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What is Meant by "State Goals" for Planning

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The need for state "goals" or "guidelines" is frequently discussed in the current debate which is raging about how to deal with the issue of land use in Wisconsin. Those opposed to having state goals refer to state goals as "state zoning," raising the fear that the state would take away local government's ability to zone. It is not clear that those supporting state goals and those opposing state goals are talking about the same thing. In an effort to better understand the concept of state goals, the following summarizes the state goals of a few of the states which have adopted them

The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan, entitled "Communities of Place," for example, contains no detailed standards for local zoning ordinances and no zoning maps. Rather, as explained in the plan, "the State Plan is not a regulation but a policy guide for State, regional and local agencies to use when they exercise their delegated authority."

As a "policy guide," the plan attempts to provide an organizing framework to guide planning and growth-related decisions at all levels of government. The plan contains 8 State Planning Goals and Strategies which are summarized in the plan as:

1. Revitalize the state's urban centers and areas by investing wisely and sufficiently in improvements to their human resources and infrastructure systems to attract private investment;

2. Conserve the state's natural resources by planning the location and intensity of growth to maintain the capacities of natural resource systems and then investing in infrastructure and natural resource protection programs in ways that guide growth according to this planning;

3. Promote beneficial economic growth, development and renewal by providing infrastructure in advance of, or concurrent with, the impacts of new development sufficient to maintain adequate facility standards;

4. Protect the environment by planning for growth in compact forms

at locations and intensities of use that protect land and water quality, allow expeditious regulatory reviews and make sufficient transportation alternatives feasible to help achieve and maintain air quality standards;

5. Provide adequate public services at a reasonable cost by planning locations and patterns of growth that maintain existing and planned capacities of infrastructure, fiscal, social and natural resource systems;

6. Provide adequate housing at a reasonable cost by planning for the location of a density of housing sufficiently close to both employment opportunities and public transportation so as to reduce both housing and commuting costs for low-, moderate and middle-income groups;

7. Preserve and enhance historic, cultural, open space and recreational lands and structures by identifying these resources and using public investment strategies; preservation, conservation and regulatory programs; and other techniques to guide growth in locations and patterns that protect them; and

8. Ensure sound and integrated planning statewide by using the State Plan as a guide to planning and growth-related decisions at all levels of government.

These state planning goals focus significant attention on the infrastructure decisions of the state and local government and not on specific regulatory devices such as zoning. According to the State Plan, ". . . when county and municipal master plans are updated, they should be modified to reflect the provisions of the State Plan. In these ways, the intent of the State Planning Act is achieved through existing lines of delegated authority and through existing implementation processes. The State Plan also will be important when the State of New Jersey makes infrastructure investment decisions. The State Plan will serve as a guide to when and where available state funds should be expended to achieve the Goals of the State Planning Act".



Like the state plans of many other states, the New Jersey State Plan is a policy plan which is meant to guide the actions of state agencies and local government, not to prescribe those actions. While many of the Wisconsin state agencies prepare functional plans similar to the functional plans prepared by state agencies in New Jersey, unlike New Jersey, Wisconsin lacks any express comprehensive policy framework to try to assure that the functional plans prepared by one state agency are consistent with those functional plans of other state agencies. Wisconsin also fails to provide any clear policy framework as a point of reference to guide local governments in their local planning activities.

Another state planning example is the State of Maine. The Maine legislature has adopted 10 state goals "to provide overall direction and consistency to the planning and regulatory actions of all state and municipal agencies." These goals include:

1. *To encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of each community, while protecting the State's rural character, making efficient use of public services and preventing development sprawl;*
2. *To plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development;*
3. *To promote an economic climate which increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being;*
4. *To encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all Maine citizens.*
5. *To protect the quality and manage the quantity of the State's water resources . . . ;*
6. *To protect the State's other critical natural resources . . . ;*
7. *To protect the State's marine resources industry, ports and harbors from incompatible development and to promote access to the shore for commercial fisherman and the public;*
8. *To safeguard the State's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources;*
9. *To preserve the State's historic and archeological resources; and*
10. *To promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for all Maine citizens*

These state goals provide the framework for Maine's local growth management programs. Local communities must prepare comprehensive plans which promote the state goals. Local communities are then required to adopt land use ordinances (zoning, etc.) consistent with their local comprehensive plans. Wisconsin does not require comprehensive planning, nor does Wisconsin require consistency between local comprehensive plans and land use ordinances.

A third example is the State of Oregon. Like New Jersey and Maine, Oregon's statewide planning goals are *general* policy goals, though the state plan does include more detailed requirements about what local communities should include in their local comprehensive plans.

As indicated in the state wide planning goals: "The State of Oregon does not write comprehensive plans. It does not zone land, and it does not administer permits for local planning actions, such as variances and conditional uses. It also does not require environmental impact statements (EIS's) . . ." The state plan is not a zoning ordinance for the state. Local governments in Oregon are required to plan and administer land use regulations. The local plans are approved by the state for consistency with the goals.

The state plan includes 19 goals. The first two goals involve the planning process. The first goal is "[t]o develop a citizen involvement program that insures the opportunity for citizens to be involved in all phases of the planning process." The second goal is to "establish a land use planning process and policy framework as a basis for all decisions and actions related to the use of land and to assure an adequate factual base for such decisions and actions. City, county, state and federal agency and special district plans and actions related to land use shall be consistent with the comprehensive plans of cities and counties and regional plans."

Another group of goals address: conservation of farm lands; forest lands; open spaces, scenic and historic areas, and natural resources; as well as issues related to air, water and land resources quality; areas subject to natural disasters and hazards; and recreational needs. A third group of goals relates to: development (economic; housing; public facilities and services; transportation; energy conservation; and urbanization). A final group of goals deal with Oregon's water resources.

Other states which have adopted state planning goals include Hawaii, Vermont, Florida, Connecticut, Georgia, Washington, Rhode Island, and Maryland. Some states adopt the state goals as part of a planning law, other states develop and adopt the goals by administrative rule by an independent or state agency.

The important feature that these states share in common is that their adopted state goals are used as an organizing framework to help coordinate the actions of state agencies and/or provide guidance and support for the planning activities of local government. This framework is also used to insure that the actions taken by state or local government which impact land are at some level consistent with and therefore help implement the state goals.

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