



VOLUME TWO
BACKGROUND STUDIES

Section 4
Community
Involvement

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COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Fostering community involvement is one of the most important elements in the development of the plan and zoning ordinance. The community involvement process is a valuable tool for gathering public input, educating the public and fostering community support for the development and implementation of the project. The goals of the community involvement process are to identify important growth and development issues, identify the future direction of growth and development activities, establish planning policies to help guide growth and development decisions, and establish management strategies for implementing the policies and achieving the desired future.

St. Croix County is no stranger to the community involvement process. County elected officials and staff are continuously engaged in working with the community on an everyday basis. Examples of this interaction include public meetings; public hearings; news releases; answering phone calls; and working with developers, businesses and property owners.

From those experiences, officials and staff have gained an understanding of some of the important issues and concerns that county residents and businesses have with the direction of current growth and development activities.

However, it is still important for the county to better identify and evaluate all issues and to fully understand the direction in which the residents and businesses want future growth and

development to occur. To accomplish this, the county undertook several major community involvement activities to assist in obtaining information. These activities included:

-  Establishing a Steering Committee to provide input into, and oversee the development of the plan and zoning ordinance.
-  Establishing a Technical Committee to provide input into the development of the plan and zoning ordinance, and review and provide direction on the impacts of various policies and development management strategies.
-  Conducting a countywide survey to gather information about the type, amount and location of growth and development that should occur.
-  Conducting a visioning process to identify the desired future characteristics of the county.
-  Conducting a series of open houses and informational meetings for the general public and various boards and organizations.

The purpose of the Community Involvement section is to review and summarize community involvement activities that have been used to provide input into determining the “look” of future county growth and development. However, it is important to remember that the community involvement process is on-going. Subsequently, the community involvement activities undertaken to develop this section of the

plan are only the first steps in an on-going process and only reflect the activities that have been enacted to this point. Future community involvement

activities will be necessary to develop and implement the plan and the zoning ordinance.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

During the development of the plan, community involvement activities were used to effectively gather public input into the planning process. This input provided valuable guidance for the various committees and staff that are responsible for the development of the plan and zoning ordinance. The input formed the basis for understanding the community's beliefs on the type, amount, and location of growth and development that has been acceptable and unacceptable, as well as the future desires of the way in which growth and development should occur and what types of management activities could be used to guide the development. This provided the foundation for determining what issues the plan should address and how the plan and zoning ordinance should guide the growth and development activities.

The following is a description of community involvement activities that were conducted and a summary of each of the activities' input.

- ◆ Steering Committee
- ◆ Technical Committee
- ◆ Kick-off Workshops
- ◆ Priority Issues Identification
- ◆ Trends Analysis - Open Houses
- ◆ Development Plan Survey
- ◆ Visioning - Mission and Vision Workshops
- ◆ Visual Assessment
- ◆ Town Officials Reports
- ◆ Project Update Open Houses
- ◆ Plan and Policies Open Houses
- ◆ Plan & Policy Revision Meetings
- ◆ Final Review and Public Hearings

STEERING COMMITTEE

At the beginning of the project a Steering Committee was formed to oversee the development of the plan and zoning ordinance. The Steering Committee is responsible for ensuring

that the plan and zoning ordinance is developed in a manner that reflects the desires of the residents of St. Croix County.

The Steering Committee is comprised of 13 people from different geographic areas of the county. Not only do they provide input into the direction of the development of the plan and zoning ordinance, but they are also responsible for representing and forwarding the input of the constituents of their area of the county.

They are involved with the project during the entire development process and must ensure that the final products are acceptable to the residents of the county, staff and other persons responsible for implementing and enforcing the desires of the plan and zoning ordinance.

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

The Technical Committee is responsible for providing technical input into the development of the plan and zoning ordinance. The committee is comprised of 24 members having different professional backgrounds and expertise. The committee is responsible for reviewing the data and information that is used during the development of

the plan and zoning ordinance. They must evaluate the information for its impacts and implications that the resulting decisions may have on the overall landscape. The Technical Committee is involved throughout the entire plan and zoning ordinance development process.

