



# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SELF-ASSESSMENT

*Simple Tools for Preparing for and Updating  
Your City or County Comprehensive Plan*

## **An Unprecedented Opportunity for Rural ND**

Currently, Congress is debating the amount and focus of an unprecedented allocation of federal dollars to support infrastructure needs across the country. It will be a once in a lifetime influx of funds for ND and our many rural counties/communities. Funds are focused on getting money out to rebuild the country's infrastructure...and more. Those who are prepared to apply and address their needs will have the best opportunity. This is a unique opportunity to obtain funding to fully complete projects, like sewer systems and water lines, or road replacement or upgrade, as well as address broader community needs.

It is planned that federal funds will be allocated to several federal agencies (Rural Development, Department of Transportation, Economic Development, Small Business Administration, etc.) to award grants that address infrastructure and more, as well as allocations made directly to the states. The state funding focus will be determined by the Legislature. Within the context of Rural Development, federal funds will focus on Water and Sewer projects. We have heard from many that these are significant issues within our communities. Again, this is an unprecedented opportunity and one that needs to be thoroughly prepared for. All projects should be detailed in scope and needs, outlined, and contain a full budget for what is fully needed.

As an example, the National Endowment for the Arts is a federal agency that recently announced its American Rescue Plan grants, along with deadlines and the application process. In addition to making direct grants to organizations, they have awarded funds to states to distribute. Their guidelines indicate no match and full funding at three specific levels.

## Comprehensive Plans: Infrastructure is a Significant Component

A Comprehensive Plan is an important document for a community or a county. There are several reasons for creating them; reasons that are all very beneficial to a county or community.

Remember, Infrastructure is composed of public and private physical improvements such as roads, railways, bridges, tunnels, water supply, sewers, electrical grids, and telecommunications (including Internet connectivity and broadband speeds).

The most effective way to prepare for this influx of funding opportunities is to create or update a full Comprehensive Plan.

A Comprehensive Plan:

- Includes a general outline of the county/community goals.
- Looks ahead 10 or 20 years.
- Increases local control over changes affecting community life
- Supports securing resources to carry out community needs and priorities.
- Becomes the foundation for implementing priority infrastructure needs: roads, trails, public facilities, land use policies, and also for economic development

Funding beyond infrastructure is becoming available for economic development, workforce training, and more areas, therefore, the development or update of an existing comprehensive plan is very important.

## Checklist of Contents/Resources for a Comprehensive Plan

*\*\*For those with a current Comprehensive Plan, it should be reviewed and updated. This includes the development of a full budget for infrastructure-related needs/projects. The goal is to have "shovel-ready" projects when the funds become available.*

### **Contents and Resources for Comprehensive Plan**

- **Current demographic data** - population, workforce, age/ethnicity, poverty, etc. (Can be found by searching by county at [www.ndcompass.org](http://www.ndcompass.org)).
- **Public Input** - surveys or public meetings can be conducted to determine community/county goals and objectives, and priorities (a draft survey is attached for consideration and modification).

### **Issues and Needs and Assets and Opportunities**

- **Workforce** - Information from the workforce study commissioned by North Central Planning Council.
- **Land use** - Mapping of current and possible future land use. Communities can assist counties in this process, or consultant expertise may be needed.
- **Housing** - Current and future, as well as rehab needs (the Housing Study commissioned by North Central Planning Council).
- **Transportation** - Mapping and assessment of roads, particularly critical roads for residents. Paving or widening can and should be included here, as well as bridges.
- **Emergency Services and Plans** - Incorporate emergency plans within this document.
- **Other infrastructure** - Should include broadband or internet connectivity.
- **Community facilities** - This is a term that includes at least government buildings, recreation centers, and parks unless those are covered in a separate category. It may also include utilities, especially if the government preparing the plan also owns the utilities. In smaller towns, important facilities such as hospitals may be considered, even if they are not owned by the government preparing the plan.

## Checklist of Contents/Resources for a Comprehensive Plan

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- **Economic development** - Incorporate the plans of the county or community economic development organization. Again, the categories of threats and opportunities are useful, as are goals.

*\*\*\*As this unprecedented funding will be available fairly soon and will likely have a quick turnaround time, counties/cities should undergo a self-assessment and begin the process of developing full Comprehensive Plans, including the full cost necessary for all projects.*

***As we learn more, we will keep you informed.***

## Sample Community Survey for Comprehensive Plan Development

*(to be sent out with utility or other broad county/city mailing)*

Name: (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

- What are their ages? \_\_\_\_\_

Which community do you identify with/call home? \_\_\_\_\_

*(if county survey)*

What do you believe are the county's/city's biggest assets?

Geographic Location (on a lake; near a major highway; etc.)

School

Daycare

Hospital/Healthcare facilities

Swimming Pool

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*(list as many as may apply for them to choose)*

What do you believe are the most critical issues facing the county/city?

Water system

Sewer System

Daycare

Business Attraction

Business Expansion

Grocery store

Restaurant/food service

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Again, list what applies to your county/city)*

If we were able to secure full funding to accomplish two things within our county/city, what would they be?

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## Sample Community Survey for Comprehensive Plan Development

The federal dollars available through federal grants will be focused on infrastructure, job training, business development and retention, collaborative/regional efforts, and more.

What goals do you believe our county/city should work toward?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

What do you believe would help bring more people to our county/city for workforce and job development?

Broad promotion of our county/city

Job growth (more jobs and/or higher paying jobs)

Promotion of business opportunities (storefronts, facilities, land, etc.)

Rural lifestyle (safety, small town charm, opportunities for youth)

K-12 Education Opportunities

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Again, list what applies to your county/city)*

### Vision

What three words would you use to describe your county/city today?

\_\_\_\_\_

What three words would you hope to use five years from now?

\_\_\_\_\_

Tell us what your vision for your community is five years from now. What will it look like?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Community Survey for Comprehensive Plan Development

What resources do you believe we need to move forward toward strengthening our county/city?

- More residents
- More funding
- More county/city staff
- Strong plan with achievable goals
- More volunteers and local champions
- Increased business involvement
- Increase entrepreneurs
- Increased workforce to transition into business ownership
- Increased activities and events for residents
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Again, list what applies to your county/city)*

Finally, please list any additional comments you have regarding your county/city and its past, present, and, most importantly, its future.

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Thank you for providing your input; it is important!



## SAMPLE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE WORKSHEET

The sample worksheet below is by no means a comprehensive infrastructure self-assessment; however, it is meant to initiate the process of documenting your community's needs and opportunities.

Infrastructure Category	Current Status	Need or Opportunity	Priority
	<i>#; Type; Condition; Location</i>	<i>Areas most in need of repair or replacement</i>	<i>List project(s) of highest priority</i>
Water & Sewer			
Gravel Roads			
Paved Roads			
Broadband			
Bridges			
Community Facilities			