

Preserve, Prepare, Prosper:

A Comprehensive Guide for Smart Growth in the Town of Beloit

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Appendix A: Public Participation Plan



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Introduction – “The 3 P’s”

The engagement of a community’s citizens in its planning activities is critical to the effectiveness and applicability of the plan as it is put into action. Seldom is this truer than when a community prepares a Comprehensive Plan, commonly referred to in Wisconsin as a “Smart Growth” Plan. As the Comprehensive Plan establishes goals, policies, programs, and recommendations related to many components (for example: housing, roads, land use) of a community’s future, it is vital that a broad range of community members are closely involved in shaping the planning process from beginning to end. With this in mind, the Town of Beloit recognizes the importance of confirming the public’s primary role in the Town’s Comprehensive Planning Process, and has prepared this *Public Participation Plan* (hereafter, “*Plan*”) to illustrate the purpose, people, and process by which public participation will be woven into the planning process.

Purpose

This *Plan* is written to serve as the guidebook for public involvement for the Town of Beloit’s Town Board, Plan Commission, and any other boards or committees designated by the Town Board with the development of the community’s Comprehensive Plan. The participation framework within this *Plan* should be adhered to by the Town and its boards and committees throughout the planning process. While the Town may find that participation efforts exceeding those outlined are necessary as the Comprehensive Plan is developed, this *Public Participation Plan* and the methods for participation contained within it should be understood as the minimum level of public involvement the Town will employ in the planning process.

While the *Public Participation Plan* is required under State Statute, the Town has prepared this *Plan* to be something more, in order to present its vision for public participation. This vision is for all members of the community to be provided with ample opportunity to identify critical community issues, share ideas, engage in meaningful public discourse, and to define those values and concerns that are integral to being a citizen of the Town of Beloit. The Town intends for this *Plan* to facilitate consensus for community organization and development by using a broad range of community involvement techniques and connecting with local residents, public officials, property owners, real estate professionals, the development community, local and regional institutions and governmental entities, and financial and business leaders.

People

One of the most effective ways to assure that a plan is of better quality, is used more often, and has a better chance of being implemented is by involving a diverse range of stakeholders in the process. The Town of Beloit is committed to accenting opportunities for participation, especially for the following community stakeholders:

- *General Public* – all meetings related to the Town’s Comprehensive Plan will be open to all members of the public, and will be structured so as to allow the public to provide input, insight, questions, and feedback. Prior notice will be provided for all meetings via a variety of methods, explained in more detail in the next section.
- *Town of Beloit Plan Commission* – By Statute, the Plan Commission is authorized to prepare and recommend adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. Accordingly, the Plan Commission will serve as the oversight committee throughout the

development of the Comprehensive Plan and will host all meetings related to the plan.

- *RH Batterman & Co., Inc* – RH Batterman is a private consulting firm that the Town of Beloit has partnered with to facilitate and assist in completing the Comprehensive Plan. This consulting firm will provide technical expertise in comprehensive planning as well as identify key stakeholders for the Town to involve in the planning process.
- *Neighboring Jurisdictions* – The City of Beloit, The City of Janesville, Rock County, and the Towns of Newark, Turtle, Rock, and Rockton (IL) will all be notified when drafts of the Comprehensive Plan and its elements are completed. To the extent practicable, the Town of Beloit's Comprehensive Planning process will consider and coordinate with other local and regional plans.

Each of these groups will play a unique and vital role in the completion of the Town of Beloit's Comprehensive Plan. In addition to these groups, it may be appropriate to reach out to "Issue-Specific" stakeholders as particular elements of the Comprehensive Plan are considered (for example, involving local realtors in discussions of the Housing Element). The Town recognizes this fact, and will make efforts to involve such groups, where appropriate.

Process

Wisconsin State Statutes 66.1001(4)(a) require that, before a community's Comprehensive Plan can take effect, the community must "adopt written procedures that are designed to foster public participation... (that) shall provide for wide distribution of proposed, alternative, or amended elements of a comprehensive plan and shall provide an opportunity for written comments to be submitted by members of the public to the governing body and for the governing body to respond to such written comments." In order to satisfy this requirement, the Town of Beloit is using a variety of techniques to gather and solicit public input for the Comprehensive Plan. These techniques are discussed in greater detail below.

Submission of Written Comments

Throughout the planning process, community members may submit written comments, questions, suggestions, or concerns related to the Comprehensive Plan by attending a meeting of the Plan Commission, a Comprehensive Plan meeting, or via e-mail or U.S. mail. At all meetings of the Plan Commission, including meetings specific to the Comprehensive Plan, a "comment box" will be available for submission of any written comments. Those wishing to submit comments via e-mail can direct them to rgarcia@rhbatterman.com or rmuseus.town.beloit@tds.net, and those wishing to send them via U.S. mail can mail them to the Beloit Town Hall Attn: Town Administrator, 2871 S. Afton Road, Beloit WI, 53511.

Community Survey

Completed in 2001, a community-wide survey was conducted with the assistance of Mid-America Planning Services. The survey was designed with questions that would be relevant to the update of the Town's Comprehensive Plan, and will be used as a primer for discussion at public input meetings as well as it will inform the Comprehensive Plan's issues identification component.

