

La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan

Sub Area Kick Off Meeting #1

Summary of Initial Responses

November, 2005

SUB AREA I

November 10, 2005

Town of Burns, Town of Farmington, Village of Bangor, Village of Rockland

QUESTION I Think about where La Crosse County is today. How would you describe the current condition of the following:

Growth- Location, Pace and type (how do you feel about the balance of housing, jobs, and stores)

- Growth picking up along I -90 Corridor – Commercial residential N of Holmen and near W Salem
- Loss of business in rural areas – loss of grocery stores in T. Farmington. Rural areas = towns. (Closest grocery is store far away!)
- Residential growth haphazard – throughout the county – needs to change

Jobs, Employment and Economic Opportunity

- La Crosse trading manufacturing and high paying jobs for service jobs/low paying jobs. Concern about livable income – can people survive on this?

Relationships between communities and County

- Relationship between communities good – Re: not good between counties and communities. County mandating just like the state – communities must bear costs. A lot of shared services – fees w/jail an issue between communities and county
- Household hazard waste project and municipal court are positive examples of County/local interaction
- Difficult to deal w/county offices – bureaucracy used to be service related – not anymore
- County wants to dump C. Park on T Farmington. Don't want to provide services
- County Highway Dept has always worked well w/village
- County zoning department works very well w/local communities very helpful. Economic development staff will help
- When landowner wants to do something w/PRD – basically let them – this is a good thing - should be able to do what they want
- In Farmington – Haphazard is odd little piece of land that doesn't fit in w/the farm
- But what is the consequence of this for the community? House doesn't pay for services – growth
- Losing students in Farmington trying to fix this
- People moving into rural area demand urban services – growth doesn't pay for this – farmers do. If development occurs – have it occur near existing development – hamlets

Natural Resources

- Natural resources healthy
- Blessed with greatest natural resources in area

Existing Planning and Zoning Efforts

- Plan dictates – older farmers feel threatened. Shock when plan says what you can do. Where do individual's rights become lost to big picture – how will they be compensated? At the same time – unique agriculture area and don't want to lose that balance

- Re-zoned land being used for commercial uses. If re-zoned, commercial/residential should still be able to use as Ag
- If development occurs – should be in subdivision so you get more bang for your buck – plowing, other services. Doesn't make sense to spread it out

QUESTION 2: Consider the list of topics in Question 1. Where would you like to see the County go?

What positive aspects should we preserve?

- Preserve Ag/farming Community. Problem is small town farmers evaporating – larger farms
- Can't do anything to help farming – done @ Federal level. Federal Reserve put farmers out of farming. Nothing we can do to help farmers locally. Farms/cities intricately related – if one fails – the other fails. If one succeeds – the other succeeds
- Natural resources. should be preserved
- PDR – could this be used?

What Negative aspects should we change?

- Low wages
- Get rid of planning
- Want boundary agreements, better relationships w/annexations

What is your vision for the county over the next 20 and 50 years?

- Ag land – how much of this land is not taxable in county – too much. A lot of use value assessed lands
- La Crosse County unique – part of this is the bluffs. Have attempted to preserve them through slopes. But exceptions have occurred here and there – want more stringent requirements. Depends on who is in office and how much \$ they have
- Don't want land to be taken and not paid for - Federal lands – floodplains , etc
- Gravel pits also leave scars

QUESTION 3: How should the County get there?

What challenges need to be met?

- Don't want who's in office to dictate decisions – e.g. Slope (above)
- Wants to be able to have residential/commercial adjacent to each other so you can minimize commute. Jobs/housing balance. Need to plan to put these uses together
- Sewer/water system – efficient microbes – treats sewer water to make it drinkable. This area controlled by City – sewer treatment plant - helps them control surrounding uses
- Need to understand what other parts of the world are doing
- How do we get funding to accomplish what we want to accomplish?

