

Shaping the Region's Future (2) October, 2002

Welcome to our regular newsletter column focusing on the regional comprehensive plan. Our aim is to provide you with a quarterly update throughout the planning process.

As many of you already know, East Central received a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Administration to update our regional plan to meet new standards established in the Wisconsin Smart Growth legislation (1999). Working together with citizens, local governments, and interest groups, East Central's objective is to develop a policy framework for planning issues. This framework, addressing issues such as regional transportation, energy production and distribution, and coordination of land use and public services, will provide the regional structure upon which local governments may build local land use policies to promote consistent and cost effective land use decisions within the East Central region.

What's New? - Regional Focus Groups

During September, East Central and UW-Extension held a series of regional focus groups throughout the region. The purpose of this first round of focus groups was to bring together small groups of individuals who are making and influencing key decisions about planning for the future of their communities, key representatives of interest groups, and informed citizens. The objective of these sessions was for East Central to listen to participants' views and opinions on the key issues and opportunities that they feel are, or will be, facing communities within the 10 county area of the East Central Wisconsin region. East Central also began to explore views on how our community should look in the future. Participants were invited to answer three questions regarding their region/geographic area: What would you like to be preserved? What would you like to be changed? and What would you like to be created?

As this edition of Rapport goes to print, regional focus groups have been held for Calumet, Outagamie and Winnebago Counties, as well as for Shawano and Waupaca Counties. Both events were a great success. The sessions were well attended by people representing a broad range of interests, resulting in stimulating issue identification and visioning sessions. Key issues identified included: the state budget, annexations of town land, need to maintain economic growth, need to protect natural resources, lack of low income housing, need for inter-governmental cooperation, protecting private property rights, how to pay for new or expanded services, and urbanization of rural areas. Key opportunities identified included: implementation of the Fair Housing Act, management of DNR owned lands, tax relief, regional delivery of public services, maintaining excellence in the school system, and protecting ground water quality and quantity.

For a full summary of the regional focus groups, including lists of all the issues and opportunities identified and names of participants, check out our website at www.eastcentralrpc.org or contact Denise McShane at 920-751-4770.

What's Next? - State of the Region Report

Between now and the end of the year, East Central staff will be working to produce the "State of the Region" report. This will provide a broad description of the current state of the region in terms of the substantive smart growth elements including economic development, housing, transportation, community and public facilities, agriculture, natural and cultural resources and land use. Before we can begin to plan for the future, we need a benchmark of where we are at the moment.

The data used to produce this report will be appearing on our new Data Center webpage. Acting as an official Wisconsin State Data Center Affiliate, East Central is a repository for decennial census information. We also have data available from other government sources such as the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Commerce, Department of Administration and Department of Revenue.

Our goal is to improve local government and private sector access to the information necessary for local comprehensive planning, marketing studies, grant requests, and research and development projects in the East Central Wisconsin region.