

Jefferson County – Comprehensive Plan and Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Plan
Regional Meetings #1-4 – Meeting Summaries
June – July 2019



Jefferson County staff and the consultant team conducted four Regional Meetings to present initial findings and share data collection efforts for the Comprehensive Plan and Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Plan. Staff hosted four events throughout the County between the hours of 6-8 pm which allowed residents and attendees a chance to understand the project goals and provide an opportunity to provide feedback regarding the Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan Update. The meeting dates, locations, and number of attendees are listed below:

- Regional Meeting #1, Monday, June 24th at the Bank of Lake Mills Community Room in the City of Watertown. There were 13 attendees who signed in.
- Regional Meeting #2, Wednesday, June 26th at Palmyra Eagle High School, Village of Palmyra. There were 12 attendees who signed in.
- Regional Meeting #3, Wednesday, July 10th at the Dwight Foster Memorial Library, City of Fort Atkinson. There were 23 attendees who signed in.
- Regional Meeting #4, Thursday, July 11th at the Lake Mills Municipal Building, City of Lake Mills. There were 38 attendees who signed in.

The agenda at the Regional Meetings covered:

- Purpose, reason for updating, and overall goals of the Comprehensive Plan and Agricultural Perseveration and Land Use Plan
- Planning process overview
- Plan elements and chapters of the plans
- Existing conditions information, including demographics, population projections, and socio-economic indicators
- Engagement exercises and five exhibit board on display for attendees

Plan Purpose, Process & Elements

The regional engagement meetings began with introductions and a power point presentation by SRF staff. SRF staff explained the basics of what a comprehensive plan is and highlighted the importance of community involvement in developing the Comprehensive Plan and Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Plan for Jefferson County. The presentation outlined past and current planning efforts, explaining Wisconsin State Statutes requirements that the plans must:

- Be updated every ten years
- Create at least a twenty-year vision for future planning and community decisions
- address at least nine elements (shown in graphic below)

Demographic and Socio-Economic Data

Socio-economic data slides including historic population, population change, population density, population age-cohorts, senior and youth population, median household income, poverty status, employment density, employment characteristics, housing trends, and 2040 projections including number of households and employment were presented. Attendees were encouraged to ask questions during the presentation on the data trends. Some attendees were surprised to see the population projections for 2040, but they are partially conditional on the outcomes of this plan.

Engagement Exercises

Following the introduction of the planning process and the demographic data, all four regional meetings broke into groups of 4-8 attendees for engagement exercises. At all four meetings, the initial exercise asked attendees to list the strengths and challenges in the county. Based on the discussion and responses in the first exercise, a second exercise focused on one of the nine elements of the plan. Following this 45-minute discussion, responses for each table were reported out to all attendees.

Strengths and Challenges Exercise

Meeting attendees were prompted to work in groups of 4-8 individuals and discuss various topics within the County. Each group was given one large notepad and attendees were asked to record strengths and opportunities/challenges facing the County over the next twenty years. The strengths focused on why attendees enjoyed living in the county, while the challenges included nuisances the county could address and opportunities for improvement.

Engagement Exercises – Provide your input!

Strengths

- What is going well?
- What elements can we build upon?
- What would you like to see more of?

Opportunities/Challenges

- What are areas of improvement?
- What could be changed to improve the future of Jefferson County?



The top responses for strengths and opportunities/challenges are shown in the table below, indicating the number of tables mentioning each attribute at all four meetings combined. Attendees enjoy the recreational trails and outdoor activities in the county, the beauty of the natural and agricultural lands, and access to good schools. However, housing is a concern for many. This includes the lack of affordable housing and downtown/infill development, as well as a concern of too many rural areas being converted into subdivisions. Attendees also raised economic concerns on good paying jobs and access to high speed internet.

