2005 Comprehensive Plan Assessment

September 2021

imagine URBANA

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Executive Summary

The following is an assessment of the goals, objectives, and implementation strategies identified in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. As the City and community work together on a new plan, it is important to take a look at the past 16 years to see what has been done to accomplish the stated goals and implementation strategies of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan.

While much has changed since 2005, the Comprehensive Plan is still relevant in some ways. For example, many of the operation and maintenance goals in the plan remain a very important part of the City today.

The four cornerstone values in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan- Quality of Life, Sensible Growth, Services and Infrastructure, and Mobility- are all values that may still reflect the priorities of the people of Urbana today. The Comprehensive Plan consists of 241 goals and objectives, 87 implementation strategies, and 16 future land use classifications, that are meant to spell out specifics of what we believe is important and how we will achieve them.

Only a handful of goals had implementation steps associated with them. There were 87 implementation strategies to implement the 241 goals and objectives. Implementation strategies would have been more productive if there was an update one, two, or every five years. During this analysis, we determined the implementation strategies that were meant to be on-going or near term were more likely to be implemented. Less likely to be implemented were items that were not very specific, technology has changed, or there has been a major market change. The longer-term implementation strategies were more likely to be partially complete or not complete.

Specific implementation strategies and effectiveness are labeled individually in the Appendix. “Not complete” and “not complete and changed,” do not necessarily mean a failure. They are often the result of changes since 2005 that made them unnecessary or irrelevant. What is harder to measure is how well the goals and objectives that had no implementation strategies were implemented. About half (117) of all goals and objectives had one or no implementation strategies associated with them. That does not mean that the City did not prioritize these as valuable goals and objectives. Goals and objectives that were specific, attainable, and relevant to the City’s mission were very likely to be successful, even in the absence of implementation strategies. In the forthcoming Comprehensive Plan, we will work to recommend attainable actions and work with neighborhoods to

listen, engage, and act upon our new iteration of goals and objectives.

The document summarizes research assessing the effectiveness of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, including two appendices: (A) goals and objectives, and (B) implementation strategies.

Lessons Learned

City-wide Lens Vs. Neighborhood/Corridor Lens
The Chomprehensive Plan is a guide for the entire City, not one neighborhood or one issue. Any complex neighborhood issues that were included in the 2005 plan had to be generalized, and often did not have had enough detail or specificity to address them fully. The Comprehensive Plan focused on two specific neighborhoods; while the rest of Urbana's 13 neighborhoods have their own specific needs and issues.

A good example is the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan. The Comprehensive Plan did not specify where bike lanes or paths would go, how they should be designed, or what types of education and training programs would help get more people to ride bikes. Instead, the Comprehensive Plan said that getting people to bike more was a priority, and the City prepared a separate bike plan that was much more specific than the Comprehensive Plan could (or should) be. This allowed for a more detailed engagement process, and helped the community and staff decide where bike lanes should go, which routes should be prioritized, estimate costs for each project, and ultimately improve the bike network.

The 2008 Urbana Bicycle Master Plan – and later, 2016 Urbana Bicycle Master Plan – was adopted as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, so it is considered to be as important as the rest of the plan.

The results for biking in Urbana have been significant: in 2005, we had far fewer bike lanes and paths in Urbana than we do today, and we were not considered a "Bicycle Friendly Community." Since 2005, we have made biking safer and built our bike network extensively, and in 2018, Urbana was named the first Gold-level Bicycle Friendly Community in Illinois.

Integration of Diverse City Issues with Land Use and Transportation

The 2005 plan is very focused on land use, transportation, and other areas that fall under the purview of the Community Development and Public Works Departments. The plan is much less focus edon other issues that greatly affect the people of Urbana, like public safety, health, communication and government transparency, disaster planning, and environmental change. As one example, land use and transportation can have a great effect on public safety-related issues of community violence, food access, and business and housing diversity, but these relationships are not explored or addressed in great detail in the 2005 plan.

Actions Taken Vs. What We Prioritized

The City adopted several amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, some of which were whole plans themselves. These amendments and plans provided detail to implement specific parts of the Comprehensive Plan. One great example is how the City prioritized projects to Infra- structuremake it easier and safer for people to walking and biking bike in Urbana, through the Pedestrian Master Plan and Bicycle Master Plan. These plans were Comprehensive Plan amendments, and their recommendations are integrated in City road projects, and keeps the City engaged in traffic safety programs.

Other areas of the plan were not prioritized or implemented as well. Many goals and objectives for prioritizing growth, in areas with existing streets and sewers, amending zoning and land development codes to allow more traditional neighborhood development, and encouraging residential development near commercial areas and jobs, had mixed success and were not prioritized with actions.