PROJECT KICK-OFF WORKSHOPS

In May 1995, the St. Croix County Planning Department organized workshops to kick-off the development of the plan and zoning ordinance. Two sessions were held one in the afternoon for elected officials, steering committee members and government officials, and the second session in the evening for the general public. The purpose of the workshop was to educate individuals on the benefits of planning and the role and

benefits of a proper zoning ordinance. Harvey Jacobs, a professor of Urban and Regional Planning with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was the featured speaker.

People attending the workshop were able to provide input into the plan development process, and were also able to sign-up to participate in all or part of the planning process and plan development if they were interested.

PRIORITY ISSUES IDENTIFICATION

One of the initial steps in the planning process was to identify the various priority issues that residents and businesses believed were the most important and should be addressed through the development and implementation of the plan and zoning ordinance.

To identify some of the priority issues in the county, the Planning Department organized an *Issue Identification and Priority Setting Workshop*. The workshop was held on June 28, 1995 and had a total 50 participants, 10 people from five different sectors of the population that are involved in, and affected by, growth and development. These sectors included representatives from the Development Industry, Local

Government, General Public, Environment/Conservation, and Agriculture/Agribusiness. The group was lead through the nominal group process in which each sector was able to identify 25 of their top issues regarding current growth and development activities, county growth management techniques, or concerns about the impacts with the way growth and development is occurring. Each group then ranked their 25 issues by order of importance. The ranked priority issues were then combined to achieve an overall identification and ranking of priority issues.

The following is a combined list of the 25 top issues identified by all participants.

TOP 25 PRIORITY ISSUES

-  Use zoning as a tool to protect the small town character and environmental quality of the county through priority development areas, number, size and location of lots, cluster development, land uses and multi-modal transportation.
-  Concern for private property rights and realistic compensation for takings.
-  Land use planning to provide the best use for property.
-  Identify and provide for the management of environmental corridors and significant greenspace.
-  Enforcement of county ordinances once established (i.e., expanding zoning office).
-  Protect the integrity of our base of modest size, diversified family operated farms so they remain an environmentally and economically sustainable part of the county's landscape and natural resource habitat, space, landforms, habitats, and scenic areas.
-  Minimize development impacts on surface and groundwater quality and quantity on a watershed basis.

-  Fair property taxes and developments' affect on those taxes.
-  Plan has to be written to meet the needs of both urban and rural towns.
-  Plan should address sewer and water issues for commercial, light industrial, industrial and high density and multi-family housing.
-  Annexation/extension of municipal services/expansion of cities and villages.
-  Broader, appropriate and enforceable categories and more permitted uses in zoning districts.
-  Preserve all agricultural land no matter ownership.
-  Maintain a diverse and clean eco-system.
-  Uniform regulations among towns in the county.
-  Coordinate and expand a system of public lands for multiple use concerns.
-  Minimal impact and efficient transportation.
-  Geographic inventory and reasonable projection of population and financial potential.
-  Reduce restrictions in the St. Croix River Valley District.
-  Population densities and effect on or by septic systems.
-  Farmland consolidation -- establish a set acreage to preserve farmland.
-  Recognize/respect diversity and sustainable communities in the county.
-  County has too much power versus towns, cities and villages.
-  Livestock densities and farm sizes.
-  Growth management through community scale.

TRENDS ANALYSIS - OPEN HOUSES

One of the first steps in the development of the plan is a review and analysis of various demographic, economic, and housing trends through the use of census and other reported data sources. The purpose of the Trends Analysis is to show the type, amount, and location of change that has occurred throughout the county during the past 20 years, and to see the type, amount and location of the current pattern of development.

Once complete, this information was presented to the Steering Committee and Technical Committee. In addition to those presentations, three public forums were held to make the information available to the public and elected officials.

A series of three open house style meetings were held in order to present this information. The following is a summary of the open house public forums.

-  Town Board Members Meeting
February 29, 1995
7:00 - 8:00 Open House
8:00 - 9:00 Presentation
-  General Public Meeting
March 12, 1995
4:00 - 7:00 Open House
7:00 - 8:00 Presentation
-  General Public/St. Croix County Board
March 19, 1995
2:00 - 7:00 Open House
7:00 - 8:00 Presentation

DEVELOPMENT PLAN SURVEY

The main instrument used to obtain the public's beliefs on the way in which growth and development should occur and the elements of the county that they believe should be preserved, was the St. Croix County Development Plan Survey. The purpose of the Development Plan Survey was to assess opinions about development in St. Croix County and provide guidance in developing goals and implementation strategies for the plan.

