



Rusk County Comprehensive Plan Update Kickoff Meeting

Monday December 8, 2025, 10:00 am - 11:30 am

Rusk County Law Enforcement Center Board Room

311 Miner Ave E, Ladysmith, Wisconsin 54848

Zoom Option: Meeting ID: 841 9538 9025 Password: 825804

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84195389025?pwd=SRn0niccrA6TLtaP59Uj7RCp0RvFHH.1>

NWRPC Agenda Items

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Comprehensive Planning Process Overview and Scope of Work
3. Roles and Responsibilities (Committee and NWRPC)
4. Public Participation Plan (Adopted by the Rusk County Board in November of 2025)
5. Survey Option Details
6. Review Current Planning Issues
7. Scheduling Preference for next meeting
8. Adjourn

Comprehensive Planning Law

The Comprehensive Planning Law was enacted in 1999 (see section [66.1001](#), Wis. Stats.). Sometimes referred to as the “smart growth law,” the Comprehensive Planning Law does not mandate how a community should grow, rather it leaves such decisions up to local communities.

Comprehensive Planning Law Features

▶ **Defines a comprehensive plan as containing at least nine elements:**

- Issues and Opportunities
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources
- Economic Development
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Land Use
- Implementation

▶ **Consistency requirement** – Beginning on January 1, 2010, if a local governmental unit enacts or amends an official mapping, land division, or zoning ordinance, the enactment or amendment ordinance must be consistent with that community’s comprehensive plan.

▶ **Plan update** – Comprehensive plans must be updated no less than once every 10 years. However, the law does not define update. A thorough update of background information and a public participatory process to evaluate plan vision, goals, objectives, policies, and programs is recommended. At a minimum, the planning process must follow the same process with a public hearing, resolution, and ordinance outlined in s.66.1001(4) to adopt the plan update as for the original plan.

▶ **Public involvement** - the Comprehensive Planning Law requires public participation at every stage of the comprehensive planning process, including:

- Adopting a public participation plan to provide a diverse range of opportunities for the public to help shape the community’s comprehensive plan.
- Holding at least one public hearing prior to adopting the comprehensive plan, announced by a Class 1 notice.
- Providing an opportunity to comment on the draft comprehensive plan.

Last updated May 15, 2019

Benefits of Comprehensive Planning

Understands the past and present – a plan collects useful information about the community, such as historical trends, present conditions, and (by studying trends) where it is headed.

Lays out a roadmap to the future – a plan puts down on paper a community's goals, values, and aspirations – its vision for the future – and the steps needed to achieve these things.

Guides land use regulations – provides a rational basis for land use regulations and makes land use decisions more predictable.

Is proactive rather than reactive – a plan helps communities to identify and resolve issues early on, before they become conflicts.

Coordinates community activity – a comprehensive plan should take into account all of a community's policies, programs, departments, initiatives, services, plans, regulations, responsibilities, and systems.

Saves money \$\$\$ – a plan identifies functions within a jurisdiction or between jurisdictions that conflict, are duplicated, or could be strengthened through coordination. For example, a town and a school district could jointly own and maintain a park and playground.

Preserves local control – the Comprehensive Planning Law promotes a bottom-up, rather than a top-down approach. The state does not adopt or certify a local comprehensive plan. Instead, a plan must be adopted by a community's governing body.

Preserves local autonomy - the Comprehensive Planning Law does not alter the legal relationship between jurisdictions. Local governments continue to have the same powers and authority over land use that they had before the law was passed.

Promotes property rights – the Comprehensive Planning Law makes planning more transparent and open to the public, including landowners, than prior to the law.

Promotes economic development – planning helps communities retain existing businesses, attract new ones, revitalize downtowns, develop housing for workers, and recommend steps to improve infrastructure capacity.

Promotes intergovernmental cooperation – through the required Intergovernmental Cooperation Element, communities identify existing cooperation between jurisdictions, identify existing or potential conflicts, and describe processes to resolve these conflicts.

Protects resources – planning helps protect the things a community treasures most, including historic buildings, forests, farmland, bluff areas, wetlands, scenic vistas, downtown main streets, lakes, rivers, village squares, etc.

