

Iron County Comprehensive Plan

“Public Participation Plan”

Prepared by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission

Approved by the
Iron County Comprehensive Planning Committee
September 11, 2003

Adopted by the Iron County Board of Supervisors
October 28, 2003

In 1999, Governor Tommy Thompson signed into law a significant piece of legislation dealing with land-use that impacts every local unit of government in Wisconsin. This legislation, referred to as “Smart Growth,” is intended to provide local units of government with the tools to create local comprehensive plans. The legislation included the requirement that any municipality that makes decisions on how the way land is used must have in place an adopted comprehensive plan, meeting the requirements set forth in the Smart Growth legislation, by January 1, 2010.

To accommodate the requirement of comprehensive plans, a total of \$3 million was included in the 2000-2002 biennial budget. These grant funds were targeted specifically for communities to complete comprehensive plans at the local level. Seeking to develop a comprehensive plan for Iron County, an ad hoc committee represented by members of the Iron County Zoning Committee and representatives from towns, cities, and villages from throughout Iron County met to discuss the potential development of an application for comprehensive planning funds. From these meetings, a consensus to pursue funding was reached and a total of 10 local governmental units (10 towns and Iron County) submitted a multi-jurisdictional application.

On January 24, 2002, Iron County was selected to receive from the State of Wisconsin planning funds to develop a multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan. Associated with the receipt of the state planning funds is the requirement to develop and adopt a “Public Participation Plan” to be used throughout the comprehensive plan process. According to Wisconsin State Statute, 66.1001 (4)(a) “The governing body of a local governmental unit shall adopt written procedures that are designed to foster public participation, including open discussion, communication programs, information services and public meetings for which advance notice has been provided, in every stage of the preparation of a comprehensive plan. The written procedures shall provide an opportunity for written comments on the plan to be submitted by members of the public to the governing body and for the governing body to respond to such written comments.”

In adhering to the requirement of developing and adopting a Public Participation Plan, on *October/28/2003* the Iron County Comprehensive Planning Committee adopted the following for use in the overall development of the Iron County Comprehensive Plan.

INTRODUCTION

Recognizing that the Iron County Comprehensive Land Use Plan must reflect the people it serves, Iron County and the participating multi-jurisdictions intend to encourage citizen input throughout the development of the plan. The public participation procedures must provide for a broad dissemination of proposals and alternatives, public meetings after effective notice, opportunity for written comments, communication programs, information services, provisions for open discussion, and consideration of and response to public comments. These enhanced procedures augment the minimum public notification requirements required by law.

Iron County's Public Participation Plan forms the basic framework for achieving an interactive dialogue between local decision makers, county staff, the comprehensive planning consultant, and the citizens of Iron County. This plan outlines the public participation strategy for the development, evaluation and eventual adoption of the countywide comprehensive plan for Iron County. The Public Participation Plan documents the strategy for soliciting public review and input for the development of the plan. The creation of the Public Participation Plan is the first step in meeting the requirements of Wisconsin's Comprehensive Planning and "Smart Growth" Legislation (1999 Wisconsin Act 9 and AB 872 Technical Changes). This Public Participation Plan will apply throughout the local planning process leading to the adoption of the Iron County Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

This Public Participation Plan is intended to guide and form the basis for public participation. Iron County will comply with the Public Participation Plan as appropriate to the situation. As the planning process develops, it should be expected that deviations from the plan might be warranted.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

General

The main goal of the Public Participation Plan is to make all the citizens of Iron County aware of the progress of the comprehensive planning process occurring in the county and to offer the public opportunities to make suggestions or comments during the process. To reach these goals, Iron County has adopted the following plan to encourage public participation through the remainder of the planning process. Taken individually, the activities described in this plan are not expected to reach and inform each and every resident of Iron County. Collectively, however, the plan activities are designed to effectively and efficiently provide a broad-based dissemination of information and maximize the opportunity for citizen involvement and comment.

The majority of the public participation activities will focus on public information, education, and input and will occur at the local municipal level through a series of public meetings. Public meetings, workshops, and open houses will provide opportunities for the public to openly discuss comprehensive planning issues with local decision makers, county staff, and the hired planning consultant. Formal public hearings will also be conducted as part of the plan adoption process to allow public testimony to be made regarding the Iron County Comprehensive Plan. During the comprehensive planning process, every effort will be made to ensure that public meetings are held at one or more public locations central and convenient to all citizens of Iron County. Other public participation activities will be explored to inform and receive input from residents that may not be able to attend these public meetings and hearings.

