



# PLANNING NOTES

## PORTAGE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Volume 2, Issue 1  
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### THE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: A PROGRESS REPORT

A great deal of progress has been made since the fall of 2000 when all of Portage County's local units of government decided to work together to develop a comprehensive plan.

The cooperative nature of the planning project was a significant contributing factor in the county's receiving a planning grant from the State of Wisconsin for \$504,000 in early 2001.

The countywide planning project kicked off in earnest in June of 2001 with the formation of the Comprehensive Plan Joint Steering Committee. The steering committee consists of representatives appointed from each of the county's towns, villages, and the City of Stevens Point.

One of the first official acts of the Joint Steering Committee was the adoption of a Public Participation Plan which detailed the many ways that the public could be involved with, and offer direct input into, the planning process.

The first piece of major public input came through the completion of a countywide mail survey sent to every household in the County. Over 6,600 surveys were returned out of the 30,000 sent. To follow up and build on the information gathered through the survey, a series of Hopes and Concerns Workshops were held throughout the County. Over 1,600

comments were received from the public at these workshops.

The community survey and Hopes and Concerns Workshops helped the Joint Steering Committee identify a number of key issues concerning the future of Portage County.

Six visioning sessions were held across the county to solicit residents' ideas of what the future of Portage County should hold for those specifically identified issues. Another 1,500 responses were collected and forwarded to the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee then split into separate Urban Area and Rural Area Committees. The committees ultimately adopted Urban and Rural Vision Statements to use in guiding their individual planning efforts.

Following the adoption of the Vision Statements, the Urban Area and Rural Area Committees authorized the formation of Element Area Work Groups. A description of the work groups, their work, and the resulting committee action is detailed on page 2 of this publication. Please read on!



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***"A thing is right when it supports the stability, integrity, and beauty of the community of life."***

*Aldo Leopold*

# ELEMENT AREA WORK GROUPS FORWARD RECOMMENDATIONS

Seven Element Area Work Groups were convened in the fall of 2002 to analyze different elements of the adopted Urban and Rural Vision Statements. Work groups were made up of experts and knowledgeable citizens working within the areas of Housing, Economic Development, Agriculture, Historical and Cultural Resources, Natural Resources, Public Facilities, and Transportation.

These groups were tasked with looking at the overall feasibility of the vision statement, and recommending potential goal ideas they thought, as experts, should be included in the process for

working toward the vision.

The results of the Element Area Work Groups' discussions were forwarded to the Urban Area and Rural Area Steering Committees for discussion and deliberation. Based on their deliberation, the two steering committees developed a set of guiding principles and preliminary goals for the Urban and Rural areas of Portage County. The guiding principles and preliminary goals recommended by the Urban and Rural Committees now go to the local Plan Commissions for their consideration and possible inclusion in that unit of government's local comprehensive plan document.



## COMMITTEES ADOPT GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PLAN

The Portage County Comprehensive Planning Joint Steering Committee adopted a set of Guiding Principles at its September 2002 meeting. These guiding principles provide broad direction to each of eight element areas that will ultimately be part of the comprehensive plan document, and serve to focus future policy discussions toward achieving county citizens' visions for the future:

**Housing:** Allow for an adequate supply of housing to meet the needs of all citizens.

**Transportation:** Develop an area-wide transportation planning and funding approach that maximizes efficiency and minimizes conflicts between modes as well as jurisdictions.

**Historical and Cultural Resources:** Encourage identification and protection of historic and cultural resources.

**Utilities and Community Facilities:**

Provide adequate infrastructure, utilities, and community facilities and services to meet existing and future community needs.

