

CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSION

East Central produced *Milestone Report #1: State of the Region (2003)* for two primary reasons.

- To provide useful, accessible information to people in their communities, local government staff and officials, and interest groups.
- To collate baseline information that enabled us all to understand the basic make-up of the region and provide the foundation on which to plan for the future. It explored current and future trends, and identified issues in nine broad categories: demographic and socioeconomic data, economic development, housing, transportation, community facilities, agricultural, natural, and cultural resources, and land use. It also examined examples of intergovernmental cooperation currently in place throughout the region.

Along with input from the public participation process the first report enabled East Central to take the next step in the regional planning process; to develop a vision of our preferred future. This has been the focus of the current report.

Milestone Report #2 has been produced for three main reasons

- To clarify our aspirations for how we want the region to look in the future, specifically: "What would we like to be preserved"? "What would we like to be changed"? and "What would we like to be created"?
- To explore the impact of current and projected trends on the region. This enabled us to identify the match and / or mismatch between our envisioned and probable future.
- To identify core goals to help us work toward the future we envision for ourselves and the next generation.

In beginning to think about the future, we have taken a broad, long term, proactive approach. Our goal has been to become aware of the broader context of our decisions and conscious of the forces of change, which more often than not, may originate outside the region. In addition, we attempted to embrace many uncertainties as we involved all stakeholders in clarifying a preferred future.

Two primary approaches were adopted.

- 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 asked how we respond.
- Second, for the areas of greatest conflict, we reexamined our basic assumptions about the issues and asked are there better ways to address these challenges.

The core component of Milestone Report #2 is a series of fact sheets on the issues identified, which will be addressed in the regional plan. Each fact sheet presents information on the key facts, explains why action is necessary, outlines current action and concludes by identifying core goals.

Regional Vision Statement:

"In 2030, east central Wisconsin is a thriving, inclusive community. The region supports strong economic development while providing an excellent quality of life for all. The norm is consistent, balanced, and cost effective land use decisions that promote the economic, social, and environmental well being of the region and all of its citizens. Communities are smart about addressing growth issues in both urban and rural areas. They are successful in achieving a reasonable balance between individual property rights and community interests and goals".

Action is required for a variety of reasons, including the following:

- The loss of manufacturing jobs along with the fact that many of the industries that are growing, pay lower wages has the potential to lower the standard of living for many middle-class families.
- A lack of affordable housing makes it difficult for companies to attract and retain workers.
- Sprawl development results in longer trips to work and shop, increases the vehicle miles traveled, and leads to more congestion, which wastes time and money.
- The economic viability of the region is dependent on a highly developed infrastructure of community and public facilities: such as water, utilities, telecommunications, and waste water disposal.
- There is a limited supply of prime farmland in the region and the farm economy is going through major changes.
- The region's water supply is at risk. Portions of the region are in an "Arsenic Advisory Area" and many of the regions' areas are considered to be highly susceptible to aquifer contamination.
- The loss of historic buildings and cultural resources detracts from the region's distinctive sense of place.
- Growth and development is impacting farm, forest and open lands and natural resources. It is generating land use conflicts and creating a demand for additional public facilities and services.

Core Goal:

- East Central's core goal is to promote communities that are better places in which to live. That is communities that are economically prosperous, have homes at an affordable price, respect the countryside, enjoy well designed and accessible living and working environments, and maintain a distinct sense of place and community.

What's Next?

The envisioned future and the core goals identified in *Milestone Report # 2*, will provide the starting point for the next report: *Milestone Report #3: Goals and Strategies for Action*.

Between May and January 2005, staff, working cooperatively with stakeholders, will develop strategies and policies for action to help move us toward the envisioned future.

There are, of course, many different ways to achieve the goals that have been established: there is no one right answer, there are many answers. The next stage of the planning process will require us to consider and discuss all the possibilities, affording each the same respect. The ultimate objective of *Milestone Report #3* will be to reach a well reasoned conclusion on how to achieve the goals; the preferred policies and strategies for action. To achieve real progress, development of policies will need to be pursued in an integrated way. There is a need for close cooperation and partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors at the regional, county and local levels. The policy choices that are made will have long-term impacts on residents' quality of life: socially, economically and environmentally. Consequently, it is crucial that we are all involved in the decision making process.

As we develop policies and strategies for action, we will also develop targets, or performance measures. This step is essential to enable us to evaluate the effectiveness of our policies over time. Plans are useless without targets, but they must be the right ones.