

Town of Montello

Community Planning Report

Introduction

In October of 1999, Governor Tommy Thompson signed into law the new Comprehensive Planning and Smart Growth legislation. This legislation was the result of a collaborative effort of individuals working together to address the escalating concern about growth and development throughout Wisconsin. The significance of this legislation is that for the first time the state has provided a framework for planning which local governments can use in their individual communities. It even provides a clear deadline for communities to complete their comprehensive plans. By January 1, 2010, local government land use actions must be consistent with its adopted comprehensive plan.

This new law has prompted many communities throughout Wisconsin to learn about and prepare for comprehensive planning. Marquette County began to gear up for planning by providing information to and obtaining feedback from participating municipalities. Based on this feedback, a Land Use Planning Advisory Committee was formed with representation from 18 of 19 communities in the county. Towns, Villages, the City and the County began to share information and work together with the hopes that a cooperative effort could be maintained. Through the Land Use Planning Advisory Committee, communities have an opportunity to share information and provide input regarding preferred approaches to planning and level of readiness at a given time. As the Advisory Committee members began to look at the whole of comprehensive planning, it was decided that a County Steering Committee would be very beneficial to the process. This 5 member Steering Committee was appointed by the County Zoning Committee and is responsible for gathering information, researching alternatives, evaluating options and providing recommendations to the Advisory Committee for local review.

With the committee structures in place, committee members began to look at how they would approach the planning process including a critical component of getting resident input into the process. It is important that the hopes and concerns of the residents are identified and understood by the local plan commission members and the local government officials. It was decided that a community planning survey would be distributed to get feedback regarding a variety of planning related issues. A community planning survey distributed for the purpose of getting input from residents and property owners throughout Marquette County so that local government officials and plan commissions will better understand the land use planning related issues in the community and the preferences that surround those issues.

The survey was developed and reviewed by both the Advisory Committee and Steering Committee. Advisory Committee members shared the survey with their respective communities

to get feedback regarding survey content, distribution and cost. After many months of review, research and discussion, the final survey was approved. It was decided that a scannable survey would be utilized due to lower cost and shorter tabulation time required. NCS Pearson in Minnesota designed the survey. It was also decided to distribute a survey to every property owner in the county rather than just to a random sample. The committees felt this would be an excellent opportunity to make citizens aware of what is unfolding in the county with respect to planning.

Fifteen municipalities in Marquette County agreed to participate in the countywide survey. The cost of the survey was shared between the county and the participating municipalities. During the week of June 3, 2002, 9871 surveys were distributed to property owners within the 15 municipalities. By the return date of June 28, 2002, 3151 useable surveys had been returned and sent to the UW Madison Testing and Evaluation Center to be tabulated. This provided an overall response rate of 32%.

This report is based on the responses from only the Town of Montello. There were 1017 surveys sent to residents in the Town of Montello, and 369 were returned. The response rate is 36%.

Quality of Life

We first asked Town of Montello residents to rate various aspects of their community, including public services, environmental quality, and economic opportunities (Table 1). Town of Montello residents tend to rate the quality of the environment very high, with over 61% rating it good or very good. Similarly, they tend to rate educational opportunities fairly high. Conversely, they rate economic opportunities in their community as very low, with two-thirds (65.8%) rating it as poor or very poor. Residents also tend to rate access to goods and services as low, with about 39% considering it as poor or very poor.

Table 1. General Community Rating

	Average
Quality of Environment	3.73
Educational Opportunities	3.10
Recreational Opportunities	3.05
Access to Goods and Services	2.73
Economic Opportunities	2.16

(1=Very Poor; 5=Very Good)

For the most part, Town of Montello residents tend to rate the quality of their public facilities and services as very high (Table 2). The facilities/services receiving the lowest rating were adult education opportunities and availability of hospitals and medical services. About 40% of the residents considered these facilities or services as poor or very poor. Fire protection was rated relatively high by residents, with over 68% rating it good or very good.

