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## Comprehensive Planning Newsletter

This newsletter is intended to keep Washington County citizens, elected officials and other interested persons current on the Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Planning (Smart Growth) process in Washington County.

### In this issue:

- Learn about the level of detail needed for regional, county and local comprehensive plans
- Review the latest bills in the legislature that could impact the comprehensive planning law
- Understand the difference between 9 comprehensive planning elements and 14 planning goals
- Gain insight into the progress of the multi-jurisdictional planning work group

Send us your email address and we can email you our next issue!  
[webplan@co.washington.wi.us](mailto:webplan@co.washington.wi.us)

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## Washington County Multi-Jurisdictional

# Comprehensive Planning Newsletter

*This newsletter provides an opportunity for Washington County residents to gain insight into the process of planning the future of our County.*

### Continuation of Local Control...

Because both the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) and Washington County must complete comprehensive plans under the state law, some local officials wonder whether these plans will override local decision making. Tom Larson of the Wisconsin Realtors Association addressed this concern recently when he said, "This law embraces local control. It's about people having a voice in how their community grows."



Is Larson right? To gain more insight, let's examine the depth of detail contained within comprehensive plans at different levels of government. As it turns out, SEWRPC, the County, and local municipalities do indeed deal with many of the same issues—but usually at a significantly different scale.

Take a look at housing, for example, one of the required nine elements in a comprehensive plan. All three plans—SEWRPC's, the County's, and the local municipality's—will address housing issues. SEWRPC's plan may look at population projections, household sizes, and personal incomes and determine that the region as a whole will need, say, 30,000 affordable housing units to meet the projected demand by 2015. SEWRPC's plan may then break this need down by individual county, recommending that Washington County add 3,000 homes to meet demand. Nevertheless, this is only a recommendation, meant as a guide and as a means to coordinate the region's response to this issue. The County can address this need

however it wishes. It can even ignore the recommendation.



If the County follows the recommendation, it may break the numbers down further yet and suggest that 2,500 affordable homes will be needed in urban areas and 500 in rural areas. The County's plan may further recommend a public/private program to help fund affordable housing. It may even recommend standards for siting, design, and construction. However, the County's plan will not pinpoint specific locations where affordable housing must go. Even if it did, local municipalities would not be bound by such directives.

Only the local municipality's plan recommendation for setting aside general areas within the community for the development of affordable housing would actually carry any weight. It alone has the power to rezone such lands appropriately. Furthermore, when developments are proposed in the future, the local municipality has the power to reject any proposal that does not meet its local plan and ordinances.

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## Legislative Update

Several bills related to comprehensive planning are being reviewed by the State Legislature. The following bills listed are currently in the State Legislature.

**AB-340**—relates to expanding town authority to create an official map and status of an official town map.

**AB-435**—relates to repealing the comprehensive planning statute known as “Smart Growth”.

**AB-551**—relates to subjecting a county developed plan to town board approval. (passed assembly currently in Senate).

**AB-608**—relates to making changes to the comprehensive planning statute known as “Smart Growth”.  
(passed assembly currently in Senate).

**AB-728**—relates to comprehensive planning by local government units and fees imposed by political subdivision.  
(passed assembly currently in Senate).

**AB-732**—relates to non-metallic mining reclamation financial assurances. (passed both houses)

**AB-750**—relates to exempting from the Smart Growth law town disapproval of certain county zoning actions

For further details check the Wisconsin State Legislature web site. (<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/>)

## The Difference Between Elements and Goals

The primary content in a comprehensive plan revolves around “nine elements” outlined in Chapter 66 of the state statutes. These nine elements typically form the major chapters or sections in a comprehensive planning document. Unlike the nine elements, which are always required, the “fourteen planning goals” only have to be addressed in a plan if a community receives a state planning grant. Rather than forming stand-alone chapters, the fourteen planning goals are specific goals that are woven throughout the comprehensive planning document. Since the goals are intended to promote sound planning, many of the goals relate to more than one element, so they may need to be addressed in multiple chapters and in different ways. All fourteen goals will be briefly discussed in this and future issues of this newsletter:



### Planning Goals

The Wisconsin comprehensive planning law provides a substantial framework for planning and land use decision making in Wisconsin. While local governments continue to control their own planning and decision making, state law now identifies 14 local planning goals that provide a vision for state and local land use and planning programs, policies, infrastructure, and investments. The first four are briefly described below.



