



PLANNING NOTES

PORTAGE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Volume 1, Issue 2
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ISSUE IDENTIFICATION WILL HELP DEVELOP VISION FOR FUTURE

Local governments shoulder the burden of trying to identify and address issues of local importance. However, many times they do not consult those people closest to the issues—the citizens they represent.

In the comprehensive planning process underway in Portage County, all local units of government (towns, villages, city and county) are looking to citizens to assist them in the development of key issues and concerns across the county.

Through the use of a countywide mail survey, community hopes and concerns workshops held throughout the county, focus groups, and a visual preference survey, Portage County's Comprehensive Planning Joint Steering Committee is learning about issues in Portage County.

Why is this process important? For several reasons. First, the Joint Steering Committee is charged with identifying key issues in Portage County—those issues that need to be addressed. Second, citizens have firsthand knowledge of the issues that affect them in their daily lives. Finally, in order to develop a plausible vision for the future of their community, citizens must be grounded in reality—that is,

have a real understanding of the issues that affect every day life.

So, once issues have been identified throughout the county, citizens will be called upon again, this time to help develop a vision for the future of their community.

“Visioning” is a process through which a community talks about the type of future it wants, and then decides how to achieve it. A “vision statement” is the end product of such a process. It depicts, in words and images, what the community seeks to become—how it would look, how it would function, how it might be different or better twenty years from now.

Be involved in the Comprehensive Planning process—look for community visioning sessions in the spring of 2002—you have a lot at stake, be a part of the future of your community.



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“The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, change amid order.”

Alfred North Whitehead

COUNTY SURVEY RETURNED BY OVER 6,600 HOUSEHOLDS

In late September a community survey was sent to every residence in Portage County. Approximately 30,500 surveys were distributed in the initial mailing—and over 6,600, or roughly 22%, of the surveys were completed and returned—a highly successful mail survey result.

The survey is a means to assess what people think life in Portage County should look like in the not-too-distant future.

An important step in the comprehensive planning process underway in Portage County was to ask people living or owning land in the county what they think about a variety of issues. To reach as many people as possible, the Portage County Comprehensive Planning Joint Steering Committee decided to send a survey to every residence in the county. The idea was to let people tell the Planning Committee just what they think is right or wrong with life in the county. People were asked to identify things they liked and what needs fixing.

Residents were asked to answer a variety of questions related to a number of topics, including: county trends and land use; housing; utilities and community facilities; agricultural, natural, and cultural resources; commerce and employment; transportation; and rural and urban development patterns.

Completed surveys were received from every town, village and city in the county. Once received, responses contained in each survey were entered into a database. This database will be used to analyze survey responses. To date, all the survey information has been entered—preliminary data analysis is expected sometime in December. A full report of survey results will be available sometime after January 1, 2002.

Why are the results of the survey so important? First, over 6,600 households

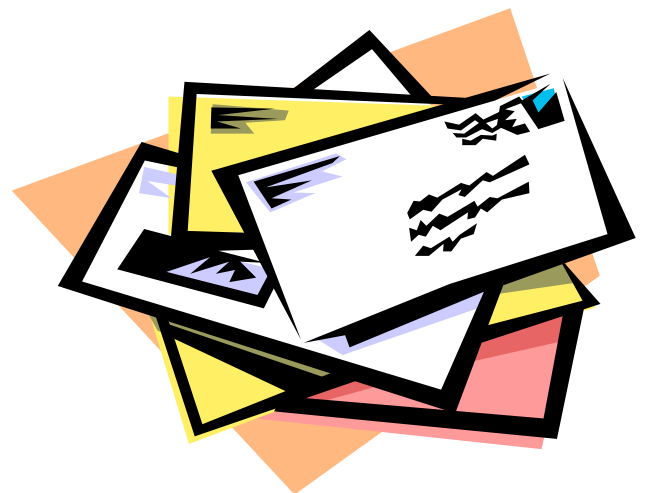
took the time to respond and weigh in on issues in Portage County. Second, in combination with Community Hopes and Concerns Workshops held around the county (see page 3 of this newsletter) and a photographic survey completed by Planning Committee members, this information will help the Planning Committee identify critical issues in Portage County.

