



Comprehensive Planning Frequently Asked Questions

Iowa Administrative Code (IAC) 567 - Chapter 101 "Solid Waste Comprehensive Planning Requirements"

What is comprehensive planning?

Iowa law (Iowa Code 455B.302, 455B.306) requires cities and counties to develop a comprehensive solid waste reduction program in collaboration with the landfill(s) or other waste facility(s) that serves their area. These programs/strategies are detailed in a plan, which is referred to as a comprehensive plan or solid waste comprehensive plan. Cities and counties can develop plans individually, or they can group together with other cities and counties to prepare a comprehensive plan. A city or county or group of cities and counties preparing a plan is referred to as a planning area. Some of these groups form legal entities utilized Iowa Code Chapter 28E.

Iowa's Administrative Code defines a comprehensive plan as: "a course of action developed and established cooperatively between cities, counties, and sanitary disposal projects regarding their chosen integrated solid waste management system, its participation, waste reduction strategies, and disposal methods."

Who writes comprehensive plans?

Any city, county or private agency operating or planning to operate a municipal sanitary disposal project must develop a comprehensive plan. The planning area can delegate the development of the plan to an individual or an organization. These plans must be developed in cooperation and consultation with the city or county responsible to provide for the establishment and operation of a sanitary disposal project. If you are not sure if your organization must complete a comprehensive plan, please contact the Land Quality Bureau for clarification.

Why have comprehensive plans?

A comprehensive plan is a tool for cities, counties and private sanitary disposal projects to chart their course toward waste reduction goals, while providing an opportunity to evaluate current waste management practices to employ technically and economically feasible solid waste management improvements. Comprehensive plans also offer a way to involve community residents, business and industry, and institutions in making decisions about how to best manage waste through improvements that will prevent or minimize adverse environmental impact. Iowa Code 455B.306(1) states "A city, county or private agency, operating or planning to operate, a municipal solid waste sanitary disposal project shall file with the director one of two types of comprehensive plans..."

Iowa Code 455B.306(3) states: The plan required by subsection 1 for sanitary disposal projects shall be filed with the department at the time of initial application for the construction and operation of a sanitary disposal project and at a minimum shall be updated and refiled...each subsequent application for renewal or reissuance of a previously issued permit.

What's in a comprehensive plan?

A comprehensive plan must explain how a planning area will implement Iowa's waste management hierarchy: 1) Volume reduction at the source, 2) Recycling and reuse, 3) Combustion with energy recovery, and 4) Other approved techniques of solid waste management including, but not limited to, combustion for waste disposal and disposal in sanitary landfills.

To accomplish this, comprehensive plans provide information about solid waste management programs that have been and will be implemented including public education, composting, recycling, and waste



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collection. Plans must analyze the existing programs, as well as alternative disposal methods. The analysis is then used to provide input to what activities the planning area will implement in the future.

What happens if an area fails to achieve state volume reduction goals?

The State of Iowa has a fee structure set up to encourage waste diversion. Planning areas diverting over 25 percent of the waste compared to a baseline may retain additional funds locally, there are additional fee breaks at the state average (36%) and 50%. Official Goal Progress is determined at the time of the plan update. In addition, planning areas may submit a written request to the Department annually to have their goal progress determination calculated.

How often are comprehensive plans submitted?

Comprehensive plans are submitted to the Department every five years. Plan due dates are staggered to avoid having all plans submitted simultaneously, and to provide Department staff with adequate time to complete plan reviews.

What happens to the plans once they are submitted?

Land Quality Bureau staff reviews each plan to ensure compliance with standards outlined in Iowa law. Department staff will work with individual planning areas to request and obtain any additional information needed for clarification. All comprehensive plans must be formally approved by the state to be considered valid, and for landfill permits to be renewed.

Is there help available to communities in preparing comprehensive plans?

Yes. The Department has developed two detailed Guidance Documents outlines (initial and update) that provide step-by-step assistance in completing solid waste comprehensive plans. In addition, staff members from the Land Quality Bureau are available to provide one-to-one assistance upon request. In addition, plan updates from across the state are available to the public. DNR staff is working to make online access possible. Until then, contact Leslie Goldsmith.

DNR Contacts

Laurie Rasmus

(515) 474-4921

Laurie.Rasmus@dnr.iowa.gov

Becky Jolly (515) 725-8308

becky.jolly@dnr.iowa.gov