Equity Integration
The 2005 plan's "Services and Infrastructure" cornerstone value has the fewest number of goals, objectives, and implementation strategies associated with it. This section of the plan dealt with affordable housing, homelessness, and maintaining an equal level of services across the City and future possible annexations.

The Comprehensive Plan had a light emphasis on equity-related goals and objectives. Despite this, from the Aspen Court renovation project, the construction of the Highland Green apartments, and the work of the Grants Management Division in Community Development, the City has maintained an active commitment to this section's goals and objectives. Possible reasons for this success may have been the specificity of the goals, active political will, buy-in from staff, and/or changing community needs.

Time Spent Planning
The Comprehensive plan has an implementation program that is a collection of actions meant to be updated annually. Due to the five year planning process that created the plan, many of the immediate and near-term implementation strategies were items that staff may have already been working on, or planning to work on. The ongoing and long-term implementation strategies were likely stated due to the timeliness of current developments and issues that were prominent at one time during those five years.

As an example, some of the most direct feedback from community groups was collected in focus groups and captured in a focus group report. The next year, the plan was drafted, and the year after that the plan was adopted. The implementation strategies that reflected this process and input were likely already completed or underway by the time the plan was adopted.

Only one amendment was made to the implementation program during the next 16 years. The 2005 plan left most of the 247 goals and objectives without strategic action to be taken by the City. Without annual or bi-annual updates to the Comprehensive Plan, implementation was done on an ad-hoc basis.

Input Process and Amendments

The 2005 Comprehensive Plan was created over a span of five years to replace the 1982 Comprehensive Plan. The planning process was initiated when the City formed a Steering Committee that oversaw the planning process. The Steering Committee was comprised of people from across Urbana- business people, neighborhood organizers, industry leaders, elected officials, Plan Commissioners, and various subject matter experts.

2001

Steering Committee Formation

Neighborhood Visioning Workshops

over 400 responses from 6 meetings in the areas below

2002

Resident Survey

350 sampled residents.

Existing Conditions Report

2003

Focus Groups

62 participants in 7 groups met to discuss specific issues.

Trends and Issues Report and Map

Neighborhood Open Houses

2004

Draft future land uses and maps were taken to 6 areas of the City. Importantly, this was a good opportunity to explain the planning process and difference between zoning and future land use. Staff adjusted maps based on these meetings.

2005

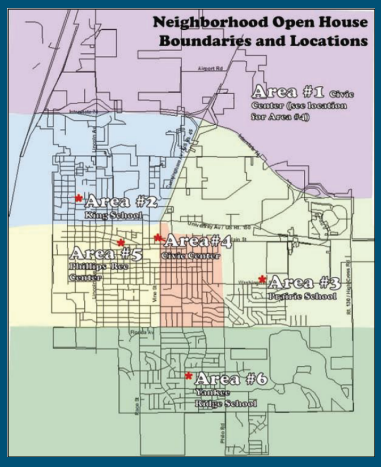
Final Draft Public Open House

February, 2005, in downtown Urbana.

Adoption

Types of Focus Groups

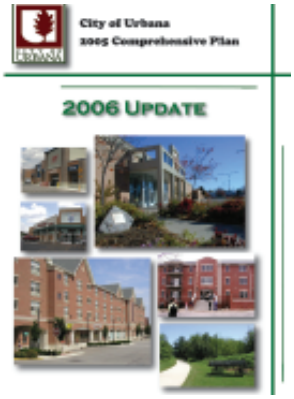
Economic Development
Transportation
Infrastructure
Public Services
Environment
Human Services
Community Heritage

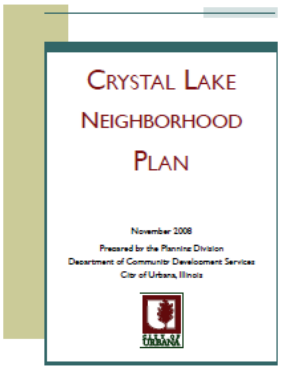


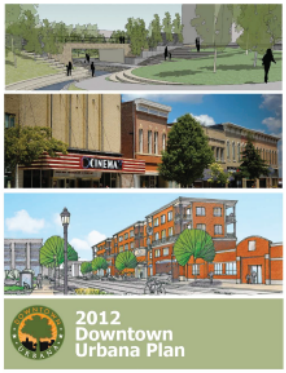
Meetings and outreach were achieved by segmenting the City into 6 sections. Photos, demographics information, and participation numbers from these events were infrequently reported.

