

# Comprehensive Planning

**rpa**

Regional Planning Agency

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## About Us

The Comprehensive Planning Division of the RPA is staffed by four senior planners, one planner, and one director. The division is responsible for producing the Comprehensive Plan as well as land use plans for specific neighborhoods, communities, or larger areas. This division also works on various special studies, zoning studies, and zoning regulations. Typical products produced by this division are plan documents, maps, illustrations, and visual presentations.

Staff routinely meets with developers, property owners, residents, and elected officials to discuss specific development proposals and the various issues and concerns that may arise from them. The Comprehensive Planning division also assists the Transportation Planning Organization with transportation planning projects as requested.

Most of the projects undertaken by the Comprehensive Planning staff are requested by the City of Chattanooga City Council, the Hamilton County Commission, or any of the other municipalities that the RPA serves. The division also assists various governments departments and agencies.



## Planning Approach

**Making Assessments-** Planners are required to look at the "big picture." We make an assessment of existing conditions for local communities and the region to help determine what impacts a proposed development may have. Careful attention is given to neighborhoods, community facilities and services, parks, commercial and industrial centers, the natural environment, streets, land development patterns, and demographics.

**Generating Ideas-** Planners generate ideas. Planners use public input and staff input combined with traditional and innovative planning techniques to provide possible land use solutions and recommendations. Planners explore options and often help to facilitate discussion between elected officials, property owners, and developers to help reach those solutions.

**Creating Tools-** Planners help to implement land use solutions by developing "planning tools." These tools take the shape of land use plans, studies, policies, and regulations. The effectiveness of the tools is part of a continual monitoring and evaluation process. It has been the experience of the RPA that developers do not want to invest in an area that does not have a plan or regulations that will help to protect their investments.

The Regional Planning Agency (RPA) serves as **staff** to the *Planning Commission*. The Planning Commission is a 15-member board appointed by the City of Chattanooga and Hamilton County.

## RPA Planning Principles

- Planning should provide for the health, safety, and welfare of the community.
- Planning should be proactive and visionary.
- Planning should reflect the integration of comprehensive economic, social, and environmental factors.
- Planning should promote the wise use of existing resources without compromising our options for the future.
- Planning should recognize the importance of diversity in our community, including its people, cultures, values, places and natural resources.
- Citizen involvement in the planning process is essential.
- Planning should reflect a high ethical standard, free from conflicts of interest.
- Planning should seek to find a balance between what is good for the community as a whole and the rights of citizens as individuals.
- Planning should incorporate realistic and flexible implementation components that define specific areas of responsibility.
- Planning should recognize the importance of the urban, suburban, and rural areas to the economic and cultural vitality of the entire community.
- Planning should facilitate new growth while protecting neighborhoods, infrastructure, and the environment.
- Planning should be an ongoing process in which previously developed plans are reviewed periodically and updated or modified as needed if conditions or preferences have changed.

## Land Use Planning

The Comprehensive Planning staff of the RPA spends most of their time on land use planning. They are responsible for producing the Comprehensive Plan as well as land use plans for specific neighborhoods, communities, or larger areas. A land use plan is a blueprint for guiding how, when, and where new growth, redevelopment and preservation should occur in a particular area. A Land Use Plan is a *general policy guide*. It provides a set of strategies for achieving specific community goals.

***The Comprehensive Plan.*** The Comprehensive Plan 2030 sets forth broad goals, policies, and action steps for all of Hamilton County. It is a general land use plan and advisory guide for future physical development in Hamilton County. It is a tool to help coordinate regional planning efforts. The Comprehensive Plan 2030 is one of the Regional Planning Agency's strategies for achieving its mission.

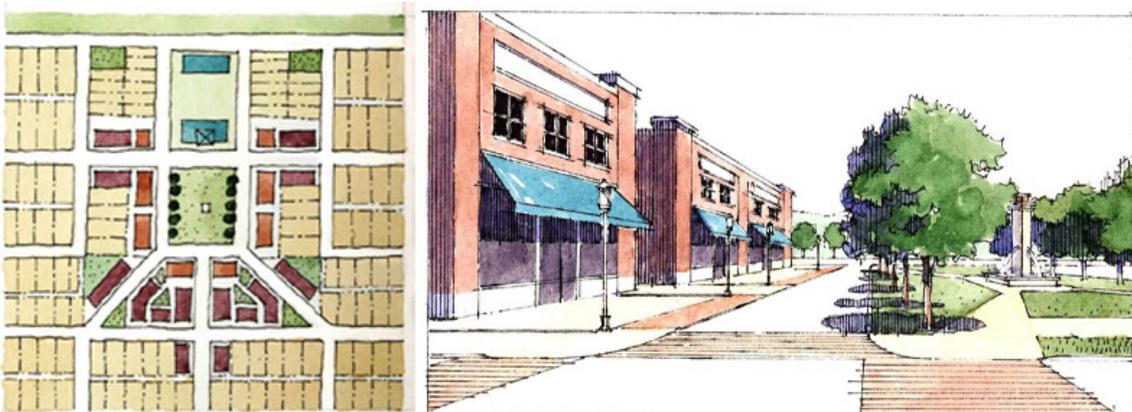
State legislation requires a Comprehensive Plan. Tennessee Code Annotated 13-3-301 states, "It is the function and duty of a regional planning commission to make and adopt a general regional plan for the physical development of the territory of the region." Planning is not *required* in Tennessee. State legislation allows a region, municipality, or county to set up a planning commission. Therefore, if a planning commission is formed then a Comprehensive Plan is required.

The overall goal for the Comprehensive Plan is to provide guidance in creating desirable & diverse communities in Hamilton County and to encourage and provide for new business and development opportunities while protecting neighborhoods, infrastructure, and the environment.

The overall strategy for the Comprehensive Plan is to address each community type on its own terms and provide recommendations that will best integrate new development and land use changes with existing character and form.

***District Plans.*** District Plans give general land use recommendations for each Planning District within Hamilton County. While the District Plans are general in nature, they describe how the policies and principles of the Comprehensive Plan are applied to certain parts of the county. The plans are helpful in guiding development, zoning, and capital improvement decisions. District Plans identify those neighborhoods or communities that are covered by a Specific Area Plan. District Plans are included in the Planning District Analysis series as a means for periodic review and update.

***Specific Area Plans.*** Specific Area Plans are completed with a thorough public input process and adopted by the local legislative bodies. They give highly detailed land use recommendations for specific neighborhoods and communities. These stand-alone documents are very helpful in guiding development, zoning, and capital improvement decisions. The Specific Area Plans within each planning district are periodically reviewed for any necessary updates in the Specific Area Plans Assessment section of each Planning District Analysis document.



## Regulations Planning

The Comprehensive Planning division also helps to implement plans by writing new zoning and subdivision regulations or amending existing ones when necessary.

## Transportation Planning

Although the responsibility for transportation planning and programming is primarily the responsibility of the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO), the Comprehensive Planning staff assists on a variety of transportation projects.

## Planning Assistance

We also provide planning assistance to other departments, agencies, and municipalities when requested and as time and resources allow.

## Special Studies

Sometimes special studies are necessary in order to examine a particular issue in greater detail. Such projects may include zoning studies, sensitive areas studies, etc.

