

Local Government Planning

Implementing Effective Plans

Some *Dos* and *Don'ts*

Background



1. Professor with Department of Public Administration, University of Alaska, Anchorage
2. Over 30 years experience in local government and planning – Planner, Planning Director, Borough Manager
3. Have worked with local governments on contracting, budgeting, planning, climate mitigation, and resilience building, capital improvements, grants; both domestically and internationally
4. Have practical experience implementing climate related emergency response and mitigation practices

Outline

- I. What's Planning?
- II. Local government planning
 - I. Some *Do's*
 - II. Some *Don'ts*
- III. UAA & Planning

Why care about local government planning?



- Varied authorities and responsibilities
 - Are responsible for the services and infrastructure used by local population on a daily basis
 - Primary implementors of national policies
 - 1st responders to extreme weather events, disasters
 - Make decisions that have long-term effects
 - Are closest government to the local population
 - Are the primary actors to address our climate challenges

Planning

- Planning is a key element of Quality Management
 - If you want to achieve goals, you have to have goals
- Planning describes the path for achieving policy objectives
- Planning requires the involvement of the entire organization
- Planning describes paths for improving the lives of our citizens

Planning

- Planning is a continuous , permanent process, incorporating knowledge of all those working in the organization
- Planning is a process, a set of actions that are simultaneous, leading to a results
- Plans should be revised as changes in the operating environment take place
- Plans should have goals, objectives, milestones, performance measures, deadlines or target dates, and responsible parties identified
- Not planning is actually a plan to do nothing

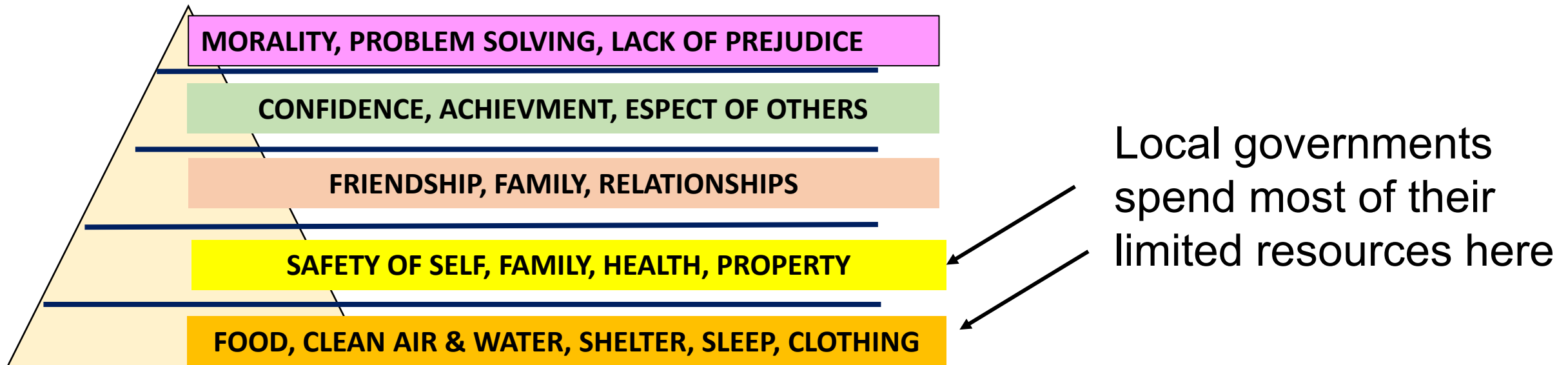
Planning tools of local governments

Planning tools of local governments

- Planning powers, policies and regulations
 - Comprehensive Plan
 - Functional Plan (e.g., the Transportation Plan)
 - Strategic Plan
 - All Hazards Mitigation Plan
 - Capital Improvement Plan (Program)
 - Zoning Ordinance
 - Subdivision Ordinance
 - Building codes

Challenges to planning

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for the Community



People want their “basic” needs addressed first

Crime prevention, “good” roads, “good” schools, affordable housing

Challenges of local government planning

- Developing a plan takes time, continual effort and resources
 - Once started you really do not know where you will end up
 - So be careful — Yet, be thoughtful, deliberate, and place boundaries when necessary

Challenges of local government planning

- Number of issues (other than planning) demanding attention
 - Yet, addressing long-term issues resolves many short-term crises
- Short-term versus long-term thinking
- Partisan (tribalism) politics

