

CHAPTER 8: Intergovernmental Cooperation

8.1 Background

This is the eighth of nine chapters in the City's Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of this chapter is to overview intergovernmental cooperation, inventory existing cooperative efforts, identify potential opportunities, and establish goals, objectives, and policies to promote intergovernmental cooperation.

A. Overview

As discussed earlier in the plan, the City of Wisconsin Rapids is surrounded by the Towns of Grand Rapids, Saratoga, Seneca, Sigel, and Rudolph, and the Villages of Biron and Port Edwards, and is part of Wood County. All of these are important intergovernmental relationships for the city. Efforts should be made to maintain good working relationships with the surrounding towns, villages, as well as the county.

The issue of intergovernmental cooperation is increasingly important, since many issues cross over political boundaries, such as watersheds, labor force, commuter patterns, and housing. Communities are not independent of each other, but rather, dependent on each other. The effects from growth and change on one community spill over to all surrounding communities and impact the region as a whole.

Statewide, Wisconsin has over 2,500 units of government and special purpose districts. Having so many governmental units allows for local representation, but also adds more players to the decision-making process. In general terms, intergovernmental cooperation is any arrangement by which officials of two or more jurisdictions coordinate plans, policies, and programs to address and resolve issues of mutual interest. It can be as simple as communication and information sharing, or it can involve entering into formal intergovernmental agreements and sharing resources such as equipment, buildings, staff, and revenue.

B. Benefits

There are many reasons intergovernmental cooperation makes sense. Some examples include:

- **Trust:** Cooperation can lead to positive experiences and results that build trust between jurisdictions. As jurisdictions

communicate and collaborate on issues of mutual interest, they become more aware of one another's needs and priorities. They can better anticipate problems and work to avoid them.

- **Cost Savings:** Cooperation can save money by increasing efficiency and avoiding unnecessary duplication. Cooperation can enable some communities to provide their residents with services that would otherwise be too costly.
- **Consistency:** Cooperation can lead to consistency of the goals, objectives, plans, policies, and actions of neighboring communities and other jurisdictions.
- **Address Regional Issues:** By communicating and coordinating their actions, and working with regional and state jurisdictions, local communities are able to address and resolve issues that are regional in nature.

The major beneficiary of intergovernmental cooperation is the local resident. They may not understand, or even care about the details of a particular intergovernmental issue, but residents can appreciate their benefits, such as costs savings, provision of needed services, a healthy environment, and a strong economy.

C. Trends

A variety of factors, some long-standing and others more recent, have brought the issue of governmental cooperation to the forefront. Some of these factors include:

- Local governments financial situation;
- Opportunity to reduce costs by working together;
- Elimination of duplication of services;
- Population settlement patterns and population mobility;
- Economic and environmental interdependence; and

In addition, as more jurisdictions create comprehensive plans and share them with surrounding communities, new opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation will be identified.

D. Tools of Intergovernmental Cooperation

There are two primary tools that can be used in the area of intergovernmental cooperation.

1. Shared Service Agreements

Wisconsin Statute s.66.0301, formerly 66.30, entitled "Intergovernmental Cooperation" enables local governments to jointly do together whatever one can do alone. Typically, intergovernmental cooperation and coordination refers to the management and delivery of public services and facilities. It is also dependent upon a defined geographic area within which cooperation and coordination may be feasible.

Intergovernmental agreements prepared using this statute are the most common form of agreement, and have been used by communities for years, often in the context of sharing public services such as police, fire, or rescue. This type of agreement can also be used to provide for revenue sharing, to determine future land use within a subject area, and to set temporary municipal boundaries. However, the statute does not require planning as a component of any agreement, and boundary changes have to be accomplished through the normal annexation process. Shared service agreements are utilized to allow this type of cooperation.

2. Boundary Agreements

Under Wisconsin Statutes s.66.0307, municipalities may prepare cooperative boundary plans or agreements. Each city, village, or town that intends to participate in the preparation of a cooperative plan must adopt a resolution authorizing its participation in the planning process.

Cooperative boundary plans or agreements involve decisions regarding the maintenance or change of municipal boundaries for a period of 10 years or more. The cooperative plan must include a plan for the physical development of the territory covered by the plan. It must also include a schedule for changes to the boundary; plans for the delivery of services; an evaluation of environmental features, and a description of any adverse environmental consequences that may result from the implementation of the plan. It must also address the need for safe and affordable housing. The participating communities must hold a public hearing prior to its adoption.

