

Sub-Area Meetings
Open House: “Review of Draft Plan”
October 22 – 30, 2007

The final phase of the La Crosse County Comprehensive Planning Process includes reviewing and commenting on the entire draft comprehensive plan. An Open House was held in each of the six sub-areas. Each meeting included a presentation providing an overview of the entire planning process and its results. After the presentation participants were asked to comment on each “station” set up around the room. These four stations included a synopsis of a major benchmark in the process. Station 1 included maps and data from the existing conditions analysis; Station 2 included issues and goals; Station 3 presented the future land use map and accompanying district explanations; and, Station 4 displayed the 5-Year Action Plan. Comments were collected through oral discussions and through written comment. Participants were asked to fill out a note card for each station with specific comments, or they could fill out a larger form that included general comments about the plan. The general themes that emerged from these sub-area meetings are listed below.

Sub-Area Comments

Sub Area 1: This meeting was held in the Farmington Town Hall in Mindoro, WI. Approximately 25 members of the public attended. There were three members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC) along with one additional county board member. Staff reports the tone of the meeting was very positive about the draft though there was some concern on development thresholds being too small. Some participants thought the thresholds should be increased due to the large size of the town. No written comments were submitted. One telephone comment was recorded, again concerning the development thresholds set by La Crosse County. The caller felt they were too large and should be reduced.

Sub Area 2: This meeting was held in the St. Joseph’s Ridge School. Approximately 40 members of the public attended. There were four members of the CPSC along with one additional county board member. Staff reports the tone of the meeting was very positive about the draft. There was some concern on development thresholds. No written comments were submitted.

Sub Area 3: This meeting was held in the Hamilton Town Hall in West Salem, WI. Approximately 35 members of the public attended. There were three members of the CPSC along with one additional county board member. Staff reports the tone of the meeting was positive about the draft. There was some concern about the County usurping certain rights from towns. Additionally, there were comments concerning the 20% slope restriction and that planning was taking away the rights of farmers. There was some confusion over the difference between planning and zoning.

Two general written comments were submitted.

- *“Lake District Residents need to have a public meeting held to clarify issues regarding property on the lake.”*
- *“Keep the Public informed, it is our tax dollars the County needs and uses”*

Sub Area 4: This meeting was held in the Holland Town Hall. Approximately 41 members of the public attended. There were three members of the CPSC in attendance. Comments were generally about comprehensive planning in general, not about the specific components, presentation, or wording of the La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan.

Written comments include:

- Station 1 “Existing Conditions” comments: *“Well done – is based on local plans”*
- Station 2 “Issues and Goals” comments: *“Goals 1, 2, 3 especially good”*
- Station 3 “Future Land Use” comments:
 - *“Good that county reflects local”*
 - *“Thresholds a good idea in case local planning gets ‘out of hand’”*
 - *“The 9 items required for rezoning for development are excellent”*
- Station 4 “Action Plan” comments:
 - *“PDR is a must”*
 - *“Good work Charlie!”*
- General:
 - Concern there is not enough local control for landowners. Two individuals felt that comprehensive plans restrict what landowners can do. They don’t feel committees and elected officials should be able to decide what occurs on their land.
 - There should be more public participation. Idea of sending out plan to every county residence.
 - Concern it will take too long to make changes if county only updates Future Land Use Map once a year.
 - One comment received later, disappointed in staff (Charlie) and consultant (Reed) presentations, and felt we were not forthright. Concerns about Stormwater management and the small business operators and farmers. Concern about housing and taking some of these tax delinquent properties off of the tax rolls for low income housing. Smart Growth is a “Land grab by government.”

Sub Area 5/6: This meeting was held in the Hmong Community Center in La Crosse. Approximately 50 members of the public attended. There were three members of the CPSC. Staff reports the tone of the meeting was very negative about planning in general, comments included “don’t take our property rights from us.” There was significant displeasure with reducing developable areas in the 20 – 30% slope range and some concern over amending the

“Ag A” zoning classification. Given the location of this meeting, there was some confusion regarding the fact that this meeting was for the County Plan and not the Town of Shelby plan.

