APPENDIX

Town of Star Prairie Comprehensive Plan
Public Participation Plan

INTRODUCTION

Public participation is the process through which people who will be affected by or interested in a decision by a governmental body have an opportunity to influence its content before the decision is made.

The concept of citizens participating in government decision-making is fundamental to the functioning of a democratic system of government. While it is true that the United States is a democratic republic, where government officials are elected to represent citizens, it is also true that elected officials need to inform, be informed by, and interact with the public in an ongoing basis if their representation is to be meaningful. Public involvement in government through electing government representatives every two or four years clearly is insufficient to enable true representation. Successful public participation results in higher quality decisions because it taps the energies, knowledge, special insights, and resources of citizens in addition to reflecting their needs, values, and concerns.

Public participation goes beyond public information. The purpose of public participation is to inform the public as well as to solicit input and responses on public needs, values, and evaluation of proposed actions.

While public information is a key component to helping the citizenry become aware of background information and alternatives being considered by the governmental body, effective public participation is two-way communication. If the members of the public are to have the opportunity to influence the content of a decision, they need to be able to have input into the process and to respond to proposed actions.

Town governments in Wisconsin have a rich tradition of grassroots democracy based on the powers granted to the citizenry through the Town Meetings of colonial America and reflected in the modern-day Annual Meeting. In the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Star Prairie, the Town Board is committed to the continuation of this tradition by providing on-going opportunities for public participation throughout the planning process.

Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning statute recognizes the necessity of effective public participation and requires the adoption of a written public participation plan as stated in Chapter 66.1001(4)(a).

"The governing body of a local governmental unit shall adopt written procedures that are designed to foster public participation, including open discussion, communication programs, information services, and public meetings for which advance notice has been provided, in every stage of the preparation of a comprehensive plan. The written procedures shall provide an opportunity for written comments on the plan to be submitted by members of the public to the governing body and for the governing body to respond to such written comments."

Levels of public participation may be classified along a continuum as described below. The level of participation increases from left to right.

Public Awareness	Public Education	Public Input	Public Interaction	Public Partnership
Objective: Increase public awareness of the comprehensive planning process	**Objective**: Provide public with balanced and objective information and to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and/or solutions	**Objective**: Obtain public feedback on issues, alternatives, and/or decisions	**Objective**: To work directly with the public to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered	**Objective**: To place decision-making responsibilities in the hands of the public
Example:* News releases Direct mail	**Example**:* Displays/exhibits Public presentations	**Example**:* Opinion surveys	**Example**:* Public forums Open houses	**Example**:* Plan Commission

Adapted from the *International Association for Public Participation*
*Not all methods fall neatly into one category. News releases may be used to increase public awareness or be written to emphasize a public educational objective. An open house may contain public education activities, public input activities, and offer public interaction in the same session.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

Stage 1: Start-up

In order to create public partnership the Town will create a Plan Commission to develop a comprehensive plan for recommendation to the Town Board.

Stage 2: Issues and Opportunities

The Town will organize an **Issues and Opportunities Workshop** to which the public will be invited through a direct mailing to all town residents. This activity is an example of public interaction. Participants will identify and prioritize those issues and opportunities that they believe ought be addressed in the comprehensive planning process. The items will be listed by topics corresponding to the required elements in a comprehensive plan. The direct mail flyer will contain a postage-paid mailer, which residents unable to attend the workshop may use to return their list of items to be included in the prioritization voting.

The Town will conduct a **Public Opinion Survey** of town residents regarding land use and development issues. The data from this survey will reflect public views about various issues related to comprehensive planning and will be incorporated as public input for consideration by the Plan Commission.

In order to further guide the development of goals for the nine elements of the plan, the Town will organize a **Visioning Workshop** at which the residents of the town will be invited to participate in the creation of a vision statement to reflect the desired future for the Town

Stage 3: Plan Elements

As the various elements of the comprehensive plan are drafted, three open houses will be scheduled for public participation. The topics of each open house will depend on the actual sequence of completion of the draft elements. That sequence will be dependent on the timing of

relevant data availability, which is not yet known. The open house format will be designed to feature opportunities for public education, public input, and public interaction.

- **Public education.** County Planning Department staff and UW-Extension staff will present information about the elements under consideration at each open house. Presentations will include data, trends, maps, goals, objectives, policies, and programs. News releases to the local media will be used for public awareness and education to provide updates on the planning process and to communicate the content included in the above presentations. Materials will be posted on the County's Internet web site with an e-mail response form. Members of the Planning Department and UW-Extension will be available upon request to give presentations to community groups.
- **Public input and public interaction.** Citizens attending the open houses will be able to make comments, ask questions, and engage in a dialogue with Town Plan Commissioners and Planning Department staff. Written comments and questions will be accepted during the open house. In addition, comments and questions may be submitted at any time during the planning process via surface mail, electronic mail, telephone, and FAX. Direct responses will be made to those who request it or where a response is appropriate. A record of all comments and questions will be retained and analyzed for similar content; the analysis will be presented to the Plan Commission for consideration.

Public partnership in Stage 3 will be accomplished through Plan Commission review and modification of draft analyses and alternatives prepared by the Planning Department. If appropriate, the Plan Commission may implement additional public participation activities following any of the open houses, particularly if public input and interaction results in substantial modifications to earlier documents, maps, proposals, or policies.

Stage 4: Plan Review and Adoption

News media will be used to inform and educate the public about the proposed comprehensive plan prior to adoption. Copies of the proposed plan will be available for review in the local public libraries and on the County's Internet web site. Information will be provided to describe how to request additional information or how to make comments.

Chapter 66.1001(4)(d) of the Wisconsin Statutes requires a public hearing prior to the Town Board vote regarding adoption of the proposed comprehensive plan. A notice of the hearing must be published at least 30 days before the hearing is held in a newspaper likely to give notice in the area. The notice must contain the date, time and location of the hearing; a summary of the proposed plan, the name of a person to contact for additional information; details relating to where or when the proposed plan may be inspected; and how a copy may be obtained for review.

Planning is a continuous process that does not end with the adoption of the plan. As future planning issues arise, the Plan Commission may organize additional public participation activities as it considers specific planning issues and amendments to the comprehensive plan.