

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Per Wis. Stats. Sec. 66.1001(2)(a), the Issues and Opportunities Element of a comprehensive plan shall contain: Background information on the local governmental unit and a statement of overall objectives, policies, goals and programs of the local governmental unit to guide the future development and redevelopment of the local governmental unit over a 20-year planning period. Background information shall include population, household and employment forecasts that the local governmental unit uses in developing its comprehensive plan, and demographic trends, age distribution, educational levels, income levels and employment characteristics that exist within the local governmental unit.

Issues

As part of the development of the county Smart Growth Plan, four county-wide visioning sessions were held between 2006 – 2007. The following general issues were identified by residents and property owners as top issues facing the county.

Sustainability

- We need to focus on sustaining and balancing the economy, environment, and social systems so that human needs and desires are balanced with the preservation of the natural environment.
- We are nearly completely reliant on non-renewable energy sources and lack the infrastructure to utilize renewable energy resources.
- We need to manage tourism in a sustainable manner, including developing tourism programs that focus on education and appreciation of the county's unique resources.

Natural Resources

- Future growth needs to be balanced with the preservation of natural resources. We need effective and efficient land management, such as concentrating/clustering growth, which would help retain open space and natural beauty.

Economic Development

- There is a lack of diversity in our economy. The county has few job opportunities with benefits and loses young people to better job opportunities elsewhere. That, combined

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with our lack of affordable housing options, will continue to keep young people from living and raising families here.

- The Northern Door economy especially is very dependent on tourism. The Southern Door economy offers somewhat more diverse economic activity but, such as in the case of agriculture, is also limited or threatened by various forces.
- The lack of modern Internet technology prevents local establishment of various business opportunities.

Agricultural Resources

- We are faced with decreasing agricultural diversity and fewer people making a living in agriculture.
- Fewer local and small family farms means less food security.

Community Character

- Growth may jeopardize our rural character, such as our open land, historic/old buildings, scenic vistas, and small-town flavor.

Community Facilities and Utilities

- We need more educational opportunities for people of all ages, particularly in the tourist off-season.
- We are faced with an aging population that will greatly increase the demand for senior support and health care services.
- Our trail system outside of our parks is very limited and will become increasingly difficult to develop as the cost of land increases.
- We have a good school system, but it is faced with declining enrollment.

Transportation

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- There are a lack of alternative transportation options both within and to-and-from the county.

Land Use

- New development is often not contiguous with existing development and encroaches on ecologically and aesthetically valuable open space.

Housing

- The county is increasingly becoming less accessible to people of all incomes and ages. We lack an adequate supply of housing options for people of all income levels, resulting in less economic, social, and cultural diversity.

Cultural/History

- We have a need for more year-round cultural and education activities.

Opportunities

As part of the development of the county Smart Growth Plan, four county-wide visioning sessions were held between 2006 – 2007. The following general issues were identified by residents and property owners as the top opportunities facing the county.

Sustainability

- We have many socially and environmentally conscientious residents who can promote more sustainable alternatives for the county's economy, environment, and social systems.
- We have unique resources that can be used to shape tourism programs focused on education and appreciation of the county's natural assets.
- We have the capacity to develop some renewable energy resources, which will make us less dependent on outside energy sources and help control costs.

Natural Resources

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- We still have a significant quantity of rural character remaining, including agriculture, orchards, scenery, and open space, which we can work to preserve.
- The county has exceptional water resources that we can and should work to protect for its continued usage by humans and wildlife, and for its scenic and recreation value. Our 250 miles of shoreline plus lakes, streams, and wetlands offer tourists and residents high-quality beaches, parks, fishing, and other recreation.
- We have abundant and diverse natural resources that will continue to provide habitat for a variety of wildlife if we protect what remains.
- We have a good base of protected lands to continue to add to through future land protection and acquisition efforts.
- The county is rich in non-metallic mineral resources, which can continue to provide necessary sand and gravel for municipal and construction uses if the extraction process is well-planned and orderly.

Economic Development

- We already have a relatively clean and beautiful environment, with a high quality of living, which can aid in attracting clean and green industries.
- The county's unique geology, including the Niagara Escarpment, is a current focal point for some tourism based activities and can be further promoted as part of an eco-tourism program.
- We have strong cultural assets, including the arts, music, theatre, history, and architecture, which can grow into year-round education and economic development activities.
- The county is an ideal retirement location that will continue to attract retirees. They will in turn require more services, providing potential business opportunities.

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- Internet technology can become more accessible to everyone if we support initiatives to develop high-speed internet technology options in the county.
- We can work towards keeping the next generation in the county by developing better job and housing opportunities.

Agricultural Resources

- We still have agriculture to preserve.
- We still have the opportunity to support local agriculture and, for the most part, smaller family farms.
- Programs/incentives could be established locally to make organic and naturally grown food more accessible to residents.

Community Character

- We still have a clean, safe, and tranquil living environment to preserve.
- If we work to retain them, we can continue to have small-town character and a sense of community with the advantage of big city amenities, convenience, and accessibility.

Community Facilities and Utilities

- If we maintain and improve our recreational assets, we can help maintain the long-term health of our residents and promote more recreation-based tourism.
- The existing snowmobile trail system still has the potential to be expanded and developed into a multi-use trail system.
- Our growing senior population could support more specialized health care for seniors.
- There is the potential to establish large medical institutions to serve as both economic development and tourism enhancement.

- Public/private partnership opportunities will arise as the need to provide increased and better support services for seniors grows.

Transportation

- We can improve transportation accessibility and options through greater community and government support for transportation initiatives.

Land Use

- We can still plan for development that will be dense and contiguous to existing development.

Housing

- We can establish public/private initiatives and programs that will increase the supply of affordable housing, helping keep and attract young people to the area.

Cultural/History

- We have a variety of cultural and historical resources that can be used, expanded, or improved upon to support eco-tourism programs and educational opportunities for both tourists and residents.