

Introduction and Overview



GETTING STARTED

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Land use planning decisions made by Indiana plan commissions, city and town councils, boards of zoning appeals (BZA) and municipalities are influenced by multiple factors such as federal, state and local regulations; community values and economic and environmental considerations. While state government provides the authority to city and county government units to pursue self-determined goals through comprehensive planning, it is up to each body to develop plans that achieve community goals. Additionally, municipal and county governments are responsible for protecting public health, safety and welfare within their jurisdiction through regulation of land use, spatial patterns and regulation of development, investment in infrastructure

for water resource management and conservation strategies for green space. Implementation of local plans and ordinances directly impacts the quality of Indiana's environment and community quality of life. This document is intended to serve local boards, commissions and their staffs as an educational resource for informed decision-making on current and emerging land use issues in Indiana.

Through the Land Use Team, Purdue Extension supports land use education, training and technical assistance for local government officials, citizen plan commissioners, board of zoning appeals members and residents. Indiana is the only state in the United States in which Extension Educators may be required to serve on Area and Advisory Plan Commissions by legislative mandate. Therefore, Purdue University is uniquely positioned to leverage this mandate to support Extension

programming that addresses current and emerging land use issues in Indiana. Similarly, the Indiana Land Resources Council collects information and provides educational assistance, technical assistance and advice to local governments regarding land use issues and policy across the state.

Purdue Extension and the Indiana Land Resources Council collaboratively developed this guidance document to support plan commission members and local government officials and staff with resources and examples to integrate agriculture and natural resources as part of community land use planning efforts for developing or updating comprehensive plans. Each document in the series provides an overview of the topic, economic development considerations, community examples and resources to make connections for local land use planning efforts.

This guidance document series is to be used for education purposes only and adapted to each community's local context as appropriate. The information included is not intended to provide specific recommendations for policies or decisions.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Due to the technical nature of planning for agriculture and natural resources, residents and stakeholders bring varying degrees of knowledge, training and information to the planning process. Engaging residents and other stakeholders early in a process to provide input for a local agriculture or natural resources planning effort is important for building trust and communicating about how the community will look and function in the future. Public participation can be any process that directly engages the public in decision-making and gives consideration to public input in the final decision (International Association for Public Participation, 2017).

Indiana's Open Door Law (ODL) ensures the public can access meetings held by public agencies (Indiana Public Access Counselor, 2011). However, how a board or commission engages with the community beyond the statutorily required minimum number of meetings is up to the local leadership. There are several methods to increase public participation, ranging from simple information-sharing strategies to more complex workshop activities. The types of public participation selected for the planning activity depends on the

complexity of the project, the target audience and the types of decisions being made. The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) designed the public participation spectrum to assist public agencies with communicating about the intent of public participation in a planning process. The stages include:

- Inform (information about the agency planning process),
- Consult (obtain and consider feedback),
- Involve (public has access to decision makers and the decision-making process),
- Collaborate (public is involved in decision-making and consensus building) and
- Empower (public has opportunity to make decisions though voting or ballots) (International Association for Public Participation, 2017).

Designing a local process for public participation takes into account the different levels of participation. Not all stages may be used in a public input series. Many public input activities fall within the consult, involve and collaborate stages. However, there are several tools and methods to use during each stage of a public participation process. Tools and strategies to share information may be used to inform residents and other stakeholders about a planning process and upcoming opportunities for public input. Outreach for comprehensive plans will always include publication or notice as outlined in IC 5-3-1. Additional outreach strategies to inform residents of a planning process and opportunities for participation may also include flyers, informational postcards, community signs, newsletters, newspaper articles or announcements, emails and postings on official websites and social media accounts, such as government Facebook, Twitter or NextDoor. Engagement tools and methods that generate feedback as part of a decision-making process include collaborative workshops, focus groups, interviews and study circles where residents have an opportunity to provide input on design preferences and brainstorm important assets and opportunities to build into their community vision. Additional input mechanisms such as online surveys and social media marketing campaigns provide the opportunity to reach larger populations. These methods can provide robust feedback. However, please keep in mind that surveys and marketing campaigns also require expertise and financial resources to effectively design, launch and analyze results.

