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Creating Goals and Strategies 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 were created in a bottom-up fashion, drawn from the review of existing county and local plans from our region, and 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 appoints three representatives to the governing body of the Commission.

Milestone Report #2: West Central Wisconsin Vision, Goals, and Strategies

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 issues identification, visioning, and plan development phases of this project now complete, this report is a brief synopsis of the vision for the region and the goals and strategies 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, along with the goals, several selected strategies, and the different categories that house the strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Schedule</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qtr 3</td>
<td>Qtr 4</td>
<td>Qtr 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data-Gathering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Issues Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Visioning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal &amp; Strategy Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<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 Interdisciplinary Visioning Approach

Obtaining a common vision for the entire region is challenging due to the wide variety of stakeholders and the size and diversity of issues in the region. To overcome these challenges, three elected participants from each county served on the Regional Intergovernmental Coordination Group (RICG). The three representatives from each county consisted of representatives from the county, a town, and a city or village. The RICG identified the numerous issues in the region. After the accumulation of all the issues, both the RICG and Technical Advisory Group (TAG) took part in an issues survey. In addition, groups that are often underrepresented in the overall planning process were included early in the process so they could comment on issues, challenges, and strategies for the region. These special population groups (elderly, health care industry, and youth) participated through meetings and surveys.

After the survey results were tabulated, the data was then taken back to the RICG, who then brainstormed the components of the vision. These components along with the special population groups’ information were used by the WCWRPC staff to identify the characteristics that were frequently discussed or highlighted as being critical components of the vision for our region’s future. These characteristics were used by the WCWRPC staff to create a draft vision statement. The RICG and TAG reviewed the draft vision statement. Minor changes were made and a final vision statement was created.

2030 Vision Statement

West central Wisconsin is a region of sustainable and identifiable communities working cooperatively and globally with strong social, physical, and economic linkages. Our cities and villages are vibrant, and our rural character and diverse resources are preserved.
Goal

Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relations among all levels of government and other relevant organizations throughout and beyond the region through communication, coordination, efficiency, planning, and sharing to achieve regional goals.

Strategy Categories

- Communication -
- Multi-Jurisdictional Planning -
- Planning at the Urban Fringe -
- Shared Services, Facilities, Equipment, and Purchasing -

Top Three Issues

- Opportunities exist for the sharing of resources between communities.
- There is a lack of intergovernmental cooperation on land use, in particular at the urban-rural fringe between cities and towns.
- A regional strategy is needed to assist our communities and the region in meeting the Governor’s 25x25 goal of producing 25 percent of the State’s electricity and transportation fuels from renewable resources by 2025.

Selected Strategies

- Involve adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions and school districts in planning processes and decision-making.
- Work cooperatively to identify opportunities to reduce service costs and enter into agreements which are mutually beneficial.
- Encourage a consistent regional perspective on growth and development consistent with Smart Growth principles.
- Utilize Memoranda of Understanding to define working relationships and mutually beneficial outcomes between jurisdictions.
- Create and improve venues to stimulate intergovernmental cooperation.
- Conduct public forums related to best-practices, issues, and opportunities at the county level.
Goal
The region will utilize its diverse resources to be a leader in sustainability endeavors and will create an environment and conditions necessary for a sustainable future.

Strategy Categories
- Energy -
- Community Desirability -
- Regional Production and Consumption -
- Business Development -
- Carbon Reduction -
- Community Design -

Top Three 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 percent 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 often not part of community planning efforts.

Selected Strategies
- Work with municipalities to benchmark current energy costs, demand, and performance.
- Educate units of government on the benefits of programs/initiatives that reduce their environmental footprint and reduce their energy costs (e.g. Energy Independent Communities; Green Counties; Cool Cities; Transition Towns; The Natural Step; Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle Initiatives, etc).
- Identify regional strategies that will meet and/or exceed Wisconsin’s 25 x 25 goals regarding renewable energy.
- Identify barriers to a functioning regional food system and create a baseline of regional food consumption.
- Actively work with municipalities and counties to ensure existing and future urban and suburban development be designed in a way that does not solely require automobile dependency and that allows for accessible mass transit and non-motorized modes of transportation.
Goals
West central Wisconsin will have a range of affordable, efficient housing options that provide a safe, healthy living environment.

Maintain our existing housing stock, preserve traditional residential neighborhoods, and encourage new housing to be developed in a manner that is consistent and compatible with the context of its surroundings.

Strategy Categories
- Research and General Outreach -
- Planning and Regulatory -
- Multi-Jurisdictional and Collaborative Efforts -

Housing Unit Projections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>Projection 2010</th>
<th>Projection 2020</th>
<th>Projection 2030</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barron</td>
<td>21,000</td>
<td>22,899</td>
<td>24,826</td>
<td>26,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chippewa</td>
<td>21,356</td>
<td>24,811</td>
<td>28,161</td>
<td>31,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>13,531</td>
<td>14,206</td>
<td>15,301</td>
<td>16,666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunn</td>
<td>15,277</td>
<td>17,739</td>
<td>20,290</td>
<td>22,461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eau Claire</td>
<td>37,474</td>
<td>41,826</td>
<td>46,343</td>
<td>50,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>21,129</td>
<td>25,374</td>
<td>29,851</td>
<td>33,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Croix</td>
<td>24,263</td>
<td>34,173</td>
<td>45,105</td>
<td>55,944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>154,030</td>
<td>181,028</td>
<td>209,877</td>
<td>236,472</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

source: U.S. Census.

