

Features of 13 Good Plans

1. A good plan communicates a sense of place and an understanding of what is special about your community and region.
2. It tells a story!
 - What was the community like in the past, and what is it like today?
 - How is the community changing, and what will the community be like in the future if present trends continue?
 - What are the qualities that give the community a sense of place, and that people value?
 - What are the forces of change acting on the community?
3. It describes alternative futures and the likely consequences of alternative courses of action.
 - It reminds citizens and local officials that no outcome is preordained or inevitable. The choices communities make *do* make a difference.
4. It expresses a **compelling vision** of what residents would like the community to be like in the future.
 - It expresses a community's deepest held aspirations.
 - It inspires and offers hope.
5. It presents essential data – but not too much.
 - It is not padded with data not directly pertinent to the substance of the plan, and therefore not so heavy that people are discouraged from taking it with them to community meetings.
 - All figures, charts, tables and maps contained in the plan are included for a reason, because they shed light on important issues addressed in the plan. (Tables, charts, and graphs presenting interesting but non-essential data are placed in a separate appendix, rather than in the main body of the plan.)
6. It puts forward goals and objectives that are capable of being translated into specific policies and actions.
 - It avoids goal statements so general that they cannot be meaningfully interpreted or applied in practice.
 - It identifies *indicators* for measuring progress toward meeting specified goals.
7. It is realistic! It does not attempt the impossible. It does not put forward goals and objectives without identifying how those goals and objectives might be achieved.
8. It comes out of a process that solicits input from a wide range of citizens and stakeholders, and describes the process that was used in preparing the plan.
9. It is fair and equitable and attempts to balance competing interests.
10. It strives to balance development needs against the need to conserve and protect environmental resources. Its aim is to achieve a pattern of land use and development that is sustainable.
11. It lets developers know the type of development the community wants – not just what the community *does not* want – and encourages development in areas most suitable for development.
12. It encourages people to think about what is best for the *whole* community (not just for their neighborhood or for them individually), and about the interests of future residents as well as those of current residents.
13. It is packaged and presented in a way that encourages citizens to want to read it. People *care* about the places where they live and work. They want to know what is happening (and likely to happen) to their community. Do not discourage them from doing so by producing a dull, dry, off-putting plan.