

NEWS RELEASE--PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS
WRIGHT COUNTY NORTHWEST QUADRANT LAND USE PLAN

Wright County will sponsor a series of public open house meetings to kick off work on a comprehensive plan for the northwest quadrant (NWQ) of the County. This area includes the Townships of Albion, Chatham, Clearwater, Corinna, French Lake, Maple Lake, Silver Creek and Southside, as well as the Cities of Annandale, Clearwater, Maple Lake and South Haven. The County Board adopted the Northeast Quadrant Land Use Plan on July 31, 2007, as phase 1 of a multi-year project to update and renew land use planning efforts by Wright County. (The northeast quadrant included a more urbanized area, with the Townships of Buffalo, Monticello, and Rockford, and the Cities of Albertville, Buffalo, Hanover, Monticello, Otsego, Rockford and St. Michael.) Preliminary work has begun on the NWQ, the second phase of the County Plan, and the County has continued its relationship with the consulting firm of Short Elliot Hendrickson Inc. (SEH), which is working with staff from the Wright County Office of Planning and Zoning.

The primary purpose of these open houses will be to share the preliminary findings and background data on population growth, transportation, natural resources, gravel mining, parks and recreation, past and current planning efforts and other important factors impacting the lives and aspirations of the people who live and work in northwestern Wright County. No new plans are proposed at this time. County staff will display various maps and data regarding the natural and man-made features of the NWQ, and staff from the County Planning Office, SEH, and other related agencies will be available to answer your questions and record your concerns. A brief and informal survey of those who attend may also be completed. Working maps will be available to give the public a chance to identify areas of special concern in the northwest. There is an emphasis on natural resource planning, and we are particularly anxious to find those areas that local residents believe are the hidden treasures of the northwest, due to their special beauty, natural features, ecological value, importance to wildlife and other resource concerns. However, staff will also be available to record any concerns about planning, land development, and the future that you may want to voice. There will be no speeches, and no formal presentation, but rather an opportunity for you to learn more about your neighborhood, and to teach us what you know and what concerns you.

The County Board of Commissioners has appointed members to four different committees which will work on specific topic areas of the plan for the NWQ as we proceed after these initial open houses. The County Planning Commission will work with staff on the formulation of the plan, with input and advice from these committees. The general topics assigned to the four committees, formed from volunteers representing all areas of the NWQ, are: 1) Water Quality and Natural Resource Issues; 2) Growth of the City of Annandale; 3) Growth of the City of Maple Lake; and, 4) Aggregate Resources and Mining. Due to issues which remain from the northeast quadrant plan, the committee on gravel mining will include representatives from the Monticello/Buffalo area where mining is also a critical issue. Ultimately, the County Planning Commission will have a public hearing on the plan when completed, and recommend final action to the County Board of Commissioners. The County Board has the final authority to act on the proposed Plan.

All are welcome at any of these open houses, but keep in mind that we will emphasize the townships and cities at the various open houses in accord with this schedule:

ALL OPEN HOUSES WILL BE HELD FROM 7 P.M. TO 9 P.M.

MONDAY, JANUARY 28, 2008 AT THE ANNANDALE HIGH SCHOOL COMMONS AREA

(For Corinna, French Lake and Southside Townships and Annandale and South Haven.)

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2008 AT THE MAPLE LAKE HIGH SCHOOL COMMONS AREA

(For Albion, Chatham and Maple Lake Townships and the City of Maple Lake.)

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2008 AT THE SILVER CREEK TOWN HALL

(For Clearwater and Silver Creek Townships and the City of Clearwater.)

If you cannot attend any of the open houses, or just want to follow progress on the Plan in the future, you can visit our website at: <http://www.co.wright.mn.us/departments/pandz> . The website includes a more thorough review and copy of the adopted Northeast Quadrant Plan, and a new, fledgling site for the Northwest. Future committee meetings, summaries and data will be posted on the website.