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CREATING A VISION FOR WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN

The Regional Comprehensive Planning Effort
West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC) is preparing a comprehensive plan which will serve as a regional framework of broad advisory goals and strategies that advocate good planning practices while providing communities with the information and tools they need for their respective planning efforts.

Plan recommendations will be created in a bottom-up fashion, being drawn from the review of existing county and local plans from our region, as well as from the input of the planning advisory groups.

This is a State of Wisconsin grant-funded effort in cooperation with three counties and 21 cities, villages, and towns who are also preparing their individual comprehensive plans.

Who is WCWRPC?
West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission—one of eight regional planning commissions in Wisconsin—is statutorily charged with the responsibility of planning for the physical, social, and economic development of the region.

Since 1971, WCWRPC has been conducting areawide planning and providing technical assistance to local governments in our region.

Each of our region’s seven County Boards appoint three representatives to the governing body of the Commission.

Milestone Report #1: West Central Wisconsin Conditions, Trends, & Implications
The regional comprehensive plan encompasses the nine required elements of the State Comprehensive Planning Law, in addition to an Energy & Sustainability element unique to our project. With the data-gathering and issues identification phase of this project now complete, this report is a brief synopsis of the county-level conditions & trends reports, working papers, and issues identification activities for each of the primary plan elements. Each page includes the top three related regional issues as prioritized by the Regional Intergovernmental Coordination Group and the Technical Advisory Group in May 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Schedule</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data-Gathering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visioning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal &amp; Strategy Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Toolkit &amp; Regional Workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan Adoption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

timeline may vary or be completed earlier than scheduled
Our Gold-Star Participatory Approach

Obtaining participation for a regional-level comprehensive plan is challenging and opportunities are limited by time, resources, distances, and interest levels of the public. To overcome these challenges, a five-pronged participatory approach is being implemented which encourages input from our communities, service providers, businesses, and neighbors.
Conditions & Trends

- St. Croix Co. has been the fastest growing county in Wisconsin since 1990.
- Growth patterns vary within the region and even within counties.
- Farm population in our unincorporated towns has decreased from 25% in 1970 to less than 7% today.
- Median age is increasing.
- The region is becoming more ethnically diverse, in part due to employment opportunities in certain communities.

Projected Population Change (2008-2030)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>2008 Estimate</th>
<th>2030 Projected</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barron County</td>
<td>47,727</td>
<td>54,065</td>
<td>+ 13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chippewa County</td>
<td>61,872</td>
<td>75,152</td>
<td>+ 21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark County</td>
<td>34,589</td>
<td>40,833</td>
<td>+ 18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunn County</td>
<td>43,292</td>
<td>54,103</td>
<td>+ 25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eau Claire County</td>
<td>98,302</td>
<td>118,728</td>
<td>+ 20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk County</td>
<td>45,892</td>
<td>58,866</td>
<td>+ 28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Croix County</td>
<td>79,702</td>
<td>137,360</td>
<td>+ 72.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Central Wisconsin</td>
<td>411,376</td>
<td>539,107</td>
<td>+31.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top 3 Issues

- Our growing elderly population will continue to increase service demands.
- Many areas have been experiencing significant in-migration of new residents who may have different expectations for services, land use, etc.
- Our aging population and the out-migration of many younger people may result in insufficient workforce numbers in our region in the future.

Implications

- A “one size fits all” solution for issues in our region is often inappropriate given the differing growth rates and demographic trends across west central Wisconsin. This also creates challenges when attempting to identify a regional identity and regional strategies.
- Our communities are changing. Change is accompanied by new issues and opportunities. New solutions will be needed to accommodate these changes while still achieving the vision of our communities and residents.
- The population and growth trends in our region impact all plan elements on topics such as labor force availability, land use conflicts, and changing demands for housing, services, and infrastructure. Planning efforts must consider and reflect these population and demographic trends.
**Conditions & Trends**

- In 2005, only 4.5% of Wisconsin energy was derived from renewable resources.
- From 1970 to 2005 in Wisconsin, energy consumption has increased 55%, which is more than double the population growth.
- From 1987 to 2007 for every +1 increase in population there were +4 acres assessed as residential in our region.
- Direct sale of farm products increased 111% in our region between 2002 and 2007.