So, once issues have been identified throughout the county, citizens will be called upon again, this time to help develop a vision for the future of their community.

In order to develop a plausible vision for the future of their community, citizens must be grounded in reality—that is, have a real understanding of the issues that affect every day life. The surveys and workshops will help build that understanding.

Be involved in the comprehensive planning project—you have a lot at stake—be a part of the future of your community.

**Approximately
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30,500 surveys
mailed out to
all county
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COMMUNITY HOPES AND CONCERNS WORKSHOPS HELD

Portage County UW-Extension and Planning and Zoning Staff facilitated sixteen Community Hopes and Concerns workshops around Portage County in October and November. Over 400 people participated in the sessions.

The Community Hopes and Concerns Workshops are part of the issue identification and visioning step in the comprehensive process underway in the county. The workshops allow public participation in assessing the environment in which we all live. Specific strengths and weaknesses of the community and Portage County were identified, as well as threats that need to be overcome and opportunities to take advantage of.

The purpose of the workshops was to provide an opportunity for the public to offer information on their specific hopes and concerns related to their community. Used in combination with other data collected through the community and photographic surveys, focus groups, and invited experts, this information will form the foundation from which a countywide vision for the future will be developed.

Evening sessions were held in Junction City, Rosholt, Amherst, Almond, Town of Grant, Stevens Point, Bancroft, and Plover (2 sessions).

Other sessions were convened at UW-Stevens Point to capture faculty/staff and student input; Ben Franklin Junior High, P. J. Jacobs Junior High, Rosholt Middle School, and Stevens Point Area Senior High School to receive input from young people in the county; and the Lincoln Center to solicit input from older adults. In addition, Joint Planning Committee members and alternates went through the exercise at their November committee meeting.

Participants in the sessions worked in small groups and were asked to respond to three questions: 1) What are your concerns about your community? (i.e. the town, village or city in which you live); 2) What are your concerns about Portage County?; and 3) What are your hopes for your community or Portage County? Participants were asked to write down their top three responses to each question.

Participants then shared one idea at a time with their small group. The information was recorded on a flip-chart for all to see. When all responses were collected for the first question, participants were given the opportunity to vote anonymously for what they thought were the top three responses listed on the flip-chart for that question. Facilitators recorded the votes on the flip-chart papers and indicated what responses received the most votes. This process was repeated for questions two and three. At the end of the session the small groups shared the information that they had developed with the larger group.

Information from each session has been tabulated and will now be analyzed by Planning staff and committee members in an effort to identify common themes. The information will be made available to the public sometime in early 2002.

A total of sixteen workshops were held around the county and attended by more than 400 participants.



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PRESORTED STANDARD
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Schedule of Upcoming Events:

- **January 9, 2002**– Joint Planning Committee Meeting, 6:30 p.m. Courthouse Annex Building
- **Early 2002**– Community Surveys Results Released
Background Information Report Released



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We're on the Web!
www.co.portage.wi.us/
Click on "County Comprehensive Plan" Link

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING WEBSITE OFFERS INFORMATION ON PLANNING EFFORT

Information regarding the Portage County Comprehensive Plan can be found on the World Wide Web!

The Comprehensive Planning website is your one-stop shop for resources related to the planning process.

Six easy to use sections guide your visit through the website. Find useful information related to how the planning will be done in the "About the Plan" section.

Resources related to the Urban and Rural Planning Committees, including membership, committee meeting agendas, and minutes, can be found in the "Urban Planning Committee" and "Rural

Planning Committee" sections.

The "Getting Involved" section contains information on the wide variety of ways that citizens can be involved in the planning process.

Have a question about the planning process? Use the "Ask a Question" section to ask a planning staff member a question via email.

In the "Resources" section, find the

comprehensive planning newsletter and a series of fact sheets that talk about planning-specific issues.

Also contained in this section are links to a wide variety of other web-based planning resources.

Stay connected with the planning process underway in Portage County—use the link below to keep up-to-date on all the happenings!

www.co.portage.wi.us/
Click on the "County Comprehensive Plan" link



Portage County Comprehensive Plan

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