1. *Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial and industrial structures.*  
This goal encourages growth in areas where previous growth has already occurred, thereby lessening the need to use farmland and open space outside of built-up areas. Taxpayer dollars may also be saved if new development can be supported by existing infrastructure rather than new infrastructure.

2. *Encouragement of neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices.*  
The typical household generates approximately ten vehicle trips per day. Bicycle and pedestrian paths, and access to transit service provide options that can help lower the number of daily vehicle trips. This in turn reduces the amount of carbon dioxide emissions and the wear on local roadways.



3. *Protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, wood lands, open spaces and ground water resources.*  
Natural areas are regularly under consideration for development, and once they are gone, they're gone. Natural areas are important for recreation, tourism, and ecological balance. Air quality, groundwater quantity and quality, flood reduction, soil conservation, and many other benefits result from natural resource protection.

4. *Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests.*  
Agriculture has an approximately \$140 million total economic impact annually in Washington County. In light of this substantial impact, serious consideration should be given to its preservation as an industry.

## Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Planning Process

### Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Planning Work Group

In anticipation of applying for a joint State comprehensive planning grant in November 2004, a multi-jurisdictional planning work group has been formed to develop a work program, a public participation plan and to complete a grant application. The work program and public participation plan will be customized to meet the needs of each partnering municipality. To date, the County has received formal commitment to participate in this work group from nine towns and one village. Once the work group finalizes the work program and public participation plan, each community interested in partnering to complete their comprehensive plan must formally adopt a resolution stating their interest in partnering and sign an agreement detailing out the responsibilities of each party.

The work group meets monthly on the fourth Monday of each month through October 2004 at 7 p.m. at the County Highway Vehicle Maintenance Facility located at 900 Lang Street, West Bend. The public is welcome to attend these meetings. If you would like more information on this planning effort or would like to be added to the quarterly newsletter mailing list, please contact Debora Sielski at 262/335-4445.

#### Multi-Jurisdictional Work Program

The next four work group meetings are critical in making the participation in this planning partnership a success. The work group will be preparing the draft work program which defines how the County and partnering communities will work together to complete their comprehensive plans. The work program will:

- Define the relationships between partnering communities
- Outline major work elements
- Identify the responsibilities of each partner
- Provide a time line for completing the plans
- Delineate the committee structure
- Review the costs for each partner.



#### Public Participation Plan

The work group will also complete a public participation plan. This plan will describe how Washington County and partnering communities will engage the residents of Washington County throughout the planning process. Once a draft plan is complete, a public information/input meeting will be held to obtain comment on this plan. The public participation plan will:

- Detail specific County wide public outreach efforts
- Describe the outreach that will take place to learn about the needs and desires of local communities
- Provide a description of the public participation methods



Citizen planners gather around the “Smart Board,” a new technology that allows citizens and professionals to instantaneously view land-use scenarios, which they can change at the touch of a finger.

### Continuation of Local Control...(Continued from page 1).

This framework is the same for all of the nine elements, although there are some possible exceptions. First, in the case of extraterritorial platting or zoning jurisdiction, local control in a town may be subject to the local control of a nearby city or village. (This is a result of previously existing statutes, not the comprehensive planning law.) Second, a county plan may make some very specific recommendations for property or facilities it owns within a town. Third, a County regulation, such as the shoreland zoning ordinance or County subdivision ordinance, may determine if certain land uses or a new subdivision will be allowed within a local government. However, this is nothing new—the County historically has had authority to enforce certain land use regulations, such as shoreland zoning and subdivision control, and will continue to have that authority whether or not a County comprehensive plan exists.

The comprehensive planning law did not change the legal relationship between cities, towns, villages, and the County. All units and levels of government continue to have the same powers and authority over land uses that they had before the law was passed. The comprehensive planning law did not address the legal relationship between the plans of various units of government. Conflicts between the plans and implementing ordinance of different units of government may well occur, as they do now and did prior to passage of the comprehensive planning law.