensure that severe injuries or fatalities are exceedingly rare. Street and intersection design plays a major role in traffic speed and crash severity. Establishing a Vision Zero program focuses system designers and policymakers on the need to prioritize safety and slow speeds.

# [M]

## 2.8 REDUCE SPEED LIMITS ON NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS AND IN WALKABLE AREAS.

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### PROBLEM:

Speed limits in most places, especially neighborhood streets, are too high, endangering cyclists, pedestrians, and people with mobility challenges, as well as people in cars.

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### STRATEGIES:

- Reduce speed limits on neighborhood streets to the minimum statutory limit.
- Reduce speed limits in other walkable areas to or near the minimum statutory limit.
- Pursue modification of state standards to lower the minimum statutory speed limit to 20mph in neighborhood contexts and 30mph or lower in walkable mixed-use areas.
- Identify “road diet” candidate streets in walkable areas and disinvested communities.
- Pursue “road diets” along identified candidate streets.

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**DISCUSSION:**

The speed that vehicles travel along streets impacts both public safety and property viability. Every mile per hour increase in vehicle speed is an increased threat to the lives of non-car roadway users. Some cities have reduced neighborhood street speeds to 20mph and walkable commercial street speeds to 25 or 30mph in pursuit of Vision Zero. Walkable areas and disinvested areas tend to have more non-car roadway users and should be prioritized for change.

In many cases just changing the posted speed is not sufficient to change driver behavior. Physical changes to narrow the roadway (“road diet”) may be needed to reduce vehicle speeds. Along state-owned roadways, there are additional barriers to reducing speeds, such as the 85th-percentile rule that makes reductions nearly impossible. In these cases, modification of state standards may be required.

# 3.0 HOUSING

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Housing is in short supply in most large American cities, and the affordability crisis is expanding to mid-size and smaller cities. Additional strategies to address access and affordability issues in housing are located throughout this document, including the Utilities and Facilities section.

## [M]

### 3.1 ENCOURAGE HOUSING GROWTH NEAR EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION.

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#### **PROBLEM:**

Housing is often located far away from employment and education, and the cost of transportation exacerbates the affordable living crisis.

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#### **STRATEGIES:**

- Increase allowable housing density in locations accessible to jobs and education.
  - Prioritize housing subsidies in locations accessible to jobs and education.
  - Include the cost of transportation in affordability calculations.
  - Establish transportation demand management (TDM) policies that encourage employers to subsidize transit use by employees.
- 

#### **DISCUSSION:**

The [H+T Affordability Index](#) tracks the cost of housing and transportation combined with a holistic view of affordability. Municipalities should consider using this tool as one of their performance measures to track improvements to affordability.

# [L]

## 3.2 IMPROVE ACCESS TO ATTAINABLE HOUSING.

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### PROBLEM:

While affordable housing has long been missing in most municipalities, there is now an increasing lack of attainable housing for the workforce.

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### STRATEGIES:

- Support naturally occurring affordable housing by maintaining and developing existing building types not commonly produced by the marketplace, such as missing middle, single-room occupancy, co-housing and shared housing.
  - Create an action to revise ordinances to reduce the cost to supply housing, including permit fees, service fees, and approvals process length and complexity. (See 1.2 Establish Pink Zones.)
  - Update zoning regulations to increase areas within the jurisdiction where missing middle housing can be provided without complications.
  - Permit accessory dwelling units (ADU) by right in all residential zones.
  - Do not require the owner to occupy the primary residence with an ADU so people have the opportunity to age in place.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

Most zoning does not support missing middle housing types nor shared housing and single-room occupancy. Zoning will almost always need an update to implement policies associated with housing expansion. This is likely to be a contentious discussion, as residents in single-unit housing districts are usually fearful of change. While the text amendment changes are simple enough, because of the political challenges, this issue is categorized as L instead of M. The creation of a Pink Zone can increase receptiveness because the new regulations apply to a small area, and the experimental nature allows the community to learn what zoning and processes should be applied in other areas.

# 4.0 UTILITIES & FACILITIES

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Municipal facilities and services have become large and remote from the populations they serve. Additionally, suburban patterns of development have increased the cost of utility service and maintenance. Together these have eroded the physical and social structure of neighborhoods.

## [M]

### 4.1 REQUIRE NEIGHBORHOOD-SCALED PARKS.

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#### PROBLEM:

Most cities require parks that are too large, which causes them to be located far from housing, making them less accessible generally and especially to those with mobility constraints.

