

**Sub-Area Meetings
Visioning Process Themes
March 23-30, 2006**

Phase 2 of the La Crosse County Comprehensive Planning Process includes creating and confirming the “vision” or overall direction of the County Plan. The first step in this process is reviewing the existing goals. The Phase started with a community discussion in each of the 5 Sub-Areas within the County. Participants were asked to identify likes, dislikes, and missing themes for the goals generated as part of the existing County plan. The general themes that emerged from these sub-area meetings are listed below. The complete compiled public responses are available for the steering committee’s review.

Question #1

What goals (or parts of goals) do you like and feel are appropriate for the County Plan?

- ✓ Economic Development Goal
- ✓ Water Quality Goal
- ✓ Environmental Resources Goal
- ✓ Parks and Recreation and Cultural Resources Goal
- ✓ Land Use and Growth Management are key for countywide discussions

Economic development and the idea of livable-wage providing jobs were key topics in each of the sub-areas. Water quality is also a significant issue and the current goals on this subject are good, but many have recommended they could be condensed into one goal. Environmental resource preservation is an important aspect throughout the County, both in terms of topography (ridgelines, etc.), and wetland or wildlife areas. There were discussions that parks and other recreational resources enhance communities, and that preservation of historic places is generally a preferred practice.

Question #2

What goals (or parts of goals) do you dislike and feel are not appropriate for the County Plan?

- ✓ Jurisdictional Controls, who is responsible for implementation of these goals?
- ✓ Need to add goals for redevelopment
- ✓ Existing goals have an “urban bias” in goals (sewer service goal, transportation goal—esp. transit)
- ✓ Land Use and Growth Management Goal needs to reflect the rural community’s desires.
- ✓ There needs to be consistent decision-making at the County level.
- ✓ Uncertain many of the goals can be implemented, and are these goals measurable?

There is a county-wide concern that some of the goals may not be actionable, or that they reside outside the jurisdictional control of the local governments. There are also no goals regarding redevelopment of existing sites, which may prove more cost effective and provide for more efficient use of land in some communities. Many goals are also based on the provision of municipal services that may not relate to rural communities. Examples include sewer service provision, or feasibility of developing certain transportation options. There was also a call for consistent decision-making at all levels of government, and increased opportunities for intergovernmental communication. The degree of specificity for the goals was also in question, many respondents couldn’t tell what the goals actually meant because they were either too broad in scope, or they did not appear to be measurable.

Question #3

What ideas are missing from these goals?

- ✓ Maintain private property rights.
- ✓ Maintain local control, especially considering annexation
- ✓ Education Goals
- ✓ Business retention
- ✓ Housing Goals
- ✓ Need more Intergovernmental Cooperation Goals

One major theme that emerged from all of the sub-areas was preservation of individual property rights. While this was stated, there are many different definitions for what “property rights” entails. Many communities worry about equitable land use planning, especially concerning preservation of environmental areas. Similarly, the recognition that intergovernmental cooperation will become increasingly important in light of declining shared revenue allocations and increasing service provision costs will require discussions between neighboring communities and the County overall. Discussions about annexation and jurisdictional rights are also important, as it affects the ability of some communities to effectively plan for the future of their community. The existing goals lacked educational goals. Retention of existing businesses, and goals concerning the placement and composition of housing stock, are also ideas that should be considered for revisions to the goals.

Question #4

When looking at the existing goals – What doesn’t make sense to you? (unclear language, word choices, etc.)

- ✓ Water Supply Goal and Water Quality Goal are redundant, could combine
- ✓ Air quality goal does not make much sense
- ✓ Goals are really broad, almost too general
- ✓ Economic Development Goal should be more clear

The water goals about supply and quality were often viewed as redundant and were frequently recommended to be combined into one goal. The air quality goal needs to be clarified or expanded to include a more concise definition about what the County is actually trying to accomplish. Many respondents feel the existing air quality goal is unclear. The broad nature of the language used in many goals was deemed too vague in many sub-areas overall. The economic development goal was also mentioned in every sub-area as being either too vague, or too open to interpretation. This is especially true for some of the more rural communities where development of businesses is thought to detract from the rural landscape. Further, some rural communities are concerned about the development of incentive-based programming that tends to preclude the conversion of active farmland to other uses, especially when town lands abut municipal boundaries.

“Most Important” Goals

Each evening concluded with participants being asked to list the three most important goals. These are summarized by study area:

Group 1:

Land Use and Growth Management	12
Environmental Resources	7
Air and Water Quality	5
Protect Individual / Property Rights	3
Transportation	3
Economic Development / Jobs	3
Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources	3
Phased Development in Areas Closer to City	2
Solid Waste	2
Address Distinct Rural & Village Issues	2
Improve Zoning Laws	1
Keep Residential Regulations Flexible	1
Better Explanation of how to achieve goals	1
Protection from Nuisance Law Suits	1
Explore Impact Fees	1
“Majority of people trying to neutralize this plan”	1

Group 2:

Protect Individual / Property Rights	16
Land Use and Growth Management	9
Environmental Resources	6
Transportation	6
Economic Development / Jobs	6
Air and Water Quality	6
Control Taxes	5
Preserve Prime Agricultural Land	4
Greater Town Control in Planning & Development	3
Solid Waste	3
Less Rural Development	3
More Input	2
Rural Treatment Plant Options	2
Renewable Energy-Alternative Sources	2
Protect Woodlands	1
Limit Zoning	1
Growth Management	1
Control Government Spending	1
Promote City Redevelopment	1
Good Education System	1
Promote Industrial over Service Growth	1
Clustered Development	1
Parks	1
Address Distinct Rural & Village Issues	1
Social Services	1
Regional Cooperation	1

Group 3:

Land Use/Growth Management	32
Economic Development / Jobs	24
Transportation	13
Water Quality	8
Farmland Preservation	8
Parks and Green space	7
Protect Individual / Property Rights	5
Solid Waste Disposal	4
Housing Development	3
Consolidation of Services	3
Environmental Resources Preservation	3
Energy Distribution	2
Sewer Service	2
Taxation	1
Affordable Housing	1
Air Quality	1

Group 4:

Land Use / Growth Management	10
Economic Development / Jobs	7
Water Quality	6
Transportation	5
Protect Individual / Property Rights	4
Housing	4
Environmental Protection	4
Air Quality	3
Better Communication- Input	2
Direct development to incorporated areas	1
Transfer Development Rights	1
Parks and Green space	1
Rural Character	1
Shared Services	1
Update Zoning	1
Shared Well Systems	1
Efficient Well and Sewer	1
School Districts	1
Consider the Greater Good	1

Group 5:

Land Use / Growth Management	10
Environmental Protection	9
Transportation	5
Economic Development / Jobs	4
Individual/ Land Owner Rights	3
Intergovernmental Cooperation / Govt.	3
Water Quality	3
Sewer Service	2
Improved Communication	1
Alternative modes of transportation	1
Balance Public Good / Property Owner Rights	1
Create Measurable Goals	1
Balance local and regional concerns	1
Sewer Service in Towns	1
Solid Waste	1
Make Recycling convenient	1
Local Control in Towns	1
Parks and Recreation	1
Air Quality	1
Quality of Life	1
Fiscal Responsibility	1