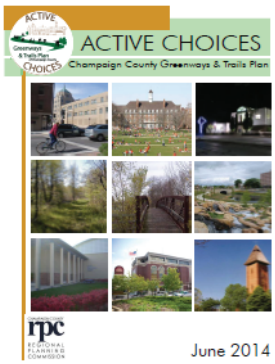
Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan

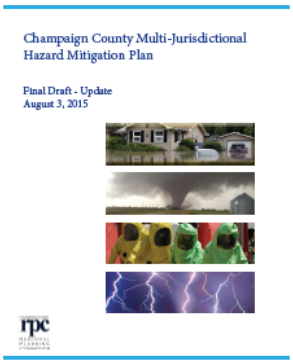
As stated above, there have been numerous amendments to the plan since 2005. Most amendments were specific planning documents, such an individual neighborhood plans and bicycle and pedestrian master plans. Some amendments were "map amendments," which changed the future land use designation of specific areas of Urbana. Changes in the future land use maps usually occur when a property has a re-imagining of its future (e.g., changing the closed Washington Elementary School from an institutional to a mixed residential future land use).

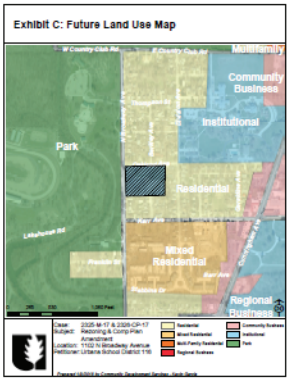


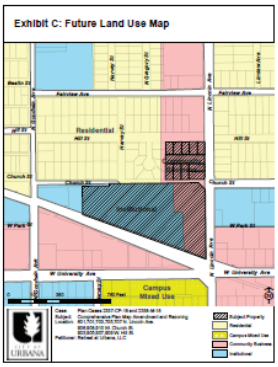


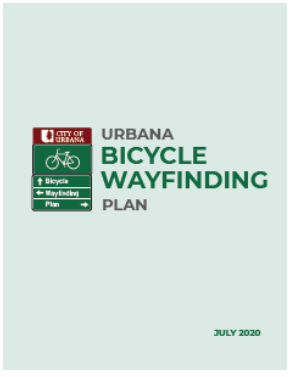


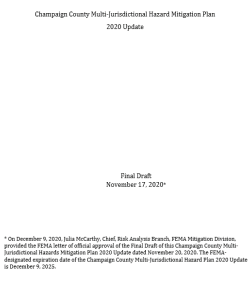




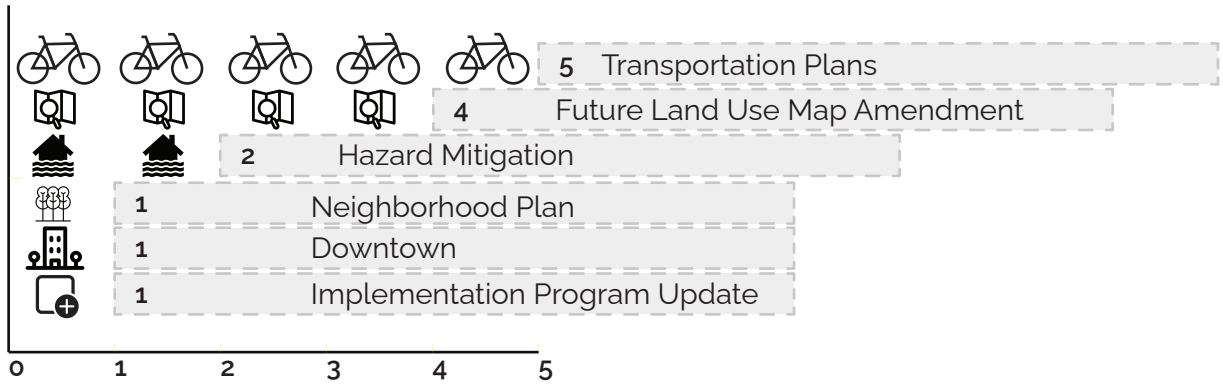








TOTAL OF 14 AMENDMENTS



Though annual progress on the current plan's implementation program and 5-year updates to the whole Comprehensive Plan were suggested, 2006 was the only year there was an amendment to update the implementation program.

In the implementation strategy section (page 14), the plan called for an area-specific plan for the Historic East Urbana Neighborhood Association (HEUNA) neighborhood, but that neighborhood did not end up with an adopted area-specific plan. Conversely, the Crystal Lake neighborhood did have an area-specific plan created that was amended into the comprehensive plan in 2008.

