

I. INTRODUCTION & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Development of the Comprehensive Plan

In March of 2000, St. Croix County adopted the Development Management Plan, the first county-wide comprehensive plan. However, that plan was developed from 1997 through 2000, prior to the State’s comprehensive planning law, which was signed by Governor Thompson in October 1999. The existing Development Management Plan did not fully meet the requirements of the 1999 law and the county planned to update and review it on a regular basis. In addition, part of the 1999 law requires that all planning decisions made by municipalities in Wisconsin be consistent with a comprehensive plan, which is to be adopted by January 1, 2010. After this point in time, approval of some regulatory decisions must be consistent with the comprehensive plan and plans are to be reviewed at least every 10 years. To bring the County into compliance with the comprehensive planning law and complete a scheduled 10-year update of the Development Management Plan, St. Croix County began the process of updating and revising the Development Management Plan as a Comprehensive Plan. This project began in November of 2008.

Wisconsin Statutes define comprehensive planning as the following:

66.1001 Comprehensive planning. (note: previously, s. 66.0295)

(1) **DEFINITIONS.** In this section:

(a) “Comprehensive plan” means:

1. For a county, a development plan that is prepared or amended under s. 59.69 (2) or (3).
2. For a city or a village, or for a town that exercises village powers under s. 60.22 (3), a master plan that is adopted or amended under s. 62.23 (2) or (3).
3. For a regional planning commission, a master plan that is adopted or amended under s. 66.0309 (8), (9) or (10). (note: previously, s. 66.945(8), (9) or (10))

(b) “Local governmental unit” means a city, village, town, county or regional planning commission that may adopt, prepare or amend a comprehensive plan.

66.1001(3) Actions, Procedures that must be consistent with Comprehensive Plans

Beginning on January 1, 2010, if a local governmental unit engages in any of the following actions, those actions shall be consistent with that local governmental unit’s comprehensive plan:

- (g) Official mapping established or amended under s. 62.23 (6).
- (h) Local subdivision regulation under s. 236.45 or 236.46.
- (j) County zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 59.69.
- (k) City or village zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 62.23 (7).
- (l) Town zoning ordinances enacted or amended under s. 60.61 or 60.62.
- (q) Zoning of shorelands or wetlands in shorelands under s. 59.692, 61.351 or 62.231.

According to State law, a comprehensive plan shall contain at least all of the following elements:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Issues and Opportunities | 6. Natural Resources |
| 2. Housing | 7. Cultural Resources |
| 3. Transportation | 8. Economic Development |
| 4. Utilities and Community Facilities | 9. Intergovernmental Cooperation |
| 5. Agricultural Resources | 10. Land Use |
| | 11. Implementation |

As part of the comprehensive planning legislation, Wisconsin identified 14 goals to be addressed in comprehensive planning:

1. Promotion of redevelopment
2. Encouragement of neighborhood designs
3. Protection of natural areas
4. Protection of economically productive areas
5. Promoting efficient development patterns
6. Preservation of cultural, historic, and archaeological sites
7. Encouragement of cooperation
8. Building community identity
9. Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing
10. Providing infrastructure, services, and developable land
11. Promoting expansion or stabilization of the economic base
12. Balancing individual property rights
13. Planning and developing land uses that create or preserve unique urban and rural communities
14. Providing an integrated, efficient, and economical transportation system

In order to add some “teeth” to this plan, each element will include goals, objectives, and policies in order to allow for the implementation. For the purpose of this plan, these will be defined as the following:

Goals: *General statements of desired outcomes of the community; broadly written but specific enough to be able to gauge progress*

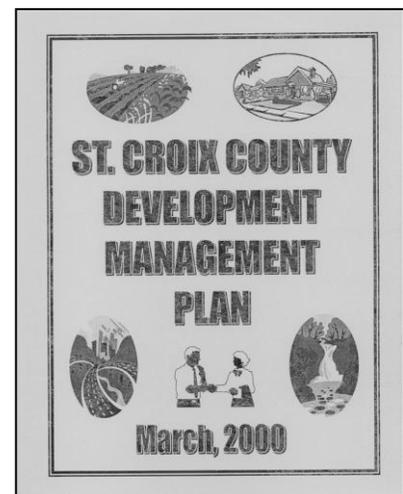
Objectives: *More specific and subset of goals; providing measurable strategies*

