

INTRODUCTION

The Smart Growth Initiative

The State of Wisconsin enacted the Smart Growth Initiative in the 1999-2000 biennial budget bill. It is the state's first attempt to curb urban sprawl and promote better land use. This landmark effort encourages sound land use planning by local communities and creates financial incentives for municipalities to devise and follow land use plans that meet the State's Smart Growth guidelines. The initiative encourages municipalities to have a Comprehensive Plan that complies with the State's guidelines by 2010. While the 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.

In the Comprehensive Plan, each municipality must address the following nine elements:

- Element 1: Issues and Opportunities
- Element 2: Housing
- Element 3: Transportation
- Element 4: Utilities and Community Facilities
- Element 5: Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources
- Element 6: Economic Development
- Element 7: Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Element 8: Land Use
- Element 9: Implementation & Evaluation

The Smart Growth Initiative also encourages state agencies and local units of government to consider the following fourteen goals when taking action affecting land use.

Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial and industrial structure.

Encouragement of neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices.

Protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, opens space and groundwater resources.

Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests.

Encouragement of land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low costs of community services provided by public agencies.

Preservation of cultural, historic and archaeological sites.

Encouragement of coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government.

Building of community identity by revitalizing main streets and enforcing design standards.

Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels throughout each community.

Providing adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial and industrial land uses.

Promoting the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities at the state, regional and local levels.

Balancing individual property rights with community interests and goals. *(See Appendix for Survey Results.)*

Planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied or unique urban and rural communities.

Providing an integrated, efficient and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience and safety, and meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and

disabled citizens.

The Town's Smart Growth Planning Process

In August, 2004, the Town of Union Board appointed a group of 25 interested residents to the Union Smart Growth Committee ("Committee"). Doug Zweizig was appointed as chair. The group spent September, October and November, 2004 becoming familiar with the Smart Growth legislation and building the structure that would enable the Committee to conduct its work. During this time, the Committee drafted a Public Participation Plan, developed a timeline that would ensure the Comprehensive Plan was approved prior to March, 2006 when the moratorium on prohibiting the division and subdivision of land within the Township would expire, applied for a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Administration and conducted a search for a consultant to assist with the technical aspects of the project.

The Committee selected Whalen & Associates, Inc. (W&A) as the consulting firm to assist with technical expertise and requested the Town Board approve a contract with W&A starting January 1, 2005.

The Committee spent January – March, 2005 learning about specific topics from resource experts. The Committee heard from resource experts from the Wisconsin Department of Administration, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, the League of Municipalities, the Towns' Association, the Land Use Information Center, and the Evansville Library. Also, during this period, the Committee developed and distributed a survey to all households in the Township. Response to the survey was encouraged through publicity and multiple mailings to household addresses. Given the opportunities each household had to participate, the Committee regarded the responses received from 64% of the households be the best available expression of the views of the residents and determined, to the extent possible, to prepare a plan that was in accord with the results of the survey.

April through August, 2005 the Committee worked on conducting two Listening Sessions with residents of the Township as well as identifying the key concepts and elements that should be included in this Comprehensive Land Use document.

In September and October, the Committee worked on preparing drafts of the nine required elements. Each element was initially studied by a work team who identified the key topics that should be included in the Comprehensive Plan. The W&A team drafted the text for each topic. The Committee participated in a series of revisions of the final document.

In November, the Committee produced a draft of the *Comprehensive Plan* for examination by the residents. Copies were distributed to the Eager Free Public Library, to restaurants in Evansville, and in barber and beauty shops. On December 7, the Committee held a Town Meeting at the Evansville Country Club to learn about questions and concerns that residents would have about the direction of the plan. Response was positive and allowed the Committee to proceed with the completion of the plan document.

A formal public hearing was held February 8, 2006 during which comments from the public were heard.

After the Public Hearing, the document was revised and again reviewed by the Committee. The approved document was forwarded to the Town of Union Planning and Zoning Committee March 9, 2006 for review. The newly formed Town of Union Plan Commission (which included the previous members of the Planning and Zoning Committee) approved the Comprehensive Plan by

resolution on July 27, 2006. It was sent to the Town Board for a public hearing on September 14, 2006. The Town Board gave final approval and officially adopted the Comprehensive Plan on October 5, 2006.

Timetable

The Committee, appointed in August, 2004, worked at a rapid pace because the final approval of the *Comprehensive Plan* was required by March, 2006 when the moratorium temporarily prohibiting the division and subdivision of land within the Town expired. (See *Appendix A for detailed timetable*)

Smart Growth Committee Members

Members of the Town's Smart Growth Committee include:

Doug Zweizig- Chair, Jim Edmonds, Kat Edmonds, Mike Exum, Renee Exum, Alvin Francis, Scott Fredrickson, Kim Gruebling, Dennis Hatfield, Bob Janes, David Johnson, Marty Johnson, Russell Kaney, Ralph Knasinski, Don Krajeck, Eric Larsen, Bridgit Larsen, Bill Murphy, Cindy Murphy, Kendall Schneider, Randy Shotliff, Doug Sutter, Don Templeton, Jeff Trumpy, Judy Whalen - facilitator.

