

Rice County Comprehensive Plan Update Public Participation Plan

Introduction

Public participation is an essential component of the planning process and of our system of governance. Our elected officials represent the citizens of Rice County, and as such, need to inform, be informed by, and meaningfully interact with the public on an ongoing basis. Citizen participation is necessary to produce a meaningful and accepted comprehensive plan.

Rice County is committed to providing broad and continuous opportunities for public participation throughout the development of the comprehensive plan. The purpose of this Public Participation Plan is to provide details of how the public will be involved throughout the comprehensive planning effort. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee is comprised of Rice County Board of Commissioners and members of the Rice County Planning Commission. They will use the information collected from the public participation efforts throughout their decision making processes.

Objectives of the Planning Process

Rice County's objectives throughout the development and adoption of the Rice County Comprehensive Plan are:

- ❖ Provide an effective mix of participation opportunities including: public information, public education, public input, public interaction, and public participation.
- ❖ Utilize and monitor public participation strategies to provide diverse public participation opportunities for a broad range of citizens, landowners, businesses, community organizations, and special interest groups within Rice County.
- ❖ Address the diverse needs, issues and priorities of all planning participants.
- ❖ Set forth means of discussing, addressing, and resolving conflict between planning participants.
- ❖ Maximize the efficiency of plan development as well as intergovernmental cooperation through joint planning efforts.

Public Participation Methods

Methods used to involve citizens at different levels from passive to active include:

- ❖ **Public Awareness**-News releases and mass media advertising, as well as displays and exhibits in public spaces, will be utilized to build awareness of the comprehensive planning process and opportunities to participate.
- ❖ **Public Education**-Public meetings will be held throughout the planning process to provide citizens with balanced and objective information to assist in understanding issues and alternatives and the means to addressing them.
- ❖ **Public Input**-Public feedback, which is critical in assessing needs and providing input on alternatives, will be received via community forums, surveys, focus groups, small group conversations, open houses, and stakeholder and public meetings.

Public Awareness & Education Efforts:

❖ Rice County Website

A Comprehensive Plan webpage will be added to the Rice County website. In all communications, residents will be encouraged to access this page for up-to-date information on the comprehensive planning process. All agendas, minutes, notices, fact sheets, and power point presentations will be posted. Public access to the website is also available at public libraries throughout the county.

❖ Email Updates

Citizens, property owners, and additional stakeholders will be encouraged to register for an email distribution list. Email updates will provide summaries of plan progress, participation opportunities, and additional information as the plan develops.

❖ Plan Displays/Exhibits

Meeting notices, draft chapters, and upcoming public participation sessions will be available for review at libraries and other locations as appropriate. Displays detailing the importance of comprehensive planning and how it impacts our decisions and daily lives will be placed at the Rice County Government Services Building, Rice County Fair, and various other places.

❖ Press Releases

Press releases regarding the comprehensive planning process and progress will be provided to local communities, area newspapers, and radio stations.

❖ Mass Media Advertising

Public meetings will be advertised on the radio using existing Environmental Services contracts and in county-based newspapers as appropriate.

❖ Social Media

A Facebook page will be developed for the comprehensive planning process, providing instant updates to the general public in a highly accessible format, to provide announcements of meetings and new postings to the website.

❖ Presentations to Local Groups

Rice County Environmental Services staff will work with various county stakeholder groups in the county to provide up-to-date information on comprehensive planning efforts as development of the plan progresses. Staff will do their best to accommodate any group's request for presentations and dialogues pertaining to the Comprehensive Plan.

❖ Written Comments

Written comments from the public may be submitted to planning staff at any time during the planning process.

Public Participation/Input Efforts:

❖ Visioning and Issue Identification Community Forums

Three public input meetings will be conducted at three different locations in Rice County to obtain input from citizens and property owners to assist in identifying key assets and opportunities for developing a vision for future development in Rice County.

❖ Citizen Survey

A citizen survey regarding land use will be developed in Survey Monkey and distributed via multiple methods, including the Rice County website, to obtain input from a wide range of citizens.

❖ **Focus Groups/Small Group Stakeholder Meetings**

Focus groups and small group stakeholder meetings will be conducted throughout the process to identify key issues and to evaluate alternative implementation strategies under consideration by the Steering Committee.

❖ **Goals, Objectives and Implementation Strategies Public Input Meetings**

Public input meetings will be conducted at different locations in Rice County to obtain input from citizens and property owners to review goals and objectives and evaluate implementation strategies under consideration by the Steering Committee while the draft comprehensive plan is developed.

❖ **Final Draft Open House**

An Open House will be held once a final draft is developed and prior to an official public hearing, giving members of the community an opportunity to ask questions and review the plan prior to a public hearing.

❖ **Official Public Hearing**

An official public hearing will be held prior to formal adoption of the Comprehensive Plan by the County Board of Commissioners.