RUSK COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE SCOPE OF WORK



BACKGROUND

Rusk County adopted its current Comprehensive Plan in 2009. As required by Wisconsin Statutes § 66.1001, the plan must be updated every 10 years. This update will revise data, maps, forecasts, narrative, vision, and implementation strategies to reflect current conditions and long-term goals that guide growth and development over the next 20 years.

PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In accordance with Wisconsin Statutes § 66.1001(4)(a), the Rusk County Board of Supervisors will adopt written procedures to ensure public participation at every stage of the planning process. Recommended engagement efforts include public meetings, online outreach, and at least one public open house prior to the official public hearing. Events may be held in person, virtually, or in hybrid formats, depending on the county's preferences.

PLAN ELEMENTS ADDRESSED

As defined by Wisconsin Statutes § 66.1001(2), the updated comprehensive plan will include at least these nine elements:

- Issues and Opportunities – A compilation of demographic, income, education, and employment data, along with goals, objectives, and policies to guide growth and development over the next 20 years.
- Housing – A compilation of current and future housing needs over the next 20 years, including data on types, age, condition, occupancy, affordability, and availability.
- Transportation – A compilation of existing and proposed transportation facilities, including roads, transit, rail, and bike/pedestrian networks, with goals and policies to guide a multi-modal system that supports land use, economic development, and mobility over 20 years.
- Utilities and Community Facilities – A compilation of existing and future utilities and facilities, including water, sewer, stormwater, waste disposal, energy, broadband, and public services like emergency response, law enforcement, and healthcare, with goals and policies to maintain and expand these systems to meet resident needs over the next 20 years.
- Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources – A compilation of the county's agricultural, natural, and cultural resources, including farmland, forests, water, wetlands, wildlife, historic sites, and community landmarks, with goals and policies to protect, preserve, and sustainably manage these resources over the next 20 years.
- Economic Development – A compilation of existing economic conditions and future opportunities, including major industries, employment trends, labor force characteristics, and infrastructure, with goals and policies to promote a diverse and sustainable economic base over the next 20 years.

- Intergovernmental Cooperation – A compilation of existing and potential coordination opportunities with other governmental units, including towns, cities, neighboring counties, and state and tribal agencies, with goals and policies to strengthen partnerships, reduce duplication, and improve governance efficiency over the next 20 years.
- Land Use – A compilation of updated existing and proposed land uses, with amendments to the land use inventory to reflect changes since 2016, and amendments to the countywide future land use map to reflect current and anticipated trends over the next 20 years.
- Implementation – A compilation of policies, programs, and actions to achieve the plan’s goals, with timelines, responsible parties, and strategies for monitoring and updating the plan over the next 20 years.

DIGITAL SURVEY (OPTIONAL)

A countywide public opinion survey will be conducted to gather community input. Building on the 2009 survey, questions will be developed collaboratively by the Planning Committee and Northwest Regional Planning Commission. The survey will be administered digitally through the ArcGIS Survey123 platform. Public outreach will be carried out across multiple channels, including direct mailings, the county website, social media, and other local communication outlets. Once the survey period (set by the county) concludes, the Northwest Regional Planning Commission will analyze the responses and prepare a summary report highlighting key findings, statistical trends, and insights to inform the comprehensive planning process.