Whalen & Associates, Inc. Project Team

Members of the Whalen & Associates, Inc. project team and their area of expertise include:

Judy Whalen – facilitator, strategic planning

Gregory Hofmeister, P.E. – civil engineer, land surveyor, site planning, municipal engineering, surveying and mapping

Sue LeBrun, P.E. – civil engineer, transportation impact studies

Nancy Zolidis, PhD. - hydrogeologist, wetland hydrology, water supply, lake management, environmental regulation and permitting

Bob Wendt – soil scientist, GIS mapping

Rob Montgomery, P.E. – water resources, environmental engineering, surface water and groundwater supply, wetland hydrology and permitting, environmental investigation and remediation

BACKGROUND

Authority and Purpose

The purpose of this Comprehensive Land Use Plan is to provide guidance for the “planned, coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the Town of Union, which will, in accordance with existing and future needs, best promote public health, safety, morals, order,

convenience, prosperity and general welfare, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development.” (SS Sec. 62.23(2))

In accordance with Wisconsin State Statutes Sections 59.97 and 60.61, the Town of Union adopted a Town Development Plan in 1979. On April 8, 1985, the Town elected to exercise village powers in accordance with Section 60.10(2)(c) of Wisconsin Statutes. With village powers, the Town’s authority to develop and administer a Development Plan is authorized through State Statutes Sec. 61.35 and 62.23.

During the 1980’s, significant changes occurred in the economics of both the agricultural and development industries as well as the regulations affecting these industries. Because of these significant changes, the Town of Union Board requested the Rock County Planning and Development Agency to assist the Town in updating its development plan to provide guidance for the physical and aesthetic development of the Town. The outcome of this initiative was the *1993 Comprehensive Update of the Town of Union Development Plan*. The *1993 Comprehensive Update* served as a tool for decision-making for the Planning and Zoning Committee and the Town Board until August, 2004.

In August, 2004, the Town Board appointed a 25-member Smart Growth Committee to update the *1993 Comprehensive Plan* and comply with the State’s recently enacted Smart Growth legislation.

The Smart Growth Committee is not a policy-making body, and specific policies are therefore not included in this Plan. The Committee urges the appropriate policy-making bodies serving the Town to develop and adopt policies that are in accord with this Plan, and to revise those policies as necessary over time to reflect revisions to the Plan.

The Intent of the Plan

When a community such as Union Township considers planning for land use at this time, the issue of “growth” is central to the discussion. Citizens in the Township survey said that they were concerned about growth (65%) in the Township. When asked at what rate the Town’s population should change in the next ten years, 60% of the citizens said that it should increase at a slower rate than it has been. In addition, 76% said that the Town Government should encourage moderate to no growth in the future. (*See Appendix A: Survey of Households*)

However, slow or managed growth does not mean **no** growth. 23% said that the Town Government should encourage moderate growth; 2% felt the Town Government should encourage fast growth; 41% said that the population should increase at the same or a faster rate. Many expressed the view that growth is inevitable, and some say that growth ought not to be managed by anything but the market.

The Committee concluded that growth needed to be managed and that the issues related to growth went beyond the amount or rate of growth to concern the kinds of growth that should be encouraged. The primary intent was to promote the kind of growth that would maintain the small rural atmosphere that 90% of the residents said they liked about living in the Town of Union. Preserving the rural character of the Town meant preserving quality farmland in the Town and preventing residential building from interfering with the agricultural livelihood that is so important to the Town. It meant incorporating new housing in such a manner that it preserves the rural character that residents have indicated they value. It also meant locating housing close to existing transportation routes since we know that a large proportion of residents will travel to Madison (40% of households) or to Janesville (11% of households) to work. Further, to promote

efficiency and to control sprawl, it meant placing new housing next to existing residential development.

Further, to promote efficiency and to control sprawl, it meant placing new housing next to existing residential development. Finally, it meant that growth for the Township would not impose an increased tax burden on existing property owners; new housing would add enough to the tax base to pay for the increased services required. These principles can be characterized as “healthy growth,” growth that occurs at a rate and in a way that contributes to the existing rural character of the Town.

Organization of the Document

This *Comprehensive Plan* is organized around the nine elements required by the Smart Growth legislation:

- Element 1: Issues and Opportunities
- Element 2: Housing
- Element 3: Transportation
- Element 4: Utilities and Community Facilities
- Element 5: Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources
- Element 6: Economic Development
- Element 7: Intergovernmental Cooperation
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Within each Element chapter, information is reported on the current condition of that element in the Township, issues involved in planning for that element, and other background aspects that guided the recommendations related to the element. Results of the Township survey related to the element are reported throughout the chapters. The chapters conclude with Goals, Objectives, and Actions related to the element. In this plan, “Goals” are major statements of purpose and direction—expressions of a desired end state. “Objectives” are more specific descriptions of an end to be achieved under the more general Goal. “Actions” are the means proposed to work toward the Objective. The Actions in the individual element chapters are repeated in the Implementation chapter with timelines and responsibilities assigned.

The format is designed to be simple and easy to use. The Smart Growth Committee desired a document that could be a tool for committees to use and reference as they conduct their work. It is designed so each section can be updated as needed without having to reprint the entire document. All of the maps are located in one section and numbered consecutively. Figures displaying data are numbered by individual element sections. (Ex. H-1, H-2)

While the percentages may appear to overlap or total more than 100%, the percentages represent responses to different questions. For clarification of the percentages, refer to the Household Survey Results in Appendix A.

Town of Union Comprehensive Land Use Plan

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