



Comprehensive Plan Public Forum Summary

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Rice County Environmental Services
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Rice County Environmental Services Department began the Comprehensive Plan update with a public outreach process including 3 public meetings. This is a summary of the top themes that arose from the 3 public forums that were held in November and December of 2015. Community members gathered in 3 different locations and were informed about the comprehensive planning process and participated in a series of small group discussions. A total of 99 attendees responded to 4 questions asked at each meeting. Below is a summary of public responses organized as top themes recorded from the meetings under each question and participant demographics. Please see additional attachments for all individual responses collected from the small group discussions and forum evaluation.

Public Forums

November 17, 2015, South Central College, Faribault (28 attendees)

December 8, 2015, Forest Town Hall, Forest Township (26 attendees)

December 15, 2015, Center for Creativity, Northfield (45 attendees)

Question 1: What do you love about living in Rice County?

- **Small town feel with accessible urban amenities**
- **Natural Resources:** Lakes, rivers, open space, diverse landscape
- **Recreation:** Parks, trails, activities
- **Agriculture:** Rural character, farming community, farmers market
- **Economy:** Diverse job opportunities, local shops
- **Culture:** Diverse education opportunities, history, music, theater
- **People:** Family, friendly people, caring, youth involvement
- **Quality of Life:** Sense of community

Question 2: Imagine you are riding in a hot air balloon over Rice County in 20 years. What do you see?

- **Water Quality:** Desire cleaner lakes, streams, waterbodies, protective buffers or strips
- **Rural Design:** Agriculture, open farm country, fields, animals, permaculture, crops
- **Renewable Energy Production:** Solar energy-farms, windmills, sustainable energy
- **Urban Design:** Less urban sprawl, more densely developed cities with same footprint, buffers
- **Transportation Systems:** Walkable, bikeable cities, biking county-wide, multi-modal interconnection, well-maintained roads, commuter rail, transit
- **Business:** Locally-owned sustainable cooperative businesses, farms, employment opportunities
- **Greenways:** Recreation, wildlife corridors connecting cities and rural parks
- **Planning:** Effective planning across jurisdictional boundaries, well-planned development
- **Housing:** Clusters of homes, accessible housing, more houses, scattered housing
- **Community:** Sense of safety and comfort, healthy environment

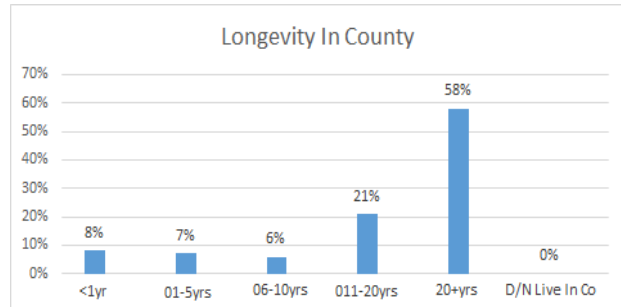
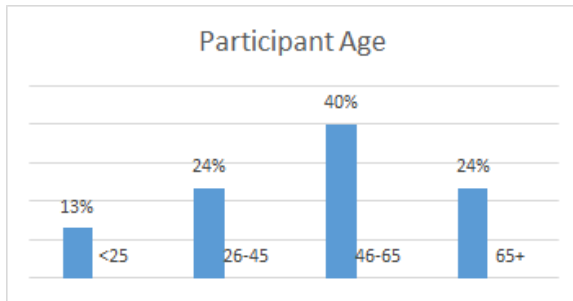
Question 3: In thinking about Rice County over the next 20 years, what are the most pressing challenges we will need to work on as we plan for our future?

- **Economic development:** Creating local jobs and tax base, retain community wealth, dignified employment for low income and young people, solutions to increasing poverty
- **Climate Change:** Planning & transitioning for climate change (extreme weather events)
- **Finance-Tax:** Funding projects, balance tax base to maintain infrastructure and ease tax burden, keep cost of living low and quality of life high
- **Sustainable development:** Limit sprawl, balancing land use for ag & business development
- Transition of energy production and ownership
- **Education:** training for future jobs, quality schools, survival programs for at-risk youth
- **Water & Air Quality:** Improve and protect water quality (ground and surface) and air quality
- **Technology:** Computer interconnectedness and infrastructure
- **Food systems and production:** Education, local control of new food energy systems
- **Demographics:** Cultural diversity and population growth, attracting and retaining young people
- **Government:** Sensible, practical negotiation, Informed, strong leaders & citizens, push back Metro-centric state government
- **Agriculture:** Preserve rural character, Help older generation farmers transition farmland
- **Planning and Implementing Regulations:** buffers, soil erosion ordinance, low impact development, long term plans for growth, septic compliance, transitional county zoning, user-friendly, good comp plan focused on infrastructure and smart gov, serving an aging population
- **Transportation:** Public transit, biking, multi-modal, maintain roads and bridges

Question 4: As we look at Rice County today, how can we take advantage now of what we have to enhance the area during the next 20 years?

- **Preservation:** Ability to preserve natural corridors, agriculture, rural landscape, and small town feel
- **Natural Resources:** Improve quality of our lakes & streams, Measure and protect ground water/surface water, Encourage rather than discourage renewable energy, Utilize best management practices for soil conservation, Preserve parks and encourage outdoor recreation
- **Agriculture:** Help protect, preserve and restore ag land and farm businesses, support new farmers including small scale, organic farms
- **Government Practices and Partnerships:** Build upon & improve Comprehensive Plan, Clear zoning and best land use practices, Greater collaboration between government units, Develop/encourage strategic partnerships between existing organizations, Give fair and balanced voice to all communities and townships, Challenge schools, ag, industries to use expertise toward solutions
- **Economic Development:** Nurture responsible business development, Attract businesses that pay a fair wage, Create cooperative business models, Promote businesses off 35, Don't overspend budgets, Invest in technology, Keep things local through market research and partnerships, Leverage colleges for community good, Participation & continued encouragement of community events
- **Transportation:** Building up county & township roads for safety, Completing trail systems with focus on the trail physical activity benefits and economic opportunities, Positive & purposeful development along 60/35 corridor, Limit roundabouts, Plan for airport expansion and improvements, Develop transportation plan to accommodate future growth
- **Diversity:** Welcome diverse cultures, practice cultural justice and sensitivity
- **Youth:** Engage & educate youth to encourage them to stay and be more involved
- Build upon existing assets, Learn from our past

Participant Demographic



Participant Locations Map