Advisory boards that focus on seeking consensus and agreement provide the opportunity for collaboration and shared decision-making. This can also be the most time-intensive form of public participation. As with any public input process, specific focus should be given to reaching out as broadly as possible to provide equitable access for participation and to place emphasis on engaging underrepresented populations. Working in collaboration with local community groups, faith-based institutions and other social organizations will assist those designing the engagement process in tailoring efforts to the needs of the stakeholders. The references section below contains several options for designing a community engagement process appropriate for the scale of your planning process, target audiences, budget and timeframe.

Furthermore, private consulting planners and Purdue Extension staff working in collaboration with a plan commission and local staff can serve important functions as neutral parties to support communication, education, technical assistance and facilitation during a community engagement process. Working with a trained facilitator familiar with planning processes to co-design and lead community meetings, workshops and outreach strategies for public input can help to resolve conflicts, develop a shared community vision, formulate creative solutions and achieve objectives. The featured community engagement example to the right highlights how Bartholomew County utilized an advisory committee structure, engaged a trained facilitator to design and run meetings, and conducted community outreach and engagement practices as part of a countywide concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) regulation study.

Supporting a public participation process provides a pathway for direct dialogue with experts and local decision makers. When done well, outreach and engagement opportunities provide a platform for diverse groups to convene for decision-making and communication about important issues related to the environment and local planning.

COMMUNITY EXAMPLE: BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY – CAFO REGULATION STUDY COMMITTEE

Contributed by Kristine Medic, Purdue University Extension, Bartholomew County (former)

In 2014, the Bartholomew County Commissioners called for a study of local land use regulations as applied to CAFOs. Over the course of a year and a half, the CAFO Regulation Study Committee was charged with reviewing, evaluating and making recommendations for revisions to the standards within the Bartholomew County Zoning Ordinance.

The committee consisted of a County Commissioner, County Plan Commission members, representatives from departments of government (Surveyor, Soil and Water Conservation, Health) and county residents. The committee members represented a range of interests among residents. The county Purdue Extension ANR/Community Development Educator served as the facilitator in the process. The following are some important points relative to the committee's charge and process:

- *Keep options open*
 - The County Commissioners asked that the committee work to keep options open for farm families and landowners, consistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan.
 - The committee focused on the future to consider all types of CAFO operations that might be developed.
- *Focus on zoning only*
 - Zoning was the committee's only tool, to primarily focus on location.
 - Zoning does not regulate odor, emissions or discharges; nor does it regulate animal welfare or off-site manure application. Zoning guides the location of land uses to minimize conflicts.
 - The committee worked to understand the total regulatory environment so that zoning recommendations made by the committee were consistent with other rules.
 - Local zoning is just one set of regulations under which livestock operations must function.
 - The committee was asked by planning staff to bring current zoning language into alignment with existing state regulations.

- Because the focus was forward-looking, past applications to the BZA were not considered for discussion.
- *Clarify the role of Purdue Extension*
 - “ANR Educators do not serve on a plan commission as an advocate, nor should they be perceived as an advocate, for any one individual or interest group. . . . As a Purdue employee who has access to research-based information and facts, the Educator provides accurate information and resources to the commission as a part of the decision-making process,” according to Purdue Extension’s publication titled *The Role of the Extension Educator on the Plan Commission*.
 - As facilitator, the role in the process was to support the committee’s decision-making by finding research-based information and sources and fostering a process that finds solutions in the county’s best interest.
- *Open to the public*
 - Interested residents observed meetings from the audience and addressed the committee briefly at the end of meetings relative to the topic of the day.
 - The committee’s schedule, topics and meeting notes were posted on the Purdue Extension Bartholomew County’s website and communicated by local news media.
 - The drafts of committee recommendations to the Plan Commission were available for public review.

After more than 20 meetings, three field trips, an open house, a survey and additional work, the CAFO Regulation Study Committee forwarded its findings to the Columbus/Bartholomew Planning Department staff, which used the majority recommendations on setbacks and acreage to revise the zoning code. Revisions were then forwarded to the Plan Commission and, finally, to the County Commissioners for adoption.

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