

CHAPTER 3: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF EAST CENTRAL WISCONSIN

Introduction

Visioning is a process in which the public discusses what type of future it wants to achieve. The vision statements presented in this report describe a year 2030 view of the sort of region we want to live in, in terms of our community, our environment, and our economy.

The regional vision and thematic vision statements presented in this chapter are based on the input received at a number of public participation events including regional focus groups, public information meetings, and technical advisory committees. The professional contribution of the East Central planning staff is also incorporated. A summary of the format and process of the public participation events, including representation is available on-line at www.eastcentralrpc.org. In addition, a full report on public participation in the planning process will be produced in due course.

The vision statements presented below reflect the issues the region is facing. These include the challenges of an aging population, the global economy and the loss of manufacturing jobs, the perceived lack of affordable housing, the environmental, social and economic consequences of sprawl, poor quality drinking water, and the desire to preserve rural character and maintain a distinct sense of place.

Core Concepts and Recurring Themes

Five core concepts run through the thematic vision statements that have been developed: choice, economy, equity, environment, and quality. These ideas reflect the beliefs, values, and priorities of people living and working in the region. They will therefore inform every aspect of the regional plan.

A number of key recurring themes have also emerged that are relevant across all areas of the plan. These include: provision of education/raising public awareness, merits of improved coordination and collaboration, importance of intergovernmental, interagency, and public/private sector cooperation, requirement for better communication, recognition of local responsibility, need for efficient and cost effective service provision, importance of communicating consequences, the value of best practice examples, necessity of exploring alternative and creative funding options, potential of regionalism, need for integrated, proactive, and sustainable planning that takes account of future generations, and the absolute necessity for implementation and monitoring.

An overall regional vision is presented below, along with the thematic vision statements for each substantive area of the plan.

A Regional Vision

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 norms are consistent, balanced, and cost effective land use decisions, which 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, and are successful in achieving a reasonable balance between individual property rights and community interests and goals.

The Economy

In 2030, the region has diversified employment opportunities including well paid knowledge based jobs. The regional economy benefits from advances in research and technology, and supports entrepreneurialism and local business ownership. The region conducts collaborative economic development efforts across jurisdictional boundaries of governments, educational institutions, and other economic development entities. The preservation of natural resource amenities supports tourism opportunities, assists in attracting an educated workforce and enhances the quality of place for residents in the region.

Housing

In 2030, a dynamic housing market fosters community and neighborhood cohesion. Varied types of quality housing are integrated with community facilities and various transportation alternatives. This housing market meets the needs of urban and rural households of all types, ages, income, cultures, and mobility status.

Transportation

In 2030, an efficient regional transportation network provides options for the mobility needs of all people, goods, and services.

Community Facilities

Efficient, cost effective community facilities are provided, which enhance the quality of life and ensure prosperity and economic stability for all. The emphasis in service provision is on cooperative planning, fostering collaboration, enhancing partnerships, sharing resources and transcending boundaries, as appropriate. In 2030, there are regional opportunities for the sustainable and safe management of solid waste and recycling, collection, processing and disposal activities. A well managed and planned public and private water supply provides for the region's citizens and industry. The region is served by a variety of well-functioning public and private wastewater treatment systems capable of accommodating future growth, while limiting the inherent conflicts caused by both urban and rural development patterns. Adequate, cost effective, environmentally friendly utility infrastructure exists to support industry and the general population. There are cost effective, efficient, quality, emergency and non-emergency services to ensure public safety. A variety of meaningful educational options and opportunities exist for all students. Children and adults in the region have access to educational, informational and recreational library services and materials. There is a collaborative regional forum to create and implement a strategic framework for the continuum of care for the health and well being of the residents of the region. Through cooperative efforts, park, open space, and recreational facilities and programs are protected and preserved and there are plans for new facilities. There are community facilities which meet the needs of various groups, including youth, elderly, and minorities, in a balanced and financially responsible manner.

Agricultural Resources

In 2030, agriculture is an important feature of the economy and lifestyle of the East Central region. Development pressures have been diverted away from farmland and ample, unfragmented, agricultural districts exist. Farming is practiced on the most productive soils. A variety of farm types and sizes are operating successfully. The region's farming community supplies both local and global markets. Citizens, local officials, and farmers are aware of and continuously address interrelated economic and land use issues. The viable and stable farm economy, in terms of farm income and prosperity, reflects concerted efforts by the private and public sectors to balance free market forces and government programs for land conservation.

Natural Resources

In 2030, the importance of natural resources, including their link to the regional economy and quality of life is recognized. Natural resource planning is sustainable, consistent and coordinated. The region's ecological resources are planned for and protected; there is a strong sense of ecological place. The Winnebago Pool Lakes and the Fox/Wolf River systems are recognized as the backbone of the region's ecological resources. Geologic resources significant from an aesthetic, scientific, cultural, historic, educational, or commercial extraction purpose have been identified and inventoried, and many are preserved and protected. The region proactively addresses public access, recreation, and trail facilities in order to meet the needs of its citizens; enhance the quality of life and environment; realize tax savings and other economic benefits; and maintain and improve the region's tourism economy. The region is comprised of well-defined urban and rural spaces which improve the individual's perception of 'sense of place', while communities within the region have maintained their individual character. Within the region, surface water resources are planned for in a comprehensive, watershed-based manner that embraces and encourages the use of 'green infrastructure' concepts. There is proactive protection of natural features that not only contribute to water quality, but also to the long term sustainability and economic benefit of the region. The region is served by a variety of well-functioning public and private wastewater treatment systems capable of accommodating future growth while limiting the inherent conflicts caused by both urban and rural development patterns.

Cultural Resources

In 2030, the region is recognized as a leader in the state, for preservation of its cultural resources, by providing public access to resource protection tools, and the political advocacy necessary to ensure protection for, and appreciation of, our diverse ethnic heritage.

Land Use

In 2030, efficient regional land use patterns foster healthy communities, individual community identity, and respect the natural environment.

Conclusion

Once an envisioned future was identified, we began to explore the impact of the trends identified in the *State of the Region Report (2003)*, and throughout the planning process to date. Specifically we identified the match or mismatch between the vision for the future and the likely future given current and anticipated trends. Through this process we have been able to move forward and determine the core goals that will enable us to achieve the envisioned future.

Chapters 4 through 11 of this report focus on this process for each of the substantive issues: economic development, housing, transportation, community facilities, agriculture, natural and cultural resources and land use.