Table 2. Rating of Public Facilities and Services

	Average
Fire Protection	3.85
Maintenance/Condition of Roads	3.60
Law Enforcement	3.55
School Facilities	3.53
Public Recreation Lands	3.52
Library	3.49
Emergency Medical Services	3.48
Garbage/Recycling	3.15
Adult Education Opportunities	2.72
Hospitals/medical Services Availability	2.71

(1=Very Poor; 5=Very Good)

Town of Montello residents tend to value a variety of aspects of their community (Table 3). We asked respondents to identify the three aspects of their community they value the most. The three qualities that were identified most often were “lakes/rivers/streams–wildlife/beautiful scenery,” “quiet and peaceful,” and “small town living.” Residents were much less likely to report that the low crime rate, friendliness, or appearance of their community were important aspects that they valued.

Table 3. Most Valued Aspects of Community

	Percent
Lakes/Rivers/Streams - Wildlife/Beautiful Scenery	70.2
Quiet and Peaceful	66.7
Small Town/Rural Living	66.7
Low Crime	31.2
Friendliness	24.9
Clean and Neat in Appearance	16.0
Other	2.7

What are the major problems or concerns facing Town of Montello residents? In Table 4, we report the top three problems or issues facing residents. Overwhelmingly, Town of Montello residents report that increases in taxes were the most important problem or concern facing them in their community. Almost two-thirds (63.4%) said that it was one of the top three concerns they have. About 44% of residents said that lack of job opportunities was their central concern. Hardly any of the respondents thought that an inadequate labor supply or lack of available housing were problems in their community.

Table 4. Problems or Concerns of Community

	Percent
Increase in Taxes	63.4
Lack of Job Opportunities	43.6
Lack of New Businesses	33.1
Low Wages	24.4
Lack of Activities for Youth	20.6
Increase in Land Prices	19.0
Vacant Buildings - Unattractive Business District	17.9
Unattractive Housing/Property Conditions	16.8
Uncontrolled Development/Urban Sprawl	12.7
Increasing Crime	9.8
Other	6.2
Inadequate Labor Supply	2.7
Lack of Available Housing	1.1

Housing Needs

A critical part of the comprehensive planning law is to identify housing needs in the community. We asked Town of Montello residents whether there was a need for various types of housing in their community (Table 5). Among the types of housing considered, residents were most likely to report that their community needed assisted living housing for the elderly. Residents were most likely to disagree with the proposition that their community needed more mobile home parks. About one-half (49%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the idea of building more mobile home parks. There also were a fairly large number of people (more than half) who disagreed with the idea that their community needed more high income housing. There seemed to be general perceived need for single family housing, low-to-moderate income housing, and multi-unit apartments.

Table 5. Housing Needs in Community

	Percent Agree/Strongly Agree
Assisted Living - Elderly	38.1
Low to Moderate Income Housing	31.6
Single Family Housing	27.8
Multi-Unit Apartments	20.4
Duplexes	17.7
High Income Housing	8.0
Mobile Home Parks	4.6

Business and Employment Development

As indicated above, Town of Montello residents tended to rate economic opportunities in their community as fairly poor. We asked respondents to identify what types of development they thought would be best for the Town of Montello (Table 6).

Table 6. Business & Employment Preferences for Development

	Percent Agree/Strongly Agree
Small Scale Industrial Development	68.8
Small Scale Retail Development	64.5
Moderate Scale Industrial Development	55.4
Tourism Development	53.3
Large Scale Retail Development	47.3
Small Scale Agricultural Development	41.4
Large Scale Industrial Development	31.0
Service Development	23.2
Moderate/Large Scale Agricultural Development	22.4

Overall, it appears that Town of Montello residents tend to prefer small- to medium-scale industrial and small-scale retail development in their community. Over two-thirds (68.8%) of the residents agree that the town should promote small-scale industrial development (less than 50 employees). More than one-half (55.4%) agreed that moderate-scale industrial development should be promoted. Similarly, almost two-thirds (64.5%) agreed that small-scale retail development should be encouraged. Town of Montello residents were most likely to disagree with the promoting large-scale industrial, service, and agricultural development.

Planning

We asked Town of Montello residents several general questions about planning and zoning. Approximately 20.8% of the respondents reported that they were aware of Wisconsin's new "Smart Growth" or Comprehensive Planning Law.

