

POLK COUNTY COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS ALL FOCUS GROUPS – QUESTION 1

Amery Focus Group

February 26, 2007

35 people signed in.

WHERE HAVE WE BEEN? Back to the future. What are some significant changes and history of Polk County that have taken place in the last 150 years.

- Trains/railroad full.
- Displacement of Native Americans.
- Loss of agriculture/loss of family farms, movement to larger farms.
- Tourist “mecca” weekend homes, development of lake property.
- Cut of base employment with overseas trade & jobs.
- Increase in demand for social services.
- Logging decline.
- Consolidation of school districts/one room school emphasis education.
- Motorized transportation.
- Electricity changed rural landscape.
- Influence of co-ops.
- “Radical” political history.
- Crop farming – wheat – originally then to dairy.
- Loss of dairy farms.
- Wheat – cattle – houses.
- Yoyo factory demise.
- Churches spaced 7 miles apart.

Town of Apple River Focus Group

March 12, 2007

WHERE HAVE WE BEEN? Back to the future. What are some significant changes and history of Polk County that have taken place in the last 150 years.

- Development.
- Recreation – Natural Resources.
- Tourism.
- Rural to urban transition.
- Loss of family (dairy) farm.
- Urban sprawl (Twin Cities).
- Education – school consolidation.
- Big government.
- Loss of local control.
- Limited services (communication) in past.

County Employees Focus Group

March 13, 2007

11 people signed in.

WHERE HAVE WE BEEN? Back to the future. What are some significant changes and history of Polk County that have taken place in the last 150 years.

- Population growth.
- Rural (Ag) to Business Ag.
- European immigrant to new immigrant.
- Lake development – weekend, seasonal, year-round.
- Farming (Ag) to Industry.
- Autonomous small towns.
- Transportation – car, roads, bus.
- Trip expansion (town to town; town to TC).
- Railroad.
- County seat.
- Bridges.
- Commodity delivery.
- Expectations – instant gratification.

Osceola Focus Group

February 22, 2007

26 people signed in.

WHERE HAVE WE BEEN? Back to the future. What are some significant changes and history of Polk County that have taken place in the last 150 years.

- Interstate Park.
- Polk County Fair (1880).
- County Seat Debate – St. Croix Falls vs. Osceola.
- Trails became roads.
- Railroad/Bridge.
- Ag to manufacturing.
- Logging industry.
- Cedation of tribal lands.
- Electrification of rural areas.
- Consolidation of schools.
- RFD – Rural farm mail delivery.
- Lake associations.

Luck Focus Group
February 12, 2007

27 people signed in.

WHERE HAVE WE BEEN? Back to the future. What are some significant changes and history of Polk County that have taken place in the last 150 years.

- Population shift/change – rise in in-migration.
- Agriculture change.
- Loss of native residents.
- Railroad rise and fall.
- Electricity to rural areas.
- Building bridges.
- Clear-cutting of forests.
- Growing importance of tourism.
- Roads/transportation.
- Consolidation of school districts.
- Medical facilities.
- Development of lakes.
- Loss of yo-yo factory.
- Loss of creamery.
- Proliferation of “retail” stores.
- Death of small towns.
- Internet.
- World wars impact on rural areas.
- Conservation of lands.
- Expansion of County Government.
- Rise of cooperatives.
- Shifts of coal to oil-based economy.
- Changes in land use.
- Crime activity.
- Disparity between ‘have’ and ‘have nots’.
- Agriculture – larger scale, intensified.
- Industry – mechanical.
- Reliance of volunteer-based organizations to provide services.
- Unsustainable community development.
- Lack of planning.
- Pressures on infrastructure.

**City of St. Croix Falls Focus Group
March 12, 2007**

WHERE HAVE WE BEEN? Back to the future. What are some significant changes and history of Polk County that have taken place in the last 150 years.

