

**City of Atlanta Bureau of Planning**

**Minimum Small Area Comprehensive Plan Requirements**

The following are the minimum plan requirements for small area comprehensive plans to be considered for adoption into the City of Atlanta’s Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP). *Please note that the satisfaction of these requirements does not guarantee that a plan will be adopted into the CDP* – the plan must undergo the normal internal review and legislative process once it has been completed and submitted.

These requirements are given in two parts: the **minimum plan contents** part (A) identifies the sections and information that a comprehensive plan must contain, and the **minimum plan process** part (B) lists the basic process steps and requirements that the plan must undergo. Part (C) gives **minimum requirements for maps**.

**A. Plan Contents**

The following section lists the minimum content of a small area comprehensive plan. The actual sequential organization of the planning document(s) may be determined by the author, however, plans must address the following topics, *at a minimum*:

	<b>Plan Section</b> ▪ Subsection	<b>Notes</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>Executive Summary</b>	The Executive Summary should be a short (1-2 page) <b>overview</b> of the process, plan, and participants. It should highlight any major themes of the plan.
<b>B</b>	<b>Community Vision and Goals</b>	This section must represent the <b>agreed vision and goals</b> of the affected communities. The vision statement should be general and long-term. Goals should be more specific and realistic. It is usually helpful if goals are organized by short/medium/long term (you might use the Implementation Strategy – section G – to help with this. Objectives, if they are included, should be very specific and measurable.
<b>C</b>	<b>Existing Conditions</b>	<p>The Existing Conditions section should describe the <b>current state of the study area</b> in factual terms (including inventories as appropriate). It may also characterize those conditions relative to the vision and goals of the plan (as strengths, weaknesses, inadequacies, etc.)</p> <p>The Existing Conditions section must identify <b>projects that are currently planned</b> for the area (a current CDP can help with this).</p> <p>This section should not present specific recommendations.</p>

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C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demographics and Socio-Economics</li> </ul>	This subsection must include a description of current income, racial, disability, age, and educational attainment characteristics of the community.
C2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Land Use</li> </ul>	This subsection must include a <b>comprehensive map</b> of existing land uses.
C3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Housing</li> </ul>	This subsection must include information on current housing stock, including housing type, vacancy, tenure, and condition.
C4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transportation</li> </ul>	<p>This subsection must include descriptions of the condition of all transportation modes, including automobile, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit, and freight (rail and truck).</p> <p>Note: Plans that contain recommendations for <b>major transportation improvements</b> (such as roadway expansion, intersection reconfiguration, bridges, rail transit) will be required to justify these recommendations based upon specific transportation data. This may require the participation of transportation specialists, such as engineers and analysts.</p>
C5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Environment</li> </ul>	This subsection must include a general description of environmental conditions (water bodies, brownfields, etc.)
C6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Infrastructure and Facilities</li> </ul>	This subsection must include a general description of existing conditions of sewer, storm water, fire, police, EMT, schools, etc.
C7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Urban Design and Historic Resources</li> </ul>	This subsection must include a general characterization of urban design in the area and general conditions of historic resources of all types (buildings, landmarks, historic sites, etc.)
D	<b>Planning Methodology</b>	<p>This section must <b>describe the process</b> that was used to analyze the existing conditions, and then synthesize the recommendations (that is, the problem solving process). For example: Was a formal process used? Was it iterative? Was it highly inclusive, such as a workshop or <i>charrette</i>? Did it involve functional experts? Was any transportation analysis or modeling done?</p> <p>This section does not have to be highly detailed, but should serve to show that the recommendations were arrived at through a rational process.</p>
E	<b>Public Participation</b>	<p>This section must include a description of the public involvement plan, and a description of the execution of that plan. It should include dates, locations, and descriptions of major meetings and approximate attendance. It should identify the major stakeholders of the plan and the extent to which they were involved in plan development.</p> <p>In addition, this section must describe any efforts to involve traditionally underrepresented populations, such as the disabled, the young, the elderly, the indigent, etc.</p>