TIMELINE

| | |
|--|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Preplanning – Month 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish plan steering committee • Internal plan review to identify content revisions (data, plan, maps, etc.) | <p style="text-align: center;">Preplanning – Month 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise and adopt Public Participation Plan |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Preplanning – Month 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up plan update webpage • Engage local units of government • Issue press releases announcing plan update | <p style="text-align: center;">Plan Update – Month 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Steering Committee Meeting 1:</i> Plan update overview, Issues & Opportunities roundtable • Update narrative (demographics, housing, transportation) |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Plan Update – Month 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Steering Committee Meeting 2:</i> Existing Land Use inventory discussion, Future Land Use mapping methods discussion • Conduct Existing Land Use inventory • Update narrative (demographics, housing, transportation) | <p style="text-align: center;">Plan Update – Month 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Steering Committee Meeting 3:</i> Visioning review (goals & objectives) • Existing Land Use inventory stakeholder review • Update narrative (utilities & community facilities, ag, natural, & cultural resources) |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Plan Update – Month 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Land Use inventory stakeholder review Update narrative (utilities & community facilities, ag, natural, & cultural resources) | <p style="text-align: center;">Plan Update – Month 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Land Use inventory stakeholder review/Future Land Use Map development Update narrative (economic development, intergovernmental cooperation) Complete all resource mapping activities |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Plan Update – Month 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Steering Committee Meeting 4:</i> Existing Land Use Map review, Future Land Use Map review, Initiate implementation review (actions) Update narrative (economic development, intergovernmental cooperation) | <p style="text-align: center;">Plan Update – Month 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Steering Committee Meeting 5:</i> Updated Existing Land Use Map review, Updated Future Land Use Map review, implementation review (actions) Update narrative (land use, implementation) |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Plan Update – Month 11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Steering Committee Meeting 6:</i> implementation review (actions), identify new actions Update narrative (land use, implementation) | <p style="text-align: center;">Plan Update – Month 12-13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compile full draft plan <i>Steering Committee Meeting 7:</i> Full draft plan review, public open house discussion and scheduling Post preliminary draft plan for public review |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Plan Update – Month 14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold public open house on proposed preliminary draft plan | <p style="text-align: center;">Plan Update – Month 15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Steering Committee Meeting 8:</i> Consider public comment, draft plan finalization, approve resolution recommending draft plan to County Board |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Plan Adoption – Month 16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> County Board receives committee resolution and schedules the public hearing on the draft plan and ordinance | <p style="text-align: center;">Plan Adoption – Month 17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post final draft plan for at least 30-day public comment period Publish a class 1 notice at least 30 days before the hearing is held Follow the adopted Public Participation Plan for public engagement |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Plan Adoption – Month 18 By November 28, 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold public hearing on draft plan and ordinance County Board ordinance adopting updated Comprehensive Plan | |

RUSK COUNTY

Citizen Participation Plan for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program

Adopted December 17, 2024

PURPOSE

In order for the CDBG Program to operate effectively, and to address the needs of the citizens of the County of Rusk, the entire population must be kept informed. The decision-making process must be open and consistent with State and Federal regulations. To accomplish this, the following plan will be followed:

PROGRAM OVERSIGHT

1. The County of Rusk shall create a Citizen Participation Committee, members of which shall be appointed by the County Board Chair and confirmed by the County Board. This Committee shall be responsible for implementation of the Citizen Participation Plan (CPP), as well as offering guidance in preparation of the grant application.

The County of Rusk shall oversee the preparation of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant application.

2. To insure responsiveness to the needs of its citizens, the County of Rusk shall provide for and encourage citizen participation. Particular emphasis shall be given to participation by persons of low- to- moderate income (LMI).

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

1. The County of Rusk shall establish a committee composed of persons representative of the County of Rusk demographics. This committee must include at least one LMI person.

The committee members should also include representatives from the local government, real estate, banking, and labor communities whenever possible. This committee shall assume responsibility for coordinating all required elements of the Citizen Participation Plan. All committee members must be residents of the County of Rusk.

NOTICE OF HEARINGS

1. Official notice of hearings will be by public notice in the *Ladysmith News* as a 2-week (14 days) notice prior to the hearing date. In addition, the public notice shall be posted at the County of Rusk in the County Courthouse. These notices will include the time, place and date of meetings, as well as a brief agenda.
2. All notifications of meetings and available assistance must be worded in such a way as to encourage LMI participation. In addition, all meeting announcements shall include where, and during what time, information and records relating to the proposed and actual use of funds may be found.

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Community Development Block Grant – Citizen Participation Plan TEMPLATE

REQUIRED PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public hearings shall be held to obtain citizen views and to enable them to respond to proposals at all stages of the CDBG Program, including the development of needs, the review of proposed activities and the review of program performance. Hearings shall be held after adequate notice, at times and locations convenient to potential or actual beneficiaries and with accommodations for the handicapped, and, if needed, for non-English speaking persons.

1. The first hearing will receive citizens' views and provide an explanation of:
 - a. Community development needs, objectives, and strategies.
 - b. The CDBG program including goals, objectives, application process, amount of funds available, timetable, eligible activities, etc.
2. The second hearing will receive citizens' views and provide a review of the performance of the funded activities.
3. The first public hearing shall be held during the development of the application for funds.
4. The second public hearing shall be held during the implementation of the program. If the project includes construction, demolition, and/or structural rehabilitation activities, then the second hearing must be held after construction, demolition, and/or rehabilitation has begun and is in progress.
5. The County of Rusk will attempt to have at least one of the public hearings in the service area.