Provisions for Open Discussion

Iron County will ensure that public meetings allow for an open discussion of the relevant issues at hand and that public hearings allow for appropriate testimony. When public meetings or hearings are conducted, Iron County will make every effort to ensure those who choose to participate in the planning process have the opportunity to actually have their opinions heard. To accomplish this, the following actions will be implemented:

- An agenda will be established that clearly defines the purpose of the public meeting or hearing, the items to be discussed, and any actions that may be taken.
- The scheduled date, time, and place will be convenient to encourage maximum participation by Iron County residents.
- A clearly identifiable facilitator or chair will conduct the meeting or hearing in an orderly fashion to ensure that all attendees have an opportunity to offer comments, discuss issues, or provide testimony.
- The facilitator or chair will provide opening remarks that clearly outline the purpose of the meeting or hearing, describe procedures attendees should use during the meeting or hearing when offering input, and describe how the public input will be used.
- As appropriate, an overview of documents or proposals to be considered will be discussed.

- All persons attending the meeting or hearing that desire to participate should be allowed to do so. However, specific factors, such as the meeting or hearing purpose, number in attendance, time considerations, or future opportunities to participate may require that appropriate constraints be applied. These constraints will be clearly outlined by the facilitator or chair if the need arises.
- All attendees will be encouraged to sign in using a provided sign in sheet.
- Meetings and hearings will be recorded by Iron County staff or local officials at the municipal level.
- Summaries or minutes of meetings or hearings will be transcribed from the aforementioned recordings and made available as soon as possible following the meeting or hearing through mailings or possibly the county's website.
- Special arrangements will be made under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) with sufficient advance notice.

Opportunity for Written Comments

Detailed comments can most often be better expressed through written format. To encourage the citizens of Iron County to express written comment throughout the planning process, the following steps will be taken:

- All meeting and hearing notices will include the name, address, and e-mail address (if applicable) of person(s) to whom written comments should be sent along with any deadlines for submitting comments.
- At public meetings or hearings, the facilitator or chair will clearly announce any deadline for submitting written comments, if such comments are allowed subsequent to the meeting or hearing.
- Persons speaking or testifying will be encouraged to concisely express their comments and provide specific details in written format.
- Persons may also respond with comments to the Iron County UW Extension office at: willandresen@ces.uwex.edu.

Consideration of and Response to Public Comments

The various methods for involving the public and soliciting public opinions and comments during the comprehensive planning process are defined herein. These methods represent the initial steps for bringing public comment into the decision-making process. The following steps will be taken to ensure that public recommendations and comments are taken into consideration by the decision-makers when developing the countywide comprehensive plan:

- Time will be reserved subsequent to the close of a meeting, hearing, or comment deadline and prior to the actual decision or recommendation being made to ensure that decision makers can adequately review all relevant materials or comments.
- Decision makers may reconvene a public hearing for the purpose of addressing public comments.

- The record (written comments or testimony, tape recordings, or transcripts) of hearings and meetings will be compiled by county or local municipal staff and made available to decision makers for their review and consideration prior to a recommendation or decision being made.
- Substantive comments pertaining to studies, analyses, or reports, along with appropriate responses, will be included in the published documents itself.
- Relevant comments or testimony will be addressed through the findings-of-fact portion of the decision maker's written decision or recommendation.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Public Meetings and Workshops

Municipal Planning Group Meetings & Workshops

Municipalities participating in the comprehensive plan will hold public meetings and workshops to assimilate information collected at the municipal level relevant to the Nine Elements of a Comprehensive Plan as defined by the State. The majority of opportunities for citizen participation will be provided at the municipal level. Through municipal public meetings, residents will be able to become an instrumental part of their community's planning process. By participating in meetings and workshops held, citizens can aid their elected officials and planning committees in creating a vision for their community's comprehensive plan. Interested citizens can also become involved in the planning process as members of their community's plan commission.

Meeting/Hearing Notices

Official meeting notices will be prepared for any of the above public meetings or hearings conducted pertaining to the comprehensive planning process. At a minimum, the requirements of §19.31 pertaining to public meetings and notification will be met. The Iron County Clerks office or municipality staff will place meeting notices in their regularly designated locations, based on the location of the public meeting or hearing. In all cases, notices will be forwarded to the county's official paper and other newspapers as deemed appropriate. It is recommended that any notices be published at least one week prior to the meeting. All public hearings will follow the same public notice except all public hearings will be published as per a Class II notice. Notices may also be posted on the Iron County website.

Civic and Community Presentations

Throughout the planning process, representatives responsible for development of the comprehensive plan will meet with local civic and community organizations to discuss the development of the comprehensive plan. In addition to presenting information, information will be collected at the presentations as it pertains to the development of the comprehensive plan.