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<b>F</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>This section gives recommendations for closing the gap between the existing conditions and the community vision. The subsections should be descriptive, not just lists of projects. Why are certain recommendations being made? How do they relate to the community's goals?</p> <p>This section (and subsections) must identify how the plan recommendations support the <b>city-wide goals</b> and policies given in the Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP).</p> <p>With the exception of the General Recommendations, subsections may be <b>organized</b> by functional area (land use, transportation, etc.) as shown below, or by geographical subarea if that is more appropriate.</p>
F1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ General Recommendations</li> </ul>	<p>This subsection should describe the <b>high-level recommendations</b> that cross-functional areas (for example, specific activity center developments, major corridor enhancements, etc.).</p>
F2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Land Use and Zoning Recommendations</li> </ul>	<p>This subsection must include a <b>map</b> that identifies specific recommended future land use changes. The map must use City of Atlanta land use categories.</p> <p>This subsection may also generally describe recommended changes to existing zoning where necessary.</p>
F3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Housing Recommendations</li> </ul>	<p>This subsection should describe recommendations for housing and housing priorities for the area.</p>
F4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transportation Recommendations</li> </ul>	<p>This subsection should give recommendations for transportation improvements. It should include recommendations for all transportation modes, as appropriate.</p>
F5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Infrastructure and Facilities Recommendations</li> </ul>	<p>This subsection should describe the recommendations for infrastructure, such as sanitary sewer, water, and storm sewer. It should also give any recommendations for community services and facilities, such as parks (reflect in Land Use recommendations as well), police, fire, libraries, schools, etc.)</p>
F6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Urban Design, and Historic Resources Recommendations</li> </ul>	<p>This section should describe recommended urban design considerations and standards for specific subareas. It should also give any recommendations for preservation or enhancement of historic resources.</p>
<b>G</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<p>The Implementation section of the plan describes <b>what projects</b> should specifically be carried out, the <b>timeframe</b> for implementing those projects, and the <b>funding strategies</b> for capitol projects.</p>
G1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implementation Strategy and Project Summary</li> </ul>	<p>The Implementation Strategy subsection should describe the <b>overall approach to implementing the plan</b> recommendations. Which recommendations should be implemented first, and why? What should be implemented next? What are the high-level dependencies among the recommendations? How can public improvements be used judiciously? How will fiscal constraints</p>

		<p>influence the overall implementation? What funding sources should be relied on?</p> <p>This subsection must also give a <b>summary</b> of the recommended projects, summarized by implementation phase, total cost, and funding source.</p> <p>It must also explicitly state any recommended changes or updates to existing planned projects.</p>
G2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implementation Projects</li> </ul>	<p>This subsection must give the <b>details</b> for recommended implementation projects. All implementation projects must support one or more community goals, and must be identified in one or more recommendations.</p> <p><b>Projects may be organized</b> by implementation phase (introduced in the Implementation Strategy), or by functional area (land use, transportation, urban design, etc.).</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Plans that contain recommendations for <b>major transportation improvements</b> (such as roadway expansion, intersection reconfiguration, bridges, rail transit) will be required to justify these recommendations based upon specific transportation data. This may require the input of transportation specialists, such as engineers and analysts.</p> <p>This section must include <b>details and assumptions regarding cost estimates</b> (for example, “Design costs were estimated at 15% of construction costs.”)</p> <p><b>Implementation projects must include the following information:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Unique Project ID</b>, within the plan (e.g, T1, T2, T3, LU1, Z1, ...)</li> <li>• <b>Project Name</b></li> <li>• <b>Project Description</b>, including project extents or termini, if applicable, and justification</li> <li>• <b>Implementation Phase</b> or Priority</li> <li>• <b>Implementation Year</b></li> <li>• <b>Cost Estimate</b>, broken down by phase (for example: transportation projects should include concept plan, design/preliminary engineering, ROW acquisition, construction). If the cost for a phase is unknown or highly variable, it should be identified as “to be determined (TBD).”</li> <li>• <b>Concept Plan Required?</b> Indicates that more planning must be done to adequately determine project requirements, costs, etc.).</li> <li>• <b>ROW Required?</b> Indicates if there is a possibility that the project will require ROW acquisition.</li> <li>• <b>Estimating Assumptions</b> (For example, “Assumed that no rebuilding of the RR bridge is necessary.”)</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Recommended Funding Source(s)</b><sup>1</sup></li><li>• <b>Responsible Organization</b></li></ul>
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<sup>1</sup> It is assumed that the author is familiar with the requirements and criteria of the funding sources indicated, and that the project as described is eligible to be funded using that source.