PROGRAM INFORMATION, FILES, and ASSISTANCE

1. Technical assistance will be provided to any citizen who requests information about program requirements. Assistance via in person or by appointment will be provided by the County Clerk's Office.
2. The County of Rusk will maintain, in the County Courthouse, a record of all citizen participation efforts including minutes of meetings and copies of notices and brochures.
3. Citizens will be invited to make proposals regarding the application. If suitable proposals are submitted in writing, a written response will be provided within 15 days. Every effort will be made to respond to all proposals prior to the final action on the subject.
4. Citizens may petition or request in writing assistance or changes.

The County of Rusk staff will respond to all such requests within 15 days after the County of Rusk Citizen Participation Committee has met to discuss the request.

COMPLAINTS

The County of Rusk will handle citizen complaints about the program in a timely manner. By federal regulation the County of Rusk will respond in writing to all written letters of complaint within 15 days

Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources

Community Development Block Grant – Citizen Participation Plan TEMPLATE

after receipt of the complaint. The nature and disposition of verbal complaints will be reported in a complaint log. The first contact for complaints should be made to the County Clerk.

In addition to the above procedure, any citizen wishing to object may complain directly to the following address:

Attention: Executive Staff Assistant
Wisconsin Department of Administration
Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources
P.O. Box 7970
Madison, WI 53707-7970

Written complaints should contain the following information and should be as specific as possible when describing:

- 1) The Program area being referenced: HOME, Community Development Block Grants for Housing (CDBG – Housing), Community Development Block Grants for Community Development (CDBG – Community Development), Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), etc.;
- 2) The event resulting in the complaint;
- 3) The dates, details, and reason for the complaint; along with
- 4) The complainant's name, address, and telephone number.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The County of Rusk will respond to residents' requests for reasonable accommodations to participate in CDBG public hearings in accordance with state and federal laws; and include instructions for making accommodation requests in hearing notices.

NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING PERSONS

The County of Rusk will regularly review the demographic data of the municipality and survey a CDBG project area and/or service area if deemed necessary to identify non-English speaking persons; and will take steps to assure them equal opportunity in the citizen participation process.

Rusk County Comprehensive Plan Survey Question Ideas

1. What are the three most important reasons you (and your family) chose to live in Rusk County?
 - a. Natural beauty
 - b. Recreational Opportunities
 - c. Small town lifestyle/rural lifestyle
 - d. Near Family and Friends
 - e. Low Crime Rate
 - f. Quality Neighborhoods
 - g. Near job/employment opportunities
 - h. Home Costs
 - i. Low property taxes
 - j. Agriculture
 - k. Schools Community Services and Facilities
 - l. Health Care Services
 - m. Other

2. How would you rate the overall quality of life in Rusk County?
 - a. Excellent
 - b. Good
 - c. Fair
 - d. Poor
 - e. No opinion

3. I believe Rusk County is prepared to address challenges over the next 20 years
 - a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neither agree or disagree
 - d. Somewhat agree
 - e. Strongly agree

4. I feel I have a voice in shaping the future of Rusk County.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Somewhat disagree
- c. Neither agree or disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Strongly agree

5. The “small town feel” of the county is worth preserving.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Somewhat disagree
- c. Neither agree or disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Strongly agree

6. Please Provide your opinion on the following statements

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | No Opinion |
|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| The location of new residential development should be managed to ensure efficient delivery of public services. | | | | | |
| Emergency services (Police, Fire, and EMS) should be provided jointly by communities if money can be saved and service quality is maintained. | | | | | |
| Rusk County communities should pool resources to attract/retain companies that will create jobs. | | | | | |
| It is important to support the preservation of productive agriculture land in Rusk County. | | | | | |
| Identifying and protecting historical sites and structures is important to me. | | | | | |
| Additional use of roads for motorized all terrain vehicles(ATVs) is needed in my community. | | | | | |

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|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| My community should coordinate with the county and neighboring communities to plan for an aging population's housing needs. | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|

