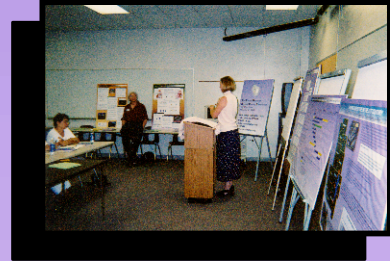


Purpose:

East Central has produced a State of the Region report for two reasons:

- To provide useful, accessible information to people in their communities, local government staff and officials, and interest groups.
- To collate baseline information that will enable us all to understand the basic make-up of the region and provide the foundation on which we will begin to plan for the future. This report along with input from the public participation process will enable East Central to take the next step in the regional planning process.



Policy Integration:

To achieve real progress, development of policies will need to be pursued in an integrated way:

- Land use and transportation planning will have to be taken forward together .
- There will need to be close links between housing and economic development strategies.
- Preserving rural character will require action on a variety of fronts.
- In addition, protecting water quality, avoiding excessive long-term costs for infrastructure provision and maintenance, minimizing the fragmentation of ecosystems and curbing damage to environmentally sensitive areas will require a solid understanding of the interaction between urban and rural policies.

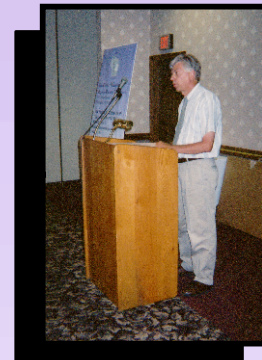
To move forward successfully will require close cooperation and partnership between the public, private, and voluntary sectors at the regional, county, and local levels.



Regional Issues:

There are two primary approaches that can be used to explore the impact that the trends identified in this report may have on the region.

- First, for the trends that are most likely, for example, an aging population, an increasing number of households and a reduction in household size, we need to ask how we respond.
- Second, for the areas of greatest conflict, we need to reexamine our basic assumptions about the issues and we need to ask are there better ways to address these challenges.
 - New construction, reconstruction and expansion of highways, at considerable cost, seem to be the dominant current trend in transportation. How do we rethink how we deal with transportation issues relating to sprawl? How do we promote compact, mixed land use patterns that provide access, reduce social exclusion, and create livable communities, while being cost effective?
 - The number of residential units in the region increased by 43% in the 20 years between 1980 and 2000, however the amount of residential land increased by 173%. How do we promote cost-effective redevelopment and development of land with existing or nearby community facilities while continuing to provide both housing choice and affordability?
 - Approximately 320,000 acres of farmland were lost during this 20 year time period, an area larger than the entire area of Winnebago County. How do we protect farmland and preserve rural character while ensuring the continued economic vitality of the region?
 - The region's natural resources, groundwater and surface water, lakes and open spaces are under increasing pressure from both the urbanization of our rural areas and greater than ever recreational use. How do we ensure the protection of our natural resources in the face of competing demands?



What's Next?

Developing a vision of our preferred future represents the next step in the regional planning process and will be the focus of Milestone Report #2: Issues, Opportunities and a Regional Vision. This report, which is scheduled for completion in October 2003, has three objectives:

- To develop a vision for the future of the region.
- Explore the impact of current and projected trends on the issues identified in the State of the Region report.
- Identify core goals to help achieve the future we envision for ourselves and the next generation.