



SECTION 14: OVERALL IMPLEMENTATION

General Implementation Recommendations

The preceding sections have presented individual implementation strategies and include topical action agendas with specific recommendations for City action. The following section contains several closing thoughts regarding general implementation of this Plan which do not fall within a specific substantive area.

By adopting this Plan, Whitehouse has taken the first step toward managing its growth, a project first initiated prior to the 1995 Comprehensive Plan. While the City has been basing zoning and growth decisions on the original Plan, that document failed to provide the needed guidance due to a variety of shortcomings and implementation problems. If the City takes this new opportunity to codify the recommendations of this document similar problems should not occur and a unified vision for growth can be maintained throughout the life of this Plan.

"When development is proposed [this Plan gives staff the ability to say] 'do we ever have the place for you...' and it's already planned... it's not hit and miss... we've been living with hit and miss way too long."

- Suzanne Loudamy

"[Something exciting to me about the planning process is that] when you start meetings like this you're working with a bunch of [citizens and committee members] who are all over the page, with information all over the place... you just have to start pulling down pieces and then you sort of back into it, and all of a sudden a light bulb goes off and you say 'this really could work.'"

- Jan Bellefeuille

Officials should be confident that the recommendations contained within this document were derived from a combination of rigorous analysis, professionally accepted planning practices, and extensive public input.

While differences of opinion are inevitable, this Plan truly represents a cooperative and collaborative product of input from citizens who are interested enough in the future of their City to participate.

This project exceeded its originally funded scope; however, many components necessary for Whitehouse to truly achieve the goals of this document require additional planning work. One such project is a reevaluation and update of the City's Zoning Ordinance. As is discussed in the

"The Zoning Ordinance that we have right now is too broad... it's not specific enough and sometimes when things are zoned or rezoned the Planning and Zoning Commission never knows exactly what we are going to get."
- Mark Sweeney

Land Use Recommendations Section of this document, the current ordinance is insufficient for full implementation of this program and will require drastic changes. Simply adopting this Plan is insufficient without the accompanying updates to the Zoning Ordinance.

"You can take a gun and put it to somebody's head and say 'Who's your mayor?' [If you did] there'd be a lot of dead people lying around here."
- Andy Irvine

Other examples of needed ongoing effort are Special District Plans focused on topics such as the Town Center or parks system. During this project many techniques were utilized to encourage public participation including some unorthodox strategies which were employed when traditional methods failed. One of the reasons these efforts were

necessary is that Whitehouse has not habitually practiced ongoing involvement with citizens. As a result, many residents within the community are under informed about opportunities to contribute their ideas and are generally detached from their municipal government.

"I don't know if the people understand the importance of the decisions that are made [in these meetings]."
- Danny Hogden

"The word doesn't get out far enough from City Hall [for people to know what's going on]. I know you guys try hard... [but] it just doesn't get out."
- Kimberly Rischard

The municipal government needs to determine ways in which increased communication between City Hall and the residents of Whitehouse can be established in order to continue the desired level of citizen input for the recommended ongoing planning projects.

The City may wish to begin working with the local newspapers to cover



committee meetings beyond just the City Council. A monthly newsletter distributed through the utility bill is another option for publicizing civic activities and events.

The City's web site could also be used in conjunction with traditional media for this purpose. Few municipal web sites have established a sufficient relationship with citizens to allow a simple online calendar to function as an announcement mechanism. Fortunately, several technologies are becoming commonly used such as RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds and podcasting, which may allow for even a low traffic site such as Whitehouse's to function in this capacity. RSS would allow citizens to sign up for an alert service which places any "headline" that the City would like to publicize on a citizen's Internet start page. As with many Internet technologies, this technique is new but is rapidly gaining acceptance by mainstream web users. RSS is becoming a default feature for start pages hosted by sites such as Yahoo and Google.

Another method for allowing busy citizens the option of participating on their own schedule would be "broadcasting" commission and committee meetings as podcasts. These programs are the Internet equivalent of traditional talk radio. The primary difference is that citizens could subscribe to various City podcasts and automatically receive the program on their portable music players or computers anytime a City meeting occurs. Regardless of which technologies or methods are utilized, it is imperative that the City continue to involve the public in ongoing planning activities.

Phasing and accomplishing individual components of large projects is repeatedly addressed within this document. Few cities have the financial resources to undertake the task of implementing a Comprehensive Plan through single brute force measures. Instead, the strength of any well conceived planning project lies with its ability to become a reality through phasing and patient implementation steps.

"We can't get [everything that this Plan calls for] done all at once but [if we can find a good place to start] then we could... because once we get the ball rolling [the rest can fall into place]."
- Ben Dieter



***"We would be a different Whitehouse if starting 10 years ago [we] stuck with our Master Plan..."
- David James***

zoning and subdivision cases.

Officials should also not feel as though this document is immutable. The Plan does not replace elected and appointed officials' experience and judgment; however, if conditions change the City should feel comfortable reassessing the recommendations of this document through a formalized amendment

process. The previous Plan quickly grew out of date and rather than executing incremental updates, City officials gradually came to distrust other components of the document. Adhering to the recommended update schedule at five-year intervals will help to avoid this situation again.

***"The two parts [of this Plan that jump out] to me are if and when [this Plan is adopted by the City] this Council should be challenged to support it and follow it the best they can, not file it in a drawer. The second thing is that not only does this Plan have pie-in-the-sky [elements] but it is also doable. Maybe not in the first year... maybe most of it happens in years 12 through 15, but the Plan is doable."
- Danny Hogden***

will fail in its mission unless the recommendations contained within are used to affect actual ordinances and City actions.

Given the community's high level of interest in this project any small accomplishments will have the ability to build momentum for larger projects. The critical factor is how well the Plan is followed in the coming months and years during countless heated

***"We looked at the proposed high density residential land use along 346 in the 1995 Plan and realized that it really didn't make sense anymore... within a matter of a year after the Plan was approved we were already saying that we didn't like that recommendation."
- Mark Sweeney***

The idea that codifying the recommendations of this Plan is a necessity has been repeated within the text of this document and reinforced with related quotes from citizen participants. However, it bears repeating that even a well written and publicly supported Comprehensive Plan



The responsibility for this implementation will fall squarely on the shoulders of the City Council. City staff and the various appointed boards, such as the Planning and Zoning Commission and Parks Board, must be given the monetary support they need to undertake the remaining planning tasks. The City Council must also pledge itself to support the staff and Commission as they implement the Plan even when political pressure is applied counter to the recommendations contained herein.

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***"Once our P&Z gets their work done then the City Council and the Mayor have to backup their work. When they come in here after hours of work and citizen input we're going to have to stand behind them and support them... because if we don't do anything with the Vision 2020 Plan then we failed in our job."
- Dale Moran***

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Overall Implementation

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