7. Rate the quality of the following services and facilities

| | Excellent | Good | Average | Fair | Poor | No Opinion |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------|---------|------|------|------------|
| County Parks | | | | | | |
| County Public Health Services | | | | | | |
| County Road Maintenance | | | | | | |
| County Recycling Programs | | | | | | |
| County Zoning Enforcement | | | | | | |
| County Building Code Enforcement | | | | | | |
| County Nuisance Ordinance Enforcement | | | | | | |
| Emergency Dispatch Service (911) | | | | | | |
| Police Protection/Law Enforcement | | | | | | |
| Fire Protection | | | | | | |
| Public Libraries | | | | | | |
| Local Public School System | | | | | | |
| Broadband Services | | | | | | |
| Cellular Telecommunication Services | | | | | | |
| Local Town/Village Road Maintenance | | | | | | |

8. Rate the quality of the following Natural Resources and infrastructure.

| | Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor | No Opinion |
|----------------------------|-----------|------|------|------|------------|
| Wetlands and Forests | | | | | |
| Lakes, Rivers, Streams | | | | | |
| Groundwater Resources | | | | | |
| Wildlife habitats | | | | | |
| Parks and Recreation Areas | | | | | |
| Public Trails | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

9. Should the following cultural resources be preserved and enhanced and how would you support their preservation?

| | Yes, support with local tax dollars | Yes, support with private dollars | Yes, support with both public and private dollars | No, not important to me |
|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Historical and cultural buildings and sites | | | | |
| Farmers Markets | | | | |
| Community events and festivals | | | | |
| Rusk County Fair | | | | |

10. Does enforcement of Rusk County’s zoning regulations need to be improved to protect water quality in your community?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. No opinion/Don’t know

11. How would you rate the following transportation services in your community?

| | Excellent | Good | Average | Fair | Poor | No Opinion |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------|---------|------|------|------------|
| Road Maintenance | | | | | | |
| Snow Plowing | | | | | | |
| Condition of Local Roads | | | | | | |
| Condition of County Roads | | | | | | |
| Bicycle Trails | | | | | | |
| Pedestrian Trails/ Walkways | | | | | | |
| ATV/UTV Trails | | | | | | |
| Snowmobile Trails | | | | | | |
| Cross Country Ski Trails | | | | | | |
| Airport Facilities | | | | | | |
| Public Transportation | | | | | | |

12. I would support the following transportation service expansion options in my community (Select all that apply)

- a. Rideshare services (Uber/Lyft)
- b. Local bus routes
- c. Car rental services
- d. None of the above
- e. Other

13. I would support the development of more of the following on public lands (select all that apply)

- a. Bike routes and trails
- b. Walking and hiking trails
- c. Cross country ski trails
- d. ATV/UTV Trails
- e. Snowmobile trails
- f. Horseback riding trails
- g. Skateparks
- h. Playgrounds
- i. None of the above

14. I believe electric vehicle (EV) charging stations are important to my community's future.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Somewhat disagree
- c. Neither agree or disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Strongly agree

15. How has the availability of suitable housing in the county changed over the last 20 years?

- a. Greatly worsened
- b. Somewhat worsened
- c. Remained the same
- d. Somewhat improves
- e. Greatly improved

- f. No opinion/don't know

16. Select all housing additions that the County could benefit from.

- a. Single family homes
- b. Moderately priced homes
- c. Higher priced homes
- d. Duplexes
- e. Apartments
- f. Manufactured (mobile) homes
- g. Mobile home parks
- h. Housing for seniors
- i. Public/subsidized housing
- j. Rehabilitation of existing homes
- k. Non of the above

17. Dilapidated/Abandoned buildings and houses are a problem in my community

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Somewhat disagree
- c. Neither agree or disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Strongly agree

18. How would you rate each of the following local services and facilities in your community?

| | Excellent | Good | Average | Poor | Terrible | No Opinion |
|-------------------|-----------|------|---------|------|----------|------------|
| Town/City Hall | | | | | | |
| Town/City Garage | | | | | | |
| Sanitary/Sewer | | | | | | |
| Municipal Water | | | | | | |
| Police Protection | | | | | | |
| Fire Protection | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Ambulance Service | | | | | | |
| Health Care Facilities | | | | | | |
| Childcare Facilities | | | | | | |
| Garbage Collection | | | | | | |
| Recycling program | | | | | | |
| Library | | | | | | |
| Education | | | | | | |
| Parks | | | | | | |
| Recreation Programs | | | | | | |
| Broadband/ Internet | | | | | | |
| Mobile Phone Service | | | | | | |
| Zoning Enforcement | | | | | | |