Comprehensive Planning Seminar

The Town organized a Local Government Comprehensive Planning Seminar in July 2004, identifying and inviting key community stakeholders to the Beloit Inn for a series of presentations on the State's Comprehensive Planning program. The seminar served as an introduction to the Town's Comprehensive Planning efforts and provided participants with the opportunity to gain an awareness of the planning process and their role in it.

Comprehensive Plan Element Focus Groups

In 2004 and 2005, the Town conducted focus group sessions for each of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan (further sessions are slated for 2008 for the Parks and Recreation Element and to "wrap up" the other 9 elements). These sessions were open to the public, and several were facilitated or attended by individuals with expertise in specific fields (for example, the Rock County Economic Development Director for the Economic Development element focus group). The input gathered at these sessions will prove critical in identifying key planning challenges and opportunities and in informing the goals, objectives, policies, and programs that are found in the Comprehensive Plan.

Community Workshops

Between June 2008 and February 2009, the Town will conduct at least four workshops to discuss the vision, goals, objectives, and recommendations that will form the backbone of the Comprehensive Plan. These workshops will draw from the ideas generated from the focus groups, survey, Comprehensive Planning law, and the Town's past planning efforts to construct the new Comprehensive Plan. At these workshops, the consultant will prepare presentations clearly illustrating the emergent themes, directions, and scope of the Comprehensive Plan as it progresses, and community members will discuss and develop the Plan's essential content and advise to the general structure of the final Comprehensive Plan.

Town Website

The Town's website (www.townofbeloit.org) will include a page dedicated to the Town's Comprehensive Plan. At a minimum, this page will include links that will direct the user to:

- Press Releases and Public Notices
- Documents (Drafts-in-progress or final)
- Consultant presentation materials
- A timetable/progress report on Plan progress
- A project e-mail link to allow the user to submit questions, comments, or suggestions related to the comprehensive plan

Media and Press Releases

In addition to required notices being published in the newspaper (Beloit Daily News), the media will play an active role in the public awareness process. This may occur in the form of interviews with the Town Administrator or other member of the planning team on the status of the project. The media will be notified of all meetings held throughout the process.

Plan Commission Updates

As an item on its regular monthly agenda, the Town's Plan Commission will include an update on the status of the Comprehensive Plan. This update will essentially function as a status report on the progress of the Plan and a notice of any scheduled Comprehensive Plan meetings. As a part of this agenda item, any members of the public may inquire, in writing or in person, about issues related to the Comprehensive Plan, with the expectation that if the question can not be answered to their satisfaction immediately, it will be at or before the next Comprehensive Plan meeting or Plan Commission meeting.

Public Hearing

The final draft of the Comprehensive Plan will be presented at a public hearing, held by the Plan Commission, for approval. This hearing, as required by State Statute, must be preceded by a Class 1 notice that is published at least 30 days before the hearing is held. The public hearing will be open to the public, and written and oral testimony will be taken. Minutes will be kept and filed with the Town Clerk's office.

In accordance with State Statutes, the Class 1 notice will be published at least 30 days prior to the public hearing, and will include the following information:

- The date, time, and place of the hearing;
- A summary, which may include a map, of the proposed Comprehensive Plan or amendment to the plan;
- The name of an individual employed or associated with the Town who may provide additional information regarding the proposed ordinance, and;
- Information relating to where and when the proposed Comprehensive Plan or amendment to such plan may be inspected before the hearing, and how a copy of the Plan or amendment may be obtained.

Additionally, at least 30 days before the public hearing to adopt the Comprehensive Plan is held, the Town will provide written notice to all of the following:

- A person who has obtained, or made application for, a permit that is described under s. 295.12 (3)(d);
- A person who has registered a marketable nonmetallic mineral deposit under s. 295.20;
- Any other property owner or leaseholder who has an interest in property pursuant to which the person may extract nonmetallic mineral resources, if the property owner or leaseholder requests in writing that the Town provide the property owner or leaseholder notice of the public hearing;
- Any and all persons who have submitted a written request to receive notice of any proposed ordinance that potentially affects the allowable use of their property.

Plan Adoption

As discussed above, the Plan Commission will hold a public hearing to discuss the ordinance adopting the Comprehensive Plan. Once the Comprehensive Plan meets their approval, they will adopt a resolution recommending final approval by the Town Board. The Plan is not official until the Town Board enacts an ordinance by a majority vote that adopts the plan.

Copies of the proposed plan will be made available for viewing at the Beloit Public Library, the Beloit Town Hall, and on the Town website at the time the public hearing is scheduled. Any duplication costs will be incurred by the party requesting duplication.

After notice of the public hearing has been published, written comments may continue to be submitted to the Town Administrator via mail or the e-mail addresses provided above. Written comments will be accepted up to one week before the public hearing and will be addressed at the public hearing.

Any proposed revisions to the Comprehensive Plan after it has been presented to the Plan Commission for public hearing and prior to the plan and ordinance adoption by the Town Board will be noted in the minutes and acknowledged before the Town Board takes final action.

Once adopted, a copy of the final Comprehensive Plan will be sent to the Clerk of every local governmental unit that is adjacent to the Town of Beloit, the Wisconsin Land Council, the Wisconsin Department of Administration, and the Beloit Public Library. Any future revisions to the adopted comprehensive plan require a similar process (a Class 1 notice 30 days prior to a public hearing, Plan Commission resolution and Town Board ordinance adoption) in order to take effect.