

Building Communities

Fact Sheet

What is the Building Communities Program?

The Building Communities Program provides direct technical assistance to local communities within the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Area (Blount, Chilton, Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair and Walker counties).

The services of the Building Communities Program include:

- Examining redevelopment or development opportunities within communities
- Preparing comprehensive plans that encourage economic development and promote compatible land uses
- Analyzing and formulating strategies that improve multimodal transportation (walking, biking, riding transit or driving)
- Drafting and amending zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, overlay districts and design guidelines

Why would YOU want to use the Building Communities Program?

The Building Communities Program is the perfect tool for communities that want to consider new strategies for growing their tax base or managing expenditures.

With the Building Communities Program, local communities are able to develop tools that can help them:

- Attract new businesses
- Guide the form, intensity, & placement of land development
- Address existing and future transportation, water/stormwater, community facilities, & infrastructure needs
- Plan for community services and amenities

Who should use the Building Communities Program?

The Building Communities Program is designed to assist local governments with developing, managing and implementing comprehensive plans and transportation plans for their respective communities. Due to the program's funding structure, priority is given to communities within the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Area.

How does Building Communities work?

The RPCGB offers an 80/20 match through its Building Communities Program for communities within Birmingham's Metropolitan Planning Area that want to improve their transportation system, catalyze economic development and grow in a sustainable way. That means YOU only pay 20% of the cost of a plan. So if a plan costs \$100,000, YOU only pay \$20,000.

Throughout the planning process the RPCGB will serve as the project manager and will actively engage the community to ensure that the plan reflects the community's aspirations.

How do we apply for funding?

Local governments should contact the RPCGB to discuss opportunities. Funding for projects can only be used for planning and not for construction. Projects are subject to funding availability.



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Comprehensive Plan Fact Sheet

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan is used as a guide to decision-making about the natural and built environment. The plan is used as a guide to making decisions regarding land use, development, growth management and capital improvements. It provides a framework for guiding public and private decisions that will affect new development as well as reinvestment in existing neighborhoods and business areas. A Comprehensive Plan is based on the residents' vision of how they want their city to grow in the future— it is a long-term vision (typically covering 15 to 25 years) that may extend beyond the lifetime of those participating in drafting the plan. It is composed of a combination of maps, development policies and design guidelines.

What is the difference between a Comprehensive Plan & the Zoning Ordinance?

A Comprehensive Plan guides land use decisions and becomes the foundation of zoning and subdivision choices that are made by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Zoning Board of Adjustments. The Zoning Ordinance is part of the City's Code and regulates the type, scale and intensity of development that may occur in the specific zoning districts. To fully understand how a parcel of land can be used, you first need to know how the land is planned in a Comprehensive Plan, and then determine how the land is zoned. Just as changing the Comprehensive Plan for a parcel of land requires a Comprehensive Plan amendment, changing the zoning for that parcel requires a rezoning application.

Why create a Comprehensive Plan?

The purpose of a plan is to ensure that the City can be prepared for future growth and change from 2015 through 2040. There are a number of significant challenges that must be addressed such as:

- Significant shifts in demographics with an aging Baby Boomer population and a younger generation of "Millennials", each seeking new housing choices and lifestyle options that are different from what is most present today.
- How to plan for redevelopment and development opportunities to ensure that the City will be maintain its reputation for being a business friendly environment, and provide guidance for the City's leaders and economic developers as they seek to attract small businesses and industries, while at the same time retaining and bolstering existing businesses.
- How to address rising household and transportation costs created by long commutes and lack of transportation options, leaving many who live and work in the City vulnerable to spikes in fuel cost.
- How to attract new businesses.

What are the citizens' roles in the planning process?

During the course of the planning process residents, business owners, landowners, and others can actively participate in the planning process by sharing their vision for growth. Think about what areas of your community should be residential, office, commercial, industrial and parks? Are there areas, streets or corridors that need special attention? What are some specific uses or opportunities you would like to have in your community (For example: More shopping? A community center? More parks? More offices?)

This is a plan being created with input BY the citizens and everyone is welcome to participate...it is a plan that strives to be all-inclusive. Not every idea will get into the final plan, but all of them will be considered.

For more information, contact:

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RPCGB

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