Top Three 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 reduce future housing in areas if residents are less willing to commute long distances.

Selected Strategies
- Encourage local governments to allow for and promote a mix of housing types and affordability options, including rental, multi-family, and manufactured housing, which meet resident needs by providing example incentives, programs, models for working with developers, and regulatory language alternatives.
- As the region’s population ages and demand warrants, advocate for a mix of affordable housing and assisted living options (e.g., nursing care, assisted living, in-home respite) which are sited in proximity to related goods and services, and contributes to keeping our older citizens as active members of our communities.
- Provide local governments model regulatory language which accommodates green construction techniques and energy efficiency strategies (e.g., building materials, landscaping, infrastructure, deep retrofits, site design) for consideration and incorporation into local plans, programs, and ordinances.
**Goals**

Our transportation system will be safe, sustainable, and accessible while meeting the multi-modal mobility needs of all residents and enhancing their quality of life.

The neighborhoods and communities of our region will be efficiently connected with each other and the world, moving people and freight through a variety of transportation modal options.

Our region will work cooperatively to maintain, sustain, and enhance our transportation infrastructure and services.

**Strategy Categories**

- Highway -
- Transit/Ride Share -
- Bicycle/Pedestrian -
- Rail -
- Multimodal -

**Top Three 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.

**Selected Strategies**

- Coordinate a transit service system that facilitates the interaction of services effectively on a region-wide basis.
- Upgrade rails to continuous-weld trackage to better serve both freight and passenger rail.
- Encourage regional coordination of transportation improvement plans.
- Designate routes of regional priority (rail, bicycle, freight, etc.).
- Encourage and support establishment of sustainable revenue streams for all modes to ensure long-lasting effectiveness.
- Coordinate regional efforts to support passenger rail service to west central Wisconsin.
**Utilities & Community Facilities**

**Goals**

The utilities and community facilities of our region will be provided in a sustainable manner which protects our natural environment.

Our utilities and community facilities will continue to ensure that our region is a safe and desirable place to live for our residents and supportive of our shared economic goals.

Utilities, community facilities, and related services will be provided in an effective, cost-efficient, and coordinated manner.

**Strategy Categories**

- General Utility and Community Facility -
  - Water/Wastewater -
  - Stormwater Management -
  - Solid Waste/Recycling -
  - Communication and Power Distribution -
  - Education -
  - Parks and Recreation -
  - Public Safety -
  - Health and Human Services -

**Top Three 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.

**Selected Strategies**

- Development should occur so that local jurisdictions can provide infrastructure and services in the most cost-effective and efficient manner.
- Involve youth in community activities and projects; look for positive intergenerational opportunities.
- Increase awareness of future residential care needs for the elderly.
- Promote and include active living and healthy community concepts as part of community plans.
- Educate local governments on opportunities for coordinative solutions to utility needs.
AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Goal
Protect and support agriculture and the rural landscape of the region while maintaining strong natural resource stewardship principles and practices.

Strategy Categories
- Right to Farm -
- Loss and Fragmentation of Farmland -
- Loss and Fragmentation of Forest Land -
- Best Management Practices and Stewardship Principles -
- Viability and Diversity of Agriculture -
- Regional Food and Energy Production and Consumption -

Top Three 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 inter-generational transfer are making it increasingly difficult for many farms to stay in operation.

Agricultural Products Sold To Individuals For Consumption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2002 Farms</th>
<th>2007 Farms</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
<th>2002 Value (in $1,000)</th>
<th>2007 Value (in $1,000)</th>
<th>Value Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barron County</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>858</td>
<td>103%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chippewa County</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>-7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark County</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunn County</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>101%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eau Claire County</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>1046</td>
<td>378%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk County</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>712</td>
<td>231%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Croix County</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>173%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>982</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>2,525</td>
<td>5,319</td>
<td>111%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>4,918</td>
<td>6,243</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29,072</td>
<td>43,491</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>116,733</td>
<td>136,817</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>812,204</td>
<td>1,211,270</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: USDA Census of Agriculture

Selected Strategies
- Support the Working Lands Initiative.
- Support “Right-to-Farm” laws and ensure that non-farm residents in farming areas are familiar with these laws and typical farming practices.
- Encourage/direct new development to areas of existing urban or residential development.
- Promote farming and forestry practices that incorporate current best management practices.
- Encourage agricultural markets that include farm-to-table, direct market farms, organic farms, small family farms, and farms with sales of local agricultural products and that produce non-traditional products and/or bio-energy feedstock.
- Promote intergovernmental cooperation that reduces the loss of agricultural land and forest fragmentation.
Goal
Conserve the quantity and quality of the region’s natural resources.