The survey contained a total of 57 questions, 13 questions ranking the

seriousness of problems in areas experiencing growth, and 44 questions that assessed the various methods and techniques related to the management of growth and development.

A total of 1,352 surveys were sent to residents representing the general public, agriculture, development industry, environment/conservation, and local government officials.

The following are the summary results of the survey. The complete results are found in the Appendices.

SURVEY SUMMARY GENERAL ISSUES

-  Preserve and protect water resources.
 - Protect lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams.
 - Protect ground water resources.
 - Protect groundwater, wetland and other environmentally sensitive areas.
 - Land use planning efforts should consider the impacts of development on the various water resources.
-  Preserve and protect environmentally sensitive areas.
 - Land use planning efforts should consider the impacts of development on environmentally sensitive areas.
-  Maintain natural, scenic and rural qualities.
 - Promote development around cities and villages (compact development).
 - Preserve natural views.
 - Limit the amount and type of rural residential development.
 - Preserve the rural character of the county.
 - Preserve open space and scenic areas.
-  Preserve and protect valuable agriculture production land.
 - Preserve and protect valuable agricultural farmland.
 - Protect smaller family farms.
-  Maintain adequate outdoor recreation opportunities.
 - Would accept a small tax increase to improve county parks.
 - Maintain access to hunting and fishing areas.
 - Need more bike routes, paths, and off-road trails.
-  Development should be encouraged in areas that are contiguous to other development and served by municipal services.
 - Industrial and commercial development should be limited to areas with municipal services.
 - Residential, industrial and commercial development should be able to pay for the cost of providing services.
 - Municipal services should not be extended outside of municipal boundaries.
-  Local land use regulation should be used fairly to control growth and development.
 - Residents would not be interested in paying more taxes to support continued unplanned, rural residential development.
 - Land use regulations must be fair and preserve private property rights.
 - Local governments should prepare land use plans.
-  Promote the safe and efficient use of the transportation system.
 - Promote the use of public transportation.

- Encourage ridesharing for commuters.

VISIONING - MISSION AND VISION WORKSHOPS

One of the more major efforts that was used to build a foundation for making decisions about the type and management practices that will guide future growth and development activities was a *Visioning Workshop*. Visioning is a process used to anticipate the desired future characteristics of a community. The visioning process should yield direction for developing strategies and actions to get from the present to the desired future. The "VISION" should provide direction for the development of the plan and zoning ordinance, as well as providing decision makers with the foundation for making judgments about the type, intensity and location of the future growth and development activities.

The purpose of the visioning sessions were to develop mission and vision statements, including a list of

characteristics that St. Croix County would like to maintain or achieve in managing growth and development, and goals and objectives to guide the development of the plan and zoning ordinance.

The *Visioning Workshop* was comprised of 29 people that volunteered to be involved in the development of the plan. These participants represented the general public, development industry, agriculture, environment & conservation, and local governments. This group was lead through a process that focused on identifying the positive values and characteristics that the residents of St. Croix County would like to achieve through the management of growth and development activities.

The following are the mission and vision statements that were developed through the visioning workshop.

VISIONING SESSION SUMMARY

MISSION STATEMENT

Working Together Toward a Quality Future.

VISION STATEMENT

St. Croix County will be a place of respect, with a framework to guide existing and future residents, businesses and local government in land use decisions:

- Where the integrity of the county's natural resources, including woodlands, lakes and streams, groundwater, wetlands, soils, and grasslands are maintained.
- Where urban and rural communities cooperate in planning for development and services while striking a balance between economic development, agricultural production and environmental conservation.
- Where the public health, safety and welfare of the residents and landowners are protected through ordinances that have clear standards and are universally enforced.
- Where development in our rural environment preserves open greenspace and fits the nature of the land while respecting property rights.
- Where development is orderly, with a balance of types and greenspace, respects community values, and pays its way.
- Where a variety of housing opportunities exist for all income levels.
- Where business investment and economic vitality are encouraged while keeping taxes equitable.
- Where economic diversity and employment opportunities exist locally.
- Where quality recreational opportunities are provided.
- Where quality educational opportunities are provided.
- Where flexibility and balance in the future includes continuing formal and informal communications to assess residents' and landowners' needs and concerns.
- Where cooperation, communication, respect and involvement between all units of government and citizens will foster a sense of community and land stewardship to maintain for the future, the quality of life we now enjoy.