- Electricity.
- Lumber industry to tourism/recreation/retail-based economy.
- State parks introduced tourism.
- Trains connected communities.
- Decline of small farms/dairy.

**Tourism Council
February 2007**

WHERE HAVE WE BEEN? Back to the future. What are some significant changes and history of Polk County that have taken place in the last 150 years.

- Loss of railroad.
- Change in mobility of people.
- Loss of public transportation.
- In-migration – a lot of seasonal residents.
- Loss of locally-owned businesses.
- Influx of large 'chain' stores.
- Loss of being neighborly.

POLK COUNTY COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS ALL FOCUS GROUPS – QUESTION 2

Amery Focus Group

February 26, 2007

35 people signed in.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? Current Assessment. What trends and issues do you see developing in our County and in our communities?

- Turnover/change of elected officials (schools, county) – lack of continuity.
- Dysfunctional County Board.
- Influx of individuals needing public assistance.
- Local retail transition.
- Lack of “community” – individuals moving in isolate themselves.
- Need organization to bring together/unify.
- Northern/southern part of county is facing different issues.
- Loss of decent jobs.
- Decline school enrollment.
- Export of young people.
- Import of individuals 50-60-70, aging population.
- Natural resources/lakes.
- Increase in homes in country.
- Smaller family size.
- MN immigrants/urbanization.
- Village economy – nursing homes and public housing – public support growth.
- Lack of transportation – dependent car travel.
- Opportunities differ in northern/southern part county.
- Neighbors NOT helping neighbors – don't know each other.
- Resource conflicts/lack of planning for protection of lakes, open spaces.
- Lack of cooperation and collaboration.

Town of Apple River Focus Group

March 12, 2007

WHERE ARE WE NOW? Current Assessment. What trends and issues do you see developing in our County and in our communities?

- Larger tax base.
- Development/building.
- County board does not have control over employees.
- Too large of a county board.
- Lack good paying jobs.
- Lack infrastructure/highways for business.
- School administrators act as corporate CEO's.
- Expanded/better communications.
- Lack of accountability on County board.
- Increased crime, drugs (meth).

- Better health care.
- More traffic on Hwy 8.
- Increased burden on Social Services.
- Lakeshore development.
- Pockets of poverty.

County Employees Focus Group

March 13, 2007

11 people signed in.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? Current Assessment. What trends and issues do you see developing in our County and in our communities?

- Social need is high.
- Weekend get-a-way.
- Community identity.
- Attitude (self v. community).
- South of 8 v. North of 8 (2 identities).
- Internet.
- Transportation to receive goods.
- Government industry – large workforce. (11%)
- Crossroads – 1. Metro or 2. Rural.
- Fringe of urban sprawl.
- Less compassion.
- Outside influence – Met Council.
- Losing family farms.
- Exporting youth.
- Retirement destination.
- Low paying jobs – difference in have & have nots.
- Drug issues – alcohol and controlled substance.
- Tourism (untapped).

Luck Focus Group

February 12, 2007

27 people signed in.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? Current Assessment. What trends and issues do you see developing in our County and in our communities?

- Tourism-based economy.
- More fluid – mobile.
- Searching for identity/values.
- Lack of industry – local job opportunities.
- Dependent on Twin Cities.
- Part of global economy.
- Reactive not proactive.
- More technologically advanced than admit.
- Behind on wireless connectiveness.

- Lack of community connectedness.
- Loss of community spirit.
- Dependent on outside 'food'.
- Conflict between land use.
- Commuting long distances to work.
- Main Streets 'surviving.'

Osceola Focus Group February 22, 2007

26 people signed in.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? Current Assessment. What trends and issues do you see developing in our County and in our communities?