**Implications**

- Energy and sustainability must be considered when addressing all plan elements; it affects our quality of life and the energy and natural resources upon which we depend.
- Energy conservation and renewable resource options for the region exist and will receive increasing attention as fuel prices rise, environmental consequences are considered, and new technologies become available.
- Our region and its communities have opportunities to reduce costs while strengthening our economy through conservation, sustainable practices, and capturing emerging markets.
- The decisions of today affect future generations; we have an obligation to plan accordingly.

**Top 3 Issues**

- There is a need for more information, education, models, and facts regarding the renewable energy potential and sustainability opportunities in our region.
- A regional strategy is needed to assist our communities and the region in meeting the Governor’s 25x25 goal of producing 25% of the State’s electricity and transportation fuels from renewable resources by 2025.
- Energy conservation and sustainability is not a priority for many communities in the region and is not part of community planning efforts.
**Conditions & Trends**

- The number of housing units in the region increased 14% between 1990 and 2000, while population increased 12.2%.
- Seasonal housing is a large percentage of the housing stock in some areas, though the number of seasonal homes overall is decreasing as units are converted to year-round homes.
- About 75% of the region’s housing stock is single-family units. 49% of the housing stock was constructed prior to 1970.
- Polk, St. Croix, and Dunn counties have had some of the highest foreclosure rates in the State.

### Seasonal Units – 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Number of Units</th>
<th>% of Total Housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barron County</td>
<td>2,299</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chippewa County</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark County</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunn County</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eau Claire County</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk County</td>
<td>4,209</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Croix County</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Central Wisconsin</td>
<td>8,976</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000*

### Top 3 Issues

- Existing regulations may not accommodate or support the growing demand for alternative housing options, such as green building methods, sustainable site design, and multi-generational housing trends.
- Increased housing options are needed in the region and this demand will likely increase as our population grows and ages; the region will need more elderly housing in the future.
- Increases in travel time and fuel costs may limit future housing in the region if residents are less willing to commute long distances to their places of employment.

### Implications

- The region contains an older housing stock that is in need of rehabilitation and energy efficiency improvements. Continuation of programs to address these issues is of importance.
- The increasing conversion of seasonal units to year-round units has created new demands for services and infrastructure in many rural areas.
- Local communities must be prepared to meet the changing demands for different types of housing, in particular as our population ages and as more attention is given to alternative building methods.
- The great variety of housing authorities, non-profit housing programs, and other related service providers in our region provide an opportunity to work cooperatively to address our future housing issues and demands in an efficient and effective manner.
TRANSPORTATION

Conditions & Trends
- From 1998 to 2007, the percent increase in annual Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) in the region was double that of the State.
- Region’s VMT is projected to increase 30% by 2030; +64% for trucks.
- By 2030, 31% of the region’s 1,800 bridges will need significant maintenance.
- Vehicle crashes and related injuries are generally decreasing.
- Transit services in region are fairly limited, but demand is increasing as our population ages and commuting distances grow.
- Increasing attention to walking and biking as part of local transportation options.

Change in Annual Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) by County (1998-2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barron Co.</td>
<td>526,512,500</td>
<td>565,400,000</td>
<td>7.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chippewa Co.</td>
<td>677,111,500</td>
<td>800,700,000</td>
<td>18.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark Co.</td>
<td>398,616,500</td>
<td>409,600,000</td>
<td>2.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunn Co.</td>
<td>613,419,000</td>
<td>662,200,000</td>
<td>7.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eau Claire Co.</td>
<td>996,413,500</td>
<td>1,075,000,000</td>
<td>7.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk Co.</td>
<td>388,834,500</td>
<td>413,300,000</td>
<td>6.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Croix Co.</td>
<td>870,087,000</td>
<td>1,118,400,000</td>
<td>28.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Wisconsin</td>
<td>56,047,940,000</td>
<td>59,492,700,000</td>
<td>6.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC Region total</td>
<td>4,470,994,500</td>
<td>5,044,600,000</td>
<td>12.83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top 3 Issues
- Revitalization of freight and passenger rail is important for the development of the region, especially given rising fuel prices.
- Maintenance of our aging transportation infrastructure in light of growth, increasing traffic volumes, and budget challenges.
- Intergovernmental coordination and other partnerships are important to providing alternative modes of transportation.