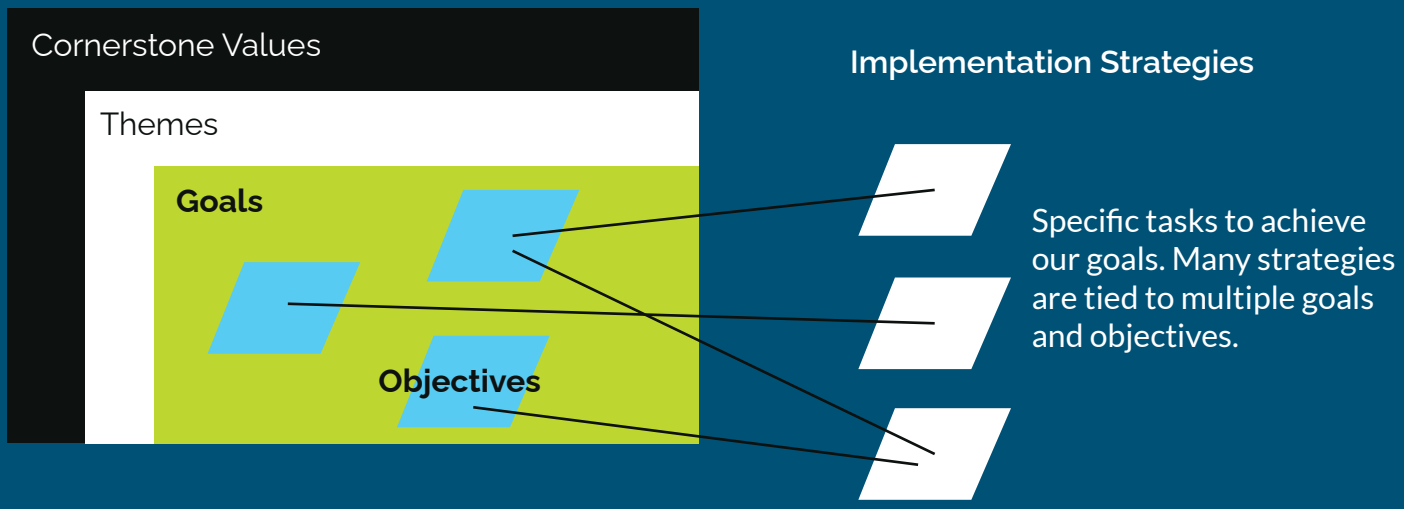
The four future land use amendments, over 16 years, may indicate a successful flexibility in the generalized future land use designations, rather than zoning map amendments (105 cases), which are more specific and have implication for development regulations.

Most amendments were transportation-specific. By design, the plan did not go into many specifics about the type of infrastructure, location, transportation mode, and connectivity. Those specifics were fleshed out in specific documents. These mode-specific transportation planning efforts have been successful since 2005. Since 2005, we have become a Gold-level Bicycle Friendly Community and reconfigured many miles of streets for multi-modal transportation.

Goals and Objectives

The 2005 Comprehensive Plan is guided by a set of goals that reflected the community's stated values.

There are four cornerstone values, 15 themes, 50 goals, 191 objectives, and 87 implementation strategies in the plan. All of the implementation strategies made up the implementation program.



The implementation program was not meant to be a finite list of actionable implementation strategies, and not all goals and objectives had implementation strategies associated with them.

Appendix A: Goals and Objectives of this document has a full list of goals and objectives along with the number of implementation strategies associated with each and an assessment of the effectiveness of those implementation strategies.

As shown in this section, some goals and objectives were prioritized in the implementation program. The implementation strategies that were prioritized over others, had varying success- possibly due to the goal's attainability.

The plan suggested that the goals, objectives, and implementation strategies should be revised annually, semi-annually, or every five years to better align with City-efforts, and changes in stakeholders, partners, and the environment. Despite this there was no regular evaluation of what was (and was not) being implemented, or whether a goal or objective should be revised.

Goals and Objectives With the Highest Number of Strategies

This is a list of the Goals and Objectives that had 6 or more implementation strategies associated with them in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan.

1.0 Preserve and enhance the character of Urbana's established residential neighborhoods.

12.0 Preserve the characteristics that make Urbana unique.

44.0 Provide for the safe, efficient, and cost-effective movement of people and goods within, through, and around the City.

12.1 Identify and protect neighborhoods and areas that contain significant historical and cultural resources.

15.0 Encourage compact, contiguous, and sustainable growth patterns.

25.0 Create additional commercial areas to strengthen the City's tax base and service base.

28.0 Develop a diversified and broad, stable tax base.

While these goals and objectives had the most strategies associated with them, they were not the most successful goals and objectives when looking at the overall effectiveness of the implementation strategies associated with them.

When looking at the goals and objectives that had higher rates of being implemented, the most successful were the ones that were more specific, measurable, time-based, and relevant to City services and infrastructure.

Whether a goal or objective was implemented was not influenced by how many strategies were affiliated with the it.

There were 58 goals and objectives that have zero implementation strategies. Another 59 goals and objectives have only have one implementation strategy.

