

# County launches public effort to grow smarter

By Bill Novak

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## Big input meetings set this week at Alliant Center

Planners, political leaders and the public will come together Wednesday and Thursday night to start the long process of guiding Dane County's land use, housing and transportation direction for the next half-century.

The Dane County Comprehensive Planning Steering Committee is hosting kickoff events starting at 7 p.m. in the Exhibition Hall at the Alliant Energy Center. The agenda and events will be the same both nights.

The planning effort will bring people from opposite ends of the spectrum together so all sides can be heard.

Developers will sit next to environmentalists; liberals and conservatives will be expected to work side by side. Far-fetched? It's the only way a comprehensive plan could ever hope to

meet with success, said County Board Supervisor Lyman Anderson, co-chair of the steering committee.

"A lot of people, including myself, look with suspicion at the term planning," Anderson said, "because planning can sometimes become regulations.

"It's important for people to realize this is planning from the bottom up. People need to participate in this. If people don't get involved, someone will make these plans, and by then they will be in ordinance form."

Supervisor Brett Hulseley, also co-chairing the steering committee, said the kickoff sessions Wednesday and Thursday will give every citizen in Dane County a chance to make his or her voice heard on the direction the county

will go for decades to come.

"What do we want Dane County to look like in 50 years?" Hulseley said. "Each planning option has choices and trade-offs."

The state is requiring every municipality in Wisconsin to file comprehensive plans by 2010 under the Smart Growth initiative. Fourteen Dane County municipalities grouped together to get funding for their planning processes, but the steering committee's goal isn't just for those 14 communities but for all 61 municipalities within the county.

Working groups will tackle three main areas: natural resources, agriculture and open space; housing and economic development; and transportation, utilities and community

facilities.

The sub-elements include making recommendations on how to conserve farmland; locations for residential, commercial and industrial land use; where roads, transit service lines, railroads and airports should go; and how to supply sufficient affordable housing for all incomes, ages and special needs.

Steering committee members besides Anderson and Hulseley include County Board Supervisors Vern Wendt, Eileen Bruskewitz, Chuck Erickson and Karen Cornwell; builder and developer representative David Simon; Dane County Towns Association President Jerry Derr; Madison mayoral representative Judy Olson; agriculture representative Jerry Bradley; environmentalist Dave Cieslewicz from 1,000 Friends of

Wisconsin; and village and city representative Bill Clausius from Sun Prairie.

One of many ideas the committee will kick around at the kickoff and beyond is the transfer of development rights, a concept that allows landowners (usually farmers) to sell their rights to develop their own land to developers who could then plan cluster communities and neighborhoods literally anywhere in the county.

Instead of having one house on every 35 acres of land out in the country, a farmer could sell the right to do traditional "splits" to a developer who might want to put together a neighborhood of 50 homes, or a high-rise condo developer in downtown Madison who wants to add another floor or two.

"Many developers talk about cluster development," Hulseley said. "This would allow for more efficient development."