

COMMUNITY NEEDS REPORT



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



2026 Sheboygan County Community Needs Forum - CDI

Introduction

On June 17 and 18, 2026, Sheboygan County hosted a Community Needs Forum focusing on the Community Development and Positive Youth Development Institutes with participation from representatives across local community organizations. Attendees included local government officials and leaders of youth organizations. They engaged in facilitated discussions around current goals, challenges, existing and needed resources, hard to reach audiences, and opportunities for collaboration. The purpose of this report is to highlight community-identified needs relevant to the Community Development Institute (CDI), and to demonstrate how programming from Sheboygan County Extension is addressing these gaps.

Forum Discussion Summary

The forum discussion focused on the challenges currently faced by the municipalities within land use, planning, public participation, zoning ordinances, state statutes, and other issues faced by local government officials. Attendees expressed a pressing need for training programs for new and established government officials, research on land use planning/ordinances, and distribution of educational resources for local government officials. Sheboygan County does not have a county-wide zoning ordinance, so each municipality is responsible for its own land use planning and ordinance enforcement, which adds additional challenges to officials who must act upon many zoning issues on their own. Many participants also cited a lack of public participation in local government, as well as challenges filling seats held by elected officials when the time comes for elections. Participants also voiced interest in more youth participation opportunities in comprehensive planning and government decisions.

Those who could not make it to the two meetings or had additional thoughts were able to share their thoughts via an online survey distributed after the meetings. Many of the responses echoed the challenges highlighted during the in-person meetings, with additional topics such as specific technical planning training mentioned as needs.

Identified Community Needs and Gaps

The following were identified as key areas of need that the Community Development Educator should focus on for Sheboygan County.

- Local government official training and programming
- Resources on zoning ordinances, updates, and state statute updates that affect local zoning ordinances
- Comprehensive planning resources
- Resources and strategies for running effective public hearings, engaging community members in local government decision-making, and inter-governmental communications.
- Support designing and facilitating community engagement opportunities.

Extension Alignment

Sheboygan County's Community Development Educator is currently focused 100% on the Local Government Education program, as identified through the 2025 Community Needs Forum. Sheboygan County is home to 118,034 residents per the 2020 US Census, and has 28 total municipal entities, 15 of which are towns that do not rely on county-wide zoning ordinances. Each town therefore is responsible for its own zoning code of ordinances and its enforcement. The Community Development (CD) Extension Educator will prioritize their effort providing educational support to best prepare these municipalities to face current and evolving challenges facing Wisconsin, including renewable energy ordinances, comprehensive plan preparation, farmland preservation plan compliance, and state statute compliance. The Sheboygan County Community Development Educator will also keep abreast of statewide initiatives spearheaded by UW Extension and pass along the findings to local officials when reports, programming, and research are made available.

The Community Development Educator will serve as a conduit for additional statewide Extension programs and educational resources, connecting them and local officials who may benefit from said programming. Examples include "lunch and learns" from state-wide educators and distribution of resources created by UW Extension. Additional efforts to collaborate with the Positive Youth Development Institute will be pursued by the Community Development Educator to provide resources to those who identified youth engagement as a key need in their municipality.

Additional Extension Resources to support Sheboygan County

- UW - Stevens Point Center for Land Use Education
 - Extension CD educators work closely with [Center for Land Use Education - University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point](#) to distribute resources and educational materials
- Role-based Skill and Leadership Development for local government officials and staff
 - Local Government Leadership Academy (<https://leadershipdevelopment.extension.wisc.edu/local-government-leadership-academy/>),
 - Certified Public Managers Program (<https://localgovernment.extension.wisc.edu/cpm-program/>)
 - County Officials Workshops (<https://localgovernment.extension.wisc.edu/home-page/county-officials-workshops/>)
 - Town and Village Officials Workshops (<https://localgovernment.extension.wisc.edu/home-page/town-officials-workshops/>)
 - Town Clerk Trainings (<https://localgovernment.extension.wisc.edu/clerks/#townclerks>).
- RESET - Engaging Wisconsin Communities in Renewable Energy
 - [RESET](#) will be presenting additional educational materials in Sheboygan County in August 2026
- Additional newsletters, outreach
 - The Extension CD Educator in Sheboygan County will distribute new materials as they are made available through the [UW Extension - Sheboygan County CDI](#) website.