

1. Smart Growth Summary

A Vision for 2035

Evansville is a unique, inclusive and vibrant city with the atmosphere and character of a small urban village. Quality of life is high, with recreation and services easily accessible by many modes of transportation. A sense of community is promoted through urban design and mutual respect.

The historic identity of Evansville is reinforced by continuous architectural maintenance and restoration throughout the City, while innovative City policies and property owners maintain modern amenities, management practices, and energy independence. Evansville's downtown is a successful, active and attractive gathering place for shopping and community events, providing a vibrant third space for residents, employees and visitors. Evansville is an inviting place for entrepreneurs and start-ups, with many innovative businesses populating the City.

The Smart Growth Law

In 1999, the Comprehensive Planning Law, often referred to as the Smart growth Law, was adopted in Wisconsin. The law was developed to provide a framework for planning throughout the state. Up until that time, some communities were planning, but many more were making land use decisions without a long-range plan in place. Plans that did exist varied greatly from community to community with respect to their format, content, and ultimate use in the decision-making process.

The intent of Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law is to provide an open, public planning process that can result in quality, community-based plans. Plans developed under the law are rich with information about present conditions, desired future conditions and supporting goals, objectives and policies aimed at achieving the future vision of the community.

Evansville's Planning Process

The City of Evansville decided to develop this plan as a tool to balance the City's comparatively rapid growth rate (the fastest in Rock County) and desire to maintain its "small-town" charm. Evansville is a very desirable place to live with growth rates during the past two decades reflecting this fact (see chapter 3-demographic profile). In the 2014 community survey prepared as part of this planning process, 94% of respondents indicated they were very satisfied or satisfied with Evansville as a place to live. This number was 89% in the 2022 survey results. The City wants to manage new development to control potential adverse impacts to the City's character and resident satisfaction with Evansville as a place to live.

Throughout the planning process, elected officials and staff felt it was important to solicit input from a variety of stakeholders living and working in the City. A public planning process offered several opportunities for public participation including meetings, presence at community events, community-wide surveys and an interactive internet web site. The input from local stakeholders served as a guide in the development of this plan. Accordingly, information from the community survey and public meetings is highlighted within the plan.

What's in the Plan?

This plan is divided into twelve chapters organized around the required plan elements described in the planning law.

- The Introduction provides additional information about the state planning law and past City planning efforts.
- The Issues and Opportunities Chapter highlights the City's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as identified by local stakeholders. This information served as the foundation for understanding what is working in Evansville and what could be improved.
- The Community Profile examines important local demographic, economic, and housing facts and trends.
- From there, the plan moves into a series of chapters dedicated to specific topics (e.g. housing, transportation, utilities and community facilities, natural and cultural resources, and economic development). Each of these chapters includes a vision for the future, an inventory of existing conditions, a series of policies aimed at reaching the vision, and specific goals and objectives to pursue over the next 20 years. Some of the important topics discussed in these chapters include the need to maintain adequate sewer and water infrastructure to accommodate urban development, the need for a variety of housing to meet the different needs of Evansville's residents, street connectivity, walkable development patterns and economic expansion to support the tax base and provide quality local employment and shopping choices.
- Chapters 9 and 10 focus on land use. Chapter 9 profiles existing conditions, codes, and trends. Chapter 10 highlights goals for planning in Evansville and concludes with the Future Land Use Map that will serve as a guide for decision-making.
- The next chapter profiles the relationship between Evansville and its intergovernmental partners with respect to planning and development (e.g. WisDOT, WDNR, nearby towns, Rock County, Evansville Community School District and others). A central point in the chapter is the need to expand partnerships with neighboring towns and the Evansville Community School District.
- Finally, the Implementation Chapter outlines the monitoring and review process that will support plan implementation.

Goals for Planning in Evansville

In developing this plan five important goals were defined. These provide a framework for understanding future development in Evansville. Discussed at length in Chapter 10, as a means of introduction, the goals are:

- **Create a healthy, livable community that attracts quality residential and business development.**
- **Balance continued growth with the desire to maintain the City's small-town walkability, historic character.**
- **Create a destination point for residents and visitors**
- **Design new residential development to be more attractive to people who want to live in a walkable urban setting.**

A Commitment to Planning

Consistent with Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Law, Evansville will use this plan when making land use decisions (EG, land divisions, zoning changes, conditional uses, historic, and conservation). The plan is a living document and must be reviewed and revised frequently to ensure that it remains an up-to-date and effective decision-making tool.