

Rusk County
Comprehensive Plan
~ Public Participation Plan ~

Consideration of and Response to Public Comments

The various methods for involving the public and soliciting public opinions and comments during the comprehensive planning process are defined herein. These methods represent the initial steps for bringing public comment into the decision-making process. The following steps will be taken to ensure that public recommendations and comments are taken into consideration by the decision-makers when developing the countywide comprehensive plan:

- Time will be reserved subsequent to the close of a hearing, meeting, or comment deadline and prior to the actual decision or recommendation being made to ensure that decision makers can adequately review all relevant materials or comments.
- Decision makers may reconvene a public hearing for the purpose of addressing public comments.
- The record (written comments or testimony, transcripts, or tape recordings) of hearings and meetings will be compiled by county or local municipal staff and made available to decision makers for their review and consideration prior to a recommendation or decision being made.
- Substantive comments pertaining to studies, analyses, or reports, along with appropriate responses, will be included in the published documents itself.
- Relevant comments or testimony will be addressed through the findings-of-fact portion of the decision maker's written decision or recommendation.

Public Participation Plan

The items below are some of the ways that may be used to engage the public in the planning process.

Municipal Planning Group Meetings and Workshops

Municipalities participating in the comprehensive plan will hold public meetings and workshops to assimilate information collected at the municipal level relevant to the Nine Elements of a Comprehensive Plan as defined by the State. The majority of opportunities for citizen participation will be provided at the municipal level. Through municipal public meetings, residents will be able to become an instrumental part of their community's planning process. By participating in meetings and workshops held citizens can aid their elected officials and planning committees in creating a vision for their community's comprehensive plan. Interested citizens can also become involved in the planning process as members of their community's plan commission.

Meeting/Hearing Notices

Official meeting notices will be prepared for any of the above public meetings or hearings conducted pertaining to the comprehensive planning process. At a minimum, the requirements of 19.31 pertaining to public meetings and notification will be met. The Rusk County Clerks office or municipality staff will place meetings and notices in their regularly designated locations, based on the location of the public meeting or hearing. In all cases, notices will be published at least one week prior to the meeting. All public hearings will follow the same public notice except all public hearings will be published as a Class I notice. Notices may also be posted on the Rusk County website.

Civic and Community Presentations

Throughout the planning process, representatives responsible for development of the comprehensive plan will meet with local civic community organizations to discuss the development of the comprehensive plan. In addition to presenting information, information will be collected at the presentations as it pertains to the development of the comprehensive plan.

Newsletter Mailings

Rusk County Development may develop an annual newsletter to inform residents about comprehensive planning and other issues related to the development of the comprehensive plan. Each newsletter will include a list of contacts from which citizens can gain additional information and an address or e-mail address where comments can be sent.

Rusk County Web Page

Rusk County's current homepage could be supplemented with a page regarding comprehensive planning efforts in Rusk County. The web page might include topics related to the "Smart Growth Initiative" and the Rusk County Comprehensive Plan, drafts of plan elements, meetings agenda's and minutes, a list of contacts and will also include an e-mail address to the viewers can submit comments or place their name on a mailing list to receive further information. Once constructed, periodic updates should be made to keep the web page current. Ultimately, the Rusk County Comprehensive Plan and participating municipalities comprehensive plans could be placed on the web. As maps are developed for the plans, they may also be placed on the web page.

Community Displays

The development of public displays will be prepared during the course of the project and could be displayed at the Rusk County Courthouse or placed for a short period of time at a number of public locations throughout the county, such as libraries or town halls.

Mailing Lists

As public participation proceeds, interested citizens will have opportunities to place their name on a mailing list to receive additional information regarding the planning process via direct mail or e-mail where applicable. Rusk County Development will compile and maintain this mailing list. Names to be included on the mailing list will originate from meeting and hearing sign-in sheets, written correspondence, recognized community organizations, as well as through individual requests. This list will also be used for newsletter circulation, special mailings, and notices as appropriate.

Periodic Articles

As the public participation process proceeds, interested citizens and community leaders may request more detailed information on land use related topics than desired by much of the general public. To provide more detail to citizens and key officials showing an interest in the Comprehensive Plan, articles will be prepared from time to time by Rusk County Development or UW-Extension staff.

Planning Document Dissemination

Rusk County will foster public participation through the efforts described below. Additional efforts beyond those listed may also occur during plan development. The core efforts to gather public input throughout the planning process include:

- Posting public information and hearing notices in accordance with Wisconsin's Open Meeting Law;
- Sending notices regarding all public information meetings and public hearings to local media outlets;
- Placing legal notice of all hearings in the official county newspaper;
- Attending selected Rusk County Towns Association meetings to gather feedback on the planning process;
- Hosting regional meetings at different locations within Rusk County to disseminate and gather information;
- Distribution of a survey to identify key issues useful in assisting in developing the comprehensive plan;
- Posting information on the Rusk County website;
- Accepting written comments throughout the planning process; and
- Holding at least one public hearing to receive comments on the recommended draft document before being submitted to the Rusk County Board for action.

Meeting and hearing notices will state the availability and location of documents.

Public Hearings

Once the final draft of the Rusk County Comprehensive Plan is completed, the Rusk County Committee on Committees with assistance from Rusk County Development and involved municipalities will conduct a series of public hearings to receive public comment on the proposed plan. As plan development progresses, a schedule for these meetings will be prepared.

Hearing Notices

Rusk County will place legal notices of hearings in the county's official newspaper. Hearing notices should be published as required by state law and county policy.

Prior to any unit of government enacting an ordinance approving the comprehensive plan, a hearing shall be conducted preceded by a Class 1 public notice that is published at least 30 days before the hearing is held. The local governmental unit may also provide notice of the hearing by any other means it considers appropriate. According to the comprehensive planning legislation, the Class 1 notice shall contain at least the following information:

1. The date, time, and place of hearing.
2. A summary, which may include a map, of the proposed comprehensive plan or amendment to such a plan.

3. The name of an individual employed by the local governmental unit who may provide additional information regarding the proposed ordinance.
4. Information relating to where and when the proposed comprehensive plan may be inspected before the hearing and how a copy of the plan may be obtained.

Rusk County Comprehensive Plan Adoption Process

Rusk County will follow the procedures for adopting the comprehensive plan as listed in §66.1001 (Comprehensive Planning). The first step in the adoption process is being met by the adoption of this document that details written procedures that are designed to foster public participation throughout the comprehensive planning process. The final step in the process will be adoption of the plan by ordinance per §66.1001 4(c).

Randy Tatur, Rusk County Board Chair

Attest: _____
Denise Wetzel, Rusk County Clerk

Adopted by the Rusk County Board of Supervisors on: _____