Policies: *“Operational Actions” to meet goals and objectives; identify existing policies, and those requiring further approval*

Plan Purpose

The intent of this legislation is to allow municipalities to decide on their own how they want to develop for the next 20 years. Planning is a natural human characteristic; it helps us to achieve goals and objectives in an orderly fashion. Looking 20 years ahead allows us to deal with future problems today, and make necessary corrections to change unwanted trends while maintaining positive ones. This plan is not meant to determine what an individual can or cannot do with their property, but to reach compromise on the future of the county. While this plan is considered a legal document, it is meant to be used as a guide not only for St. Croix County, but also for business owners, residents, and community leaders.

The Comprehensive Plan is essentially an update of the St. Croix County Development Management Plan (right) adopted in 2000. The purpose of the Development Management Plan was to develop a comprehensive set of informational resources and a policy framework to assist the County and local units of government in managing development. Most of the demographic information as well as the goals and policies were in need of updating. Also, additional elements were necessary in order to satisfy the comprehensive planning law.



The Development Management Plan was the predecessor to the Comprehensive Plan.

Organization of this Plan

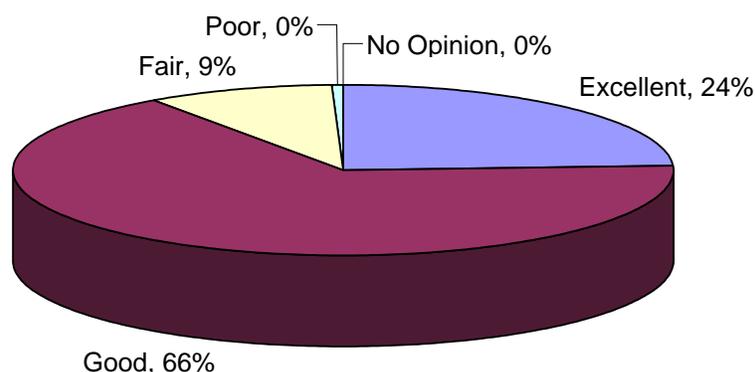
This plan is split into Volume 1 and Volume 2. Volume 1 is intended to be a summary and analysis of each element and includes the goals, objectives, and policies for each element. Volume 1 also includes special subsections that easily address many of the content requirements of the plan. Volume 2 contains the background and technical information that was gathered, reviewed, analyzed and incorporated in the document during the comprehensive planning process.

Public Participation

Wisconsin Statutes §66.1001 (4) (a), requires that the governing body of the governmental unit, St. Croix County Board of Supervisors, adopt written procedures designed to foster public participation. Public participation must include open discussion, communication programs, information services and public meetings for which advance notice has been provided, at every stage of comprehensive plan preparation. Such written procedures provide for wide distribution of proposed, alternative or amended comprehensive elements, an opportunity for the public to submit written comments on the comprehensive plan, and a process for the governing body to respond to such comments. The public participation process in St. Croix County included public workshops, a public opinion survey, open houses, a webpage with project materials, public meeting notices and a public hearing. Detailed descriptions of the public participation activities involved with the development of this plan can be found in Volume 2 County Background.

One of the key components of the public participation portion of the Comprehensive Plan was the public survey that was mailed out to residents. On September, 2008, the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls mailed surveys to 1,146 County residences. The initial mailing was followed by reminder postcards and a second mailing to non-respondents. The overall response rate was 44 percent (500 completed questionnaires). Results of the survey are incorporated throughout the comprehensive plan. A complete summary of the survey can be found in Appendix A. Chart 1 (below) shows that 9 of 10 St. Croix County residents felt that the overall quality of life in the County was good (66%) or excellent (24%). Residents in the western portion of the county gave a slightly higher overall rating.