Newsletter Mailings

Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC) will develop an annual newsletter to inform residents about comprehensive planning and other issues related to the development of the comprehensive plan. The newsletter may also be available for view on the NWRPC website at www.nwrpc.com. Each newsletter will include a list of contacts from which citizens can gain additional information and an address or e-mail address where comments can be sent.

Iron County Web Page

Iron County's current homepage could be supplemented with a page regarding comprehensive planning efforts in Iron County. The web page might include topics related to the "Smart Growth Initiative" and the Iron County Comprehensive Plan, drafts of plan elements, meeting agenda's and minutes, a list of contacts and will also include an e-mail address so that viewers can submit comments or place their name on a mailing list to receive further information. Once constructed, periodic updates should be made to keep the web page current. Ultimately, the Iron County Comprehensive Plan and participating municipalities comprehensive plans could be placed on the web. As maps are developed for the plans, they may also be placed on the web page.

Community Displays

The development of public displays will be prepared during the course of the project and could be displayed at the Iron County Courthouse or placed for a short period of time at a number of public locations throughout the county, such as libraries or town halls. A public display booth could be developed for the Iron County Fair held the first week of August in Saxon, in an effort to continue to increase citizen participation and awareness.

Mailing Lists

As public participation proceeds, interested citizens will have opportunities to place their name on a mailing list to receive additional information regarding the planning process via direct mail or e-mail where applicable. The Northwest Regional Planning Commission will compile and maintain this mailing list. Names to be included on the mailing list will originate from meeting and hearing sign-in sheets, written correspondence, recognized community organizations, as well as through individual requests. This list will also be used for newsletter circulation, special mailings, and notices as appropriate.

Periodic Articles

As the public participation process proceeds, interested citizens and community leaders may request more detailed information on land use related topics than desired by much of the general public. To provide more detail to citizens and key officials showing an interest in the Comprehensive Plan, articles will be prepared from time to time by Northwest Regional Planning Commission or UW-Extension staff.

Planning Document Dissemination

Documents that contain or describe the proposed plan's policies, maps, or recommendations will be made available for public review. Such documents will be made available well in advance of opportunities for public discussion or testimony. Such documents will be made available ten (10) calendar days prior to any public meeting or hearing scheduled for their discussion or a decision.

Documents may be disseminated as follows:

- Digital versions may be posted on the Iron County Comprehensive Plan website.
- Hard copies will be delivered to all public libraries. The likely geographic area to be affected by a proposal will be the basis on which libraries will be sent documents. Proposals of a countywide nature will be sent to all applicable libraries.
- Hard copies will be delivered to each municipality's chief elected official and/or key staff. An additional copy will also be delivered for placement at each municipality's town/village/city hall for citizen review.
- Hard copies will also be available for review at the Iron County Zoning Department during normal business hours.
- Hard copies will also be available for review at the Northwest Regional Planning Commission, 1400 S River Street, Spooner, WI 54801 during normal business hours.

Meeting and hearing notices will state the availability and location of documents.

Public Hearings

Once the final draft of the Iron County Comprehensive Plan is completed, the Iron County Land and Zoning Committee with assistance from the Northwest Regional Planning Commission and involved municipalities, will conduct a series of public hearings to receive public comment on the proposed plan. As plan development progresses, a schedule for these meetings will be prepared.

Hearing Notices

Iron County will place legal notices of hearings in the county's official paper and other local newspapers throughout the county as related to the geographic area affected. Hearing notices should be published as required by state law and county policy.

Prior to any unit of government enacting an ordinance approving the comprehensive plan, a hearing shall be conducted preceded by a Class 1 public notice that is published at least 30 days before the hearing is held. The local governmental unit may also provide notice of the hearing by any other means it considers appropriate. According to the comprehensive planning legislation, the Class 1 notice shall contain at least the following information:

1. The date, time, and place of hearing.
2. A summary, which may include a map, of the proposed comprehensive plan or amendment to such a plan.
3. The name of an individual employed by the local governmental unit who may provide additional information regarding the proposed ordinance.

4. Information relating to where and when the proposed comprehensive plan may be inspected before the hearing and how a copy of the plan may be obtained.

Iron County Comprehensive Plan Adoption Process

Iron County will follow the procedures for adopting the comprehensive plan as listed in §66.1001 (Comprehensive Planning). The first step in the adoption process is being met by the adoption of this document that details written procedures that are designed to foster public participation throughout the comprehensive planning process.

Gus Krone, Iron County Board Chairman

Attest: _____
Michael J. Saari, County Clerk

Approved by the Iron County Board of Supervisors on: _____