

3

Issue Identification



Wadena

Comprehensive Plan & Transportation Plan

3.1 OVERVIEW

Public Involvement is a key component in the development process of a comprehensive plan. Public outreach efforts assist in the identification of issues, development of goals, and the continued success of the plan.

This chapter will review the public involvement efforts completed during the update of the Wadena Comprehensive Plan.

This section of the plan addresses the following elements:

- Public Involvement
- Issue Identification

3.2 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

It is important to involve as many sectors of the public as possible throughout the planning process. Five techniques were used through the updating of Wadena's Comprehensive Plan including a study review committee, focus group meetings, Planning Commission review, public involvement/open house meetings, and a community survey.

STUDY REVIEW COMMITTEE

A Study Review Committee (SRC) was established early in the planning process, and was comprised of city officials, city staff, MnDOT staff, and community leaders. The SRC generally met on a monthly basis to discuss various aspects of the plan throughout the process. Recommendations were made by the SRC pertaining to the preferred land use plan alternative, goals and objectives, and the draft Comprehensive Plan.

EARLY PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT MEETING

An early public involvement meeting was held to gather input and information from the general public. During this meeting, a presentation was made providing general information about the Comprehensive Plan and Transportation Plan process. Following the planning process overview, participants were asked to participate in an Electronic Facilitation Questionnaire and Visual Preference Survey. The results from this process are shown in Appendix A.

FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

Input was specifically sought from business representatives, the school district, social service agencies, and city leaders as part of focus group meetings held early in the process.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Following the results of the Electronic Facilitation Questionnaire, the SRC determined that more public input regarding the survey questions should be sought. An updated survey on Survey Monkey, an online survey website, was generated, and contained the original survey taken at the public meeting and two additional questions. Notification of the survey was sent to all residential property owners within the City of Wadena. The two additional survey questions were also provided in the notification, and those choosing not to participate online could send in or drop off their answers to these questions. In total, 13 online responses and 81 paper responses were received. The outcome of this additional survey can be found in Appendix A.

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETINGS

The Wadena Planning Commission reviewed the future land use plan alternatives at a special work session and during a regularly scheduled meeting early in the process. At the work session, alternatives were reviewed, and at the regular meeting the draft preferred land use plan was reviewed and fine-tuned.

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

A public open house was held to gather input regarding comprehensive plan strategies and the preferred land use plan alternative. Transportation plan elements were also on display at the open house. A brief presentation was made, followed by time to review display materials and answer questions.

PLAN ADOPTION

Public Open House and Planning Commission Public Hearing

The Comprehensive Plan and Transportation Plan were presented to the residents of Wadena at a public open house held on January 29, 2013. Copies of both plans were available for review, along with displays of key elements. Following the open house, a presentation of the Comprehensive and Transportation Plans was given during the Planning Commission public hearing. This presentation gave an overview of both documents for the commission and public in attendance. Comments and questions were heard from Planning Commission and Wadena residents. Following the comment period, a motion

was made to recommend approval of the Comprehensive and Transportation Plans to the City Council. The motion was carried unanimously.

Wadena City Council Public Hearing

To be added following adoption.

3.3 ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

The early public involvement efforts provided a wealth of information upon which the comprehensive plan could be built. Community members who participated in the survey were willing to highlight positive and negative aspects of their community, and provide insight into a future vision of Wadena. Highlights from the input received through all public involvement efforts are combined below.

COMMENTS RECEIVED

Economy, Business and Services

- Additional businesses are needed in Wadena.
- Bring additional industry to the community.

Transportation

- Better roadway connectivity throughout.
- Improvements to Highway 10 through town.

Recreation

- Sidewalk and bike trail improvements need to be made.
- There is a need for additional park facilities that don't focus on sports equipment.

Public Utilities

- There are utilities that need upgrades.
- Streets need better maintenance.
- Increased focus on maintenance of city facilities and work completed.

Schools and Education

- Education for Wadena's youth is crucial.
- Maintain a skilled workforce in the region.

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Community Aesthetics

The majority of respondents agreed that the gateways to Wadena and development along Highway 10 do not provide a positive image of the city. There was strong support for city and county regulations to improve the appearance of development along the gateways to Wadena.

Jobs and Employment

Over half of the responses strongly disagreed that there are enough jobs available in the community to attract and retain young adults graduating from high school and post-secondary education in Wadena. However, there was disagreement on whether there are enough skilled and qualified workers to meet the needs of Wadena's business, healthcare, and educational institutions.

While 40 percent of the responses stated they strongly disagree that it is easy to find full-time employment, the same percentage agreed that it was easy to attain part-time employment in Wadena.

A slight majority of participants indicated disagreement that downtown Wadena meets at least 50 percent of their need for goods and services. However, responses did not show a strong agreement or disagreement towards the City of Wadena as a whole meeting 90 percent or more of the needs for goods and services.

Participants indicated a strong desire for additional jobs within Wadena. When asked, "Wadena is a place that needs more:", more than 75 percent of responses were jobs, over the other choices of single-family homes, affordable housing, commercial and retail, or no more growth.

Land Use

It is important to preserve the rural, agricultural environment surrounding Wadena according to a majority of the respondents.

Transportation

There was strong agreement that improving the safety of the transition from four lanes to two lanes is very important on Highway 10. Nearly half of the respondents agreed that the biggest concern while traveling on Highway 10 is the section of highway through town. Participants indicated a high level of agreement in regards to the interaction between bicycles and pedestrians with vehicular traffic around the new school.

Most respondents shared a sense of agreement that delay is frequently experienced when trying to cross the railroad tracks on Highway 10. However, a smaller percentage responded that planning for a future railroad grade separation is important or very important.

Housing

A slight majority of respondents agreed with a statement that Wadena has an adequate housing supply. A greater majority agreed that the older homes within the community are in good condition overall.

Parks and Recreation

Respondents displayed a generally neutral feeling towards increasing the priority of construction and maintenance of sidewalks and bike trails within the City of Wadena. A majority of respondents responded negatively when asked if there are destinations within the community that they would like to walk or bike to, but indicated they do not feel safe doing so. Most people agreed that there is a need to improve bicycle and pedestrian access to Black's Grove Park.