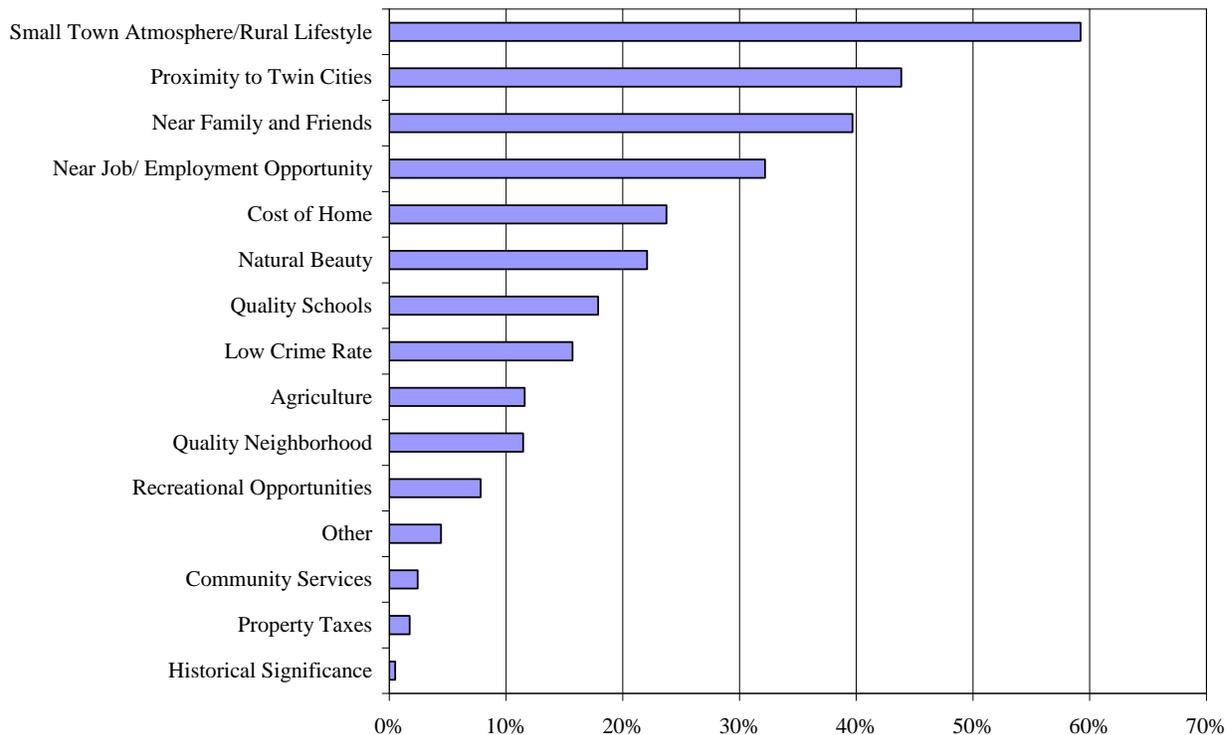
Chart 1. Overall Quality of Life Rating in St. Croix County



Source: *St. Croix County Comprehensive Planning Public Opinion Survey Report Results, 2008*

Chart 2 lists the top reasons for living in St. Croix County according to respondents of the survey. The top two reasons given by respondents were the small town atmosphere/rural lifestyle and the proximity to the Twin Cities.

Chart 2. Top Reasons for Living in St. Croix County



Demographic differences in the reasons for living in St. Croix County include:

- Agriculture was less important to residents of cities and villages and was more important to residents in the eastern portion of the county.
- Small town atmosphere/rural lifestyle was more important to men.
- Proximity to the Twin Cities was rated higher by residents in the western portion of the county and those with more formal education but was less important to long-term residents (25 or more years).
- The cost of a home was rated higher by village residents than by city and town residents.
- Being near family and friends was more important to long-term residents, retirees, and those with less formal education.
- Households with children gave a higher level of importance to the quality of schools.
- A quality neighborhood was less important to town residents.
- Natural beauty was a more important factor for residents in the western portion of the county, single adult households, and those with more formal education.
- The cost of a home was more important to younger respondents (under 45 years old).
- The quality of the local schools was less important to village residents than to city or town residents.
- Not surprisingly, being near employment opportunities was more important to respondents currently employed.