- Transition from farms – residential – small parcels.
- Loss of wildlife habitat.
- Lack of Higher Educational Institutions.
- Agriculture to light industry.
- Urban encroachment/impact.
- Rise in taxes.
- Loss of 'community'/'localness'.
- Brain-drain of youth.
- Demise of small business.
- Influx of 'Big Box.'
- Growth of CSA's/Farmers Market.
- Increase demand for services.
- Aging population.
- School enrollments declining.
- Loss of traditional values.
- Low paying jobs.
- Lack of land-use planning.
- Local control – home rule.
- Rise in crime.
- Clean air, water, environment.
- Opportunities – good quality of life.
- Tourism based economy.

City of St. Croix Falls Focus Group March 12, 2007

WHERE ARE WE NOW? Current Assessment. What trends and issues do you see developing in our County and in our communities?

- It looks beautiful.
- Bedroom community.
- Transition from ag to eco-tourism.

- Target of expansion from cities.
- Recreational expansion/activities.
- Quality of life.
- Poised to make choices: between retail and tourism.
- Commercial/industry not viable – economic development strategy.
- Sense of community – small town atmosphere.
- More ecological minded.

Tourism Council February 2007

WHERE ARE WE NOW? Current Assessment. What trends and issues do you see developing in our County and in our communities?

- More roads, less farm-land.
- Many recreational opportunities.
- More tourism oriented.
- More mobile society.
- More commuter residents.
- Loss of local entrepreneurs.
- Not enough time.
- Too many community events – sometimes overlap.
- High income class and low income class. No middle class.
- Low income housing.
- Multi-generational families living together.
- Housing/property \$ rising.
- Single families.

POLK COUNTY COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS ALL FOCUS GROUPS – QUESTION 3

Amery Focus Group

February 26, 2007

35 people signed in.

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO? Preferred future. What does Polk County's preferred future look like?

- Planning – (comprehensive) and control on zoning/planned growth/preserve lakes & natural resources.
- Green space protection.
- Jobs for youth/"better" jobs for all.
- Promotes viable small business, sustainable local/entrepreneur-based business.
- Greater cooperation among villages.
- Encourage entrepreneur.
- Better zoning & planning/protection of land.
- Promote logging/agriculture – preserve farmland.
- Encouragement of creative arts.
- Leader of cohesive county government.
- County "stewards" rather than supervisors.
- Bird watching.
- Promoting health wellness.
- Better use of renewable energy/energy independence.
- More trees.
- Smaller, more efficient county board.
- Protect farms/open spaces.
- Decide if establish "Big Box" or maintain local businesses or revive other small local opportunities (Econ Dev).
- Diversity of economic development.
- Develop park system – county & towns.
- More businesses & incentive for preserving natural & physical resources.
- Increase population.
- Non-motorized transportation for recreational & non-recreational.
- Protect & preserve "right to farm."
- Better definition between residential and business.
- Service roads/frontage roads to accommodate travel.

Town of Apple River Focus Group

March 12, 2007

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO? Preferred future. What does Polk County's preferred future look like?

- Retain rural image.
- Structured/planned development.

- Good paying jobs.
- Apple River remain in natural state.
- Allow green space in plans.
- Establish guidelines based on values for each township.

County Employees Focus Group

March 13, 2007

11 people signed in.

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO? Preferred future. What does Polk County's preferred future look like?

- Control urban sprawl and outside influences.
- Expand on tourism without relying on it.
- Protect resources – growth on lakes, water quality high, farmland as farmland, environmentally sound.
- Unified county – values, services, identity.
- Adequate educational and social services.
- Maintain diversity – unique qualities.
- Creating communities – strong healthy families, social networks, intergenerational networks, community pride, not ME but community.
- Attract healthy youth.
- Attract new industry.
- Expansion of healthcare services.
- Mass transit.

Luck Focus Group

February 12, 2007

27 people signed in.

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO? Preferred future. What does Polk County's preferred future look like?

