

A Housing Lens for Comprehensive Plans

Guiding questions to support people-centered, constructive planning conversations

Why a housing lens?

Comprehensive plans guide how communities grow and evolve over time. They address many interconnected topics, including land use, transportation, infrastructure, parks, economic development, and quality of life.

Housing is one part of this larger picture. Where and how homes are planned affects access to jobs and services, aging in place, workforce stability, and the overall health of a community.

A Housing Lens for Comprehensive Plans is not a checklist, scorecard, or way to judge plans. Instead, it offers guiding questions to help residents, organizations, and decision-makers think more intentionally about how housing connects to broader community goals.

How to use this lens

This housing lens is designed to:

- Encourage curiosity and understanding, not comparison
- Support thoughtful, respectful engagement in local planning conversations
- Help connect planning language back to real people and daily life

1. People & Community Needs

- How does the plan describe who currently lives in the community and who may want or need to live there in the future?
- Are different life stages considered, such as seniors, families, or young adults?
- How are housing needs discussed alongside jobs, schools, services, or aging in place?
- How does the plan acknowledge residents who contribute to the community but may face housing challenges?

2. Housing Variety & Choice

- What types of homes are discussed or envisioned in the plan?
- How does the plan encourage a range of housing types and price points?
- Are there opportunities for smaller-scale or lower-cost housing where appropriate?
- How does the plan balance new development with preserving existing neighborhoods and community character?

3. Location, Access & Connection

- Where does the plan suggest different housing types could be located?
- How are housing options connected to transportation, jobs, schools, and daily needs?
- Does the plan consider walkability, accessibility, or proximity to services?
- How does housing support overall quality of life goals?

4. Implementation & Partnerships

- Does the plan outline strategies to support its housing vision over time?
- How might the plan guide future zoning updates, incentives, or investments?
- Are partnerships mentioned, such as nonprofits, employers, or faith organizations?
- How does the plan approach preserving existing homes as communities grow?

5. Opportunities for Engagement

- Where does the plan invite continued community input?
- What upcoming decisions will influence how the plan is implemented?
- How can residents and organizations stay involved over time?
- Who are the key contacts or bodies responsible for carrying the plan forward?

A reminder

Every community is different. Comprehensive plans reflect local context, priorities, and tradeoffs. Using a housing lens is not about finding the “right” answers. It is about asking thoughtful questions that help connect planning decisions to the people who live, work, and belong in our communities.



Created by

Supporting housing options that help people stay connected, stay employed, and stay rooted.

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