Implications
- While our region is well connected for vehicle travel, connections by other transportation modes are more limited and will need to be expanded to better serve the region.
- Transportation projects influence land use and vice-versa, and require coordinated planning.
- With rising fuel prices, there is increasing attention to alternative modes for passenger and freight transportation. Likewise, the demand for transit services for seniors is also projected to increase.
- Roads constitute a large (if not the largest) portion of many local government budgets. It is a continuing challenge to maintain local transportation infrastructure, while meeting demands (e.g., road paving, access, bike lanes, curb & gutter) due to new growth.
Utilities & Community Facilities

Conditions & Trends

- Groundwater quantity is a concern for some areas along Highway 29 while groundwater quality problems have arisen in western parts of our region.
- Increasing stormwater management requirements in recent years.
- Broadband and fiber optic service gaps.
- Strong educational offerings, but fiscal challenges for many local schools at all levels.
- Many aging governmental structures need maintenance, expansion, or replacement.

Assisted Living Facilities and Growing Demand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barron</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>1,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chippewa</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>1,552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunn</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>1,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eau Claire</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>1,533</td>
<td>90.8</td>
<td>2,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>1,269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Croix</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>893</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>2,498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>5,936</td>
<td>86.8 avg</td>
<td>11,531</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top 3 Issues

- Budget limitations for local governments are making it increasingly difficult to provide needed or mandated services.
- With our aging population, there will be increasing demand for assisted living facilities, nursing home beds, and other related services.
- Opportunities exist for the sharing of resources between communities.

Implications

- It is becoming increasingly important that communities and local services providers consider all alternatives and cooperative opportunities to provide needed services. Partnerships are crucial given that many critical community services are provided by private sector or non-profit entities.
- Increasing growth will result in increasing demand for services, though studies show that the tax base gained from growth is not always sufficient to cover the needed community services.
- The expectation levels of new residents may be different than those of an existing community, resulting in local conflict or differing demands for facilities and services.
- The effectiveness of many services can be improved through regional analysis and multi-jurisdictional approaches, such as emergency management planning, trail planning, and shared public infrastructure.
Agricultural Resources

Conditions & Trends

- From 1990 to 2007, the region lost 500,000 acres (780 square miles) of assessed farmland. This is 1/8 of the total size of the region.
- Total market value of agricultural products sold increased, in constant dollars, $287 million from 2002 to 2007.
- Between 1987 and 2007, the region lost 58% of its dairy farms, 37% of its milk cows, and regional milk production dropped 18%.
- The region is experiencing a large increase in organic farms and direct market farms.
- Farms that sell over $500,000/yr. are significantly increasing their percentage of the total value sold in the region.

Top 3 Issues

- Farmland is being taken out of production and converted to other uses.
- Increasing pesticide, herbicide, and fertilizer use in the region and related water quality impacts.
- Farming costs, fluctuating commodity prices, low revenues, and barriers to intergenerational transfer are making it increasingly difficult for many farms to stay in operation.

Implications

- Due to the rural nature of our region, farming and agri-business will continue to be vital to our economy and must remain strong for the region to prosper.
- A substantial amount of the loss of farmland is the result of land-use policies and economic decisions in the region. These trends will continue if attitudes do not change.
- There is increased interest in the region and Twin Cities for organic food, buying from local farmers, and renewable energy. Given the availability of suitable land in our region which is less expensive than land immediately surrounding the Twin Cities, west central Wisconsin has an opportunity to be a food and renewable energy feedstock supplier to the greater region.
- Changing farm types, sizes, and practices can have environmental impacts and result in land use conflicts, in addition to influencing the economy and character of our communities.
**Conditions & Trends**

- In 2008, the region had over 780,000 acres of assessed farmland.
- The region is experiencing different trends of forestation. This includes increases and decreases of forested acres and the fragmentation of forested areas.
- Water consumption increased from 59.7 million gallons/day to 109.7 between 1979 and 2005.
- The region has 335 non-metallic mining sites.
- 68 different water bodies are impaired, much of this coming from sedimentation and agricultural run-off.