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#### STRATEGIES:

- Fund parks departments such that they can maintain open spaces that are right-sized and distributed throughout the community.
- Expand the comprehensive plan's park type to include neighborhood-scaled parks (<4 acres) and playgrounds (<1 acre).
- Require new development to provide neighborhood-scaled parks and playgrounds that are distributed throughout developments.

---

**DISCUSSION:**

Nearly every comprehensive plan finds that neighborhoods lack sufficient park space. They often attempt to make up for a lack of parks by requiring a significant amount of new park space be provided in newly developed areas. However, the required parks are usually so large that they cannot be integrated into neighborhoods.

The most successful full-service neighborhood parks are smaller than four acres, and playgrounds and park spaces smaller than one acre are valuable assets when distributed throughout the community. Parks departments are often underfunded and as a result unwilling to maintain right-sized park spaces. This results in many new neighborhoods which entirely lack easily accessible park space in some cases or increased housing costs where developers are forced to set aside or build parks that are too large. When parks are larger they cannot be located near homes, forcing people to drive if they have a car, or forego park access if they do not.

# [M]

## 4.2 REDUCE COST OF SERVICES THROUGH COMPACT DEVELOPMENT POLICIES.

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### PROBLEM:

Dispersed suburban development patterns have much higher service costs per housing unit than compact development.

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### STRATEGIES:

- Prioritize compact, connected development.
  - Incentivize infill redevelopment through reduced or waived fees and expedited processes.
  - Don't accept dedication of over-sized suburban roadways.
  - Charge a higher impact fee for low-density development.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

With a connected street network and higher-density development, city neighborhoods require fewer resources to meet desired standards of life-safety services. For example, one fire or police station may serve thousands of residents and employees in a city neighborhood where two or more would be required in a suburban location to access the same number of homes and businesses. Because of the cost savings associated with compact infill, small redevelopment projects within the city should be incentivized through expedited processes, reduced regulations and no impact fees. These are among the policies that would be addressed in a Pink Zone (see 1.2).

# [M]

## 4.3 RIGHT-SIZE IMPACT FEES.

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### PROBLEM:

Impact fees increase the cost of housing, and many are structured in a way that promotes car-dependent suburban sprawl.

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### STRATEGIES:

The following strategies can be used independently or together:

- Tier impact fees by the size and type of new housing, resulting in lower fees for multi-unit housing and smaller houses in comparison to larger houses.
  - Remove the cost of maintenance from impact fees.
  - Remove impact fees from already built places, levying fees only on greenfield development.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

Impact fees vary in scope and legality from state to state. In many states, impact fees are levied on new development to pay for parks, schools, life safety, and the expansion and maintenance of roads and utilities. New development requires new municipal services, the addition of which should be funded by that new development. However, ongoing maintenance costs, often part of impact fees, should be recovered through user fees and other taxes. Additionally, many places subject to impact fees already have municipal infrastructure in place.

As impact fees have risen sharply in many places, affordable new development has become difficult to deliver. Right-sizing impact fees can reduce their effect on housing affordability, and if well-designed discourage sprawl. Impact fees may be adjusted overall throughout the municipality, however a targeted response that removes fees from infill areas where infrastructure is already in place encourages efficient use of infrastructure and additional housing supply in places most likely to be transit-served and accessible to work places, key drivers of affordability. Impact fees can also be addressed in Pink Zones (see 1.2).

# [L]

## 4.4 PROVIDE FACILITIES AND SERVICES AT THE SCALE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

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### PROBLEM:

Many community facilities and services have been consolidated into large installations and are no longer accessible without a car.

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### STRATEGIES:

- Develop policies to provide schools, libraries, and parks within neighborhoods and at the proper scale.
  - Co-locate multiple uses to conserve costs and provide space for community organizations.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

In an attempt to conserve expenditures, cities have moved toward a smaller number of larger libraries and parks, and school boards have consolidated schools into mega campuses. This has made these services less accessible to those with financial or mobility constraints. One option for smaller dispersed facilities is to co-locate schools, libraries, community meeting spaces, and parks. This requires coordination between municipal government and school boards, but can make neighborhood resources economically attainable.

# 5.0 ENVIRONMENT

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Future environmental hazards due to climate change will reshape the natural and built environment. Activities today must be adjusted to mitigate additional severity, and municipal investments must account for the need to adapt to future hazards.

## [M]

### 5.1 MITIGATE ADDITIONAL FUTURE CLIMATE IMPACTS.

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#### PROBLEM:

The physical pattern and operations of cities contribute to further increases in climate change.