Most residents believe land use should be governed by zoning. Only about 21% disagreed with this statement, while 56% agreed (23% were neutral). There was, however, much more general support for planning in the community. Almost 87% agreed that it is important for residents to plan for the future of their community. Only 6% disagreed with this statement.

Municipalities can place restrictions on new development, such as zoning, historical preservation and design guidelines. We asked Town of Montello residents to indicate the level of restriction (low, moderate-to-low, moderate, moderate to-high, or high) for various types of restrictions (Table 7). By far, residents are most likely to support restrictions on where mobile homes can be located. Approximately 55% thought there should be a high level of restrictions on the location of mobile homes. Only about 7% reported that there should be a low level of restrictions on these activities. There also was a moderate level of support to restrict the location

of manufacturing plants and large-scale “commercial farms.” Residents are much less supportive of restrictions on housing location.

Table 7. Amount of Preferred Government Restriction on New Development

	Percent Moderate to High/High
Locations of Mobile Homes	72.2
Manufacturing Plant Location	64.3
Location of Large Scale “Commercial Farms”	57.7
Location of Campgrounds & RV Parks	54.6
Subdivision Development	51.1
Development of Forest Land	49.8
Development of Agricultural Land	44.7
Location of Retail Enterprises	44.4
Housing Location	25.6

There are other indications that residents are generally in favor of planning for the future. About 73% of the respondents reported that a building inspector should be in place to enforce building codes. Ninety percent of the Town of Montello residents thought their community should look at sharing services with surrounding communities if it would save money and make town management more efficient.

We asked respondents a general question about their vision of the county in the year 2020. The question asked what type of county they would like to see in the future: (1) preserve rural landscape with limited new development; (2) preserve rural landscape with moderate amounts of new development; and (3) unrestricted development in rural areas. The majority (57.1%) prefer the second option, while 33.4% chose the first option. Only 9.5% of the respondents picked the third option.

What types of issues do residents think the community needs to plan for in the future? We provided respondents with a list of issues and asked them to agree or disagree whether or not the community needs to plan for the issue (Table 8).

Table 8. Future Planning Issues for Community

	Percent Agree/Strongly Agree
Protecting Lakes/Rivers/Streams	93.0
Protecting Groundwater	92.9
Protecting Private Property Rights	90.7
Improving Quality of Life for Children/Grandchildren	86.3
Attracting Good Paying Jobs	82.1
Community Participation in Land Use Planning/Decision	78.0
Attractiveness of Community to Visitors	77.8
Protecting Woodlands	77.3
Protecting Wetlands	71.6
Protecting Agricultural Land	70.0
Preserving and Rehabilitating Old or Historic Sites/Buildings	57.2
Increasing Sport/Recreation Opportunities	55.5
Attracting New Home Construction	40.0

The three issues for which residents were most likely to agree that the community needs to carefully plan for were: (1) protecting lakes/rivers/streams; (2) protecting groundwater; and (3) protecting private property rights. The issues that residents seemed least concerned about were increasing recreation opportunities and attracting new home construction.

We also asked respondents to identify among these same issues, which were the most important (Table 9). Essentially the same issues were identified in these questions. However, 24.8% of respondents identified attracting good paying jobs as the most important issue.

Table 9. Most Important Future Planning Issues for Community

	% Most Important	% Second Most Important	% Third Most Important
Protecting Lakes/Rivers/Streams	20.1	21.1	12.5
Protecting Groundwater	16.8	19.7	6.8
Protecting Private Property Rights	10.4	10.7	14.2
Improving Quality of Life for Children/Grandchildren	14.1	7.7	11.8
Protecting Woodlands	3.0	5.0	12.5
Attracting Good Paying Jobs	24.8	8.7	10.1
Community Participation in Land Use Planning/Decision Making	4.4	5.4	7.4
Protecting Wetlands	2.0	7.0	6.1
Protecting Agricultural Land	1.7	4.0	3.7
Attractiveness of Community to Visitors	0.7	4.7	6.4
Preserving and Rehabilitating Old or Historic Sites/Buildings	0.3	1.7	3.4
Increasing Sport/Recreation Opportunities	1.3	3.7	3.0
Attracting New Home Construction	0.3	0.7	2.0

Public Participation

One of central elements of the new comprehensive planning law is public participation in the process. Approximately 41% of the residents indicated they would be willing to attend meetings to participate in planning activities for their community and learn about Comprehensive Planning and Smart Growth.