VISUAL ASSESSMENT

The next major community involvement activity was the visual assessment. The purpose of the visual assessment exercise was to develop collections of photographs that represented the intent of the mission and vision statements, and draft goals and objectives that were developed during the Mission and Vision Workshop.

To collect the photographs, participants from the Mission and Vision Workshop were provided with a camera and asked to take photographs of “positive” (appropriate land use or design) or “negative” (inappropriate land use or design) types of development. In addition, each participant completed a *Photo Response Survey* in which they described the “positive” or “negative” element(s) of the development.

The photographs were reviewed by the St. Croix County staff and organized into “positive” and “negative” development. The staff then submitted the photographs, vision statements, survey results, and a draft of the goals and objectives to Wayne Tlusty, UW-Extension. Mr. Tlusty was asked to

review these products to determine the degree of consensus in managing growth and development, and level of consistency between the vision, draft goals and objectives, and visual assessment.

Generally, there was a consensus to manage growth and development in a manner that would:

-  Preserve and protect natural resources and the environment.
-  Preserve and enhance the rural character of the county.
-  Preserve and protect agricultural areas for the purposes of sustaining a viable agricultural economy and preserving rural character.
-  Encourage the development of commercial and industrial activities in areas with public facilities.

There are inconsistencies between site specific issues regarding the type and design of the development. Design issues, especially related to residential development, will have a significant impact on the development of the zoning ordinance and will be further explored.

TOWN OFFICIALS REPORTS

Throughout the project, efforts were made to keep the town officials informed and to obtain feedback on the process. County staff held general meetings for all town officials, regularly attended the

Towns' Association meetings, which are held quarterly, and whenever requested, attended monthly town meetings to give specific reports.

In addition, the members of the Planning, Zoning and Parks and Steering Committees were urged to consider themselves ambassadors to the towns; providing regular updates at town board meetings or rezoning hearings.

 Town Board Members Meeting
November 16, 1994
7:30 – 9:00 Presentation

 Town Board Members Meeting
February 17, 1997
7:30 – 9:00 Presentation

PROJECT UPDATE OPEN HOUSES

The Physical Features Analysis provided information on the county's physical resources, the limitations, potential, and related land uses of the soils, topography, water bodies, groundwater, wetlands, floodplains, shorelands, woodlands, etc.

Based on the survey results and the visioning sessions it was apparent that the public is very supportive of protection of sensitive environmental areas. Once the physical features analysis was complete, the information was presented to the Technical Committee to map and develop an environmental corridor protection proposal. The Technical and Steering Committees also considered other important resources such as transportation corridors, nonmetallic mining resources and productive farmland.

The policy analysis was developed to address the policies in all the communities which affect development throughout the county.

Once complete, this information was presented to the Steering Committee and

Technical Committee for review and approval. In addition the information was made available to the public and elected officials.

The results of the visioning and visual assessment sessions, along with the status of the zoning ordinance and the goals and objectives, environmental corridors protection and farmland protection materials were presented to the public in a second series of open house style meetings. The following is a summary of the open house public forums.

 General Public Meeting
September 30, 1997
2:00 - 7:00 Open House
7:00 - 8:00 Presentation

 General Public Meeting
October 7, 1997
2:00 - 7:00 Open House
7:00 - 8:00 Presentation

 General Public Meeting
October 9, 1997
2:00 - 7:00 Open House
7:00 - 8:00 Presentation

PLAN & POLICIES OPEN HOUSES

The final sections of the plan, the policies and implementation, were presented to the public during two informational meetings/open houses.

The policies addressed where, how much and what types of development should be regulated. A plan map was developed to show development expected in various parts of the county.

The policies also provided a guide to environmental protection, development design, transportation planning, agricultural protection, and recreation planning.