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#### STRATEGIES:

- Prepare a climate action plan as a framework for measuring and planning to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts.
  - Reduce car-dependency by restricting new suburban development patterns, retrofitting existing suburbs, and encouraging urban infill.
  - Restore natural systems within the municipality.
  - Reduce the climate impact of municipal services, such as retrofitting municipal buildings to be more energy efficient, implementing recycling policies, and converting the municipal fleet to electric vehicles.
- 

#### DISCUSSION:

Mitigation and adaptation are both required to adequately address the future threats of climate change. The world's trajectory at present cannot be reversed, however continuing the status quo will worsen future conditions. The operation of cities can be a significant climate driver, particularly in the continuation of and investment in car-dependent patterns. Reinvestment in cities along with growth policy should consider how each decision could reduce climate impacts.

# [L]

## 5.2 PREPARE FOR INCREASED HOUSELESSNESS AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS.

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### PROBLEM:

Climate change impacts will increase the houseless and vulnerable populations whose needs are already under-served today.

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### STRATEGIES:

- Invest in services for houseless populations, including overnight shelters, warming shelters, medical services, food pantries, and others.
  - Establish humane policies concerning overnight camping.
  - Invest in affordable and subsidized housing distributed throughout communities.
  - Reduce barriers to building affordable and subsidized housing.
  - Provide financial assistance to vulnerable populations for utilities and transportation.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

As the impacts of climate change continue to increase, they will disproportionately affect houseless and vulnerable populations. Additionally, as people migrate from places of greater climate hazard to lesser, the limited commodity of housing in areas of lesser hazard will become more expensive, resulting in more houselessness. Today, little is done to assist these populations; continuing to ignore their problems is irresponsible. The lack of affordable housing will be exacerbated by increasing heating and cooling costs. Housing that is affordable is likely to be located in areas of additional environmental hazard and in places poorly served by transit.

# [XL]

## 5.3 PREPARE FOR FUTURE CLIMATE RISKS.

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### PROBLEM:

Climate change will affect where and how people should live; adapting to changes requires forward-looking policy.

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### STRATEGIES:

- Update flood maps incorporating expected sea level rise.
  - Restrict development in areas of present and future climate hazard.
  - Encourage development of and relocation to areas of low future climate hazard.
  - Disinvest in areas of future climate hazard.
  - Assist disadvantaged and threatened populations in adaptation.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

The world's trajectory at present cannot be reversed, and it will have severe consequences on the natural and built environments. Ignoring this will result in significant loss of property and investments, along with negative health effects and death. Increased flooding, sea level rise, wildfires, hurricanes, tornadoes, heat waves, and winter storms are inevitable.

While the data is evolving, informed decisions should be made today based on the available evidence. This will affect where people should live, how and where municipal investments are made, and when to rebuild or relocate. As with any other environmental hazard, disadvantaged and threatened populations are at the greatest risk, lacking the resources and support to relocate on their own.

# [XL]

## 5.4 PRESERVE HIGH-QUALITY AGRICULTURAL LAND.

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### PROBLEM:

Loss of agricultural land threatens food supplies and contributes to car-dependent sprawl, health risks, and atmospheric pollutants.

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### STRATEGIES:

- Establish a transfer of development rights (TDR) program or other funding program to compensate rural land owners for agricultural preservation.
  - Increase the minimum property size in agricultural areas to at least 10 acres per lot.
  - Locate areas to direct new growth that are sufficient to accommodate demand but protect sensitive agricultural and natural areas.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

Agricultural land is often the easiest land to develop as it is already cleared, drained, managed, and connected to the regional transportation network. For much of the 20th century, agricultural land that once surrounded cities and towns became placeless suburban sprawl. Today most regions include small, historically compact cores surrounded by miles of low-density, car-dependent suburbs. These surrounding areas contribute significant amounts of atmospheric carbon dioxide due to automobile use, while also limiting peoples' access to walking, contributing to increased heart disease and obesity.

Additionally, the loss of distributed high-quality agricultural land threatens long-term future access to food. These areas should be protected from future growth, which should instead be directed to already developed places and areas that are not agriculturally or naturally sensitive. However, doing so is difficult. Farming is difficult, and much of the funding for operation is secured on the basis of the future developed value of land. A system must be in place to provide rural landowners with sufficient property value to secure loans and operate their businesses, while preserving long-term agricultural use.

