

Introduction

The Value of a Comprehensive Plan

When we think about places we have visited or lived, some stand out as models of natural beauty and human comfort, supported by thriving local economies. The most satisfying places to live, work, and raise families are communities that meet the needs of local businesses and individual expression, and provide opportunities to explore and conserve our natural environment.

Great communities do not grow by accident or without public debate and agreed-upon guidelines. Collaborative planning processes and comprehensive plans are the building blocks of such great communities. Planning helps maintain and promote livable, vital communities.

The Town of Nepeuskun is a great place to live. Rush Lake provides hunting and recreation opportunities for residents and is one of the gems of the community. The beautiful countryside of Nepeuskun is rich with productive farmland. Generations of Nepeuskun families have enjoyed the quiet rural character and strong sense of community found here. This Comprehensive Plan outlines how to maintain what we like about our community, and identifies key improvements to make our community even better.

This plan is intended to capture a shared vision for the Town. It is a statement reflecting community pride and how residents want the Town to manage growth and development in the future. This Plan will help elected officials make decisions that reflect the short- and long-term wishes of the community. It will help prioritize the Town's human and financial

resources to provide the necessary public infrastructure and amenities needed to maintain a high quality of life. In doing so, the Plan also seeks to foster sustainable development and an economy that is in keeping with its rural character.

This plan is a blueprint for community-wide action over the next 20 years. Action must come from all segments of the community – business owners, residents, and visitors - not just from Town Government. Everyone must be involved and dedicated to making needed improvements and to continue those efforts that have already had a positive influence.

Wisconsin “Smart Growth” Legislation

As part of the state's 1999-2000 biennial budget, Governor Thompson signed into law what is referred to as the “Smart Growth” legislation (1999 Wisconsin Act 9). Smart Growth legislation significantly changed the stature of comprehensive planning in the state and placed it very high on the “to do” list. Although state statutes do not require local governmental units to adopt comprehensive plans consistent with the requirements, it provides that if a local governmental unit does not do so by January 1, 2010 it may not enforce existing or adopt new ordinances, plans or regulations that in anyway affect land use.

If a community wants to prepare a comprehensive plan, it must follow various substantive and procedural requirements. State statutes define nine areas that need to be addressed in a community's comprehensive plan:

1. Issues and opportunities (Chapter 2)
2. Housing (Chapter 3)
3. Transportation (Chapter 4)
4. Utilities and community facilities (Chapter 5)
5. Agricultural, natural, and cultural resources (Chapter 6)
6. Economic development (Chapter 7)
7. Land use (Chapter 8)
8. Intergovernmental cooperation (Chapter 9)
9. Implementation (Chapter 10)

The Smart Growth legislation also outlines specific procedures for public participation that must be followed as part of the comprehensive planning process. Specifically, a municipality must hold at least one public hearing on the plan and notify the public at least 30 days in advance of this hearing. In an effort to foster meaningful public input, the Town of Nepeuskun provided additional opportunities for public involvement, as outlined below. A copy of the Town of Nepeuskun’s public participation plan can be found in Appendix A.

Past Planning Efforts

The most recent planning effort resulted in the adoption of a Land Use Plan (LUP) in 2001. The Town Plan Commission had several proposed amendments to the LUP and Crispell-Snyder, Inc. helped the Town to review and incorporate these amendments into the new “Smart Growth” Comprehensive Plan.

[Note: More detail will be added to this section]

A Community Process

The planning process set out to celebrate and protect the diversity of lifestyles and interests within our community, build on the strengths of our community

in achieving our goals, and guide the future of the town.

In order to fulfill this charge, the Plan Commission took seriously the process of engaging as many residents as possible in the comprehensive planning process. The Plan Commission’s job was not merely to produce a report, but to reach out and collaborate with the community, to educate residents about planning, and to involve them in developing the plan. These goals stem from the fundamental aim of the planning process: to engage residents in building community consensus for a vision for Nepeuskun’s future.

Throughout the process, the Town Newsletter was used to inform citizens of meeting dates and to summarize the developments of the planning process. This ensured that everyone in the town was at least aware of the process, even if they weren’t able to attend specific planning meetings.

Community Visioning Workshop

The planning process began with a public visioning workshop on July 30th, conducted by Crispell-Snyder, Inc who was hired by the Town to assist with the Comprehensive Plan. Members of the community met in small groups to engage in a guided discussion on what the current assets, issues, and opportunities are in the community and to identify specific top priority goals and actions for the comprehensive plan. Notes from this meeting, including individual responses to the discussion questions, can be found in Appendix B.

Land Use Planning Workshop

The Land Use Plan section is an important portion of the overall Comprehensive Plan. Crispell-Snyder, Inc. conducted a separate future land use workshop for the Town on _____. During this workshop participants were provided with existing land use

maps and worked in small groups to determine appropriate areas for development, redevelopment and conservation.

Focus Groups

In _____ Crispell-Snyder conducted six focus groups with a total of ___ individuals identified by the Plan Commission. These focus groups covered a wide range of topics and were designed to solicit additional insight into key issues. The following groups met for 30-45 minutes each:

- Farmers
- Business Owners
- Land Conservation
- Rush Lake Association
- Planning and Zoning
- Soil and Farmland Conservation

Community Survey

In September 2008, the Plan Commission, with the assistance of Crispell-Snyder, Inc, conducted a town-wide survey to collect public input for the comprehensive plan. The survey was designed to build on the previous Community Survey conducted in the late 1990s as part of the Land Use Plan process. The survey was mailed to all households as part of the Town Newsletter and extra copies were also made available. Approximately 105 people returned the survey.

A report analyzed results from the survey, documenting what residents identified as priorities and goals for a comprehensive plan and the best strategies for achieving these goals. A copy of this report on the survey results can be found in Appendix C.

Open House and Plan Adoption

Based on input from the public and extensive data and analysis provided by the planning consultants, the Plan Commission worked to identify specific

goals, objectives, and actions for the plan. A draft plan was completed in _____ and an open house was held to again seek public input. The plan was then revised based on comments received at the open house, and a final plan was approved and adopted on _____ following a public hearing.

[Note: This section will be expanded on later.]

Regional Cooperation

A key theme in this Comprehensive Plan is the interrelationship among the various aspects of our daily lives. These interrelationships often extend well beyond municipal lines and are regional in nature. The Town of Nepeuskun is part of a broader geographic area and economic market that influences everything from where we choose to shop and live to what areas we visit to hike and swim.

An over-arching principle of the Plan is that the Town of Nepeuskun will work proactively with Winnebago County, nearby towns, Rush Lake Associations, and state and federal agencies to cooperatively address regional issues, such as natural resources, public infrastructure, and consumer, employment, and housing markets.

The State of Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning legislation adopted in 1999 requires that municipalities work cooperatively to address regional issues. As part of the planning process, an official meeting was held with nearby municipalities and the county to discuss regional issues and seek agreement on inter-municipal planning issues. Informal conversations throughout the process helped to ensure a collaborative and mutually-beneficial planning process.