Brice Prairie Master Plan

Town of Onalaska

Community Meeting #2

Sand Lake Elementary School
February 11, 2006
9 am - 11 am

Agenda

- Background
- Master Plan Schedule
- Preliminary Concepts
- Flexibility and Opportunities
- Discussion and Critique
- Next Steps
Public participation and debate

Preference for “Growth with Conservation”

Brice Prairie Planning District Goals & Objectives:

1. Promote conservation, agriculture, and limited conservation-based development as preferred land uses.
2. Explore policies, programs, and compensation mechanisms that will allow for alternatives to industrial uses for undeveloped properties with that zoning definition.
3. Prohibit the rezoning of Exclusive Agricultural Zoning Districts.
4. Ensure zoning is consistent with the Land Use Plan designation.
5. Protect and enhance Brice Prairie’s status as a recreational gateway to the Great River State Recreational Trail, Lake Onalaska, the Black River Bottoms and other areas within the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.
6. Encourage redevelopment opportunities to focus land use on conservation design principles.
Town Comprehensive Plan

Brice Prairie Planned Land Uses

**Protecting existing areas**

- **Agriculture Preservation**: preserve productive agricultural lands
- **Conservancy**: preserve environmentally sensitive lands
- **Residential**: protect existing neighborhoods
Brice Prairie Planned Land Uses:

**Accommodating new development**
- **Conservation Residential**: residential with open space
  - Minimum 60% open space preserved
- **Conservation Mixed Use**: mixed-use areas with open space
  - Where Prairie residents and visitors can live, work and recreate
  - Mix of compatible uses:
    - Public and Non-Profit
    - Office
    - Commercial
    - Recreation
    - Residential
    - Open space
    - Education
    - Agriculture

**Why Master Plan?**
- Comprehensive plan already has significant detail
- Some areas need more attention to detail
  - Town centers and other special areas
  - Environmentally-sensitive areas
  - High growth areas and redevelopment areas

**Master Plans**

- Master Plan Process
- Zoning, Subdivision Regulations, etc.
Brice Prairie is a Special Place

Project Schedule

Master Plan Process

- Collect & analyze data
- Property owner & resident input
- Identify opportunities & constraints
- Design alternative concept plan(s)
- Select desired plan(s)
- Detailed plans, implementation strategies
Brice Prairie Capacity Analyses

- Environmental capacity
  - Ground & surface water, wetlands
  - Habitat, impervious surfaces, shorelands
- Transportation
  - Access, efficiency and congestion
- Emergency services capacity
  - Fire/EMS & law enforcement

Project Schedule

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Community Meeting #1

- What type of development is appropriate for the Prairie? Where should that development be?
- What types of open space should be protected?
- What does open space mean to you?
- What are your priorities?
  - For preservation
  - For development

Project Schedule

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Meeting #1: January 28
Meeting #2: Today
- Created two concepts from your suggestions two weeks ago
- Similar approaches
  - Both create a Prairie Crossroads Community
  - Both protect important open space through Purchase of Development Rights
  - Both show USFWS and adjacent development
- Different assumption on the role of Purchase of Development Rights

- Rural homes clustered around a crossroads or small civic or commercial area (e.g., a church or neighborhood store) and surrounded by a large expanse of protected open space.
- Development is clustered; 60% open space.
- A mini-village - mix of types and sizes and can include residential, office, retail and commercial uses.
- Walkable, community gathering spot
- USFWS in process to purchase 187 acres from Mathy Construction and Capitol Air Systems
- New USFWS regional headquarters would be on 12 acres; remaining acres left as open space
- USFWS serves as required open space for remaining Mathy and Capitol Air parcels
- 100% voluntary program - rights are purchased at negotiated value, land remains in private ownership.
- Landowners sell to governments the development potential of their property, which is then devoted to conservation easements.
- Conservation easements permanently protect open space and valuable ag land by restricting or prohibiting development.
Concept Differences

- The Town support and funding for the PDR program is unknown
- Timing of PDR program commencement is unclear
- Amount of funding from regional, state and federal grants, private sources and Town property owners is uncertain

Concept A

- Concept A assumes a strong role for PDR
  - Full commitment to the program by Town officials and residents
  - Full funding and aggressive search for matching funds and partnering
  - Regional, state, federal grants plus Town referendum on additional tax/fee
  - Partnership with local land trust?
La Crosse Blufflands Protection Program

- City of La Crosse and the Mississippi Valley Conservancy, a local nonprofit land trust, signed a formal agreement to join together to protect the community's blufflands.
- MVC acts at the "broker" for the program, working with landowners to purchase lands and easements in the blufflands overlooking La Crosse.
- In 2005, the La Crosse City Council approved $275,000 for the program and MVC leveraged this funding through grants from DNR and private fundraising

PDR Priorities for Concept A

1. Environmentally-sensitive land - western tip including the former landfill and surrounding areas
2. Agricultural Preservation areas - purchase the development rights to all farms in their entirety (willing sellers) and enable continued farming and open space
Concept B assumes a weaker role for PDR

- Moderate PDR program funding allows the purchase of environmentally sensitive areas
- Allowance of other Agricultural Preservation areas to become Conservation Residential areas
  - Open space requirement: 60%
- Same # of lots
- 2 acre vs. ¾ acre lots
- Private vs. common open space
- Natural features protected
- Trail & pond access
- 60% Open Space
Preserved Open Space Possible Uses

- Town could require public access to preserved open space
- Town could permit the open space to serve the new adjacent neighborhood
- Town could permit active open space
  - Small-scale agricultural production (organic farm?)
  - Another example: a golf course
Golf courses do preserve open space, but typically create an environmental hazard due to the application of pesticides, etc.

- The Prairie’s current groundwater problems makes typical golf courses especially hazardous here

Audubon International and other groups certify golf courses that meet standards for wildlife conservation, habitat enhancement and resource conservation

- Audubon Signature Program: Legacy Courses at Cragun’s near Brainerd, MN
- Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries
  - 8 in Wisconsin, 15 in Minnesota and 9 in Iowa
  - Baraboo CC
  - Greenwood Hills CC, Wausau
Today’s Discussion Issues

- Did we get it right?
- What are we missing?
- What are your thoughts on both concepts?
- Should the best of each concept be merged into one? Should one be thrown out?
- How much of future open space preservation should be public? How much should be private?

Next Steps

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Next Weeks
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