Once adopted, the plan must be submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Administration for state approval. Upon approval, the cooperative plan has the force and effect of a contract. Working with the towns, the city could use this tool to establish boundaries in certain areas where it is logical and in the best interest to do so from a planning and service delivery standpoint.

8.2 Inventory & Trends

Currently there are numerous relationships and several general agreements in place. The following is a summary of existing and potential cooperative efforts.

A. Intergovernmental Relationships

1. Local

Existing areas of cooperation include:

The City of Wisconsin Rapids, the Village of Port Edwards, and the Town of Grand Rapids currently operate the South Wood County Airport. The City of Nekoosa recently joined this group of communities for the joint operation of the airport.

The Fire, Police, and EMS Departments all have mutual aid agreements in place with the surrounding communities.

The city provides the majority of funding to the Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce through room tax dollars.

An agreement is in place for street plowing along the borderline streets.

An agreement is in place with the Village of Biron for wastewater treatment.

The city regularly hosts other south Wood County communities elected officials to discuss issues that impact everyone. The city and surrounding communities need to continue to identify and explore potential areas of cooperation.

2. County, School Districts, & Regional

County:

Wood County provides a variety of services to the residents of Wisconsin Rapids, including 911 dispatch and health services. As the county seat, the city is the center of county government. The Courthouse is located in the city.

Wisconsin Rapids School District:

The city is fully within the boundaries of the Wisconsin Rapids Public School District (WRPS). Communication is important, especially when

reviewing new residential subdivision proposals, both in the city and within proximity to the city. Street configuration is an important consideration to the school district as it relates to busing students. Cul de sac streets may create difficulty for busing, as well as other services. In addition, capacity concerns of some schools may need to be considered. Residential subdivision plats should be provided to the school district prior to approval in order to get the district's comments.

Mid-State Technical College (MSTC):

The college lies just outside the City boundary in the Town of Grand Rapids. This is an important relationship for the city, especially as it relates to the planned technology park for new business. Students and staff travel along city roads to access the MSTC campus, as well. Three-way communications and planning between the City, MSTC, and Grand Rapids are necessary for existing and planned campus activities. Moreover, the city provides sewer and water to the campus by agreement.

Regional:

The City as part of Wood County is active in a multi-county economic development organization called Centergy. One current project is a business retention survey. In addition, this group promotes the region and organizes outreach efforts with state elected officials.

The City is a member of the ten-county region of the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC). The NCWRPC, established in 1973 by state statute, is a voluntary association of governments with the mission to provide local and regional assistance to its member governments. The region includes Adams, Forest, Juneau, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas, and Wood counties.

The city is currently working with Wood and Portage counties on an educational phase of compliance for EPA, Stormwater Phase II program.

3. State & Federal

As a local unit of government, the city has formal relationships with the state and federal government, and their numerous agencies. The city frequently works with the various state departments, including the Department of Transportation, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Department of Revenue. Meanwhile, the federal agencies that the city works with include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency.

8.3 Goal, Objectives & Policies

As in the previous chapters of this plan, a series of goals, objectives, and policies are identified.

Goal:

1. Encourage coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government.

Objectives:

1. Maintain current agreements and explore additional opportunities with adjacent communities for services.
2. Work cooperatively with neighboring villages and towns to develop and guide compatible development on the city's boundaries.

Policies:

1. Continue to host meetings with surrounding communities and the county to review service agreements and identify opportunities to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
2. Maintain a close relationship with the School District related to existing and new facilities.
3. Work with the surrounding townships to develop cooperative boundary agreements.
4. Develop mechanisms to communicate with surrounding communities such as Port Edwards, Nekoosa, Biron, Grand Rapids, Stevens Point, and Marshfield in regards to eco-municipality efforts.
5. Work closely with the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) to identify transportation needs and service gaps, and create strategies and actions to address them. The strategies and actions should include environmentally friendly and energy efficient alternatives, such as bicycles, light rail, and bio-diesel or electric buses.
6. Work with WisDOT to ensure that the City's short and long range plans for transportation and land use, particularly along and in

the vicinity of, the state highway routes in the city, are consistent with the state's short and long range transportation plans.

7. Work with WisDOT to help keep the state highway routes through the City safe and operating sufficiently into the future.