### Estimated Forest Land

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2008 Forested Acres</th>
<th>2008 % of County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barron County</td>
<td>135,883</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chippewa County</td>
<td>187,211</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark County</td>
<td>264,048</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunn County</td>
<td>124,382</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eau Claire County</td>
<td>132,898</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk County</td>
<td>196,373</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Croix County</td>
<td>63,072</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Central Wisconsin</td>
<td>1,103,867</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Top 3 Issues**

- Intergovernmental cooperation is essential for the effective protection of valued resources.
- Increased stormwater management is needed to prevent debris, pollutants, runoff, and sediment from entering surface waters.
- There is increasing need for shoreland and streambank protection.

**Implications**

- Due to the limited nature and sensitivity of the region’s natural resources, these resources must be considered and addressed as part of planning and decision-making. Without consideration, these resources may be jeopardized.
- Water quality and quantity issues should be a top priority throughout the region and be addressed through intergovernmental cooperation. Without a change in current trends, ground and surface water conditions will continue to deteriorate.
- The amount of forest is increasing in some areas of the region, while decreasing in others. Yet, throughout the region, our woodlands are becoming increasingly fragmented which poses difficulties for effective timber harvesting, while decreasing habitat value for many species.
- Demand for non-metallic mineral resources is high, resulting in land use conflicts.
- The plethora of programs and regulations in place to protect our natural resources, as well as the threats to these resources, are always changing. It is challenging for local governments and residents to keep pace with such changes.
**Cultural Resources**

### Conditions & Trends
- There are 53 historical societies and museums.
- Numerous cultural resources exist that are related to the arts and events.
- There are 127 locations on the National Register of Historic Places and 5,262 places and objects on the Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory.
- The Twin Cities offer extensive cultural resources to residents in the region.
- As the region’s population diversifies, new cultural resources will emerge.
- A sense of culture is experienced in established urban areas and rural areas. However, newly developed suburban areas are often lacking a sense of culture and place.

### Top 3 Issues
- There is a need for more education in order to preserve and revive the culture and history of our region.
- Many cultural events in the region struggle with funding and attendance.
- Development patterns of new growth often do not contribute to community identity or sense of place.

### Implications
- The preservation of historic buildings and places receives limited attention or a low priority among many local governments, resulting in a lack of awareness of these resources. Non-profits often work to fill such gaps, but, like local governments, most also have limited financial resources.
- Even though the region is still very homogeneous, different populations are growing and emerging. This diversifies the cultural resources of our region, which can increase economic development opportunities and attract new residents.
- Successful cooperation will be needed for funding and promotion in order to maintain the large number and variety of cultural events and opportunities in the region.
- New development which lacks a sense of place or community identity contributes to resident apathy and detachment, instead of encouraging belonging and involvement.
**Conditions & Trends**

- Annual wages and income levels for our region remain below the State level, but are more comparable to non-metropolitan Wisconsin counties overall.
- The region has higher seasonal variability in unemployment than the State.
- Employment in health care is expected to grow at the quickest pace over the next 10 years, while manufacturing employment is expected to have little or no growth.
- Traveler expenditures increased nearly 53% between 1998 and 2007 in our region.