This is a partial list of goals and objectives that have no action items and are in order as in the plan with the section numbers on the left.

Goals and Objectives With No Strategies

6.5 Preserve natural resources (including air, water, and land) and environmentally sensitive areas in the community.

7.3 Redevelop parts of Boneyard Creek to provide natural and public amenities.

16.1 Encourage a mix of land use types to achieve a balanced growing community.

19.1 Ensure that residential development is adequately serviced with recreation and open space, public utilities, access to commercial and employment centers, and other community support services.

22.7 Pursue redevelopment of the North Broadway corridor.

22.8 Promote visible, outdoor activity in downtown.

22.9 Pursue the development of a permanent outdoor public square and performance/ event space.

25.4 Find new locations for commercial uses and enhance existing locations so Urbana residents can fulfill their commercial and service needs locally.

29.3 Expand agricultural-related business, particularly along the U.S. Route 150 and IL Route 130 corridors.

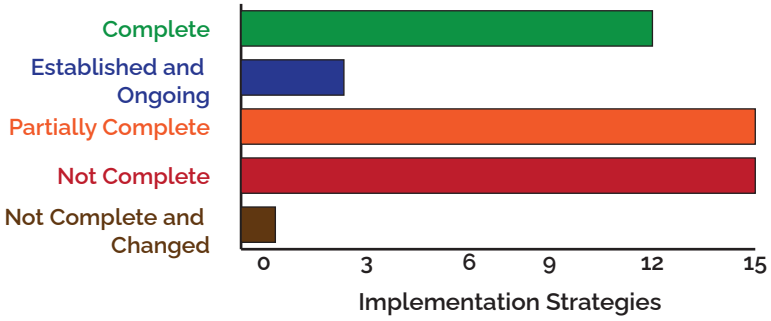
29.4 Improve opportunities in north Urbana for resource-based and distribution-related industries requiring rail and interstate access.

29.5 Recognize the potential offered by Frasca Airport by seeking airport-related industries and developments that would benefit from private air transportation.

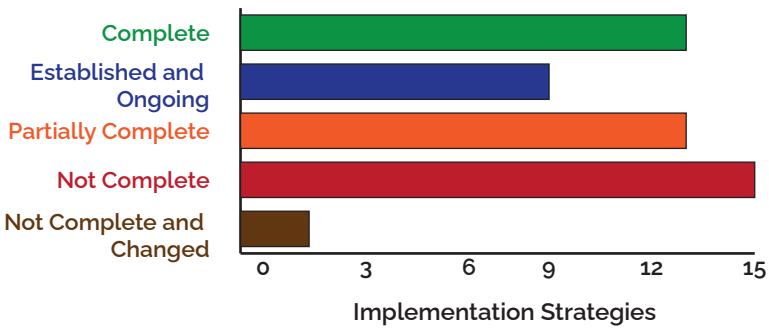
30.1 Prepare an economic development plan for the City, highlighting sectors to promote and capitalize upon and identifying specific marketing strategies.

As illustrated below, with each value, some of the goals and objectives that had little or no attention in the implementation strategies were some of the most successful goals and strategies.

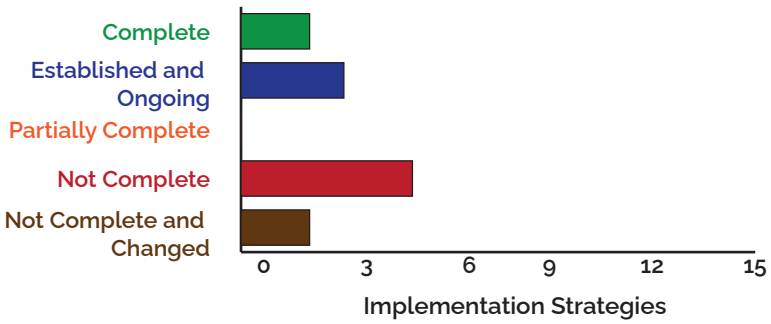
Quality of Life



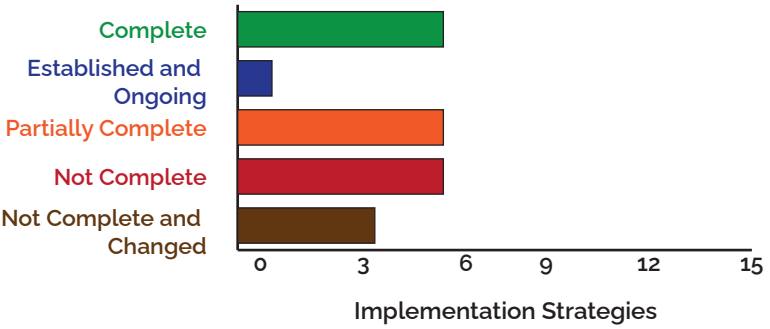
Sensible Growth



Services and Infrastructure



Mobility



Many of the equity-oriented aspects of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan were housed in the Services and Infrastructure theme. Services and Infrastructure is where the fewest implementation strategies were identified.

