



HOPKINS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Introduction

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CHAPTER

1

INTRODUCTION

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This chapter provides an outline of the overall structure of the Hopkins County Comprehensive Plan.

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Communities are constantly interacting with and responding to changing factors that relate to quality of life at the local level. Sometimes these changing factors are focused around local shifts, while others are responding to regional and national trends. Population demographics will shift, the economy will respond to new markets, technologies will improve, and preferences will change for services and housing. These changes will inevitably influence current and proposed uses of land, capital improvements, and existing property.

As we look into the future, we can choose to merely react to change or **anticipate and direct** the changes that occur. When engaging in a comprehensive planning process, the community is both responding to changes that have occurred and planning for change that the community would like to occur in the future.

HOPKINS COUNTY JOINT PLANNING COMMISSION

Participating members
include:

Hopkins County
City of Dawson Springs
City of Earlington
City of Hanson
City of Madisonville
City of Mortons Gap

Hopkins County is home to several individual communities looking at their future. Although they are individually focused on improvements benefiting their residents, they also recognize that the collective future of the county will largely be built upon cooperating efforts of all communities and their residents, businesses and services. The comprehensive planning process provides a holistic strategy which brings together anticipated changes and community aspirations.

The Hopkins County Joint Planning Commission (HCJPC) is a joint-governmental agency that works with its members on land use planning. HCJPC, in coordination with the cities of Hopkins County, has partnered with residents, elected officials and community stakeholders to develop this plan to address the county's future. The planning process was open to all communities and cities within Hopkins County. However, the focus of this planning effort is on the participating member communities of HCJPC.

PURPOSE

The Commonwealth of Kentucky establishes the requirement for and purpose of a comprehensive plan (KRS-100.183). The primary purpose of a comprehensive plan is to articulate a broader vision and establish guiding principles and policies for the future growth and development of an entire community. It does not focus on the needs and desires of one property owner, business or neighborhood. Comprehensive plans are intended to be broad in nature. This provides community leaders with the flexibility to implement the community-wide vision, goals and objectives while responding to changing community conditions that are likely to occur over the life of the plan. A comprehensive plan is not intended to dictate a community's budgeting process, but can be used to inform efforts and projects.

STANDARDS

The Kentucky Legislature has developed specific requirements and minimum content for a comprehensive plan (KRS-100.187). The elements of a plan, at minimum, should include:

- A **statement of goals and objectives**, which shall serve as a guide for the physical development and economic and social well-being of the planning unit;
- A **land use plan** element showing proposals for the most appropriate, economic, desirable, and feasible patterns for the general location, character, extent, and interrelationship of future use of public and private land;
- A **transportation plan** element showing proposals for the most desirable, appropriate, economic, and feasible pattern for the general location, character, and extent of the channels, routes, and terminals for transportation facilities for the circulation of persons and goods in the future;
- A **community facilities plan** element showing proposals for the most desirable, appropriate, economic, and feasible pattern for the general location, character, and the extent of public and semipublic buildings, land, and facilities in the future.

HISTORY & SETTING OVERVIEW

Hopkins County was formed in 1806 from parts of Henderson and Christian Counties and named for General Samuel Hopkins. The County is located in the western portion of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Hopkins County is within the Madisonville Micropolitan Statistical Area and is near several Metropolitan Statistical Areas in the region including: Evansville, Owensboro and Clarksville, TN.

Hopkins County's economy has historically been tied to resource extraction (1,613 employees), specifically coal, and farming. More recently, the economy has transitioned to be a mix of manufacturing (2,251 employees), health care & social assistance (2,822 employees), retail trade (2,216 employees), services (examples are accommodation & food; 2,544 employees) and trade, transportation & utilities (3,676 employees).¹

Some of the major employers in Hopkins County include healthcare facilities, local education, mining, and parts manufacturing. Specific companies in order of local employment are listed below.²

- Baptist Health Madisonville – 2,240 employees
- Alliance Resource Partners – 1,224 employees
- Hopkins Co. Schools – 1,004 employees
- Carhartt Customer Service Center – 650 employees
- GE Aircraft Engines – 635 employees
- Madisonville Community College – 330 employees

Population growth was rapid (21%) between 1970 and 1980. As of 2010, population growth has leveled and Hopkins County is home to a population of 46,920 people. A full summary of the existing conditions can be found in *Appendix A: History* and *Appendix B: Demographics*.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Hopkins County Comprehensive Plan was initiated by the Hopkins County Joint Planning Commission with the intent of serving as the community's guide for future development over the next 20 years.