**Average Annual Wages, 2001 and 2007**
(covered employees only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barron</td>
<td>$25,514</td>
<td>$27,608</td>
<td>+ 8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chippewa</td>
<td>$27,315</td>
<td>$29,901</td>
<td>+ 9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>$23,690</td>
<td>$27,533</td>
<td>+16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunn</td>
<td>$26,310</td>
<td>$31,161</td>
<td>+18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eau Claire</td>
<td>$27,842</td>
<td>$32,484</td>
<td>+16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>$24,564</td>
<td>$28,320</td>
<td>+15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Croix</td>
<td>$26,763</td>
<td>$31,184</td>
<td>+16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>$31,546</td>
<td>$36,830</td>
<td>+16.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Top 3 Issues**

- While our region has many higher education opportunities, fewer employment options for these graduates contributes to a “brain drain” and loss of a skilled workforce.
- More regional efforts are needed to analyze strengths, market our assets, and pursue opportunities to attract new industry, while reducing programmatic redundancies and harmful competition between communities and agencies.
- More efforts should be made to grow existing businesses.

**Implications**

- Our economy has steadily shifted toward the provision of services and retail, resulting in changes to per capita income, required workforce skills, infrastructure demands, and economic stability.
- Our labor force is expected to tighten considerably as the baby boomer generation retires. Likewise, our aging population will require goods and services, potentially opening the door to new economic opportunities.
- Our region is linked economically to the Twin Cities. The region’s location on the Interstate 94 corridor and proximity to the Twin Cities make it well positioned economically for the future.
- The region has a wealth of organizations involved in economic development and a strong educational system, though competition, lack of agreed-upon economic metrics, and economic variations within the region make effective cooperation more difficult at the regional level.
LAND USE

Conditions & Trends

- Agriculture continues to be the predominant land use in our region, followed by forest lands.
- Residential acreage increases have been highest in western parts of the region, though agricultural land losses have been more widespread.
- Assessed forest lands have been decreasing in the eastern counties of our region and increasing in the western counties, while forested parcel sizes have been decreasing throughout west central Wisconsin.
- Land use regulations and controls differ significantly throughout our region, while cooperative land use planning has been generally limited.

Top 3 Issues

- There is a lack of intergovernmental cooperation on land use, in particular at the urban-rural fringe between cities and towns.
- Transportation systems impact land use, and vice versa. Land use and proposed transportation projects need to be planned concurrently.
- More education on land use planning trends, issues, and tools is needed in our region.

Land Use Change (Assessed Acreage), 1987-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Residential</th>
<th>Commercial</th>
<th>Manufacturing</th>
<th>Agricultural</th>
<th>Forest+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barron</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>-12.0%</td>
<td>-25.2%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chippewa</td>
<td>87.6%</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>-20.0%</td>
<td>-10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>-19.6%</td>
<td>-13.2%</td>
<td>-47.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunn</td>
<td>186.9%</td>
<td>181.7%</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
<td>-18.2%</td>
<td>-3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eau Claire</td>
<td>61.0%</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td>-19.2%</td>
<td>-17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>139.9%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>-38.2%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Croix</td>
<td>138.1%</td>
<td>122.5%</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>-27.6%</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCWRPC Region</td>
<td>106.9%</td>
<td>77.7%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>-23.0%</td>
<td>-9.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

source: Wis. Department of Revenue  + 2007 Forest and Ag. Forest combined

Implications

- The trends, goals, and policies for the other elements (e.g., transportation, housing, economic development, sustainability) all influence the land use patterns of our region.
- It is projected that our region’s population will increase by 127,731 persons by 2030. If the trends from the past 20 years are used, the Region’s assessed residential acreage would increase by over 150,000 acres by 2030, not including related rights-of-way, services, etc. This equals more than 230 square miles of assessed residential land.
- Assessed forest lands are increasing in many communities, but these are often occurring on smaller properties, sometimes converted from other uses, and often associated with residential uses. This fragmentation of forest lands reduces the economic value of our forests for timber production.
- Differences in regulations and the fiscal dependence on property taxes for programs and services are creating an environment of conflict, competitiveness, and mistrust between local governments.
For more information on this planning effort and upcoming activities, please contact us, visit our website, or join us at the online project discussion forums. Documents related to this project and a link to the discussion forums can be found at our project website.

West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
Phone: 715-836-2918
General E-mail: wcwrpc@wcwrpc.org
Project Website: www.wcwrpc.org/RPCCompPlan