Timeline of Accomplishments

There were no regular updates to the plan- nor was any reporting done by staff on the work of accomplishing the goals and objectives of the plan. Below is a short list of accomplishments supported by the Comprehensive Plan. Highlighted above the short timeline is the goal theme that relates to the accomplishment.

2005

tax base **economic development initiatives**

Walmart was constructed at High Cross Road and University Avenue

urbana's unique character

IMC opens its radio station in Downtown Urbana

2006

commerce and industry

Cross Concrete Recycling opens on North Lincoln Avenue

2007

tax base **urbana's new neighborhoods**

Stone Creek, Landis Farms, and Cobble Creek additions are approved

community development programs

Rental Registration program is created

2008

urbana's unique character

Urbana establishes an Arts grant program, now called the Arts & Culture Program

2009

urbana's unique character

Main Street Historic District created

urbana's established neighborhoods

Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan adopted

2010

multi-modal transportation system

First Urbana Master Bicycle Plan adopted

2011

tax base **economic development initiatives**

Meijer was constructed at Philo and Windsor Roads

urbana's downtown **urbana's unique character**

Historic Lincoln Hotel in Downtown Urbana became Historic Local Landmark

2012

utilities

UC2B established to install fiber-optic broadband infrastructure

2013

urbana's downtown | the environment

Adopted current Downtown Plan and Climate Action Plan

urbana's downtown

First "curbanas" were installed in downtown Urbana

2014

urbana's downtown | the environment

Boneyard Creek Crossing in Downtown Urbana is complete

2015

community development programs

Crystal View Townhomes are completed (formerly Lakeside Terrace)

the environment | multi-modal transportation system

Adopted the Champaign County Greenways and Trails Plan

2016

the environment | utilities

Adopted the Champaign County Hazard Mitigation Plan

2017

urbana's new neighborhoods | commerce and industry

Current Enterprise Zone and Think Urbana programs created

municipal services

Urbana Fire Department is ISO 1 accredited.

2018

commerce and industry | tax base

The Gather (approved) and The Retreat (constructed) at University and Lincoln Avenues

2019

urbana's downtown | sensible growth

City-owned parking lot at 200 S. Vine is sold to create housing in Downtown

urbana's downtown | tax base | urbana's unique character

Redevelopment Agreement approved for renovation and reopening of Hotel Royer

2020

urbana's downtown | urbana's unique character

Downtown Urbana is placed on the National Register of Historic Places

2021

community development programs

Aspen Court and Pinewood Place finish construction

Implementation Strategies

As stated earlier, the 2005 plan has goals and objectives that aretied to implementation strategies outlining the steps the City will take to implement the plan. This implementation program was not meant to be static and unchanged; it was meant to be updated each year to reflect the goals and objectives for the 2005 plan.

Appendix B contains each implementation strategy, a score for each strategy's effectiveness, and a brief description of the current status of the strategy.

After 16 years, and many changes across the city, state, and country, staff evaluated the list of implementation strategies to determine if each had been for accomplished or if changes made them no longer relevant. The goal was to look at what worked and what did not go as planned since 2005. The evaluations are broad and generalized. Each department across the City was asked to report on the status of strategies that were in their purview.

The implementation program listed numerous strategies, each with specific time frames, which City departments and community agencies were involved, and the types of steps required to meet each goal or objective.

Staff evaluated each implementation strategy and assigned it one of the following designations:

Complete | Established and Ongoing | Partially Complete | Not Complete | Not Complete and Changed

"Complete" and "Established and Ongoing" are successful outcomes. Some of these strategies have evolved drastically since their creation and some were started in the last few years.

"Partially Complete" often describes a strategy that had to be re-imagined or changed when it came to implementation.

"Not Complete" could describes a strategy that the City still needs to implement or a strategy that needed revision to meet the goals and objectives. "Not Complete and Changed" is reserved for implementation strategies that were made obsolete or determined not to be feasible. This could have been because of changing technology, market trends, funding issues, or limited staff time.

Above are the most common words found in the Implementation Strategies.

The word "plan" is the most frequent word in the implementation program. Interestingly, "plan" is not used to refer to the Comprehensive Plan. Instead it is used to describe creating a plan for various efforts to support the goals and objectives. "Zoning," "amend," "design," and "avenue," also had significant frequency in the implementation program. Much of the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan's goals and objectives encouraged more planning, amending the zoning ordinance, and improving or continuing to work on business and transportation corridors (e.g. University and Cunningham Avenues).