County's role in addressing challenges:

- Good partner w/local government and vise versa

- Understand each one's goals – know where County/Community is coming from – work toward common goal if this can be accomplished
- County's goal will be developed/dictated by its residents
- Steering Committee is going to take what residents say and put this into the plan for goals
- More jobs around county, moving out of county. Haphazard right now w/various organizations (LADCO) between counties (Monroe etc.) Doesn't do anymore good – bigger than local or county government. Everyone looks out for #1

Local Communities Role

- Tell the County what they want them to do. Talk to them/coordinate w/them
- Don't have adequate avenues for discussion right now – need better opportunities
- Towns have good representation @ county meetings. Usually have good turn out and public meetings. Need more of this in other areas – don't come to county board meetings. Town board members don't go to local meetings - would like them to do this more
- Hard to get local communities to know the county's agenda and vice versa - need better sharing of agendas
- Hazardous waste issue was a good cooperative venture in theory – but hasn't always worked well – won't take items
- What representation do towns/villages have on household hazardous waste committee? Doesn't exist anymore. They need representation. Another example of lack of communication. Same thing happened w/county CORP. Didn't know recs, etc until end of process

SUB AREA 2

November 7, 2005

Town of Bangor, Town of Greenfield, Town of Washington

QUESTION 1 Think about where La Crosse County is today. How would you describe the current condition of the following:

Growth- *Location, Pace and type (how do you feel about the balance of housing, jobs, and stores*

- Too Much Prime Ag Land is being developed- Direct growth towards land with marginal soils.
- There is the conflict of the “common good” versus “individual landowners.
- Improve the financial feasibility of organic farming.
- There are negatives associated with growth including: noise, traffic, bicycle conflicts, pollution, infrastructure costs, crime. There is no benefit of new growth to the people already here.
- Can growth happen anywhere else?
- What is “Sustainable” growth?
- Poor conditions in the city of La Crosse contribute to more development in the countryside. Taxes and lifestyles are considerations regarding new growth.
- State owned land is tax exempt and hurts the local tax base.

Jobs, Employment and Economic Opportunity

- Concentrate on the manufacturing base versus lower paying service jobs.
- Need a north south corridor. Need a bypass to support future economic development.
- No North-South corridor will promote additional growth in rural areas.
- Low paying jobs do not support families.
- Need jobs close to rural clusters.
- Limit conflicts with new residential and agriculture
- Make ag more viable and financially feasible
- Ag economy is changing from dairy to cash grain.
- There is a lack of erosion control and conservation farming efforts.
- Going away from Animal agriculture, due in part to over-regulation.
- Consider organic farming as a solution.
- Need to manage conflicts between quarries, growth and residential neighbors

Relationships between communities and County

- There is generally a positive attitude between Greenfield and other towns.
- County reps should visit town meetings once per year.
- What is the relationship between the County and the City?
- Only the negative intergovernmental issues get covered- why not the positive?

QUESTION 2: Consider the list of topics in Question 1. Where would you like to see the County go?

What positive aspects should we preserve?

- Protect natural resources- bluffs and wetlands.

- Clean air and water.
- Preserve scenic views- determine setbacks on bluff tops
- Promote distinct neighborhoods with variation and individuality.
- Limit infrastructure on hilltops.
- Don't move schools out
- Preserve and enhance hunting, fishing, and outdoor activities.
- Continue Downtown La Crosse revitalization-
- Enhance Downtown La Crosse as a regional night life, economic and cultural center.
- Promote tourism including hunting, fishing, biking.
- There is great love for the La Crosse Region including the River, Towns and bluffs.
- Promote wind farms on ridges
- Look at renewable energy sources.

What Negative aspects should we change?

- Keep land open and accessible to all for hunting- what incentives are available for this.
- Attract high tech (and high paying) companies and jobs.
- Look at opportunities for sustainable jobs.
- Manufacturing and industry at planned locations along highway corridors, not sprawling throughout the country side.
- Redevelop blighted areas.
- Less junk cars, etc.
- Make better decisions on school spending and investments.
- Limit public departments competing with potential private business (Highway Department example)
- Need better investment (and return on investment) with public expenditures.
- Stream Bed Restoration.

What is your vision for the county over the next 20 and 50 years?

