



INTRODUCTION





I. INTRODUCTION

This comprehensive plan is a guide for the Town of Dillsboro's future. The community seeks to improve the quality of life for its existing and future residents, focusing on the existing benefits within the community and developing a plan for future growth.

As the Town of Dillsboro and other Indiana Communities within the Greater Cincinnati Metropolitan Area continue to grow during the next ten years, the community will experience changes in development, transportation, population, and in services such as parks, sewers, and public safety. All of these changes will have potential effects upon the quality of life of the residents of the Dillsboro Community.

The future of Dillsboro will be dependent upon a balance of growth and the necessary public services and facilities that can support this growth. This will be accomplished through commitments to:

- Sound Comprehensive Planning
- Diligent Protection of Natural Resources and Agricultural Land
- Maintaining a Long-Range View of the Public Interest When Evaluating Land Use Issues

The final outcome of these planning efforts requires all to acknowledge that the public good is affected by private and community development. The individual actions of landowners, developers, and residents affect the whole community. Similarly, the actions taken by the Town through zoning and investments in infrastructure also contribute to the overall development of the Dillsboro Community.



A. The Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan is an official public document adopted by a local government to serve as a policy to guide decisions about the development of the community. As a policy guide, it must recognize the interdependence of land use decisions, resource management, the process of governing, and the physical infrastructure of the built environment.

What does a Comprehensive Plan do?

Because it is comprehensive, the plan provides guidance to the decision-making process of the *Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Town Manager, and Town Council*. Officials within these groups have been empowered to protect community character and natural resources, ensure efficient expenditure of public funds, and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of those living within the Town of Dillsboro. A comprehensive plan is developed as a vision for the community's future and a road map for community decision-making.

How is a Comprehensive Plan Developed?

A successful comprehensive plan relies upon resident participation to represent the voices of a wide range of citizens. Their input is an essential element to formulate the goals and objectives of the plan. These activities define a course of action that the Town of Dillsboro needs to undertake to maintain a vision for the future.

It is critical that the document represents those individuals who have been active participants in the planning process and identifies the actual interests of area residents. Through community workshops, public hearings, and meetings with the *Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and Town Council*, the Comprehensive Plan is a statement about the Town's future, by and for the people of the Dillsboro Community.



Indiana Code 36-7-4-201 specifies that comprehensive plans should “encourage units to improve the health, safety, convenience, and welfare of their citizens and to plan for the future development of their communities...” The “Goals and Objectives” section of this plan has been designed with the following general principles in mind, as specified in IC 36-7-4-201:

- Carefully plan transportation systems.
- Allow growth with adequate provisions for public ways, utilities, healthcare, educational opportunities, and recreational facilities.
- Consider the needs of industry in future growth decisions.
- Ensure that residential areas help to create healthy surroundings for family life.
- Support growth of the community through a proportionate and efficient expenditure of public funds.



What is the value of a Comprehensive Plan?

The value of a comprehensive plan is to articulate the community's future vision and how it will move toward that vision. To some degree all development is planned, but a comprehensive plan looks at all of the pieces as a whole, coordinating efforts to avoid duplication and limit expensive public expenditures. It protects the general welfare of the community by ensuring quality development occurs in the right locations and that incompatible uses are not adjacent. A comprehensive plan promotes *proactive thinking* about issues central to the community, rather than addressing them in a reactive manner. Planning can provide numerous benefits to a community, including:

- Helping local government provide efficient services.
- Ensuring that developers will pay their fair share of improvements needed as a direct result of their development projects.
- Directing development to areas capable of handling increased growth pressures.
- Coordinating capital improvement expenditures.
- Protecting property values.
- Preserving and enhancing community character.
- Improving the quality of life.
- Preventing incompatible development from locating in a residential neighborhood.
- Providing a circulation network of safe streets and sidewalks.
- Limiting and mitigating impacts to natural resources of all types.

The Dillsboro Comprehensive Plan contains the following sections:

- Introduction
- Community Profile
- Public Participation
- Action Plan

The Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Dillsboro includes the following major recommendations:

- Increase the number of people involved in community events, activities, and general leadership.
- Provide adequate community services to support new growth.
- Encourage economic investment within the community.
- Provide a broader range of products and services in the community.
- Promote carefully-planned growth.
- Encourage quality development, redevelopment, and revitalization.
- Promote the efficient use of land.
- Increase residential investment in the community.
- Provide a wide-range of housing options within the community.
- Capitalize on existing transportation infrastructure.
- Promote collaborations and partnerships to address regional decisions that may affect the community.
- Enhance the community identity of the Town of Dillsboro.
- Reinforce community pride.
- Protect the small town character of Dillsboro.

Ultimately, the implementation of the Dillsboro Comprehensive Plan requires the recognition and acceptance that public interest is affected by both personal and community actions.

If one overall goal exists for this document, it is to help the Dillsboro Community to analyze its decisions for the future within the context of its local character, history, and traditions.



B. 2007 Comprehensive Plan

This Comprehensive Plan is the first document of its kind completed for the Town of Dillsboro. The development of the document relies heavily on guidance from community leaders, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, and comments from the general public.

Over the past twenty years, many communities across the nation have realized that planning with community participation is the most effective way to plan. The residents of Dillsboro are the true experts on community issues within their community. The assembled planning team members from Bonar Group serve only as facilitators and information transmitters to guide the community and its leaders in identifying, inventorying, and formalizing the informal planning that they undertake in their daily lives.

