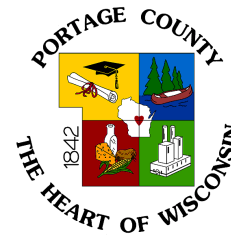


About the Plan



Your link to up-to-date information on the countywide planning effort...

Summary Information on the Portage County Smart Growth Planning Grant

The comprehensive planning project proposed by Portage County is unique and unprecedented within the State of Wisconsin in its scale and scope. Portage County is made up of 17 towns, nine villages, and the City of Stevens Point. All of these 27 units of government have agreed to participate with the County in a single planning process to fulfill the requirements for comprehensive planning established by the Wisconsin Legislature in 1999 and 2000.

The estimated cost of this planning project is \$1,000,000. The Portage County Planning and Zoning Department has been awarded a grant of \$504,000 by the State of Wisconsin, to help offset the costs of the project. In addition, Portage County is contributing \$150,000 toward the cost of the project, and all municipalities are contributing a total of \$125,000. In-kind staff support makes up the balance of the project cost.

The planning project, as proposed, is based completely upon intergovernmental cooperation. The Portage County Planning and Zoning Department will be the lead agency for the project, responsible for providing primary staffing for the various committees, and leadership to move the plan through the process. The committees responsible for drafting the plan will contain representatives from each unit of government, working toward consensus on planning issues. In the early stages of the process, all the representatives will work together to come to a consensus on the long range vision for the County. After an overall County vision is established, the planning group will split into urban and rural components. Throughout the planning process these two planning committees will hold regularly scheduled, joint meetings to build linkage and consistency between the two distinct, but interrelated planning areas. The final products of this process will be a County plan for the unincorporated portions of Portage County (including the rural villages), and an urban area plan (including Stevens Point, the Villages of Plover, Whiting and Park Ridge, and portions of the adjacent towns), which will be incorporated into the County plan. Given the universal participation in the planning process, and the joint discussions of the planning sub-groups, the plans will mesh with the minimum possible amount of conflict or inconsistency.

In order to take advantage of the unprecedented possibilities for cooperation that have been generated by the Smart Growth legislation requirements, and maintain the momentum for cooperation that has occurred, it was decided to undertake this single planning process with parallel tracks. All 28 units of government have taken official action to allocate personnel and funding toward the project; however, a plan of this scope cannot be accomplished with existing resources and must receive grant funding to proceed, based on the staff resources necessary to complete this project in 36 months.

Within the context of the nine-element comprehensive plan, 14 local planning goals will be addressed. These goals will help the municipalities: redevelop lands with existing infrastructure; protect natural areas, productive farmlands and forests; promote efficient development that is sensitive to community costs for services; preserve cultural, historic and archaeological sites and identify and preserve those features that make a community unique; encourage coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government; revitalize main streets; provide adequate housing, infrastructure and public services to meet future demands; coordinate economic development efforts in the region; address the balance of property rights with community interests and goals; and provide for integrated transportation service that meets the needs of the community, including the encouragement of neighborhood designs that offer a range of transportation options.

Cooperation Between Communities

The Portage County Comprehensive Planning Process will: bring all 28 units of government together to participate in a single planning process; identify and involve multi-jurisdictional entities, such as school districts, to ensure their unique issues are addressed; bring citizens together with government representatives and other interest groups to develop a single Countywide vision to guide the Comprehensive Planning Process and provide a framework under which the Rural and Urban Planning Committees will work.

Public Participation

Portage County's approach to public participation is broad-based and continuous throughout the planning effort. The process is responsive to citizen participants, is committed to utilizing the knowledge and understanding of citizens to address important issues, and offers multiple opportunities for engagement – at varying levels of involvement. The Portage County University Extension will facilitate the public participation process.

A large publicity and information/education campaign is planned to increase awareness throughout the County, of the comprehensive planning effort and ways to participate. Citizens will be encouraged to get involved by participating on committees or attending their meetings. To provide support for citizen-based decision-making, County staff will produce detailed narrative and tabular reports to share with the public, with opportunity for comment and feedback. Community visioning workshops will be held throughout the County and will allow the public to interact directly in the development of specific recommendations for the future development of the County.

The public participation effort will: require committees to adopt written public participation guidelines to provide for meaningful input into the process; utilize a variety of public forums to garner input from the public on a broad range of planning issues; provide for wide distribution of plan-related proposals to foster public dialogue and interaction; develop feedback mechanisms that provide for continuous communication to and from the public; and involve underrepresented populations throughout all stages of the planning effort.

Budget and Timeline

Budget and Staff Plan: The budget for the proposed planning project is \$1,000,000. The Portage County Planning and Zoning Department will hire four (4) additional full-time planners, starting in 2001, to work with two (2) existing Senior Planners, as our Smart Growth Planning Team. Several paid and unpaid interns will be brought on staff for the project team, to provide research and data collection support.

Planning Timeline: 36 months with parallel planning tracks: **Stevens Point Urban Area** (City of Stevens Point, 3 villages, and portions of 5 towns). Each unit of government will have two (2) representatives on the Urban Area Planning Committee. **Portage County** (including all towns and incorporated rural villages). Each unit of government will have one (1) representative on the Rural Area Planning Committee, with additional representation on various subcommittees.