Strengths	Opportunities/Challenges
Recreational Trails and Outdoor Activities – 13	Housing Shortage/Too Expensive – 5
Natural Beauty – Agricultural Lands – 8	Lack of downtown development/economic development - 3
Good Schools – 7	Recreation – 3
Proximity to Large Cities – 4	Broadband – 3
Strong Sense of Community – 4	Loss of Good Paying Jobs – 3
Access to Good Healthcare – 4	Fire Department/Emergency Response Funding – 3
Rural Character – 4	Town Roads (Bad) -3
Efficient Road Ways and Transportation – 3	Expensive Farm Land/Decreasing Farm Land – 3
Zoning Protection of Greenery/Natural Areas - 3	Lack of collaboration of Government – 3
Protection of clean water and air – 2	Use of Rivers (Increase Development) – 2
Sense of Safety – 2	Septic Services – 2
Small Town Identity – 2	Public transportation across county – 2
Park and Rec Department – 2	Bad Roads – 2
Proximity to Retail/Jobs and Economic Strength– 2	Lack of farmland development - 2
Recreational Businesses	Building stock opportunities for reuse
Low Taxes	Mix of agriculture and urban development
Limited Zoning and Land Preservation	Cell service
Growth form Community Out	Renewable Energy
Historic Preservation	Lack of Young People
Access to Nice Lakes	Financing
Local Government Cooperation	Zoning – Build Tax Base
County Fair	Community Health
Lake Mills is Nice	Opening rural areas for development (Bad)
Libraries	Too much commercial development
Family Centered Community	Threat of Flood Plain

Plan Element Exercises

Depending on the prevailing conversation topics in the previous discussion, a second engagement exercise focused on one of the nine elements of the plan. In Watertown, the discussion focused on Transportation, while in Palmyra it covered Transportation and Land Use. The discussions in Fort Atkinson and Lake Mills focused on Transportation, Housing and Land Use but covered all nine elements more broadly, such as economic development and community facilities.

Transportation

Attendees were asked to consider the following questions: Are Roadways in Good Condition? Are there Safety Issues? Is there Concern Regarding Maintenance or Snow Removal Issues? Are there Needed Connections? Attendees were encouraged to add stickers to a map of the county’s road and trail system to note specific locations for future improvements. General transportation themes included:

Transit Connections – Access to Health Care, Shopping	Snowmobile Trails	River connections and crossings/ Closures due to Flooding	ATVs on Roads
State of Good Repair (or lack thereof)	Roundabouts (good and bad)	Lack of Speed Enforcement	Bicycle Safety
Mobility Management	Taxi Access	Interstate Growth Areas	Bike Trail Expansion

Housing

To facilitate input, attendees were asked to consider the following questions: What changes are needed to create a housing stock that meets the needs of Jefferson County Residents? Where should the County spend its time and resources? What types of housing are needed for future residents? And, what is the greatest need for the future housing stock? Attendees could fill out a worksheet to indicate what the county should prioritize. Attendees preferred to see the county support senior housing development and affordable housing development. General housing themes discussed during the meetings included:

Workforce Housing	Rural Subdivisions (good and bad)	Affordable Housing	Infill Development
Empty farmsteads	Restricting Lot Splitting	Preserve Sense of Community	Need for Senior Housing
Allowing Accessory Dwelling Units and Duplexes	Opportunities for Rental Housing	Need for Multi-generational Housing	

Land Use

Attendees offered their views on the following topics related to Land Use: Where are Areas to be Protected? What are Areas of Change? What Areas Present Opportunity? And, What Areas Should be Preserved or Used for Enhancement? The current zoning map, land use map, and farmland preservation map provided reference points for attendees. General themes during the meetings included:

Farmland preservation (good and bad; preserve best only)	Limit CAFO impact	Driveway lengths	Utility corridors
Lot splitting	Land trusts		

The photos below illustrate the format of the successful public engagement events in Jefferson County (Top Left: Watertown – June 25th, Lower Left: Palmyra – June 26th, Top Right: Fort Atkinson – July 10th and Lower Right: Lake Mills – July 11th):



Postcards

Beyond in-person activities, postcards with project information including the project website and contact information were distributed. The post card provided general information about the Comprehensive Plan Update, with a list of the plan's discussion topics. Interested parties were invited to provide additional thoughts/comments to the project team over the next 30 days for consideration in the plan.



Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan & Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Plan

Jefferson County is embarking on a process to update the county's Comprehensive Plan to guide future development and policy level decisions. The plan will set a vision, goals and policies, that can be used to inform decisions about what county leaders should support, encourage and enhance. A complementary Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Plan will be developed as well. Your input will help shape the plan's vision, ultimately helping to shape a vibrant future for the county.



YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED!

The Comprehensive Plan is built from community input. Public meetings will be held in June and July to gain input from residents about the desired future of Jefferson County. Each meeting will include a formal presentation at 6:00 pm, followed by a series of activities.

A survey is also available to provide input, visit the following link to inform the future of Jefferson County!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/jeffersoncounty2040>

This long-range planning process is guided by the input received from residents and stakeholders, and we look forward to hearing from you. Please pass the word along to your friends and neighbors!