The planning process was designed to enhance day-to-day planning efforts by increasing the information available to leaders and citizens to make informed decisions. The intent was to establish a dynamic planning process that would continue to facilitate and stimulate communication among community stakeholders well into the future. This approach to planning ensures that future development and community decisions and activities will continue to adapt to the changing needs and demands of the community as a whole.

The Comprehensive Plan process was undertaken to establish a new framework to guide land-based decision-making for the incorporated areas of the town, possible extra-territorial jurisdiction areas, and any areas that may be annexed in the future. The policies contained in this document are aimed at promoting public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, and the general welfare and the efficient provision of services during all stages of development. Ultimately, it outlines the needs of the community, sets policies that address planning issues, and recommends appropriate actions to achieve the desired results.



Project Partners

Town Council: Dillsboro is governed by a Town Council, which consists of five elected officials who are responsible for the administration of town business. The powers and duties of the council (related to planning and development) include the following: managing town property, constructing and maintaining roads, operating and funding services/ programs, approving and passing ordinances (including zoning-related ordinances), levying taxes for public services, and sitting on or making appointments to various commissions and boards, including the Plan Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals.

The Town Council holds the legislative authority (under Indiana Code) to adopt the Dillsboro Comprehensive Plan and implements all planning-related policies and strategies for the incorporated area. Implementation will take place with the guidance of the Plan Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA), and acting Zoning Administrator. The Town Council is also the fiscal authority for the local government. They provide funds for the completion of the comprehensive plan document and will assist in the ongoing implementation of the plan through the Plan Commission's operating budget.

Town Manager: The Town Manager is a full-time paid position that helps to direct the general welfare of the Town of Dillsboro. This position is responsible for day-to-day operations of the Police Department, Volunteer Fire Department, City Utilities, Road Department, and also oversees the activities and maintenance of civic properties, including the Town Hall, Fire House, Water Towers, Sewage Treatment Plant, the Community Park, and other public utility properties. The Town Manager also acts as a liaison between the community and many regional and county representatives for issues and concerns related to the Town of Dillsboro. Also, this person often acts as a grant administrator, zoning administrator, and office manager.

Steering Committee: The steering committee draws from a variety of different public organizations and offices. It also includes concerned citizens who wanted to play an active role in the Comprehensive Plan process. The steering committee acts as the voice of the public as provided by a diverse group of community representatives. Upon review and approval of the Dillsboro Comprehensive Plan, it is the Dillsboro Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee's responsibility to recommend the adoption of the document to the Plan Commission.



Bonar Group – Planning Services Area: Bonar Group was the primary consultant for the Dillsboro Comprehensive Plan under the direction of the Town Manager, Town Council, and the Steering Committee. Bonar Group provided the services of its Planning Director, Project Planner, and Mapping Specialist, as well as other members of the firm to form the Planning Team. This team gathered and processed the data for the community profile, facilitated workshops and meetings, provided expertise in all phases of the project, and drafted the comprehensive planning document.

Process

The Town Council initiated the Comprehensive Plan Update to ensure that the plan reflects the ongoing changes within the region; including the growth pressures from the Cities of Aurora and Lawrenceburg, as well as the Cincinnati Metropolitan Area.

The Dillsboro Comprehensive Plan is to be used by policy makers as a tool for guiding decisions and the development of ordinances, but it can also serve the development community as a reference to make informed development choices. The following basic principles guide this comprehensive plan:

- Decision-making processes should recognize and integrate short-term and long-term land use, transportation, environmental, and economic development options.
- Planning efforts should be coordinated between all levels of government.
- Cost-effective solutions should have primary consideration.
- Citizen participation should remain an integral part of the implementation and amendment process.

Phase I: Initiating a Plan - The first phase of the planning process started with the Town Council's realization that a comprehensive plan was needed. Subsequently, the local officials dealt with administrative tasks while setting up the project framework. This preparation phase included:

- Securing funding.
- Choosing the consultant.
- Negotiating the Scope of Work.
- Creating the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.
- Creating base maps to record data and researching relevant publications.
- Coordinating public participation activities and establishing meeting schedules.

Phase II: Data Gathering and Analysis - The second phase of the planning process involved implementing a variety of data gathering activities. The existing condition of facilities, services, and land development were gathered and analyzed. The majority of this data is located within the Community Profile Section. Some of these tasks included:

- Surveying current land uses, classifying each parcel by principal use.
- Reviewing US Census Data and county records to construct a community profile based upon demographic, socio-economic, and development-related information.
- Gathering existing data on local utilities, community services, and regional amenities.

Phase III: Public Participation – Resident participation was an important portion of the Comprehensive Plan process. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was consulted throughout all the phases of the planning process to discuss issues important to them and the community. Additionally, the community played an active role by participating in public meetings and workshops, geared toward both adults and children to identify critical issues and other important community information. A more thorough investigation of these activities is presented in the Public Participation Section of this plan.

Phase IV: Draft Plan Development - This planning phase included revisions to the future land-use map and the organization of the information gathered to create a draft plan. Comments gathered at public meetings provided the essential information for textual components. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee participated by reviewing the goals and objectives and offering comments and suggestions. Following the receipt of these comments, the final goals and objectives were presented and agreed upon. Once these were completed, a draft plan was presented to the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee for review and comment.

Phase V: Final Plan Completion - In the final phase, revisions and edits were made based upon the comments and feedback from community members and leaders. Additional information, maps, and graphics were added to the document, as well as the final future land-use map. A final document was recommended by the Dillsboro Plan Commission to the Dillsboro Town Council for further review and its final adoption.