Throughout the planning process, there was extensive public participation. Feedback was obtained through a Planning Committee, public meetings and workshops, "Meetings in a Box" with community interest groups, and online surveys and was used to assist in establishing the decisions and recommendations of this plan. The ideas and concepts were developed on the community's input and expressed desires. A full summary of public input can be found in *Appendix C: Public Participation*.

The framework of the plan serves as a foundation of the planning process used in creating this plan which was guided by four key questions. These questions include:

- Where are we now?
- Where are we going?
- Where would we like to go?
- How do we get there?

¹ 2011 County Business Patterns, U.S. Census Bureau

² 2013-14 Madisonville-Hopkins County Economic Development Corporation

The following graphic outlines the planning process used for developing this plan.

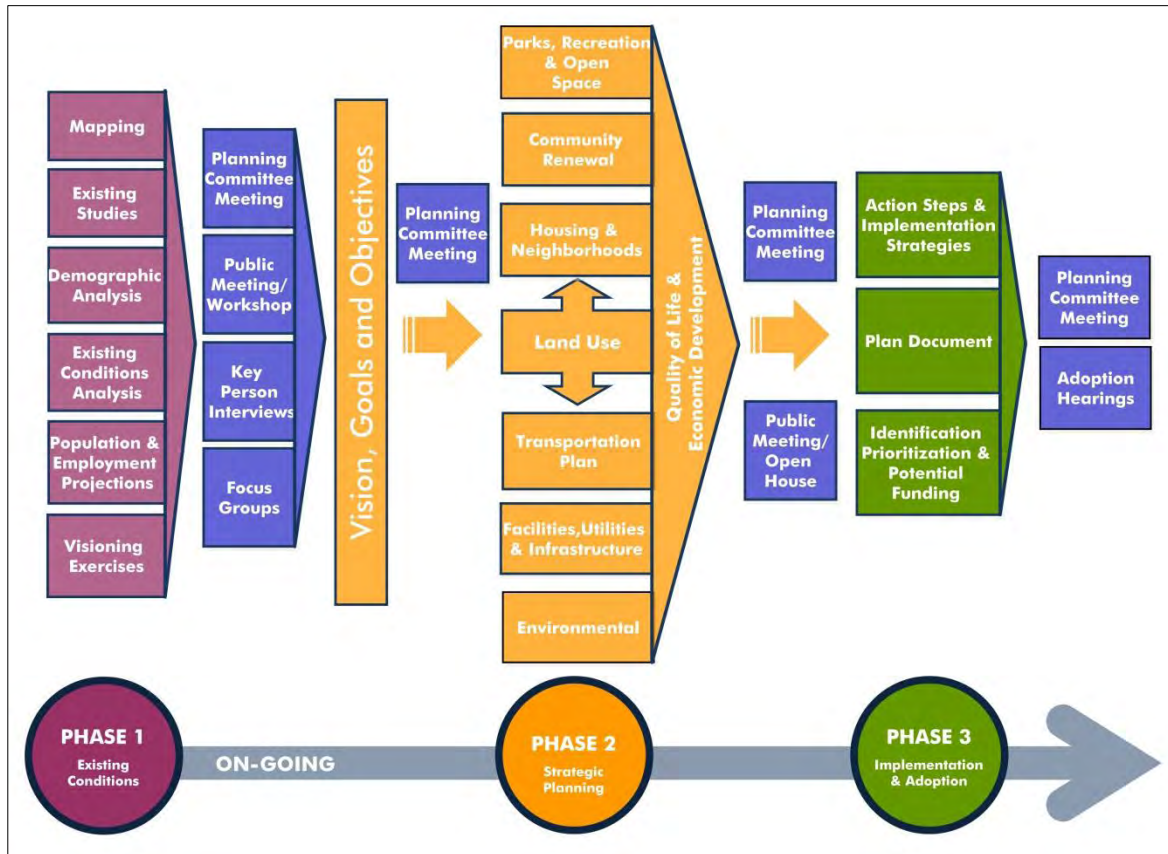


Figure: Planning Process Diagram

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This plan is the guiding document by which officials, decision makers, developers and residents can reference as development occurs. As such, the Hopkins County Comprehensive Plan should serve as the community’s guide for future development and be the basis for all decisions about the location, quality and quantity of future growth and its supporting infrastructure. Additionally, this plan is intended to be a flexible document and broad in nature. It should respond to changes or unforeseen circumstances that reinforce the vision and goals defined by the community.

