

TOWN OF ONALASKA
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

I. Introduction

The Town of Onalaska received a State of Wisconsin Planning Grant to update their Comprehensive Plan pursuant to the State's Comprehensive Planning Law, Section 66.1001 of the Wisconsin Statutes.

Section 66.1001(4)(a) of Wisconsin Statutes specifically requires the governing body of the local governmental unit to adopt written procedures designed to foster public participation, including open discussions, communication programs, information services and public meetings for which advance notice has been provided, in every stage in the preparation of the comprehensive plan. These written procedures contained within this public participation plan satisfy this requirement. This plan will guide public participation throughout the Town of Onalaska's comprehensive planning process.

This plan was adopted by the Town of Onalaska, Town Board on April 1, 2004.

This public participation program offers all citizens, businesses, interest groups and other parties a range of opportunities to participate throughout the planning process in a meaningful way to shape the future of the Town and region. Effective public input is critical for the success of this planning process because it is our citizens, businesses and groups that will experience the plan's costs and benefits on a daily basis for many years. This plan will, in part, determine where and how our residents live, work and play, and how they travel from one place to another. They will also be the main implementers and enforcers of the plan.

Our participation program is creative, inclusive and persistent. It employs the use of innovative, unique, and thoughtful ways to encourage people to participate in the process and to maximize the effectiveness of their contributions. The opportunities are open to everyone with a stake in the outcome of the comprehensive plan. And, several participation opportunities are available to a wide range of citizens – people with different incomes, races, ages, and occupations – in all stages of the planning process.

Our public participation process will:

- Ensure all planning decisions are open to public comment;
- Produce better planning decisions;
- Support and add credibility to all Town decision making processes;
- Provide opportunities to disseminate information about the plan and process to all segments of the Town;
- Strengthen the relationship between our decision makers and citizens; and,
- Develop a shared vision for the future of Onalaska.

The public participation plan has been created as a collaborative effort between the planning consultants Schreiber/Anderson Associates, Inc. (SAA) and the Town of Onalaska.

II. Public Participation Opportunities

The Town of Onalaska has established the following list of public participation opportunities in consultation with SAA because these techniques are designed to maximize public participation in every stage of our planning process. This collection of opportunities will meet both the letter and spirit of Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning Legislation and will include the following:

1. Community Survey

A community survey will be mailed to all Onalaska households. The survey will be approximately four (4) pages in length, and be designed to obtain public opinions and preferences on key subjects addressed in each of the nine comprehensive plan elements.

2. Visioning Meeting 1: Issue Identification

The visioning meeting will create public awareness of and provide education about the planning process and to answer questions. It will also facilitate a goal setting exercise. Consultants and plan committee members will lead an exercise that will engage community participants in a discussion about issues and opportunities that should be addressed in the comprehensive planning process. Participants will also set their top priorities for the process and Town of Onalaska over the next 20 years by ranking issues and opportunities. The results of this exercise will provide the foundation for the development of project and community goals and objectives.

3. Stakeholder Interviews

With input from the Town Planning Committee, SAA will conduct interviews to gain additional input and support for the comprehensive planning process.

4. Website

The consultants will maintain a website that will host Onalaska's Comprehensive Plan and planning process information. This information may include the project schedule, agendas, draft plan elements and reports, maps, photographs, and survey results.

5. Press Releases

The Town and consultants will work together to produce press releases and other public information pieces at key points to facilitate widespread awareness and education of events and overall plan creation progress.

6. Meeting Notices

The Town will post meeting notices for each meeting and event in a timely manner at accessible locations.

7. Planning Committee Meetings

The nine elements of the comprehensive plan will be developed at a series of approximately seven (7) meetings between the Onalaska Planning Committee and the consultants. The meetings, unless otherwise noted, will be open to the public and allow opportunities for public comments. The meetings will focus on the development of plans, policies, and programs to implement the community defined vision.

8. Open House to Review Draft Plan

The Comprehensive Planning Law requires municipalities to hold at least one formal public hearing with a Class 1 public notice prior to adoption of the "Final Comprehensive Plan." Prior to adoption of the Final Comprehensive Plan, SAA will conduct an open house that will be chaired by the Planning Committee. The intent of the community open house is to provide an opportunity for the public to review and comment on the complete "Draft Comprehensive Plan."

After the community open house, the Town Board will adopt, by resolution, a "Recommended Comprehensive Plan." The Town will also send a copy of the recommended plan to all neighboring jurisdictions, districts, etc. as required by the Comprehensive Planning Law, eliciting their written comments and feedback prior to adoption.

9. Public Hearing on Final Plan Adoption

The final step in the plan adoption process is for the Town Board to hold a public hearing on the proposed "Final Comprehensive Plan" adoption ordinance and the "Final Comprehensive Plan" document. The Town Board is required to consider any comments received on the Recommended Comprehensive Plan prior to adopting a Final Comprehensive Plan. After adoption of the ordinance for the Final Comprehensive Plan, the plan and adoption ordinance shall be distributed by the Town to the recipients listed in Section 66.1001(4) (b) of the Wisconsin Statutes.