# 6.0 HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

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The environmental justice movement originated within public health and is concerned with equal access to healthy, safe environments for all people. Any view of public health should be through this lens, and any decisions regarding a healthy environment must ask who loses in trade offs that may need to be made.

People's interaction with the built environment affects their health. Data has shown that walkable places with parks and a robust tree canopy are healthier and happier places for people to live. Policies should encourage and invest in these types of places to improve population health and reduce the social and monetary costs of healthcare.

[S]

## 6.1 PRIORITY SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS.

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### PROBLEM:

Students who walk or bike to school lower their risk of heart disease and obesity, but most students do not have this option.

### STRATEGIES:

- Identify current physical and social barriers to pedestrian and cyclist access to schools.
- Invest in public realm infrastructure (sidewalks, lighting, crosswalks, bike lanes) to remove physical barriers.
- Invest in programs (walking, school bus, designated safe spots, anti-bullying and anti-street harassment programs) to remove social barriers.
- Direct growth to infill existing places, supporting existing schools.

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**DISCUSSION:**

Because of growth policy, transportation policy, and school location decisions, most students cannot safely walk or bike to school. Walking or biking to school adds important daily exercise, reducing students' risk of heart disease and childhood obesity. It also promotes independence and familiarizes children with navigating their city. Once parents are able to allow children to walk or bike to school alone or with friends, the parents gain time, which can reduce daily stress. Some routes to school cannot be made safe due to poor environmental conditions or the distance between homes and schools. However, many places can encourage walking and biking to school by adding or repairing sidewalks, street lights, crosswalks, and bike lanes.

Safe access to schools is also reduced by continued development of car-dependent sprawl. This growth pattern requires school districts to follow new development and meet future students near their homes. The pattern is further supported by the backwards impact fee structure. As a result, most funding goes to new schools outside of town, and schools within the walkable neighborhoods at the core of the city decline. This process tends to result in vulnerable and disadvantaged populations having fewer attainable educational resources over time.

[S]

## 6.2 INVEST IN TREES IN LOW-INCOME NEIGHBORHOODS.

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### PROBLEM:

Most low-income neighborhoods have a degraded tree canopy, which negatively influences physical and mental health.

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### STRATEGIES:

- Target tree-planting programs to neighborhoods with below-average household incomes and higher crime.
  - Increase tree canopy by 5% per year and track changes over time.
  - Direct the fire department to water newly planted trees for the first three years.
  - Fund tree planting within municipal streets and parks as well as private properties.
  - Create a public-education program in urban forestry.
- 

### DISCUSSION:

Numerous studies have found that the urban tree canopy's health correlates with public health. In most cities, higher income areas have maintained and replanted trees. Lower-income areas commonly have severely degraded canopies, further impacting already disadvantaged communities. Some cities and non-profit organizations have invested in improving urban tree canopies, but programs are often citywide when they should first be targeted to areas that are most in need. Tree establishment and maintenance is often overlooked, resulting in unhealthy or dead trees soon after replanting investments are made. A maintenance program, along with public education, is required to ensure the investment in trees produces the desired long-term impact.

[S]

## 6.3 INCLUDE ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION POLICIES.

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### PROBLEM:

Active transportation policies are needed to increase walking and cycling.

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### STRATEGIES:

- Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure over automobiles in neighborhoods, commercial, and urban areas.
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### DISCUSSION:

Active transportation policies direct public works and transportation departments to prioritize sidewalks, crosswalks, and bicycle infrastructure. Walking and cycling on a daily basis improves public health by reducing heart disease and obesity. Most public works and transportation departments prioritize automobiles over other modes of transportation. Active transportation policies identify where and to what extent pedestrians and cyclists should be accommodated.

# [M]

## 6.4 ENABLE SCHOOL PLAYGROUNDS TO BE USED BY THE COMMUNITY.

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### **PROBLEM:**

School playgrounds are often off limits to surrounding neighborhoods that lack parks.

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### **STRATEGIES:**

- Extend the city's blanket liability insurance to cover public use of school fields and playgrounds.
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### **DISCUSSION:**

Nearly every comprehensive plan finds that neighborhoods lack sufficient park space. While schools are often well distributed throughout a city, their fields and playgrounds are often off limits to the broader community. Their fields and playgrounds are significant public investments in the community, and extending their use would require less investment than purchasing land, building, and maintaining new parks. School districts typically close their campuses to the public for liability and the safety of children. The city's liability insurance can be extended to cover public use of school grounds. Other solutions may be required to address the daytime safety of children — typically fencing — while also allowing public use outside of school hours.