## **B. Required Process**

Small area plans must incorporate the following elements into their development process.

**B.1 Initial Consultation** – An initial planning consultation must be held with the Bureau of Planning to discuss time frame, study boundaries, roles and responsibilities, etc.

**B.2 Notice** – Notice of the planning process, including indication of the study area, must be made to as wide an audience as possible. At a minimum:

A2.2.1 -- All **property owners** within the study area must be notified, as well as those who own property within three hundred feet of the study area. Notice must be made at least two weeks in advance of the start of the planning process.

A2.2.2 – The affected **Neighborhood Planning Unit(s)** (NPU(s)) must be notified. The planning study must appear on the NPU agenda(s) before the study begins, and a representative must give an overview of the planning process at a regularly scheduled NPU meeting at least two weeks prior to the start of the planning process. Status of the planning effort must be made at each regularly scheduled NPU meeting during the course of the planning study.

It is **highly advisable** to notify residents, employees, business owners, and other organizations that are active in the study area as well.

**B.3 Review of Recommendations** – A review of proposed recommendations must be scheduled and held with the Bureau of Planning.

**B.4 Public Evaluation and Review** -- A minimum of **three** public meetings must be held:

- (1) A **kick-off meeting** at the beginning of the planning process, indicating the schedule, process, and contact information for those who have questions.
- (2) A **presentation of the draft plan**, and
- (3) A **presentation of the final plan**.

The amount of time between the presentation of the draft plan and presentation of the final plan must be sufficient to allow community members to understand the draft, ask questions, and respond with comments. **Minutes** must be kept for all meetings, and made available on request.

Note that **three public meetings is a bare minimum** for a proper planning process. Most plans will require significantly more public meetings in order to acquire sufficient public input and review.

**B.5 Implementation Conference** – A working session on plan implementation must be held with the Bureau of Planning.

**B.6 Availability of Draft Plan** – Copies of the draft plan must be made available for review to all who request them.

**B.7 Community Review and Approval** – There must be evidence that the affected communities (for example, neighborhood(s) and/or NPU(s)) have had the opportunity to review and approve or disapprove the plan. It is recommended that there be evidence that the affected communities have formally approved the plan.

**B.8 Bureau of Planning Review** – The Bureau of Planning must formally review the plan and the planning process. Normally, such a review takes 2-3 weeks.

**B.9 Legislative Process** – The legislative process generally consists of

- ★ preparation and introduction of legislation,
- ★ CDP public hearing (held quarterly),
- ★ review and approval by the Community Development/Human Resources (CD/HR) Committee, and
- ★ review and approval by the City Council.

**B.10 Plan Implementation** – The process of Plan Implementation is difficult and complex, and depends upon such factors as availability of funding (local and other), legislative goals, availability of internal resources, community organization, etc. The process of plan implementation will be discussed in detail during the Implementation Conference (B.5).

### **C. General Map Requirements**

1. **Size and Orientation** – It is preferred that maps be 11”x17” (tabloid size). Maps may be 8.5”x11” (letter size), if that is sufficient for their level of detail. Maps of other sizes are discouraged.

2. **Color** – It is preferred that maps be in color. Maps may be in black and white or grayscale if they require only a simple level of detail.

3. **Elements** – All maps require the following elements:

- Title
- Map Number
- Date
- Project Name
- Legend (fully detailed and including all symbols used on the map)
- North Arrow
- Scale (scale bar or numeric scale [e.g., 1:200])

4. **Resolution** – Maps must be produced at a fine enough resolution so that all details can be clearly seen, and all text clearly read, when reproduced at original size.