Some Planning *Dos*

To make effective use of local government plans...Some *Dos*

- ✓ Build a trustful relationship first
- ✓ Be honest
 - ✓ About constraints
 - ✓ About resources and capabilities
 - ✓ About need and purpose
- ✓ Incorporate local knowledge and experience

To make effective use of local government plans...Some *Dos*

- ✓ Inform everyone that planning is required by Alaska State Statute for 1st and 2nd class boroughs
 - ✓ A way for the community to design the future
 - ✓ Either we do it together or someone does it for you
- ✓ Inform everyone that Planning is NOT Zoning
 - ✓ Zoning is only one way to implement a plan
 - ✓ Zoning can be permissive too
 - ✓ Various types of Zoning, like Performance, Euclidean, etc.

To make effective use of local government plans...Some *Dos*

- ✓ Engage the Community Early and Continuously
 - ✓ Include residents, businesses, and stakeholders in every stage of the planning process to ensure diverse perspectives and buy-in
 - ✓ Practice active listening
 - ✓ Incorporate local knowledge and experience
- ✓ Set Clear Goals and Objectives
 - ✓ Establish measurable and realistic goals based on community needs, priorities, and long-term sustainability
 - ✓ Must be formulated by the community
 - ✓ Yet must conform with local government's policies – Guardrails and boundaries

To make effective use of local government plans...Some *Dos*

- ✓ Promote Inclusivity and Equity
 - ✓ Address the needs of all demographics, including marginalized and underserved groups, ensuring fair distribution of resources and opportunities.
 - ✓ It is very difficult to “get” people to participate
 - ✓ Harder still to get the old, young, disadvantaged to participate but worth it

To make effective use of local government plans...Some *Dos*

- ✓ Integrate Sustainability Practices
 - ✓ Sad to say, but we have serious climate challenges
 - ✓ Incorporate environmentally sustainable solutions such as green spaces, renewable energy sources, and waste management systems
 - ✓ Local governments are key actors in meeting our climate challenges
 - ✓ A requirement AICP and APA planners

To make effective use of local government plans...Some *Dos*

✓ Leverage Data and Evidence-Based Strategies

- ✓ Use data analytics, geographic information systems (GIS), and case studies to guide decision-making and predict potential challenges

✓ Ensure Flexibility and Adaptability

- ✓ Design plans that can accommodate future growth, changes in technology, and unforeseen challenges

To make effective use of local government plans...Some *Dos*

✓ Foster Collaboration

- ✓ Work with other governmental agencies, non-profits, and private entities to pool resources and expertise
- ✓ Check with peers

✓ Preserve Cultural and Historical Identity

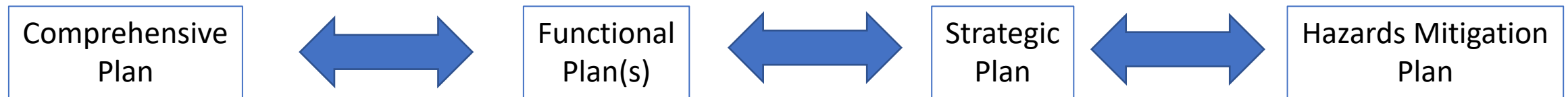
- ✓ Respect and incorporate the community's heritage and unique character into planning efforts

✓ Monitor and Evaluate Progress

- ✓ What gets measured, gets done
- ✓ Regularly assess the impact of implemented plans and make adjustments based on feedback and outcomes

