

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There are many descriptions of what a comprehensive plan is and what the comprehensive planning process is all about. Some descriptions focus on the plan as the legal basis for zoning; some highlight the fact that the plan is the community's vision. Other descriptions compare a comprehensive plan to a corporation's business plan—after all, large towns and cities are big business, raising and spending millions of dollars. Some describe a comprehensive plan as a statement of where the municipality is, where it wants to go, and instructions for getting there. We believe that this Comprehensive Plan is all of these descriptions, and we hope it is one that will be read, implemented, monitored, and updated.

The City of Bath has been doing comprehensive, community planning for decades. The Comprehensive Plan in effect until the adoption of this Plan was developed in the 1990s and adopted by the City Council in 1997. Prior to the 1997 Plan, Comprehensive Plans were written for the City in 1983 and 1959. Several waterfront, downtown, neighborhood, transportation, and other plans have been written over the years, including the following:

- Late 1960s: "The DX (DD963) Municipal Program" (referred to as "The DX Plan")
- 1967: "Master Plan Update"
- 1978: "Longreach, A Resource Conservation & Development Plan for the Bath Waterfront"
- 1981: "The Bath Downtown Waterfront: A Development and Land-Use Policy"
- 1983: "Transient Boating Facilities Study"
- 1985: "Development Marketing Survey and Action Plan"
- 1988: "Waterfront Planning Project"
- 1988: "Between the River and the Bay: An Inventory and Evaluation of Bath's Shoreline"
- 1998: "Bath Transit Study"
- 1999: "Downtown Bath Traffic and Parking Study"
- 1999: "Action Plan for the Bath Waterfront and Downtown"
- 2001: "City of Bath Housing Assessment"
- 2002: "South End Urban Design Plan"
- 2005: "Route 1 Corridor Feasibility Study"

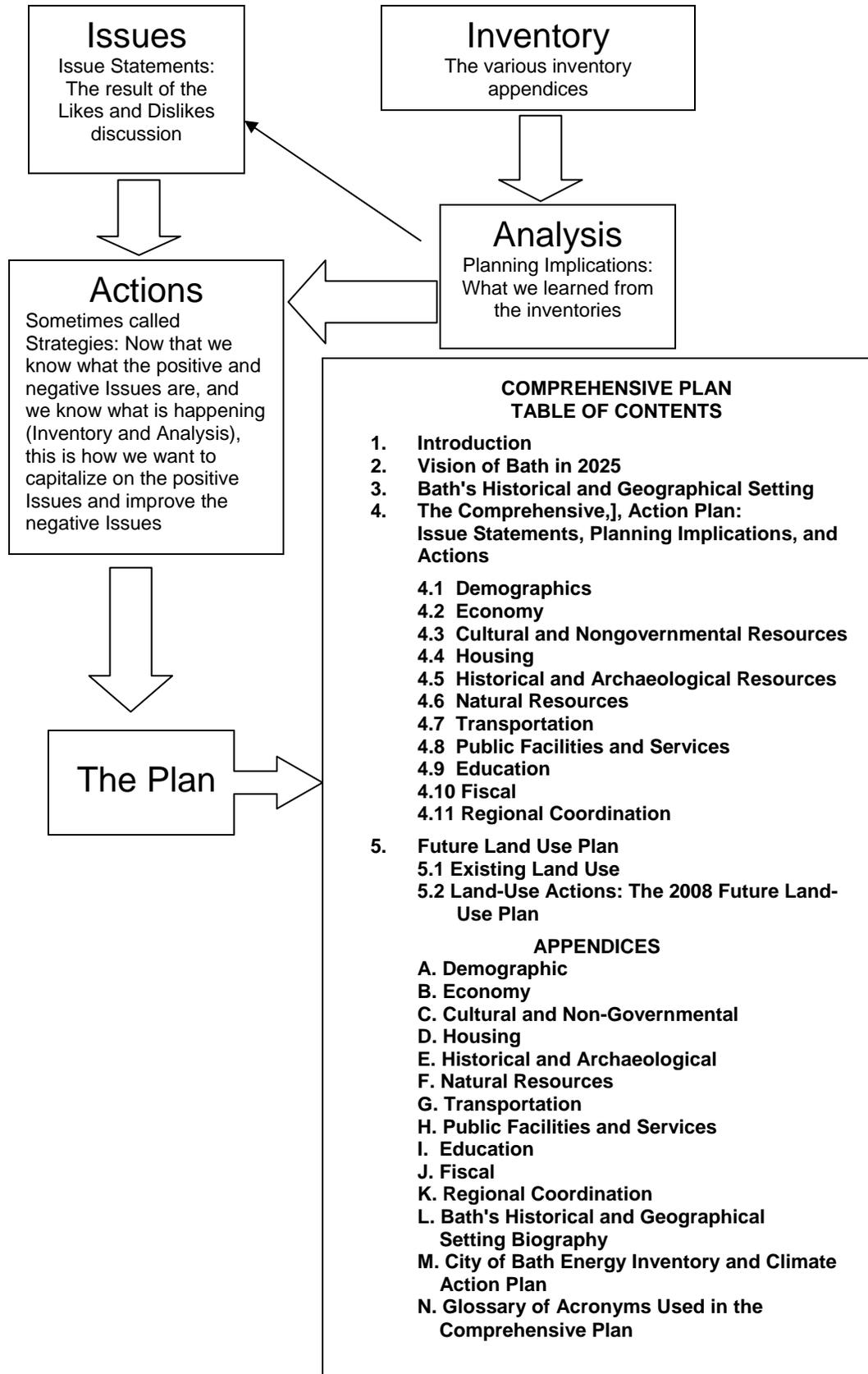
Some of the recommendations from the Comprehensive Plans and transportation, housing, neighborhood, downtown, and waterfront plans and studies have been implemented, but many have not. This statement is not