19. There are enough job opportunities that pay a sufficient wage to make a decent living in my community.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Somewhat disagree
- c. Neither agree or disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Strongly agree

20. I support the use of tax dollars to improve public infrastructure (sewer, water, roads) to help attract new development in my community

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Somewhat disagree
- c. Neither agree or disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Strongly agree

21. I support efforts to revitalize existing downtown areas in the county if these efforts are:

- a. Paid through public tax dollars
- b. Supported by private business dollars and/or non-public contributions
- c. Supported by a combination of public and private dollars
- d. I do not support the revitalization of downtown areas

22. What types of businesses/industries do you believe are the most important for Rusk County?

| | Very High Priority | High Priority | Medium Priority | Low Priority | Very Low Priority | No Opinion |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|------------|
| Agriculture – small-scale | | | | | | |
| Agriculture – Large-scale | | | | | | |
| Commercial, retail, and services | | | | | | |
| Health care services | | | | | | |
| Industrial and manufacturing | | | | | | |
| Downtown Development “Main Streets” | | | | | | |
| Home-based businesses | | | | | | |
| Tourism and recreation | | | | | | |
| Tech-related businesses | | | | | | |
| Work from home opportunities | | | | | | |
| Campgrounds – Large scale | | | | | | |
| Campgrounds – Small scale | | | | | | |
| Field Crop agriculture only | | | | | | |

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|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Short-term home rentals | | | | | | |
| ATV/UTV recreation type businesses | | | | | | |
| Silent Sport Businesses | | | | | | |
| Restaurants / Eating establishments | | | | | | |

23. Neighboring towns, cities, and counties should identify and work together toward shared goals

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Somewhat disagree
- c. Neither agree or disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Strongly agree

24. How satisfied are you with the level of communication between Rusk County government and your community?

- a. Extremely dissatisfied
- b. Somewhat dissatisfied
- c. Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied
- d. Somewhat satisfied
- e. Extremely satisfied

25. Which Rusk County Community do you reside in?

- a. _____
- b. Do not reside in Rusk County
- c. Prefer not to respond

26. Do you own or rent your Rusk County dwelling?

- a. Own
- b. Rent
- c. Non-Resident

d. Prefer not to respond

27. How many years have you owned property or lived in Rusk County as either a seasonal or permanent resident?

- a. 0-5 years
- b. 6-10 years
- c. 11-15 years
- d. 16-20 years
- e. Over 20 years

28. Is your current place of employment in Rusk County?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Retired
- d. Unemployed
- e. Prefer not to respond

29. What is your age?

- a. Under 21
- b. 21-30
- c. 31-40
- d. 41-50
- e. 51-60
- f. Over 60
- g. Prefer not to respond

30. Do you have access to the internet?

- a. Yes, at home
- b. Yes, at work
- c. Yes, at a public place (Such as a library)
- d. Yes, at home and work
- e. No

Rusk County Comprehensive Plan Update, Issues & Concerns Discussion Guide

1. Housing

- What challenges do residents face in finding suitable, affordable housing?
- What types of housing are most needed (workforce, senior, low-income, rental, seasonal workforce, rehab of existing stock)?
- How does demographic change (aging population, population decline in some towns) affect housing demand?
- How does the age and condition of existing housing stock affect availability and safety?
- Is there adequate housing near job centers such as Ladysmith?
- How does the presence of seasonal homes affect the housing market?
- Are zoning, infrastructure limits, or permit requirements restricting new housing development?
- Are there opportunities for infill development or redevelopment in established communities?
- Could vacant upper-floor commercial space be converted into housing?
- What barriers do first-time homebuyers face (credit, down payment, construction costs)?

2. Economic Development

- What industries or job sectors are strongest, and which are at risk?
- What barriers hinder business growth (workforce shortages, childcare, transportation, zoning, broadband, utilities)?
- How can Rusk County support small businesses, agriculture, natural-resource-based industries, and tourism?
- What opportunities exist for regional economic development partnerships?
- How can the County diversify its economy to reduce reliance on a few sectors?
- What workforce development or training programs are needed to align skills with employer needs?
- What opportunities exist to expand value-added wood products, outdoor recreation, and manufacturing?