**Agriculture:** Sustain an economically viable agricultural industry.

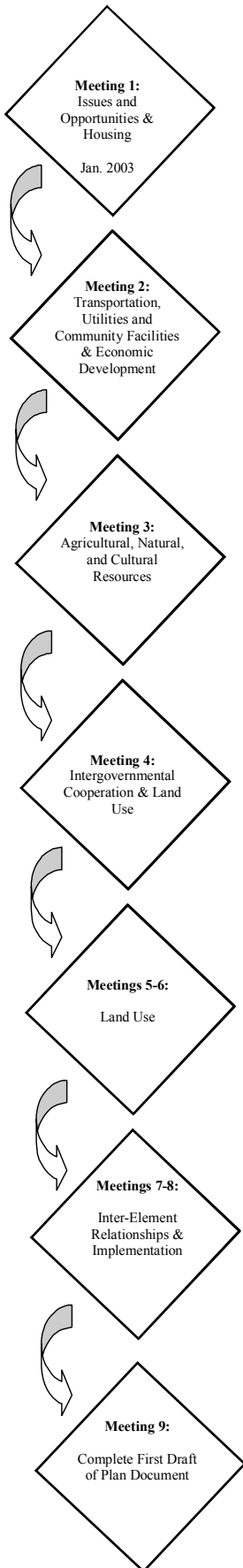
**Natural Resources:** Manage the natural resources that support and sustain us.

**Economic Development:** Promote the stabilization and expansion of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities.

**Intergovernmental Cooperation:** Encourage cooperation between local units of government to ensure efficient delivery of services.



# LOCAL APPROACH DEVELOPED FOR RURAL TOWN & VILLAGE PLANS



In January of 2003 local units of government across rural Portage County will begin to develop their individual plans with the assistance of Planning and Zoning Department staff members. Groups or “clusters” consisting of several neighboring towns may be formed to work through shared issues. A nine session local planning approach has been developed to assist rural towns and villages in developing a draft comprehensive plan for their jurisdictions by the fall of 2003. The local approach to planning is described below.

## Local Meeting Approach

Prior to the first local session, each local planning commission member will receive a workbook containing background materials about the local unit of government, information developed through public participation related to issues, concerns, and community vision, as well as guiding principles and potential goals adopted by the Countywide Steering Committee.

Before each meeting, planning commission members will review the local issues and concerns identified by the public through a community survey and a series of hopes and concerns workshops. Vision ideas, guiding principles and potential goals for the element areas being discussed will also be reviewed.

For Each Meeting the Planning Commission Will...

- o Work through a short exercise where participants, based on their local knowledge and experience, identify key issues or concerns for the local unit of government related to the element areas being discussed at the meeting.
- o Select goals for the element areas from: a) the list of potential goals adopted by the Countywide Steering Committee; b) existing plans; or c) new goals drafted by planning commission members.

Between Meetings...

- o Planning and Zoning Staff will draft for review potential objectives/policies to address the goals, concerns, and issues identified by planning commission members.
- o Draft objective/policies will be sent to local planning commission members for individual review. Comments and revisions should be returned to Planning and Zoning Staff prior to the next meeting.

Review, discussion, and initial approval of draft goals and objectives/policies will take place at the beginning of the next meeting.

After all of the Elements have been addressed...

- o Planning commission members will work through a process to assure inter-element consistency, and recommend implementation strategies.

By the end of the nine session planning process, each local unit of government will have a draft comprehensive plan document in hand. Review, refinement, and adoption of the comprehensive plan document will take place over the ensuing several months.

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#### Schedule of Upcoming Events:

- **January 29, 2003**– Future Growth Possibilities Unveiled, Sentry Theater, 7:00 p.m.
- **Early 2003**– Local units of government begin developing plans for their jurisdictions.



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[www.co.portage.wi.us/](http://www.co.portage.wi.us/)  
Click on "County Comprehensive  
Plan" Link

## FUTURE GROWTH POSSIBILITIES TO BE UNVEILED AT JANUARY MEETING

Mark **January 29, 2003** on your calendar! A special event has been scheduled for 7:00 p.m. that evening at the Sentry Theater in Stevens Point.

Come and hear about the progress that has been made in the comprehensive planning process over the last year-and-a-half. A number of milestones have been reached, and we'll celebrate the cooperative efforts of all who have been involved.

Learn also about the next steps in the planning project. Local units of government across the County will begin development of their individual plans in early 2003.

But most importantly, a number of future growth scenarios will be presented for review and comment around the county.

The scenarios will be presented in graphic and narrative form, and will be a starting point for discussing our county's preferred future growth.

Be a part of this exciting evening. Share your thoughts and ideas.

If you are a local elected official, plan commission member, local planning committee member, or someone who is interested in the future of Portage County, this meeting is for you! Everyone is welcome...

