

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

I. Introduction

Active, ongoing and meaningful citizen involvement is essential to the successful development and implementation of a comprehensive planning program. Recognizing this fact, the Osakis Comprehensive Plan has been developed through a process of intensive citizen participation. The City recognized that in order to effectively prepare, and more importantly, implement the recommendations of the plan, the public must have the opportunity to be involved in the process.

The Osakis City Council selected a broad group of people representing a cross section of the community to act as the *Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee*. The eight member Steering Committee was appointed in an advisory capacity to the City Council. Over the course of a 14 month timeframe, the Steering Committee invested considerable time in reviewing and analyzing data, identifying issues and concerns, assessing community development options, formulating policy recommendations and developing a future land use map in an effort to anticipate and provide for future growth and development.

Much of the data used throughout the Plan was produced by any number of federal, state, county, and non-governmental agencies. Additionally, technical analysis and GIS technology was employed to guide rational recommendations which relate to community values. Sources of data is cited throughout each Chapter of the Plan.

II. Overview of the Citizen Participation Process

Underscoring the importance of citizen input in the Comprehensive Plan update process, the Comprehensive Plan included a public education/involvement component. By actively educating and receiving input from the public, the Steering Committee could develop supportable and attainable goals. All meetings of the Steering Committee were open to the public and audience participation was strongly encouraged. A variety of media sources were targeted to advertise meetings, and residents were encouraged to attend the community meetings and workshops and/or offer written comments. The consultant also invited representatives from community organizations to participate. Additionally, the City encouraged public participation at the community meeting through a public outreach announcement mailed to residents and business owners with the utility bills and a mailing to all business owners for the business meeting. The invitation explained the Comprehensive Plan process, outlined the schedule for element review, and welcomed community participation. A written record of the planning process including technical presentations, discussion of development options, and the intent of actions and proposals are maintained and kept on file at Osakis City Hall.

To accomplish this program, the Osakis Comprehensive Plan included the following tools:

- Community-wide survey
- Two public participation and education meetings
- Open Steering Committee meetings
- Project specific Web-link
- Interviews by the consultant
- Committee of the whole (COW) meeting and Public Hearing

A. Community-wide survey

The first tool implemented in securing public input was a citizen survey. A citizen survey was mailed to all property owners within the City. The respondents answered questions

as they related to quality of life, housing, transportation, economic development, parks and recreation, public facilities, general government and land use. A total of 70 surveys were completed and returned to the City. Upon receiving the completed surveys the results were tabulated and reviewed with the Steering Committee. A copy of the survey and results are provided in the Appendix.

B. Public Participation/Education Meetings

Two public participation and education meetings were held: a Community Meeting on July 6, 2005, at the Osakis Community Center, and a Business Meeting on December 7, 2005 at the Osakis Pub and Grill. At both meetings participants were able to express their feelings regarding various topics.

At the onset of each meeting a presentation was conducted to educate the participants on some of the survey results, where the City currently stood in relation to various local and regional trends, and the significance of the Comprehensive Plan and meetings. All participants were afforded an equal voice in identifying their issues.

Utilizing a game board style questionnaire, all comments, identified by each individual, were recorded. After recording the comments on each topic, the group reporters were asked to summarize each roundtable discussion. The comments from both public participation meetings are located in the Appendix.

During community meetings, participants in the Comprehensive Planning process identified Osakis's strengths or most positive attributes. Among the top items noted were:

- Small town feel/friendly people
- Natural Resources
- Convenience to city life/proximity to Alex
- Safe community
- Parks
- School system

Throughout the Comprehensive Planning Process, participants in the Community Survey, Community meeting and Business Meeting were asked what the major challenges facing the community are. Following are the most common responses:

- Growth management
- Property taxes and keeping the city affordable
- Industrial diversification
- Infrastructure improvement
- Maintaining the school system/providing additional facilities
- Planning and zoning issues
- Traffic through town/keeping the downtown area
- Managing growth
- Risk of losing customers/retailers to larger communities

C. Monthly Steering Committee Meetings

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee met on a monthly basis, in a workshop setting, to review and comment on the different plan elements being prepared. These meetings were advertised and the public was invited to attend these workshop meetings. Additionally, joint meetings were held with the Planning Commission to review the Land

Use component of the Plan, and the Economic Development component was reviewed by the Osakis Economic Development Authority (EDA).

D. Project Specific Web-Link

All Chapters were posted on a website provided by the consultant. On this project specific page, the residents were able to educate themselves on the comprehensive plan process, learn key project submission and meeting dates, review text versions of the plan and the citizen survey and provide comments or questions.

E. Interviews

Throughout the planning process, interviews were held with a broad range of stakeholders to help identify the important issues and concerns addressed by the Plan. These stakeholders included business leaders, local and state agency representatives, City officials and consultants, and others with an active involvement or interest in the issues that will shape the future. Comments and recommendations of the various interviews are located throughout the Plan.

F. Review of Council, Boards and Commissions and Public Hearing

The final draft of the plan was reviewed by the boards and commissions that advise the City Council. Through the Steering Committee, the plan was formalized and recommended to the City Council on April 12, 2006. Public comment was heard at a public hearing on _____ and the Plan was officially adopted on _____ (see Resolution No. 2006-____).