Given the interest in participating in upcoming meetings on Smart Growth, we asked respondents how they would prefer to be notified of future meetings, informational sessions, and planning activities. Respondents were most likely to prefer the Marquette County Tribune (53.1%) and the mail (44%) as sources of information on these meetings. Very few reported they would like to receive information from other sources, such as posted notices on Town Hall or church bulletins. Most (56.8%) residents would be willing to allocate the necessary tax dollars to support a notification system for meetings.

Summary and Conclusions

The results of this community planning survey suggest that Town of Montello residents are generally supportive of planning for the future. They are most concerned with preserving their natural resources (e.g., groundwater, lakes, streams, rivers), while promoting a modest level of economic development in the future. Residents are not, however, interested in promoting any type of development. Most residents prefer to promote small- and medium-scale industrial and retail development. Additional housing was not reported as an important concern among respondents. They were strongly supportive, however, of developing strong restrictions on the location of mobile homes in the community.

A small minority of residents in the Town of Montello were aware of the new Smart Growth legislation, but over 41% were interested in participating in meetings to learn about the law and/or to get involved in community planning activities.

Appendix A: Land Use Planning Advisory Committee Members/Community Contacts

Dean Alexander
Howard Zellmer
Tom Cotter
Jim Warzynski
Dawn Bachmann
Ken Borzick
Wally Cacic
Arlene Stahmer
Karen Wampler
Mike Jacobi
Betty
Bob Bonneville
Jan Banicki
Jim Kronschnabel
Fred Cartwright
Jerry Smart
Bill Harris
Hollis Elliott
Martha Ward

Marquette County Comprehensive Planning Steering Committee

David Casper
Fred Cartwright
Ron Wulf
Al Rosenthal
Bill Fredrick

Appendix B: Characteristics of Respondents

As part of the survey, we collected some information on the background of respondents. One of primary reasons for doing this was to examine how some of these background factors influence attitudes toward community planning. One factor that has been shown to be related to attitudes toward community planning is residency: seasonal or permanent resident. Thirty-six percent of the respondents were seasonal residents (residing in the county on less than a year-round basis) and 64% were permanent residents.

Among seasonal Town of Montello residents, most have been a seasonal resident for more than 10 years (Table 10). About fifty-nine percent report being a seasonal resident in Marquette county for more than 10 years; 19.5% have been a seasonal resident for less than five years; and 22% for five to 10 years. About one-half (47.3%) of the seasonal residents plan to make Marquette County their permanent place of residence someday.

Table 10. Length of Residency and Status

	% Seasonal	% Permanent
Less than 5 Years	19.5	16.9
5 to 10 Years	22.0	18.8
More than 10 Years	58.5	64.3

Permanent Town of Montello residents also are likely to have lived in Marquette County for a reasonably long period (Table 10). About sixty-four percent of permanent residents have lived in the county for more than 10 years, while only 16.9% have lived in the county less than five years. About 19% have lived there for five to 10 years. Most respondents tend to own a relatively small number of acres in Marquette County (Table 11). About 27% owned less than one acre and one-third (38.8%) owned more than one but less than five acres. Only 8.6% owned 80 acres or more in Marquette County. About one-half (54.4%) of the respondents were currently employed, while 40.7% were retired. This large number of retirees is evident in the age distribution as well (Table 12). About one-fourth (22.6%) were 55 to 64 years old, and 31.5% were 65 years old or older. Respondents are employed in a wide variety of industries. They were most likely to be self-employed.

Table 11. Permanent Resident Land Ownership

	Percent
Less than 1 Acre	26.8
1 to 4.99	38.8
5 to 9.99	6.7
10 to 39.99	12.9
40 to 79.99	6.2
80 Acres or Larger	8.6

Table 12. Age Distribution

	Percent
18 to 24 Years	0.3
25 to 34	6.1
35 to 44	14.2
45 to 54	25.3
55 to 64	22.6
65 Years and Older	31.5

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