There were six written comments in favor of reducing slopes from 30% to 20% and requiring a 300 foot setback:

- *“I favor strongly going from 30% restriction to 20% restriction. My current subdivision has regular washouts that require County and Town resources to clean up on slope building that is too steep. We need to control this!”*
- *“Consider PDR’s as a way to allow land to be preserved, limit scattered development.”*
- *“I think the Co. Plan makes very good sense. 20% slope limits are preferable to 30%. Variances could be negotiated with engineering assessment, liability assumptions, impact fees, etc. Conservation provisions are key to sound development and sustainable growth, i.e., ‘smart growth.’”*
- *“I support the aspects of the plan that promote planned residential and business development, focused in certain areas. I support the preservation of Ag. and natural land/resources. I support the restrictions on development on slopes > 20% and stream setbacks.”*
- *“Overall, the County Plan is excellent! Making changes that put the county in line with regulations that exist throughout the rest of the state makes a lot of sense. I don’t think that La Crosse County should assume that it is smarter than the rest of the state regarding building on slopes!”*

There were 18 written comments in opposition to reducing slopes from 30% to 20% and requiring a 300 foot setback. Some comments included:

- *“In Shelby – setbacks should be reasonable, building should be allowed up to 30% grade, residential lot size should not be excessive (maybe 5 acres). In general, zoning ordinances should not be any more restrictive than current ones. Individual landowners should have more say so.”*
- *“Shelby should make exceptions to building as far as family houses go. When they aren’t planning to build on farmable land.”*
- *“The County Land Use Plan should allow development between 20 to 30% if proper engineering and soil analysis is completed to insure a durable and lasting site.”*
- *”My concern is about the land in Chipmunk Coulee. Over 30 years ago I was given an acre of land from my parents. I had planned to build my retirement home there. Now the Town of Shelby can tell me I can’t build there because I only own one acre. That is not fair.”*

General written comments:

- *“Two foot shoulders on County roads not effective for multi-modal traffic. Need actually to design county roads for multi-modal transportation.”*

Sub Area 6/5: This meeting was held in the Knights of Columbus Hall in La Crosse. Approximately 50 members of the public attended. There were six members of the CPSC, and an additional member of the County Board. Significant concern was voiced with reducing developable areas in the 20 – 30% slope range. There was also some confusion regarding the

fact that this meeting was for the County Plan and not the Town of Shelby plan. Participants discussed the flood of August 18th and its affects. Comments concerned taxation and being consistent with this plan. Compensation for reduction in land rights was also discussed.

Participants were interested in discussing the effect changing slope restrictions would have if their home burns down or is washed away. Other general concerns included the maintenance of railroad properties, and whether ordinances should regulate only health and safety or if aesthetics should also be included. Bureaucracy was also a concern.

There were 27 people present who were opposed to reducing the slope restriction from 30% to 20%. Written comments on slope restrictions, or other specific concerns are listed below.

- *“1) Leave 30% slope. 2) 20 acre land restriction. 3) Rural residential development is not a tax burden because Shelby has Town road already developed.”*
- *“Do not agree with 15-20% build grade, water way.”*
- *“30% slope is ok to build on. Let build on 1 acre lot.”*
- *“No 30% slope change. Keep as is. 30% slope.”*

There was one written comment in favor of the County Comprehensive Plan.

- *“I want to applaud the County for making the initial steps towards sustainability! Besides private property rights, taxes are the top issue from this meeting. Heading towards this will reduce the tax burden faced by residents. Energy efficient buildings vehicles and other products used in the County will reduce operating costs, thus reducing taxes or allowing the same tax rate to provide better services. I agree with focusing development along existing infrastructure and away from prime ag lands, steep slopes and flood plains. Saves us all \$ in the long run. Thank you, Charlie.”*

There were several written comments about general aspects of the plan.

- *“Need transportation and storm water analysis on dead end canyon roads like Smith Valley. Housing generates traffic and runoff. We need study to determine thresholds that show when too much development becomes too expensive from an infrastructure and environmental perspective.”*
- *“I think aesthetics is extremely important. I’m against more urban sprawl. I’m against a north south corridor.”*
- *“Town of Shelby Plan – What if any attention has been given to energy use and agriculture land preservation. The reality is that by 2010 there will be 9 billion people not the 6.1 and urban sprawl continues to take land out of production. Where is the global view given consideration?”*