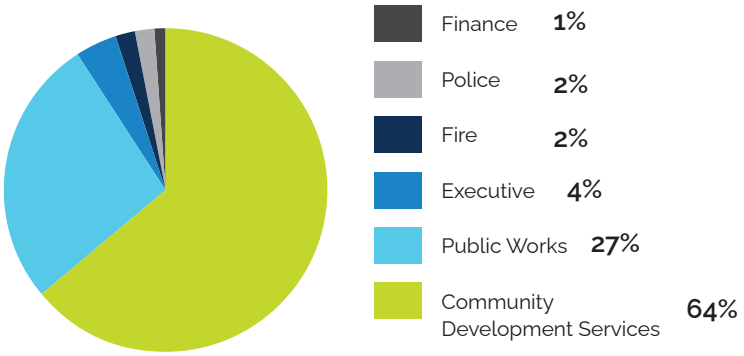
Breakdown of Implementation Strategies

The implementation strategies included most City Departments, but were focused mainly in Community Development. Many of the Public Works and Executive Department-oriented implementation strategies were actions that were related to Community Development in many ways.

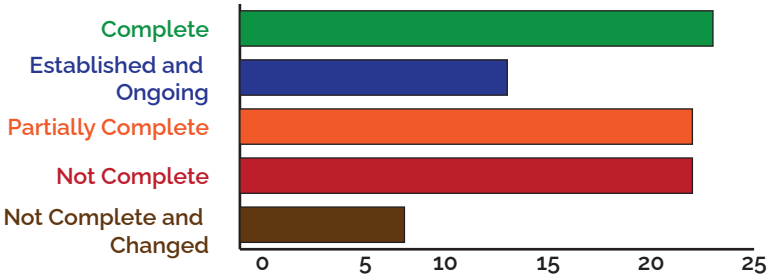
Overall, "partially complete" and "not complete strategies" were half of all strategies. "Complete" and "ongoing" strategies represent about 40% of the strategies. Some were completed by 2006, and other strategies were completed in the last few years.

Strategies involving outside agencies, many with their own strategic plans and priorities, were similarly successful.

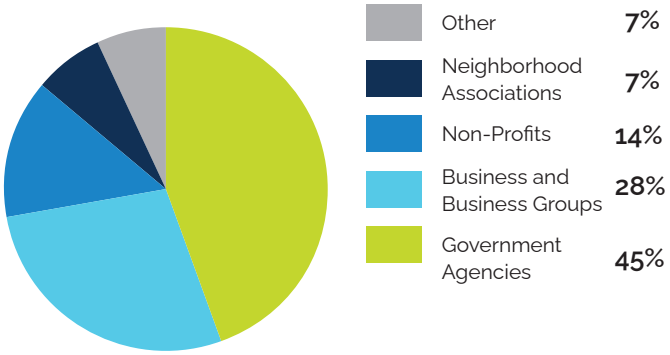
CITY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED IN IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN



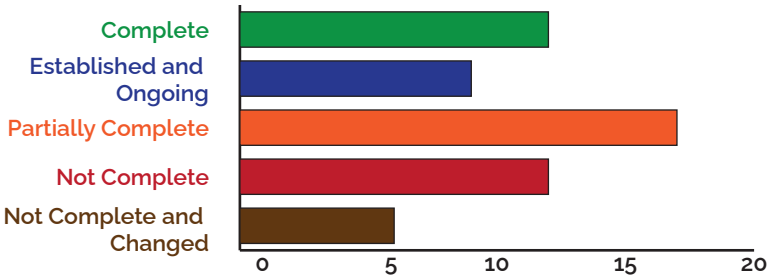
Effectiveness of Implementation Strategies



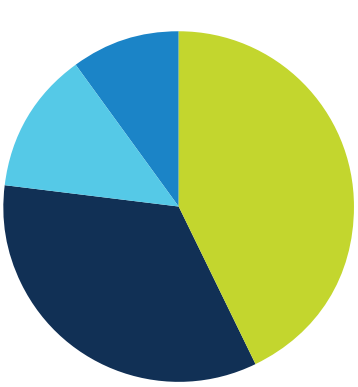
32 OUTSIDE AGENCIES INVOLVED IN IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN



Effectiveness of Implementation Strategies With Outside Agency Involvement



TIMING OF IMPLEMENTATION



Near Term	34%
Short Term	10%
Long Term	13%
Ongoing	43%

A	B	C
43%	24%	37%
22%	20%	33%
27%	44%	45%
49%	27%	27%

A = Complete or Established and Ongoing

B = Partially Complete

C = Not Complete or Not Complete and Changed

The longer the timeline for a strategy's implementation, the less likely the strategy would be implemented.