- Promote privatization- less government.
- Solve traffic congestion- North South corridor and Improvements to Highway 16
- Mass transit is not easy, look at feasible options including morning and afternoon park and rides (St. Joseph, for example)
- Keep property tax affordable
- Balance individual rights with the public good- There is a need for well thought out decisions.

QUESTION 3: How should the County get there?

- Solve the traffic issue
- Reverse the decline of manufacturing and agricultural base
- Coordinated efforts to identify affordable lands that can be used for renewable energy, production, manufacturing, and ag.
- Need to do a better job of getting the word out- Use news media, flyers, local news letter

SUB AREA 3

November 2, 1005 — West Salem Library

Sub Group — Village of West Salem, Town of Hamilton, Town of Barre

QUESTION 1 Think about where La Crosse County is today. How would you describe the current condition of the following:

Growth—*Location, pace and type (how do you feel about the balance of housing, jobs, and stores, etc.)*

- Economy driven by market
- Poor transportation system
- Need a plan now to address growth issues

Jobs, employment and economic opportunity

- Not enough high paying jobs
- Need friendly economic environment

Agriculture and farming

- Prime ag land needs to be saved
- Low commodity prices force farmers to sell for development (need that option)
- Land is becoming more valuable for development than farming

Relationship between communities with county

- Depends on subject, jail, policing services
- Generally positive relationship
- Need for more open discussion between towns, county
- Need to eliminate overlapping services

Natural Resources

- Under attack (pollution, erosion)
- Need to take steps to preserve
- Need to retain rural character
- Fear resources are slowly being lost or compromised
- Threatened by development and population growth

Existing planning and zoning efforts

- Better now than in past
- Better coordination/cooperation with towns/villages than in past
- Need to stop random development; need comprehensive planning for county and communities
- Need for flexible plan that still provides consistency, certainty
- Where plans are followed, they are doing a good job controlling growth

QUESTION 2: Consider the list of topics in Question 1. Where would you like to see the County go?

What positive aspects should we preserve?

- Natural resources
- Prime farmland
- Downtowns
- Schools
- Public safety (low crime rate)

What negative aspects should we change?

- Border wars
- Low paying jobs
- Lack of planning implementation
- Need to lower crime rate/drugs
- Development pressure
- Loss of identity (extra-territorial issues/imposition)

What is your vision for the county over the next 20 and 50 years?

- Maintain small towns
- Villages/cities should grow
- Preserve green spaces; control rural development
- Promote urban development
- Need to address transportation problems (rural population commuting to urban jobs)
- Need for controlled growth

QUESTION I Think about where La Crosse County is today. How would you describe the current condition of the following:

Growth- Location, Pace and type (how do you feel about the balance of housing, jobs, and stores)

- Transitioning very rapidly from ag / rural to residential in the County
- “Hop Scotch” residential development. Clusters in wide spread areas- Difficult for walking, biking access.
- County Highways not designed to handle high traffic volumes. Constraints may limit expansion. Narrow shoulders are very difficult to bike.
- Commercial development isolated from other commercial areas.
- People choose to live where they want and don’t want to be told were they have to live. It’s their choice. More people = more houses.
- Requirements for large lots for residential (10 acres) not helping to preserve farmlands
- Houses interspersed between farmland
- Can’t sell ½ acre lots on ag land anymore, this will just gobble more farmland.
- Concern over lack of green space for multi-family in Holmen. Would rather see them in country, views, open space

Jobs, Employment and Economic Opportunity

- Hardly any provisions for job growth – Houses coming, what about jobs.
- Need more jobs, but people protest when new employment centers are proposed.
- Types of jobs are good. Government is not the largest employer- this is good. Get more productivity out of private sector jobs.
- Transportation constraints to live in N. part of the County. Difficult to access South part of City.
- Residential growth is outpacing economic growth.
- Economic activities should be tourism/natural resource based. This is a huge opportunity that is untapped.
- County should play lead role in bringing good jobs with healthcare, pensions, and wages.
- Another county should have the lead role in solving infighting between communities
- Projections show industrial- Town does not want additional industrial.
- No jobs in this area- only a bedroom community. Would like to develop jobs in this area so people don’t have to drive to La Crosse for jobs.
- Grain farmers living off of federal government right now – heavily subsidized.
- Corn – going into ethanol – is this the best use for it?