The implementation section identified the changes needed in the sanitary, zoning and subdivision ordinances to implement the plan. It also described the ongoing planning and intergovernmental cooperation issues

that will need to be addressed to implement the plan.

The Planning Department staff also presented the plan to numerous community groups including the Builder's Association, Rotary Clubs, Economic Development and Trout Unlimited. Finally, the plan was presented to many of the City and Village Boards or Planning Commissions.

The following meetings were held on the final sections of the plan.



General Public Meeting
May 18, 1998

6:00 - 7:30 Open House
7:30 - 9:00 Presentation



General Public Meeting
May 28, 1998

6:00 - 7:30 Open House
7:30 - 9:00 Presentation

PLAN & POLICY REVISION MEETINGS

Following the May 1998 meetings, the Planning Department staff took the plan out to all the towns. Staff met with every town board one or more times to present, review and take feedback on the plan to the Steering Committee. These meetings continued throughout the summer, fall and early winter of 1998.

Based on comments from all the groups, the plan was revised four times. Because most of the concerns were identified at the town board level, three additional meetings to present interim changes and poll town opinion regarding changes were held in January of 1999.



Town Officials Review Meeting
January 6, 1999

7:30 - 9:00 Presentation



Town Officials Review Meeting
January 13, 1999

7:30 - 9:00 Presentation



Town Officials Review Meeting
January 14, 1999

7:30 - 9:00 Presentation

In May of 1999, the Steering Committee approved a final draft of the plan and forwarded it to the Planning, Zoning and Parks Committee.

FINAL REVIEW & PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Planning, Zoning and Parks Committee reviewed the Steering Committee's recommended plan over several meetings. After completing their review, the Committee held two public information meetings in September of 1999 before moving the plan forward to public hearing.

The Committee decided to hold two hearings to provide greater opportunity for public input. The public hearings were held in November of 1999. Based on public hearing comments, the Planning, Zoning and Parks Committee made several revisions to the Plan prior to recommending approval to the County Board.

The County Board of Supervisors first considered the recommended plan at its December 1999 meeting. The board delayed a decision on the plan until

March of 2000 to allow time for the Board members to obtain further feedback from their local officials. The plan was adopted in March of 2000.

The following lists the dates, times and locations of the final reviews and public hearings:

-  General Public Meeting
September 20, 1999
7:00 - 9:00 Presentation
-  General Public Meeting
September 23, 1999
7:00 - 9:00 Presentation
-  Public Hearing
November 15, 1999
7:30 Presentation & Open Forum
-  Public Hearing
November 17, 1999
7:30 Presentation & Open Forum

CONCLUSIONS

Development and implementation of successful plans, policies and ordinances affecting land use are based largely on the process in which these elements were developed. Obtaining community involvement is an essential element in the planning process. This provides the basis for decision-makers to determine where the community wants to be (VISION and GOALS) and how the community wants to get there (OBJECTIVES, ZONING ORDINANCE and LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES).

The community involvement input is critical to the development and implementation of the plan and zoning ordinance. It is also essential as an on-going activity to assist in monitoring and evaluating whether the existing management tools are effective in meeting the existing vision and goals, and whether the vision and goals are still the desired future outcome.

As stated earlier, the community involvement activities that have been completed have been for the purposes of gaining input on the current issues and concerns associated with growth and development activities and identifying the desired future landscape.

The summaries of these activities helped to identify issues and concerns that were consistently expressed by all groups of people involved in the process. These issues and concerns are:

-  Preserve and protect natural resources and the environment.
-  Preserve the rural character.
-  Preserve and protect agriculture and productive farmland.
-  Preserve and protect natural and scenic areas.
-  Encourage commercial and industrial development in areas served by municipal services.
-  Develop and implement fair planning and zoning policies and ordinances.
-  Preserve the rights of property owners.
-  Encourage fiscally responsible growth and development.
-  Maintain adequate outdoor recreation opportunities.
-  Encourage more compact development.
-  Encourage the use of alternative development techniques (e.g. cluster development).
-  Encourage uniform implementation of ordinances and regulations at all levels of government.

These “themes” provided the overall tenets that guided the decision making process in the development and implementation of the plan and zoning ordinance.