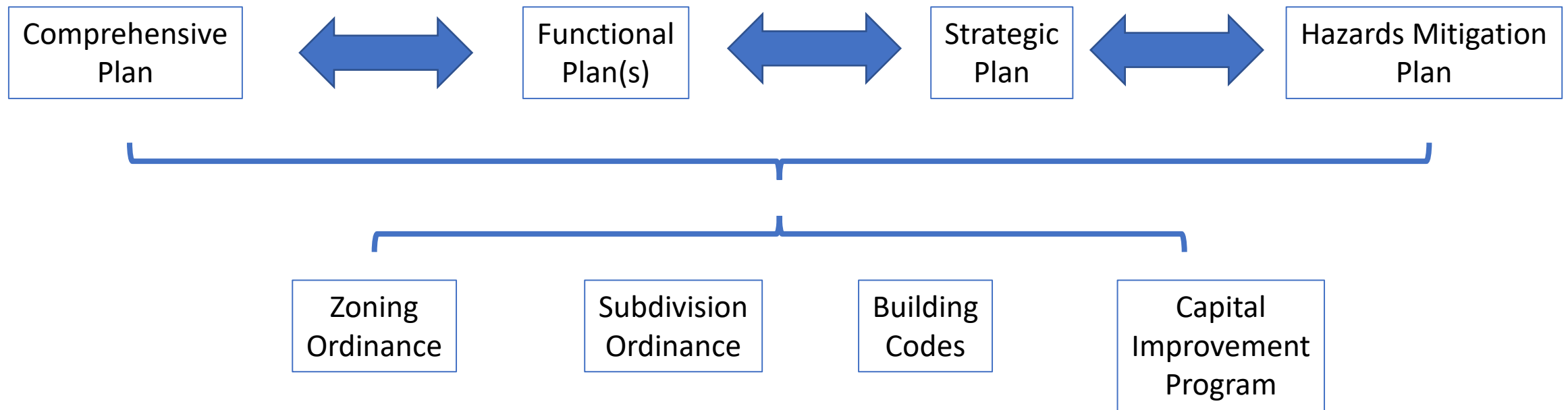
To make effective use of local government plans...Some *Dos*

- Link all planning documents – Let them speak to one another –



To make effective use of local government plans...Some Do's

- Link all planning documents – Let them speak to one another – and should be implemented through the zoning ordinance, building codes and capital improvement program



Some Planning *Don'ts*

To make effective use of local government plans...Some *Don'ts*

- Don't over promise or commit
 - Better to over-deliver
- Complete the plan and put it on the “shelf”
- Don't just “show-up” and expect honest participation
- Don't “vote” on goals, policies; strive for consensus
 - Above all get agreement up-front on how decisions will be made

To make effective use of local government plans...Some *Don'ts*

- Exclude Community Voices
 - Avoid decision-making that fails to consult with the people who live and work in the area
 - Don't build silos inside the government either
- Overlook Long-Term Impacts
 - Don't focus solely on short-term gains at the expense of resilience, or future adaptability
 - Fail to consider operating and maintenance costs
- Ignore Data and Evidence
 - Avoid basing decisions on assumptions or inadequate research that can lead to ineffective or harmful outcomes.

To make effective use of local government plans...Some *Don'ts*

- Disregard Equity
 - Don't neglect the needs of vulnerable populations or perpetuate inequalities through biased policies or resource allocation
- Overcommit Resources
 - Avoid making promises or plans that exceed budgetary or logistical capacities, leading to incomplete projects.
- Allow Fragmented Development
 - Uncoordinated development can lead to sprawl, inefficiency, and a lack of cohesive vision

To make effective use of local government plans...Some *Don'ts*

- **Impose Uniform Solutions**
 - Don't assume a one-size-fits-all approach; tailor solutions to the community's unique needs and characteristics
 - Don't assume a good process or plan done elsewhere will work for you; different conditions, culture, values, etc.
- **Rush the Planning Process**
 - Avoid hasty decisions or skipping necessary steps like feasibility studies or public consultations
- **Misunderstand or Resist Change**
 - People say they are okay with change until it requires them to change
 - Don't ignore innovative practices or emerging technologies that could enhance the planning process or community outcomes.

UAA Planning Curriculum

UAA Planning Courses

The UAA-DPA team is developing an online community planning curriculum and will address the following areas:

- ❖ Community Planning for Climate Resilience
 - ❖ Climate Action Planning (Summer, 2025)
- ❖ Hazards Mitigation Planning
- ❖ Benefit-Cost Analysis
- ❖ Grant Writing and Grants Management
- ❖ Geographic Information Systems for Policy and Planning
- ❖ Environmental Compliance

UAA Planning Courses

- ❖ For each of these topical areas, three 5-week, 1 credit courses will be offered that can be combined into a 3-credit course that can satisfy an elective requirement for a master's degree in public policy or administration.
- ❖ The first course in each series will also be offered in an open-source format, available to anyone.
- ❖ The no-cost, online, short courses will also be adapted into a workshop version

UAA Planning Courses

- ❖ The three one-credit online courses can also be combined into a three-credit public administration course.
- ❖ All introductory courses will be available as open-source, edX course, and in-person workshop versions.
- ❖ The short courses will be designed to meet the approval criteria for ongoing training by the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) and to provide the necessary continuing education credits for professional planners.

Thank you!

Contact: jjduffy@alaska.edu

Questions and Answers



Q&A

Time for discussion