Agriculture and farming

- Grain farmers living off of federal government right now – heavily subsidized.
- Corn – going into ethanol – is this the best use for it?

- Residents and people moving here consider it a “quaint” rural community. It’s pretty to look at but there are no guarantees/support to ensure that farming will last. IL and Indiana is where the farming is occurring and guaranteed to last.
- Most farmers in the area are ready to retire – they are aging and no young farmers want to buy their land.
- The area is going from many family farms to consolidated/large farms or residential.
- Things are changing from ag to residential and the preference seems to be for residential.
- Concern with taxation of farmers – the current environment is not favorable to them. Woodlots are being taxed and now those will be developed too.
- Farmers have to be careful now with their new residential neighbors – smells, noises, heavy equipment, etc. of ag practices conflict with residential. The culture is changing.
- There is a great deal of competition between residential and agland. This conflict and transition is now occurring. People want to live in an aesthetic, rural area and they are encroaching on farmland.
- There are benefits to preserving farmland. Farmers have a strong work ethic. Also, if we take land out of farming, it will be paved and there will be less groundwater recharge – will end up with reservoir draw-down problems like Madison and the Milwaukee area.
- We need to protect existing farmers. Neighbors complain about manure spreading on fields, but then there are sewage overflows in the Mississippi River and he wants to go there and waterski – conflict of interests. He is a young farmer and wants to keep farming, but it is harder and harder to do so.
- Need to find a balance between ag and residential uses – this is critical.

QUESTION 2: Consider the list of topics in Question 1. Where would you like to see the County go?

What positive aspects should we preserve?

- Bluffs
- Rivers
- Coulees
- Natural resources and aesthetics – reason so many live here. Must make every impact to minimize impact to soils, farmland, and other natural resources.
- Small, metro-area feeling. La Crosse is not too big but has everything we need.
- Nice, rural flavor even with fairly large population.
- Native American culture/history should be protected.
- Keep bike trails/walking trails and expand them in the future.
- Keep airport and railroad here.

What Negative aspects should we change?

- Transportation – geographically constrained and gets congested.
- Constant expansion/widening of paved roads not helping to get people up/down the corridor. A linear geography (even without a lg population) could support mass transit. La Crosse should be the first rural area to embrace transit.
- Need to consider amount of land farmer has to sell. Let them sell smaller parcel than 10 acres – current zoning very negative.
- Mississippi River should be accessible by everyone – need to find balance in terms of who gets access where. Farmers need to access barges, recreational users need access,

commercial/economic development may be appropriate in areas. Consider the area comprehensively. Redevelopment of Exxon site – need good plan.

- Need tools to implement the plan. Can't have plan that requires greenspace but has no tools to implement it. Decisions need to be consistent – currently private property owners are deprived of free enterprise.
- Large corporations will be building large land holdings. Small businessmen will be going out of business because banks skeptical of smaller developers if large builders coming in.
- County should actively pursue practices that protect groundwater and water resources. Not currently done/enforced.
- People judge what neighbors do with their land – it shouldn't matter what they do as long as it doesn't impact them. Concerned with this in T. Onalaska plan.
- Concern that it is down with the less fortunate and up with the rich people who live on the tops of bluffs and on steep slopes.

What is your vision for the county over the next 20 and 50 years?

- Can't see 20 years into the future. Things have changed drastically.
- Tough to guess. Did a long range plan 15 years ago and it's already out of date.
- Expect to see solid development from Holmen to Trempealeau.
- Would like the County to still be a great place to live – his kids raise their kids here – fix problems, improve traffic, keep crime down.
- Strong effort to maintain ag, natural resources, and aesthetics that we have so it continues to be a nice place to live. Hard to do, but can be done.
- If general public wants open space preserved, they need to make it worthwhile to keep farming. Must make it as profitable/desirable as selling off land for housing.
- The problem with visions is County residents envision farms-but can't maintain this-they are going out of business. Land will become vacant because farmers can't afford to continue farming.