meant to detract from the quality of the plans or the planning. These documents are cited to demonstrate that planning is not new to the City of Bath.

We hope that in the future this Comprehensive Plan will be referred to as one that was implemented. In our attempt to have it implemented, we have not immersed ourselves in the tasks of developing numerous long-range community goals, followed by a number of objectives for each goal, followed by several policies for each objective, and then followed by even more strategies designed to achieve each policy. Instead, the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee discussed what each member likes about Bath and wants to protect as well as what each member dislikes and wants to change. These likes and dislikes were "boiled down" to a number of Issue Statements—that is, positive Issues that we can act on and negative Issues that show us where we need improvement. When the Issue Statements were compiled, the Committee developed a number of Actions (or answers) for the Issues. All of the Issues and Actions were also "reality-checked" by an examination of the numerous inventories included in the appendices. The process is shown in the following flow diagram.

This approach may be a departure from the typical municipal comprehensive planning or master-planning process. In the past, municipal plans often were long-range plans that attempted to predict and/or plan for the final build-out of the community. They were grand plans. In fact, one of the fathers of city planning in the United States said that we should "make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood" (Daniel Burnham, 1893). Recently, there has been a new approach to city planning. It claims that "[c]ontrary to common perception, effective planning is not contingent on infallible, precise, or even highly accurate long-range projections. More vital to successful comprehensive planning is continual application of short-range projections to current decisions, which must be made and cannot be postponed. In real life, the immediate future is more critical than the distant future, for the continued functioning and survival of the [city] depends on the essential needs of tomorrow more than probable or possible requirements of a more distant day" (Melville C. Branch, *Comprehensive Planning General Theory and Principles*, 1983).

City of Bath Comprehensive Planning Process



This approach also states that "if you are going to plan, plan well and plan for action. If you aren't going to plan well and plan for action, don't mess with it" (Frederick H. Bair, *Planning Cities*, edited by Virginia Curtis, 1970). The Comprehensive Plan for the City of Portland, Oregon, emphasizes that the plan should "concentrate on what's do-able." It also states that old-fashioned "master planning" is not what we need to be doing; that we need to work toward achieving the possibilities and be strategic; and that we need to get the "fluff" out of plans, making them readable, usable, and interesting. After all, it is not the plan, or even the planning process, that makes things happen. It is the implementation. "Planning, in and of itself, results in nothing but planning. If action does not follow the planning, the effort is wasted" (Bair, 1970).

The Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee wants this to be a "comprehensive *action* plan"—one that will be used, referred to, and implemented; one that can and will be updated with new information as it becomes available. We believe that a committee (perhaps the Planning Board) should periodically review both Issues and Actions. If the Plan's Issue Statements no longer reflect what the current Issues are, they need to be dropped from the Plan. A process should be established to formulate new, up-to-date Issue Statements. If an Action is not working, then a new Action should be recommended or the Action should be assigned to a different department or committee.

The Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee began its work in December 2004. It began with a broad geographic and age distribution of members but, as with all committees, the time that each member could commit to the task caused some to drop out. Also, as with many tasks that don't have an end in sight, interest dwindled. Fortunately, there was a devoted core of Bath citizens who worked to develop this Plan, which was submitted by the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee to the Planning Board in January 2009. (According to the Land-Use Code, the Planning Board is the entity responsible for developing the Plan and submitting it to the City Council for its review and adoption.)

During development of the Plan, the Committee held forums for the public and workshops with the City Council. All City department heads met with the Committee to explain the workings of their respective department and to outline their future concerns and needs. All meetings were open to the

public and, as draft chapters were written, they were posted on the City's web site.

The total document is the City of Bath's Comprehensive Plan. The first part includes Issue Statements, summaries of what was learned in the lengthy inventory process, and the Actions that we expect will be accomplished to enhance the City by acting on the positive Issues and by improving the negative Issues. The last part of the Plan—the appendices—is an extensive inventory of various planning elements such as demographics, economy, public facilities and services, and natural resources.

As previously mentioned, it is hoped that the inventories will be updated periodically as new information becomes available, that Issues will be reviewed, and that Actions will be monitored for their appropriateness and success. In this way, updating the Plan won't take three years—perhaps only three weeks.