The following chapters define the vision, goals, & objectives, describe the elements of the plan, present the research and analysis of the demographics and economic characteristics of Hopkins County. It also presents the implementation plan – a tool to improve the community through actionable steps – and establishes a timeline for achievement. The chapters of this comprehensive plan include:

Chapter 1: Introduction – This chapter provides a brief overview of Hopkins County’s history and setting as well as Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) requirements, the planning process and framework of the plan document. It also includes an explanation of how portions of the plan are intended to be used and definitions for key terms.

Chapter 2: Vision & Goals – This chapter provides the foundation for all of the plan’s elements. The overall goals and objectives defined in this chapter should be used to find common ground in the discussion about land use, future development and how implementation should be accomplished.

Chapter 3: Land Use – The land use chapter is the central focus of a comprehensive plan. This chapter will outline the location and quantity of growth in Hopkins County. It includes growth and land use strategies for the county, the rationale behind land use decisions, future land use maps and a description of each land use category.

Chapter 4: Transportation – This chapter coordinates future state funded projects and local needs for all forms of transportation in Hopkins County. This includes functional classifications, roadway improvements as well as bicycle and pedestrian projects.

Chapter 5: Facilities & Utilities – The utilities and facilities element identifies the current inventory and future strategies for utilities and facilities such as water, sewer, electric, gas, solid waste, emergency services, telecommunications, healthcare services, and education. These utilities and facilities are coordinated with the future growth pattern.

Chapter 6: Economic Development – This element includes strategies and policy recommendations that relate to job creation, development opportunities, and funding strategies as they relate to economic development.

Chapter 7: Housing & Neighborhoods – This chapter highlights the existing residential areas and discusses strategies and tools to make the county’s neighborhoods stable and vibrant.

Chapter 8: Community Identity – The community identity element focuses on reinforcing the identity of Hopkins County as well as the individual cities through gateway enhancements, wayfinding, historic preservation and streetscape improvements.

Chapter 9: Parks & Open Space – This chapter assesses the existing park and recreation facilities within Hopkins County in addition to identifying future strategies for parks and open spaces.

Chapter 10: Environment – The environment element discusses the geology and geologic resources within the county. Additionally soil types, prime farmland, air quality, land cover, hydrology, abandoned and active mines are reviewed. Future strategies relating to the environment are also included.

Chapter 11: Implementation – This chapter is used to identify and prioritize tasks necessary to accomplish the plan’s overall vision, goals and plan elements. Action steps are outlined in implementation tables which include a brief description of the action and identify responsible party(ies) & partners, potential funding source(s), and appropriate timelines. Specific plan goals associated with each action step are also referenced.

Appendix A: History – The historical events significant to Hopkins County and each city are included in this appendix.

Appendix B: Demographics – This appendix includes demographic and socioeconomic information about the population in addition to housing and economic factors in Hopkins County.

Appendix C: Public Participation – This section reinforces the elements presented in the various chapters by providing a summary of the public participation process. Exercise results gathered during the Planning Committee meetings and public workshops are also included.

Appendix D: Individual Community Goals & Objectives – Each member community prioritized the goals of this plan. Following this, each community tailored each goal and corresponding objectives to their individual community. This appendix contains the individual prioritization, goals and objectives for each member community.

KEY TERMS AND PHRASES

Action Plan – Specific steps that are recommended by the plan and are important to understand in order to effectively use the document and implement the plan’s vision

Goal – A broad statement that supports the vision while adding a specific area of focus. Goals are usually lofty in scope yet attainable within the planning horizon of 20 years.

Key Person/Stakeholder – A person who is in some way responsible for implementing the plan, in whole or in part, or has a vested interest in the outcome of the plan.

Objective – A statement that adds a level of specificity to the goal without identifying the individual actions that must be taken for implementation. Objectives are generally measurable so that the community can monitor implementation progress.

Planning horizon – The period of time the plan intends to address community development or the community’s vision. This plan uses a 20-year planning horizon. KRS-100 requires a review every five years to address any changes in the community.

Policy – A definite course or method of action to guide present and future decisions. Policies can be legislative or administrative in approach.

Planning Committee – A group of people chosen to represent a cross-section of the community and guide the comprehensive planning process. They serve as liaisons between the community, the consultant, and staff during the planning process.

Vision – A broad statement describing the desired future of Hopkins County.