- How can downtowns (Ladysmith, Bruce, Weyerhaeuser, Sheldon, Tony, Hawkins) be strengthened or revitalized?
- How do childcare shortages affect employment and business growth?
- Are industrial/business park lands adequate in location, infrastructure, and zoning?
- How can tourism assets (Blue Hills, Flambeau River, ATV/UTV routes) be leveraged for economic growth?
- How can broadband investments be aligned with economic development initiatives?

3. Agriculture & Farmland Preservation

- What pressures are impacting farmland (development, aging farmers, economics, land transfer)?
- Are current farmland preservation areas accurate and effective?
- What agricultural infrastructure or local businesses are needed (processing, custom services, haulers)?
- What strategies would help sustain agricultural operations over the next 20 years?
- What barriers do new or younger farmers face in accessing land or capital?
- Which agricultural sectors (dairy, beef, specialty crops) are most vulnerable or promising?
- How can policies support diversification and soil/water conservation?
- What opportunities exist for local food systems and direct-to-consumer marketing?
- Should Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs) or farmland preservation zoning be expanded or refined?
- How is forest-to-farmland conversion or reversion affecting the agricultural landscape?
- Are existing conservation programs (NRCS, DATCP, DNR) meeting farmers' needs?

4. Natural Resources, Land Use & Outdoor Recreation

- What natural resources are most critical to protect (forests, lakes, rivers, wetlands, groundwater)?
- Are recreation impacts creating erosion, littering, invasive species spread, or land use conflicts?
- How should the County balance forestry, recreation, conservation areas, and development?

- Where are opportunities for new trails, public access, parks, multi-use recreation areas, or water access?
- Where are the most significant water quality or flooding concerns?
- How is climate change affecting forest health, wildfire risk, or runoff patterns?
- Are county forest roads, boat landings, and recreation facilities adequate and accessible?
- What conflicts exist between motorized and non-motorized recreation users?
- How should growth around lakes and shoreland areas be managed?
- Are there opportunities for natural flood management, wetland restoration, or habitat connectivity?
- Should the County pursue additional land or easements to protect high-value natural resources?

5. Transportation & Mobility

- What major road or safety concerns exist (speed, geometry, pavement condition, maintenance needs)?
- Are there pedestrian and bicycle safety issues?
- How do transportation limitations affect economic development and emergency response?
- Where are public or shared transportation services lacking?
- Are there rural intersections or highways with recurring crash concerns?
- How do road maintenance costs affect county and town budgets?
- Where are gaps in ATV/UTV connectivity that limit tourism or local travel?
- Are improvements needed in wayfinding, signage, or traffic calming?
- Are school bus routes affected by poor road conditions or long travel distances?
- How can transportation options be improved for seniors, disabled residents, and low-income households?

6. Broadband, Utilities & Community Facilities

- Where are broadband gaps most limiting for households, businesses, tourism, or agriculture?
- What utility or service gaps affect homes, businesses, or farms?

- Are existing county/town facilities (EMS, fire, schools, libraries, town halls) meeting current needs?
- What long-term capital improvements should be prioritized?
- Are water/wastewater systems capable of supporting future growth?
- How will aging EMS/fire infrastructure and staffing shortages impact service levels?
- Are public buildings accessible, energy-efficient, and weather-resilient?
- What investments are needed to improve emergency communications and disaster response?
- Should the County pursue renewable energy projects (solar, biomass) or energy efficiency upgrades?

7. Intergovernmental Cooperation

- What issues require better coordination across municipalities, Tribes, school districts, regional agencies, or state/federal partners?
- Where are cooperative agreements currently working well?
- What areas need improvement (roads, parks, EMS, broadband, watershed management, tourism, land use consistency)?
- Are there opportunities to share equipment, staff, or services to reduce costs?
- How can local governments work together to address declining fire/EMS volunteerism?
- Should the County pursue joint watershed or conservation initiatives with Tribes and regional partners?
- Where do zoning or land use conflicts occur between jurisdictions?
- Are school districts and local governments coordinating on enrollment changes and facility planning?
- How can regional tourism partners better coordinate marketing and infrastructure development?