

PLAN ELEMENT XIII: MONITORING, EVALUATING AND AMENDING THE 2020 PLAN

The universal feeling whenever a plan of any sort is prepared and adopted is that it *not* become one of those plans that sits on the shelf gathering dust. One way of avoiding this pitfall is to include in the plan a definite set of actions to be accomplished, with statements as to who is to do the work and within what time frame. We have done this in the implementation matrix found at the end of every section of the plan. The next step is to build a process in which the proposed actions listed in these tables will be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis and, if needed, the plan amended.

Monitoring the Plan

It will be the responsibility of the Planning Division to monitor implementation of the 2020 Plan on an ongoing basis. This should include, at minimum, an annual review of the status of proposals in the Plan. To simplify this process, a table listing all of the implementation items is included in Appendix H. The individual assigned the job of monitoring how implementation is progressing will do so by tracking what's in the table. For this effort to be successful, a variety of agencies and departments will need to provide input to the individual charged with monitoring implementation of the Plan. This could be accomplished through an annual meeting of an interdepartmental team that oversees activities proposed in the Plan. This approach will also help reinforce the notion that the Plan is a living document, not just something that gets published and then forgotten; and that it is something that all departments need to consider, not just Planning.

A critical tool for monitoring of the Plan will be the GIS system which should become fully functional by mid-2004. The first step in using GIS for this purpose will be to add the 2020 Plan land use designations to the system. Once this is done, an accurate figure of what is planned for each use category can be determined. Once these basic tasks are accomplished, the GIS can be used in a variety of ways to monitor compliance with the Plan, including the following:

- ▶ Tracking construction, demolition and rehabilitation permits to show patterns of growth and redevelopment.
- ▶ Tracking new subdivisions as they are recorded to show where new development is going (and possibly infill).
- ▶ Tracking zoning changes and Special Use Permits for compliance with the Plan and as an indicator of growth patterns.
- ▶ Comparing assessed valuations of parts of the City over time as an indicator of which areas are getting stronger and which less so.
- ▶ Comparing the type of new construction with Plan designations to see if they match. Significant mismatches would serve as a red flag for areas that need to be reevaluated.

Information compiled in this monitoring process will form the core of the annual review of the Plan.

Scheduled Reviews of the 2020 Plan

Starting one year after adoption of the 2020 Plan, the Planning Administrator will submit an annual report detailing the performance of the Plan over the preceding 12 months to the Mayor and City Council. This report will reference information contained in the monitoring table described above plus new and pertinent information about the community, changes in the Plan's underlying assumptions or any other factors affecting the health or welfare of the community. The report may include specific proposals to amend the Plan. At minimum, the report will include:

- ▶ The implementation matrix with updates included;
- ▶ Comments and suggestions from the interdepartmental team that reviews implementation each year;

- ▶ Verbal description of changes that have occurred since the last annual report, including such things as major annexations, road construction and zoning map amendments;
- ▶ Brief discussion of neighborhood or special topic plans (e.g., a river corridor study) either in process or adopted in the previous 12 months and their “fit” with the 2020 Plan;
- ▶ Description of any requests for map and/or text amendments to the Plan from other agencies, organizations, or private individuals;
- ▶ Description of how the Plan was used to direct major spending, regulatory and construction decisions;
- ▶ Description of how development and redevelopment did or did not coincide with the Plan;
- ▶ Review of any Plan amendments adopted during the preceding 12 months with an explanation of why they were made and what their impact has been;
- ▶ Discussion of how the City has changed in ways that may call for amendments to the Plan; and
- ▶ An implementation plan of action for the following year.

The final item should address any requested changes which would then enter the amendment process described below. The annual report will be submitted to City Council and made available to the public. Each year’s report will be posted on the City’s website, and should be the subject of public meetings to increase awareness of what progress has been made and to solicit input on how the Plan could be improved.

At least once every five years, the Planning staff will conduct a formal review of the entire Plan – text and maps. As a result of this review, they will submit to City Council proposals for changing those features and sections that are judged to be outdated and/or not serving their purpose.

After ten years, the process for formal review should be expanded to involve an ad hoc advisory group of Rockford citizens who would work with Planning staff in completing a full review of the 2020 Plan. This review should include a comprehensive review of Plan maps and implementation matrices, as well as an update of population projections.

