



GreenStep Cities

LAND USE DRAFT ACTIONS

Comprehensive Plan and Implementation: Adopt a comprehensive plan and tie regulatory ordinances to it.



1. ALL CITIES: Either (a) Adopt/have an adopted comprehensive plan that is less than ten years old or (b) Category A or B Cities - Adopt a land use plan that was adopted by a regional entity or the county less than ten years ago.
2. ALL CATEGORY B AND C CITIES: Demonstrate that regulatory ordinances comply with the comprehensive plan including but not limited to having the zoning ordinance explicitly reference the comprehensive plan as the foundational document for decision making.

Optional actions: cities can claim credit for implementing one of the “floating best practices” by:



3. CATEGORY A AND B CITIES: Include requirements in comprehensive plans for intergovernmental coordination dealing with at least six of the following issues: transportation, watershed impacts, land use, economic development, police, fire, health, sewer and water.
4. CATEGORY C CITIES: Include provisions in the comprehensive plan to explicitly achieve the following goals:
 - a. Minimize the fragmentation and development of agricultural, forest, wildlife, and open space lands in or around the city.
 - b. If the city is adjacent to undeveloped land, establishes a growth area with staging criteria that reflects projected population growth and, if applicable, is subject to an orderly annexation agreement and planned extension of municipal services.
 - c. Reduce vehicle miles traveled by encouraging development of new business, industry, housing, recreation, and government facilities in a way that supports more compact communities, transit, and nonmotorized forms of travel.



Higher Density: Enable and encourage a higher density of housing or commercial land use.

Take at least one of the following actions (numbered 1 – 5) to implement this best practice:

1. Limit barriers to higher density housing:
 - a. Include in the zoning ordinance and zoning map a zoning district that allows traditional urban neighborhood single family density (at least six units per acre).
 - b. Include in the zoning ordinance and zoning map a zoning district that allows multi-family housing (attached housing, apartments, condos) at a gross density of at least 15 units per acre adjacent to a commercial zoning district or transit center.



2. Encourage higher density housing:
 - a. Incorporate a flexible lot size/frontage requirement for infill development.
 - b. Use density and floor area ratio (FAR) bonuses in some residential and commercial zoning districts to encourage community goals that are not otherwise achieved through regulation (such as climate protection, affordable housing, green infrastructure protection).
 - c. Create economic incentives for infill development or redevelopment.
 - d. Have a regulatory standard tied to comprehensive plan language defining compact city expansion zones that limit sprawl.
 - e. Allow accessory dwelling units by right in selected zoning districts.
3. Encourage a higher intensity of commercial land uses:
 - a. Include in the zoning district and map a commercial district with reduced lot sizes and zero-lot-line setbacks, or FAR minimum between .75 and 1.
 - b. Reduce minimum parking requirements in walkable or transit-accessible commercial districts, or allow shared parking to meet minimums, or set parking maximums.
4. Provide one or more of the following incentives for (a) infill projects or (b) life-cycle housing near job or retail centers, or (c) achieving an average net residential density of seven units per acre:
 - a. Building permit fee discount
 - b. Expedited permit review
 - c. Grant or tax breaks
5. Modify zoning ordinances and map to allow, without variances or rezonings, developments that meet the prerequisites for LEED-Neighborhood Development certification.

Efficient and Healthy Development Patterns: Mix land uses.

To implement this best practice, Category C cities must implement at least two of the following actions. Category A and B cities choose one action to implement this best practice:

1. Create a National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street Program or organize a Minnesota Design Team planning charrette.
2. Locate or lease a new government facility (city building, library or school, and county, state or federal facility) near existing employment or residential centers, and ensure that the facility is pedestrian, bike, or transit accessible.
3. Modify a planned unit development (PUD) ordinance to emphasize mixed use development or to limit residential PUDs to areas adjacent to commercial development.
4. Certify a new development as complying with LEED-ND standards, including the mixed-use credits.
5. Create, or modify an existing, downtown zoning district to allow residential and small compatible commercial development, as described in *Model Ordinances for Sustainable Development: Village Mixed-Use District* or *Downtown Mixed-Use District*.
6. Create, or modify an existing, district to use form-based zoning standards and de-emphasize use-based standards.
7. Create incentives for vertical mixed-use development in appropriate locations (downtown, commercial districts near colleges or universities, historic commercial districts).

See also actions under the *Higher Density* and *Demand-Side Travel Planning* best practices.

Efficient Highway-Oriented Development: Adopt commercial development and design standards for highway road corridors.

1. For small cities not in metropolitan areas, create or modify a highway commercial zoning district that permits only traffic-dependent commercial land uses, or those businesses not appropriate for downtown.
2. Conduct a visual preference survey with community members and establish design goals for highway corridors.
3. Participate in regional economic development planning with representatives from surrounding townships, cities and the county to (1) estimate commercial/industrial needs among all jurisdictions and (2) jointly implement recommendations to stage highway commercial development, preventing overbuilding and sprawl.
4. Adopt transportation infrastructure design standards that facilitate clustering of commercial highway development, such as serial roundabouts along a highway-oriented commercial district.
5. For cities outside, or on the fringe of, metropolitan areas, adopt a concurrency/adequate public facilities ordinance that stages highway commercial development with infrastructure expansion.
6. Modify and adopt the Highway Commercial District ordinance from Minnesota's 2009 *Model Ordinances for Sustainable Development*.
7. Require decommissioning/bonding for big box stores to limit the risk of highway commercial blight.

See also actions under the *Complete Green Streets* best practice.

Conservation Design - Adopt development ordinances or processes that protects natural systems.

1. Conduct a Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment (NRI and NRA) and incorporate protection of priority natural systems or resources in the subdivision or development process, as described in Minnesota's *Model Sustainable Development Ordinances: Model Community Conservation Subdivision District* and the *Model Natural Resources Performance Standards*.
2. For cities outside or on the fringe of metropolitan areas, conduct a cost of public services study for development outside the city grid and adopt development standards or a concurrency (adequate public facilities) ordinance to ensure staged urban growth that protects natural systems in undeveloped areas.
3. For cities within metropolitan areas, incorporate best management practices from *Conserving Wooded Areas in Developing Communities* (DNR: 2000) into zoning or development review.
4. For cities with undeveloped natural resource areas use, or adopt as policy the use of the North Central Lakes Collaborative's Conservation Design Scorecard as a tool when negotiating with a developer as part of a PUD process or in creating a development agreement.
5. Develop and fund a conservation easement program or a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program in collaboration with a land trust.