QUESTION 3: How should the County get there?

What challenges need to be met?

- The challenge is to develop a realistic vision.
- The land that farmers are selling is their retirement fund. Don't have 401k through company. To make it fair – must be compensated. Big challenge and needs to be addressed. Land must be acquired at fair market value.
- Land value should be market driven.
- To encourage greenspace is not the answer.
- Recreational land taxes/woodland taxes are making it harder to have open space.
- Use value has helped farmers – woodland tax hasn't.
- Being able to balance everybody's vision – rural vs. residential, etc. This is a huge challenge.
- County has steep topography – can't build on these steep slopes, so this provides greenspace for people. People should be able to build where they want to on the flat land.

County's role in addressing challenges:

- County should let both sides talk to determine development and open space locations – County needs to talk to landowners.
- County should be regional planner – look at entire region.
- County should play dominant role. Plan town shouldn't rule. Some Towns think they are going to run the County.
- The County should have a regional view and Town, Villages, etc. should decide specific uses in an area. E.g. County designates area as commercial, local community decides what type/specifics.
- Need to realize how short sighted it is to plan for 20 or 50 years. Humans will be around much longer than that. Need to develop wisely now and live close together so we can visit open spaces in the future.

SUB AREA 5

November 9, 1005 — Campbell Town Hall

Town of Campbell, Town of Medary, Town of Shelby

QUESTION 1 Think about where La Crosse County is today. How would you describe the current condition of the following:

Growth—*Location, pace and type (how do you feel about the balance of housing, jobs, and stores, etc.)*

- Downtown revitalization (La Crosse) positive
- Growth will go where there is available land
- Infrastructure needs to keep pace with demand
- More effort needed to concentrate on infill
- Pressure to develop in outlying areas
- Infrastructure to outlying areas is expensive
- Need to offer housing choices

Jobs, employment and economic opportunity

- High-end housing; lack of high paying jobs
- Need more affordable housing
- Concentration of jobs in urban area
- Need to attract large companies
- Poor north/south transportation system
- Topography of area creates obstacles
- Solving transportation problems is opportunity for cooperation

Agriculture and farming

- Once ag land is developed, it's gone

Relationship between communities with county

- Relationship with county generally good
- First rate county services
- Sometimes county does not represent towns; City of La Crosse has too much power, influence
- Town concerns over extra-territorial platting/planning, and annexations required for utility connections

Natural Resources

- Good natural resources; woodlands, water, bluffs
- DNR seems to apply double standard in towns and city (towns more restricted)

Existing planning and zoning efforts

- County needs to utilize town comp plans
- County Board needs to be more consistent in application of plans and zoning

QUESTION 2: Consider the list of topics in Question 1. Where would you like to see the County go?

What positive aspects should we preserve?

- Natural resources, recreation
- Good medical facilities
- Good county road maintenance
- Good schools
- Good overall quality of life environment
- Low crime

What negative aspects should we change?

- City of La Crosse is too influential
- Roads/traffic congestion
- Some “cluster” housing is too dense

What is your vision for the county over the next 20 and 50 years?

- Growth of economy
- Better cooperation between local governments
- Regional services for various utilities
- Regional government

QUESTION 3: How should the County get there?

What specific challenges need to be met to meet the vision described in Question 2?

- Business development process needs to be made easier
- Need for less regulation; lower taxes
- Need for positive working relationship between local governments and City of La Crosse (City of Onalaska good to work with)
- Need to retain industries in county
- County Board politics are too partisan

What should be the county’s role?

- Provide leadership
- Foster more positive working relationships between county, City of La Crosse, and towns

What should be the role of towns, cities, and villages?

- Need for town collaboration
- Need to be active, connected grassroots
- Encourage citizen involvement
- Inspection/assessor services county-wide need to be more even