Strategy Categories
- Natural Communities and Ecological Context -
  - Surface Waters and Wetlands -
  - Groundwater Quality and Quantity -
  - Flora and Fauna Threats -
  - Nature-Based Recreation -
  - Shoreland and Streambank Protection -
  - Non-Metallic Mining -

Groundwater data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1979 Water Use (million gallons/day)</th>
<th>2005 Water Use (million gallons/day)</th>
<th>Contaminated groundwater and/or soil sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barron County</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chippewa County</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark County</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunn County</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eau Claire County</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk County</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Croix County</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>109.7</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: United States Geographical Survey and Wisconsin Center for Land Use Education

Top Three 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.

Selected Strategies
- Encourage analysis and planning based on ecological systems and context. Apply available inventory and research information in land use decision-making.
- Create a network for information sharing between agencies and organizations, so planning can better occur in consideration of the ecological context, and there are improvements in getting information to practitioners and the public.
- Support and encourage agricultural and land use practices that limit nutrient or fertilizer applications to what is needed for plant growth, according to the USDA NRCS 590 standards.
- Encourage stormwater management opportunities to upgrade old systems, including urban retrofit and new Best Management Practices (BMPs).
- Promote effective shoreland buffers, setbacks and other practices that: reduce water runoff; contribute less fertilizer, soil and chemicals into lakes and rivers; maintain or propagate native plants and trees and provide critical habitat; help clean pollutants from water runoff; and create more natural landscaping that better cleans runoff and provides habitat.
**Goal**
Culture and sense of place will continue to play a vital role in the evolvement of our region by respecting and preserving historical and current cultural resources, while recognizing that cultural resources and values are always changing.

**Strategy Categories**
- Collaboration/Inventory -
- Community Design -
- Ethnic Diversity -
- Community Assistance/Education -

**Top Three Issues**
- There is 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.

**Selected Strategies**
- Develop and maintain a regional inventory of cultural and historical organizations, places, events, and services. Disseminate the information for use as an educational, promotional, and economic development tool.
- Increase awareness among communities of available programs, alternatives, ideas, and standards to promote the preservation and revitalization of traditional downtown business districts.
- Develop a cultural resources toolkit that can help communities understand the broad range of cultural resources and the role these resources play in the evolution of their community and desirability to live in their community.
- Identify different ethnic communities in the region and ways to promote diversity with an overall goal of creating respect and appreciation for differences that exist.
- Educate and encourage communities to preserve existing areas that have a sense-of-place, and incorporate sense-of-place discussion and design techniques for new development and redevelopment projects.
**Goal**

The west central Wisconsin region will foster a sustainable, diverse economy that is attractive to business and supported by quality employment and educational opportunities for all residents.

**Strategy Categories**
- Job Retention/Creation -
- Intergovernmental Cooperation -
- Funding Programs/Assistance -
- Changing Demographics -

**Top Three 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.

**Selected Strategies**

- Develop a regional economic development vision, identity, marketing brand, and strategy. These activities should focus regional efforts, define appropriate responsibilities for all players, and incorporate activities that are already underway.
- Determine what activities should take place on a regional level to retain existing businesses and assist them to grow. These efforts should augment initiatives already taking place at the local level.
- Acknowledge the importance of the Twin Cities metro area to the regional economy. Develop regional and local initiatives to capitalize on the opportunities presented by this strong adjacent market.
- Investigate potential solutions to employment and community issues resulting from racial and cultural diversification of the labor force.
**LAND USE**

**Goals**
Our land use patterns will reflect: distinct urban centers of sustainable, mixed-use design, efficient and cost-effective infrastructure and services, and multi-modal transportation options; and, rural areas where working lands, natural resources and traditional rural character are preserved.

All levels of government will work cooperatively to realize their respective land use goals and mutual benefits through open and responsive processes.

**Strategy Categories**
- Land Use Practices -
- Organizing Land Use -
- Urban Development Alternatives -
- Rural Preservation and Development Alternatives -
- Implementation Resources -
- Issues Crossing Jurisdictional Boundaries -
- Joint Planning and Plan Consistency -
- Public Engagement -

**Top Three 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.

**Selected Strategies**
- Seek coordination between different levels of government to enhance urban centers and develop multimodal transportation potential.
- Explore potential incentives that will promote pedestrian-oriented mixed uses, traditional neighborhood design, and infill development for urban areas.
- Encourage conservation design and other rural development design alternatives, and alternative density management concepts for rural development intended to enhance rural character.
- Develop educational programs, perhaps for each county, for elected officials and plan commissioners on planning and development management roles and practice.
- Provide information on the tools and resources for communities working together, including opportunities for joint planning and implementation.
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
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General E-mail: wcwrpc@wcwrpc.org
Project Website: www.wcwrpc.org/RPCCompPlan