- Sustainability.
- Protection of natural spaces.
- Utilizing sustainable, innovative energy sources.
- Wireless internet – county-wide retaining culture.
- Be a model for energy efficiency.
- Clean water, air, open space.
- Greater cooperation.
- Greater availability of health care.
- Affordable health care for everyone.
- Lower taxes.
- We don't want to look like Woodbury.
- Large, contiguous areas of land for wildlife habitat.
- Educational opportunities.
- Self-sufficient in energy production.
- Agriculture is preserved.

- Nutritious school lunches.
- 'Next step' eco-municipalities.
- Hemp made legal cash crop.
- Crop producers grow many options.
- Living wage available.
- De-centralize large government – more local control.
- Active, respectful inter-government relations with tribe.
- Fair tax system.
- Instant run-off voting.
- No bridge at Stillwater.
- Effective and efficient government.
- Flexible zoning codes.
- Creative building design standards.
- 'Clean' county.
- Financial and environmental accountability.
- Public transportation.
- Maintaining historical buildings.
- Return to railroad to meet transportation needs.
- Walkable, bikeable communities.
- Re-evaluation of rail lines.
- Controlled growth.
- No hunger.
- No domestic violence.
- No meth labs.
- Activities for youth.

Osceola Focus Group

February 22, 2007

26 people signed in.

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO? Preferred future. What does Polk County's preferred future look like?

- Maintain farmland – rural character integrity.
- Locally supported business – shop locally.
- Open space preservation.
- Preserve unique areas – lakes.
- Sustainable energy sources – independence.
- Education to preserve natural resources.
- Accessibility for all.
- Embracing/celebration of diversity – ethnic & disabled inclusive.
- Meeting social needs – poverty, neglect, abuse.
- Trees, Trees.
- Commuter trains/mass transit.
- Better paying jobs.
- Innovative water management plan – protect environment – utilize run-off.
- Educational opportunities.
- Opportunities for creative land use.
- Incentives to preserve farms.

- Balanced land use/zoning: development to open space ratio.
- Local control – more inter-cooperation by governments.
- Trail development.
- Tourism based economy.
- Controlled growth.
- Property: 40% out-of-county ownership, 60% local ownership.
- Strong schools.
- Light pollution.

**City of St. Croix Falls Focus Group
March 12, 2007**

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO? Preferred future. What does Polk County's preferred future look like?

- Retain uniqueness and rural character.
- Preserve natural resources.
- Light rail.
- 'Destination' County.
- Preserve rural character.
- Develop low-impact development.
- Set example/create model for others.
- Balance between growth and preservation. (Growth and preservation = potential mission statement.)
- High-tech jobs.
- Preservation of farmland.
- Community allegiance.
- Universal health care.
- Lower taxes.

**Tourism Council
February 2007**

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO? Preferred future. What does Polk County's preferred future look like?

- Back to rural roots.
- Commuter rail/public transportation.
- 'Destination transportation.'
- Planned development.
- Low-impact economic development.
- Eco-tourism.
- Tourist-friendly communities and government.
- Regional promotion.
- Sustainable communities.
- Responsible citizens.
- Historical preservation.
- Natural resource preservation.
- Good quality of life.

POLK COUNTY COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS ALL FOCUS GROUPS – QUESTION 4

Amery Focus Group

February 26, 2007

35 people signed in.

HOW WILL WE GET THERE? Shape the path. What are some strategies or possibilities? What can be done, by stakeholders and others, to deal with the trends and issues occurring in Polk County?

- Conservation design (cluster in larger system).
- Change structure – rotate & stagger elections of county officials – more continuity.
- Reevaluate/study other models of government structure, involve citizen groups, consultants.
- Create planning department and outside assistance.
- Be proactive not reactive in development/defined use planning.
- Prioritize and make sure have financial resources.
- Access to technology “wireless” internet.
- Alternative transportation options.
- Use current resources create transportation (rr:ie).
- Light rail – commuter line to cities.
- Economic development from regional standpoint.
- Take advantage volunteer opportunities – neighbors helping neighbors – working together – create some sense of community.
- Inventory natural resources.

