

# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of a comprehensive plan is to guide the physical planning and development policy for the community over a twenty year horizon. A sound understanding of the existing conditions is the key to developing a meaningful comprehensive plan that can have a long lasting impact on the community.

Identifying existing conditions helps to establish a reference point from which future decisions can be made. By providing a context of facts and framing the key issues, the people involved in the planning process have an understanding of the City and its characteristics.

This Existing Conditions Report is prepared as the first phase of the three-phase comprehensive planning effort for City of Bloomington, Illinois. In its draft format, this report will form the basis for conversations during the next phase of the planning process, the Community Visioning. A final copy of this report, reflecting the community feedback on this report, will be presented to the Planning Commission and the City

Council toward the end of Phase 3 for adoption (May/June 2015).

The target audience for this report is community members as well as City of Bloomington staff and elected officials. It is organized into the following chapters:

1. **Historical Context** provides an insight into the roots of community and its influence on urban form.
2. **Demographics** covers the current demographic composition and highlights some future trends.
3. **Housing** identifies a few key characteristics of the housing stock such as type, value, ownership and affordability of housing in Bloomington.
4. **Land Use** discusses growth trends, current land use and zoning.
5. **Economics** reviews the major economic sectors in Bloomington and the Bloomington-Normal metro area, labor force issues and retail sales.
6. **Infrastructure** describes the condition of the City-owned infrastructure such as streets and sewers and also discusses the privately owned utilities such as electricity and gas.
7. **Health and Safety** highlights the impact of land use on health and discusses the public safety services such as fire and police.
8. **Natural Environment** examines the natural resources of Bloomington and the surrounding area.
9. **Community Facilities** identifies both City-owned facilities such as City Hall and the Bloomington Public Library, as well as public and private schools in the area.
10. **Regional Context** provides a perspective on issues at the state and national levels as well as technological or other advances that may have an impact on communities in the near future.

Most chapters are briefly introduced with some key facts about the topic. The key findings in those chapters give the reader a brief snapshot of what to expect within that chapter. A majority of the discussion in the chapter is data-driven. Readers can expect extensive use of location-based analysis using Geographic Information System (GIS). Limitations of the analysis include lack of data at micro scale, data spanning multiple years (2007-2013), and potential errors in compiling local data from a variety of sources.

At the end of most chapters, summaries of relevant plans and other ongoing efforts are provided. This is to ensure that the work done either by the City or other community members is not repeated, but built upon.

Some chapters include relevant news clips. Recent items in the news tend to have an influence on peoples' opinions as we prepare to envision our future. They also provide a context in which the comprehensive planning process takes place.

