

General Overview

Gathering input from residents was a critical element in drafting this Comprehensive Plan. A variety of opportunities were provided for residents to offer their ideas about how the Town should manage its growth, resources and use of land. These activities included a survey of all households, two listening sessions held during June and July, 2005, focus groups and the opportunity to attend any of the regularly scheduled Smart Growth Committee meetings. The purpose of these activities was to gather information from the residents about the issues and opportunities they see as important for the Town to address. The outcomes of these activities are summarized in the list of Issues and Opportunities that appear in this chapter.

Purpose of this Element

The Issues and Opportunities element is intended to accomplish the following four items. It encourages the involvement of the public in identifying problems and opportunities residents collectively face.

Clarify the general principles that constitute the basis of this plan along with specific issues.

Socio-economic characteristics are described.

Population projections are presented that are used in the other elements to project the need for housing, the need for land use and to gauge the adequacy of transportation and community facilities.

Basic Objectives of Issues and Opportunities Element

Demographics

The Town of Union is home to 1,860 residents as of the year 2000. The median age of residents is 37.9 years. Males comprise 51.3% of the population while females comprise 48.7%.

From 1900 to 1960, the Town's population remained relatively stable. During the 1960's, the Town began to experience double-digit percent increases. The greatest population increase in the Town's history occurred between 1990 and 2000 when the number of residents increased 21% from 1,537 to 1,860. The Town's growth rate is especially significant considering Rock County's total population grew only 9% during the same 10-year period (1990-2000) that the Town grew 21%. During this same 10-year period, the City of Evansville grew 27%. This growth significantly impacted the rural character of the Town.

According to the population projection by the Wisconsin Department of Administration Demographic Services Center, the Town of Union is expected to be the second fastest growing township in the County. The Town's population is projected to increase by 39% by 2025 increasing the total number of residents to 2,584. (Based upon a population of 1,860 in the year 2000.) The population for the entire County is expected to increase 14% during the same period.

Additional demographic information about the Town's residents such as age, gender, race, occupancy rate, school enrollments, etc. is included in Appendix A.

In a survey of all households in the Town, residents were asked two questions to learn their preferences about the future rate of growth. 60% said that the population of the Town should increase at a **slower** rate. Of those that thought that the Town government should attempt to affect growth, 68% thought the government should encourage **slow** or **no** growth.

Income

The annual median income for Union residents is \$55,385 per household and \$60,208 per family. (See Appendix A for detailed demographics)

Characteristics of Residents

The survey of households conducted in March, 2005 gathered information from residents and offers an insight into the characteristics of residents living in the Town. Of those households that responded:

- 55% have lived here more than 10 years.
- 73% have lived here more than five years.
- 69% live in single-family homes
- 17% live on farms
- 77% of the households have people ages 18-55 years old
- 37% of the households have people over 55 years old
- 11% of the households have children age 4 or younger
- 28% of the households have children ages 5-14
- 14% of the households have children ages 15-18.
- 30% of the households have a member of the family working in Evansville
- 40% of the households have a member of the family working in Madison
- 53% of the households have two people working outside the home

What Residents Like about the Town

Survey results indicate that residents feel very strongly or strongly about the following characteristics of the Town:

- 90% like the small-town, rural atmosphere

86% like the geographic location
85% like the low crime rate
64% like the quality of the schools
51% feel property taxes make it attractive to live in the Township

Residents' Concerns

While 97% of the Town households reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the Town as a place to live, the survey also gathered information about issues of concern to the residents. When asked to identify the three greatest concerns, survey respondents identified the following issues:

75% are concerned about property taxes
65% are concerned about the growth of the township
49% are concerned about the amount of traffic
25% are concerned about quality of the schools
24% are concerned about the quality of water in their wells
21% are concerned about employment opportunities
8% are concerned about air quality.

Composite List of Issues

In addition to the survey responses, the Smart Growth Committee also learned about residents' concerns through Listening Sessions and comments from residents at Committee meetings. After considering all of the input received from residents, the Smart Growth Committee developed the following lists of Issues and Opportunities to be considered in the drafting of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Protecting the rights of individual land owners while managing the growth of the Town
Preserving the rural character of the Town
Protecting the natural resources and environmental corridors
The increase in the amount of traffic
Conflicting expectations of new residents with long-time farm residents
Demand for growth places pressure on the Planning and Zoning Committee and the Town Board
Developing objective tools to assist Planning and Zoning and the Town Board with decision-making
Maintaining the quality of the educational resources, law enforcement, fire and EMS protection and other Township services
Limited retail, commercial and light industry to help support the tax base
Growth of the City of Evansville and the Village of Brooklyn
Inadequate relationship with the City of Evansville and the lack of input on City decisions that impact the Town of Union
Unknown future plans for the relocation of Hwy. 14 bypass of Evansville
Improvements in state roads will increase the pressure of development.
Limited opportunities for employment (75-80% drive to Janesville or Madison)
Maintaining the amount of development to support the cost of services
Development compatible with the overall goals of the Smart Growth Plan

Composite List of Opportunities

Protect the rights of individual land owners while managing the growth of the Town
Preserve the rural character of the Town
Protect the natural resources and environmental corridors
Help new residents understand the culture and economics of the Town
Develop objective tools to assist Planning and Zoning and the Town Board with objective decision-making
Focus on not only maintaining the quality of the educational resources, law enforcement, fire and EMS protection and other Township services but on improving the quality as the Town grows.
Identify and protect the Town's historical, cultural, natural and scenic resources
Take action to promote collaborative relationships with the City of Evansville, Village of Brooklyn and surrounding municipalities
Focus on the health, safety and welfare of residents
Welcome retail, commercial, light industry as long as it fits with the overall goals of the Smart Growth Plan and helps support the tax base
Be open-minded to the location of commercial, retail and industry in the Township
Doing Smart Growth planning is an opportunity to improve the township
Request a DOT study of the Hwy. 14 corridor and study traffic on other roads if development occurs that impacts traffic patterns
Address traffic implications of development

Coordination with Other Comprehensive Plan Elements

The Issues and Opportunities identified in this chapter impact all of the other elements addressed in this Comprehensive Plan. The Union Smart Growth Committee considered these issues and opportunities as it addressed the other elements that comprise this Comprehensive Plan.

Town of Union Comprehensive Land Use Plan
Issues and Opportunities

PAGE

Table IO-1: Population & Projections

Year	Population	Percent Change from Previous Year
1900	945	
1910	850	(11)
1920	883	4
1930	882	0
1940	919	4
1950	992	.3
1960	1,086	18
1970	1,202	11
1980	1,329	11
1990	1,537	16
2000	1,860	21
2001	1,878	.01
2002	1,911	.01
2003	1,940	.01
2004	1,976	.02
	Population Estimate*	
2005	2,006	
	Population Forecast*	
2010	2,149	
2015	2,295	
2020	2,439	
2025	2,584	

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration

Table IO-2: Median Household Income

	Median Household Income
Wisconsin	\$43,791
Rock County	\$45,517
Town of Union	\$55,385

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

Document the public's input received through the survey, listening sessions, meetings and other activities.
Identify the key issues and opportunities for the Town as it makes land use decisions.
Understand the trends impacting the local economy and demographics.
Present population projections that will be used throughout the Comprehensive Plan.

SURVEY RESULT

94% of respondents preferred a population of 2,300 in the year 2015
60% of respondents preferred an even lower population of 2,100 or less in the year 2015.

SURVEY RESULT

40% of households have at least 1 person who drives to work in Madison.
18% of households have at least 1 person who drives to work somewhere else in Dane County.
11% have someone who drives to Janesville for work.