Amending the 2020 Plan

While the Plan needs to be flexible enough that it can be amended on a regular basis, it should not be so flexible that a Plan amendment is viewed as being the equivalent of a zoning change. To that end, it is recommended that amendments only be processed twice a year unless exceptional circumstances warrant a more frequent change. Proposed amendments can come from a number of sources – from the internal review involved in preparation of the annual report; proposals from other City departments; written suggestions or requests from organizations or individuals outside City government; and/or requests from City Council members. In addition, the City could solicit proposals for Plan amendments through a variety of ways – neighborhood or other public meetings, the City website, or requests through the news media, to name a few.

Evaluation of proposed amendments will be based on the following criteria:

- ▶ The proposed change is consistent with the basic principles of the 2020 Plan.
- ▶ The change is a creative idea or concept that will benefit the community and that was unforeseen during the preparation of the 2020 Plan.
- ▶ The change does not create an adverse impact on any of the following:
 - ▷ Public facilities and services, including roads, sewers, water supply, drainage, schools, parks and public safety agencies, unless the impact can be substantially mitigated..
 - ▷ Surrounding properties. New development should be consistent with the physical character of the surrounding neighborhood or upgrade and improve its viability.
 - ▷ The natural environment including trees, slopes and groundwater, unless the impact could be mitigated by improvements on the site or in the same vicinity.
 - ▷ Landmarks or other historically significant structures or properties.
- ▶ The change allows a more viable transition to the planned uses on adjacent properties than the current land use.

- ▶ There is a change in City policies or neighborhood characteristics that would justify the Plan change.
- ▶ The change results from a neighborhood or other plan adopted by the City of Rockford.
- ▶ The change helps the City meet its affordable housing goals as specified in the Consolidated Plan.

In 1918, William H. Fulton, Secretary of the Rockford City Plan Commission, wrote that

Such an undertaking as the Plan involves, is a challenge to our civic spirit. It offers a curriculum in community effort. Can we achieve it? Yes, if we work together, if as members of one body we unselfishly seek the good of the whole, emphasizing not the things that divide, but the things that unite us.

This quotation, from the Rockford Plan of 1918, demonstrates that even in the very first effort to plan for the Rockford's growth, people were concerned that the only way to achieve positive results was to work together. This is even truer now than it was 85 years ago.

We are confident that the 2020 Plan is a pragmatic and realistic tool for City officials to use in guiding Rockford's day-to-day development. However, for this to happen will require a concerted effort on everyone's part to make this a living plan, not just some words to go along with a map. There are several instances in which this plan recommends specific actions; these need to be followed up on, if only to determine on a case-by-case basis if they are actions that truly need to be carried out. Then there is the map of proposed land use and transportation corridors. These need to be consulted as the City continues to develop (and redevelop), and as it plans its capital improvements program.

Finally, while this is very definitely a plan for the City of Rockford, Rockford does not exist in a vacuum. Its land use and transportation needs should be regularly reevaluated within the context of what is going on around it. Perhaps at some point in the future we will be able to develop a truly regional plan. In the meantime, we need to keep in mind what — and whom — we are planning for.



Implementation Matrix for Monitoring, Evaluating and Amending the Plan

Goal	Objective	Action	Who	When
Ensure that the 2020 Plan remains viable while still consistent with its original principles.	Monitor implementation of the 2020 Plan on a regular and continuing basis	Designate an interdepartmental team that will meet at minimum on an annual basis to review progress on the Plan	Coordinated by the Planning Administrator	Ongoing
		Track the following via GIS:	Planning Division staff	Ongoing
		Construction, demolition and rehabilitation permits;		
		New subdivisions;		
		Zoning changes and SUPs; and		
		Assessed valuation by area.		
	Review implementation efforts on a regular basis.	Prepare an annual report detailing performance of the Plan over the preceding 12 months.	Planning Administrator	Annual
		Conduct a formal review of the Plan after 5 years, evaluating both text and maps.	Planning staff	2009
Complete a full review of the 2020 Plan in 10 years.		Planning staff; ad hoc advisory group of citizens	2014-2015	
Process amendments to the 2020 Plan twice a year.	Solicit and review proposed amendments on an ongoing basis.	Planning staff	Ongoing	