

# Avon Hills Initiative

## Last Chance for Public Input on Comprehensive Plan

**T**he Stearns County Comprehensive Plan is nearing the finish line. Please attend the hearing on October 9<sup>th</sup> in Freeport to support it.

Avon Hills Initiative volunteers Alan Davison and Steven Plantenberg along with other citizens have spent many hours crafting a document that will be the basis of land-use decisions in Stearns county for the next 5-10 years. The Avon Hills Initiative executive board endorses the work of these volunteers.

Protection of the rural nature of the Avon Hills is an important component of the draft plan, and it is important for you to learn the details. The Initiative encourages you to attend this hearing if you support the ideas in the draft plan, as those who disagree will almost certainly be there.

*Details from the Stearns County News Release, September 21, 2007*  
It's time for the public to give their final input on the Comprehensive Plan before it goes to the Board of Commissioners for approval.

The Comprehensive Plan provides the County with a broad vision of its future, extending through the year 2030. It establishes a policy framework for land-use changes/zoning, economic development, transportation, natural resource protection, parks/recreation and intergovernmental cooperation.

Since May 2006, the staff has met with township and city leaders, state agencies, watershed districts, talked with business leaders, farmers and received feedback from residents. They did

surveys and formed a Citizens Advisory Committee to assist in the development. A draft Comprehensive Plan is now completed and the County Board of Commissioners and Planning Commission will be holding a public input session to get final thoughts from the public.

Two sessions will be held Tuesday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at the Freeport Community Center at 307 7<sup>th</sup> Street SE. The first session will begin at 2:00, with an hour allowing the public to review maps, visit "stations" for transportation, land use, economic development, natural resources, intergovernmental communication, implementation and parks/open space/recreation. From 3:00 to 5:00, there will be time for members of the public to give their comments on elements of the Comprehensive Plan. The second session will begin at 6:00, with public input from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. There will be no formal presentation; these sessions are structured so that people can come and go as needed.

After the input sessions, revisions will be made as necessary and the plan will go to the County Board in late November or early December for a public hearing and adoption. The goal is to have the plan implemented by the first of the year.

A copy of the draft plan is on the Stearns County web site. A draft copy is also available in the Stearns County Environmental Services office at 705 Courthouse Square in downtown St. Cloud.

## News Briefs

### **Raised in the Hills: Teen Art Exhibit Opens Saturday**

**A**von Area Arts Connection is sponsoring "Raised in the Hills," an exhibit of works from teenage artists from the Avon Hills area.

Work from artists Matt Adelman, Megan Bergen, Kenzie Cotty, Becky Dingmann, Liam Dwyer, Becky Hare, Anneke Jenkins, Heidi Jenkins, Kassie Kmitch and Samantha Koltes will be on display at Angel Fire Ranch—Treehouse Studio in Avon. The exhibit is open from 12:00-4:00 p.m. on October 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>.

The Avon Area Arts Connection seeks to develop an artistic and cultural community within the Avon area which encourages and nurtures the creative spirit. Visit the website at [www.avonartsconnection.org](http://www.avonartsconnection.org) or e-mail [avonarts@gmail.com](mailto:avonarts@gmail.com) to learn more about this new venture.

### **Collegeville Colors on Sunday**

**S**aint John's Preparatory school will once again be celebrating Collegeville Colors on Sunday, October 7<sup>th</sup>.

Families are invited to hike among the autumn colors of Saint John's Arboretum while enjoying art, music, theatre, and nature activities along the trails. Bouja and other treats will be served.

The event runs from 1:00—5:00 p.m. rain or shine. Family registration is \$40. Direct questions to 320.363.3317 or 800.525.7737.

## AHI to Welcome Land Heritage Coordinator

The Avon Hills Initiative Executive Committee received seven applications for the position of Land Heritage Coordinator. A subcommittee is in the process of interviewing four of the applicants, and hopes to name the new hire by mid-October.

The position is made possible by a grant from the Initiative Foundation. The Land Heritage Coordinator will be responsible for advancing the goals of the Avon Hills Initiative and will take direction from the Executive Committee in support of the volunteer efforts of Avon Hills Initiative members.

Functions of the position include: assisting Avon Hills Initiative representatives, township, city and county officials in their work on comprehensive

land-use plans for the area; attending meetings of the Avon Hills Initiative and related organizations; researching existing land-use policies and other information relevant to the Initiative; organizing and leading community information and training sessions; assisting in the development and promotion of a conservation overlay district for the Avon Hills; and expanding general knowledge and appreciation of the Initiative.

The Executive Committee members are extremely pleased with the quality of the candidates considering this is a part-time, short-term position. It is clear that all applicants have a passion for the Avon Hills and the Avon Hills Initiative.

## Public Invited to Avon Hills Documentary Premiere

On October 25, UTS (The Project for Under-Told Stories, Saint John's University) will host the premiere screening of a short documentary—*If a Road Runs Through It*. The film was directed by Mark Conway and Nick Hayes and produced by Nikki See, with Fredde Sam Lazaro as executive producer. The premiere screening of the film will be held at Pellegrine Auditorium at Saint John's University on October 25 beginning at 7:30.

The documentary tells the story of the challenges rapid change and development have brought to the Avon Hills region of Stearns county.

*If a Road Runs Through It* is in part an elegy for the passing of a way of rural life nurtured for over a century by family farms, the Saint John's Abbey, and the Monastery of Saint Benedict. It tells the story of Bob Rassier's determination to hang on to his family farm, the last standing farm in the

city of St. Joseph. His farm, like the meadow and forest lands of the College of Saint Benedict, stands in the way of a proposed bypass that would connect Interstate 94 with the suburbs and new development sprawling westward from St. Cloud. *If a Road Runs Through It* also tells the story of the stewardship of the land for a century and a half by Saint John's Abbey. The Saint John's Arboretum may well be the last refuge of the old landscape and ecosystem.

The documentary also tells the story of the Schellinger family. Other area family farms and properties were sold to developers for expansion of housing subdivisions. Instead of following this path, the Schellingens sold 102 acres of pristine woodlands to the DNR. The next generation of the family and the neighbors will continue to have access to the land and enjoy it as it has been for centuries.

## Avon Hills Initiative Executive Committee

**Peter Dwyer**  
Committee Chair  
Avon, MN

**Allan Davisson  
& Steve Plantenberg**  
Government Relations Comm.  
Cold Spring, MN and Avon, MN

**Mike Leedahl**  
Fundraising Committee  
Avon, MN

**Lowell Rushmeyer**  
Land Stewardship/Biological  
Sciences Committee  
Albany, MN

**Bill Fahrney  
& Cliff Borgerding**  
Administration Committee  
Cold Spring, MN and Avon, MN

**Jackie Leedahl**  
Cultural History/  
Sense of Place Committee  
Avon, MN

**S. Phyllis Plantenberg, OSB**  
Non-Governmental Relations  
Committee  
St. Joseph, MN

**Mark Conway**  
Education & PR Committee  
Avon, MN

Non-voting staff assistance provided by: John Maile, *The Nature Conservancy*; Rachel Peterson and Tom Kroll, *Saint John's Arboretum*. Volunteers welcome on all committees.

**To be added to the Avon Hills Initiative mailing list at no cost, please contact:  
Saint John's Arboretum  
Collegeville, MN 56321  
arboretum@csbsju.edu  
320.363.3163**