

## Briefing for Comprehensive Plan July 8 Meeting

For updating the comprehensive plan, there are three big questions for us to answer regarding the upcoming meeting:

- What are the key **issues and opportunities** the updated plan should address? The current plan summarizes the topics revealed in the mail-in survey. The new county plan lists issues identified by committee members, including county professionals. The new county plan placed vision statements in the first chapter, too.
- What are the **best ways to show the challenges and opportunities** the plan aims to address? Tables give specifics but don't show trends as well as graphs do. The "age pyramids" show the age distribution of the population, which is becoming increasingly elderly. Are there other pyramid graphs that would be useful?
- Is there an effective **graphical technique to depict regional relationships** between the Town of Washburn and surrounding communities? Are there patterns that effectively tell our story? For example, is our town a "bedroom community" where houses are vacant during the day? Are we an agricultural community that manages working lands and lives where we work? A key to planning is understanding the relationships between people and places. How are these relationships changing, and how do we show expected changes? I'm thinking that answering this question may be more helpful than simply listing the names and locations of community services in that section of the plan.

Preserving "rural character" is a primary focus of the current town plan. When the City of Ashland updated its comprehensive plan, its plan committee asked residents to submit photos of characteristics of the community they want to preserve. That led me to try to create my own photo collage of what makes for our town's "rural character" (attached PDF). I wonder if good graphics may do a better job of telling our story than lots of words do? I'll send some brief examples of graphics in the Ashland plan when I send the maps for our meeting.

Answering these questions may help you find these "data chapters" more interesting to review. How do we move from simply presenting data to telling a story about our town's future?