Town of Apple River Focus Group

March 12, 2007

HOW WILL WE GET THERE? Shape the path. What are some strategies or possibilities? What can be done, by stakeholders and others, to deal with the trends and issues occurring in Polk County?

- Team approach.
- Towns need to be proactive in planning – not county.
- Finish shoreland ordinance.
- Improve communication between board & employees and board & units of government.
- County board take initiative to reduce size before census.
- Ethanol plant initiative.
- Madison treat NW WI equal to SE WI.
- Citizen participation.
- Watch/know neighbors.
- Co-op concept/people work together.
- Ad hoc development committee.

County Employees Focus Group

March 13, 2007

11 people signed in.

HOW WILL WE GET THERE? Shape the path. What are some strategies or possibilities? What can be done, by stakeholders and others, to deal with the trends and issues occurring in Polk County?

- Zoning controls – planned development.
- Implement 1 economic development model.
- Local communities joining county plan – inclusive.
- Cooperation, collaboration.
- Re-invest in housing stock.
- Ag incentives; green space.
- Promote existing activities.
- Raise income levels (without raising cost of living).
- Tax breaks – incentives – for home updates and green space.
- Conserve main street.
- Expand health care facilities.
- Hire a planner.
- Sustainable energy – tax breaks.
- Think out of the box.
- Expand capacity of UW – share knowledge.
- Learning opportunities for youth.
- Communication to people in city.
- City to local.

Luck Focus Group

February 12, 2007

27 people signed in.

HOW WILL WE GET THERE? Shape the path. What are some strategies or possibilities? What can be done, by stakeholders and others, to deal with the trends and issues occurring in Polk County?

- Greater regulation of immigrants.
- Land use planning.
- Hire a county planner.
- Follow through and continuity and institutional memory.
- Land management/conservation.
- Strict land use policies.
- Greater flexibility in design standards emphasizing sustainability.
- 'Green' goals.
- Incorporate community values into land-use standards.
- Buy local.
- Get involved in community.
- Take personal responsibility.
- Maintain/preserve green space.

Osceola Focus Group February 22, 2007

26 people signed in.

HOW WILL WE GET THERE? Shape the path. What are some strategies or possibilities? What can be done, by stakeholders and others, to deal with the trends and issues occurring in Polk County?

- Fair tax structure.
- Planning.
- Incentives for land stewardship/trusts.
- Impact/user fees replace property taxes.
- TDR – Transfer of Development Right.
- Allow counties to implement local income tax.
- Innovative ways to raise revenues.
- Satellite campus, University located in Polk County.
- Towns have control – Home Rule.
- Universal Health Care.
- Develop alternative energy – sustainable.
- Create supportive entrepreneurial environment.

City of St. Croix Falls Focus Group March 12, 2007

HOW WILL WE GET THERE? Shape the path. What are some strategies or possibilities? What can be done, by stakeholders and others, to deal with the trends and issues occurring in Polk County?

- PDR's/TDR's.
- Business incentives.
- Comprehensive marketing plan for county.
- Local land use planning.
- Preservation of natural resources.
- Comprehensive growth plan.
- Renewable energy.
- Sustainable communities.
- Supportive County Board – cohesive, consensus, build.
- Focus learning opportunities for youth.
- Retain youth thru opportunities.
- Economic development standards/guidelines.
- No nursing home business.
- Downsize County Board to 5.

Tourism Council February 2007

HOW WILL WE GET THERE? Shape the path. What are some strategies or possibilities? What can be done, by stakeholders and others, to deal with the trends and issues occurring in Polk County?

- Planning.
- Education – customer service.
- Communication between all stakeholders.
- Imagination/creativity in planning.
- Get young people involved.
- Supportive environment for arts.
- Become active in communities.
- Teach 'customer-friendly' curriculum to communities.
- Identify community assets and promote.
- Embrace your community.
- Outreach to 'have-nots' those who need assistance.
- Build consensus.