Strategies that required coordination between City departments or with outside agencies were less likely to be implemented. More than half of the "studies and actions" were implemented.

Many of the coordination strategies required the establishment of new internal reviews and processes that would incorporate review from outside agencies. Generally speaking, studies and actions were items that were more likely to be operational, project-based (development or infrastructure), or internal tasks with no outside agencies involved.

Appendix B: Implementation Strategies has a complete list of the strategies and their evaluations by staff.

STRATEGY TYPE

Action or Council Action	36%
Coordination	19%
Special Study or Ongoing Study or Policy	45%

A	B	C
40%	30%	30%
35%	27%	38%
38%	29%	33%

A = Complete or Established and Ongoing

B = Partially Complete

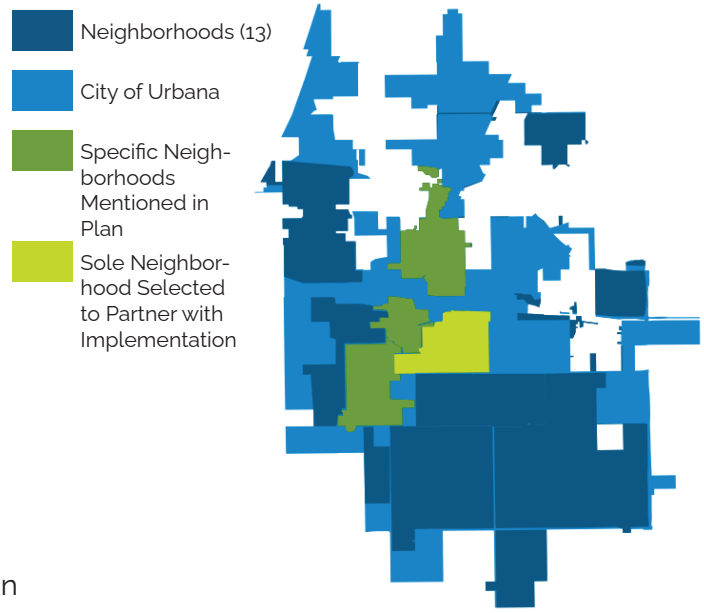
C = Not Complete or Not Complete and Changed

Individual residential neighborhoods and business districts were given varying levels of attention and suggested actions in the 2005 plan. Interestingly, implementation strategies that were specific to residential areas were not likely to be accomplished. Out of 13 neighborhoods in Urbana, only the Historic East Urbana neighborhood was identified as being in need of a study or plan. West Urbana, Downtown, and North Broadway neighborhoods were called out in specific implementation strategies. The remaining nine neighborhoods were not mentioned in the implementation strategies at all.

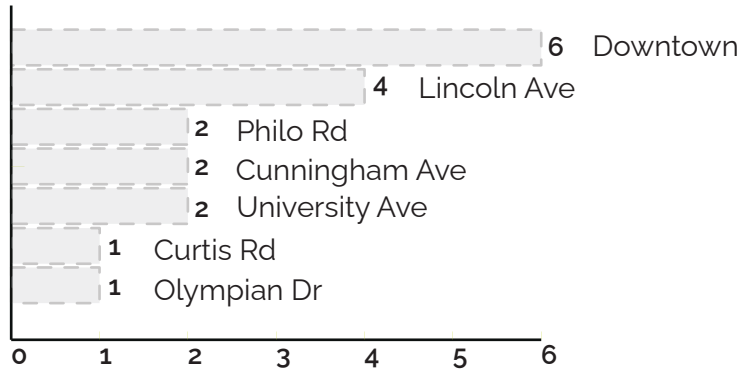
In 2008, the City adopted the Crystal Lake Neighborhood Plan as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan even though the need for a neighborhood plan was not identified as an implementation strategy in the Comprehensive Plan.

Residential Neighborhoods Mentioned in Implementation Strategies
4 out of **13**

Number of Neighborhood Plans Developed Since the Plan was Adopted
1 out of **13**



Frequency of Commercial Areas Mentioned in Implementation Strategies



Boards and Commissions Mentioned in Implementation Strategies
1 out of **24**
Historic Preservation Commission

Next Steps

Over the coming year, staff will prepare a preliminary report to summarize the public feedback and engagement process for Imagine Urbana, the City of Urbana's new Comprehensive Plan.

As feedback from our community engagement becomes more specific and theme begin to emerge, staff will be compiling information from across Urbana to provide residents, shoppers, visitors, business owners, and workers a snapshot of their Urbana, and to encourage people to expand their definition and understanding of "Urbana. "

Urbana is a wonderfully diverse community- socially, economically, and geographically. Expect to see information on the whole community that can be engaging and enlightening for anyone from Landis Farms to South Ridge, and everyone in between.