

SUMMARY

The McLeod County Land Use Plan was prepared over a two-year period ending in mid-1992 by the County Planning Commission with assistance from a committee of representatives of each of the County fourteen townships and nine cities. Technical assistance was provided by the County staff and a consultant. The plan addresses the planning and regulation of land outside the cities.

ISSUES

Land use and development issues were identified by interviewing township and county residents, landowners and officials, by hearing comments from the Planning Commission and members of the Comprehensive Planning Committee. These issues were grouped into four topics: (1) municipal fringe development, (2) preservation of agricultural resources, (3) environmental concerns and (4) land development ordinance provisions and administration. The issues are summarized beginning on page 23.

LAND USE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals and objectives were written to help create a land use plan map and to help in amending and administering the County Zoning Ordinance. These statements, organized into the categories of Growth Management, Environmental Protection and Economic Development, also guided the preparation of policy statements, which are more explicit indications of how the County wishes to respond to the issues.

Growth Management

Goal 1: Urban and Rural Areas.

Promote cost-efficient and attractive urban development in the cities and agricultural, agriculturally-related or very low-density housing development in the townships.

Objectives:

- A. Encourage residential, commercial, and industrial development within municipalities, where services are available.
- B. Encourage residential, commercial or industrial development on the fringes of the cities in a manner which:
 - 1. Is consistent with city plans for street and drainage rights-of-way.
 - 2. Is consistent with city land use planning.
 - 3. Does not economically preclude eventual extension of city sewer and water lines.
- C. Preserve rural character.
- D. Protect the fiscal health of the county, townships, cities and school districts.
- E. Help the cities become or remain economically vibrant, physically attractive and safe places to live.

Goal 2: Fiscal Responsibility.

Make the most efficient and economical use of public funds and investments.

Objectives:

- A. Avoid the duplication of facilities or services at all levels of government -- state, county, city, township and school district.
- B. Avoid the premature or unwarranted replacement or enlargement of public facilities.

Goal 3: Agricultural Preservation.

Preserve the long-term agricultural use of the more productive soils in the county.

Agriculture is an important component of the regional economy and farm operators will be protected, to the extent possible, from development which may contribute to land use conflicts and/or nuisance complaints.

Objectives:

- A. Protect agriculture and farm operators from development which may contribute to the loss of farmland and land use conflicts and/or nuisance complaints.
- B. Discourage subdivision of the county's best farmland for housing and other non-farm uses.
- C. Allow limited non-farm development provided that the impacts on agricultural land and activities are minimized.

Goal 4: Land Development Regulation.

Administer the Land Use Plan, Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance in a clear, consistent and equitable manner.

Objectives:

- A. Clearly define the relationships between, and the responsibilities of, the townships and the County in the administration of the subdivision and zoning regulations.
- B. Modify existing policies and regulations, and develop new programs as necessary, to address land use and development concerns, improve administrative efficiency, and protect the health and welfare of the County's residents.

Goal 5: Resource Stewardship.

Promote the wise use of land, water, and other natural resources along with significant historic and archaeologic resources for the long-term benefit and enjoyment of County residents.

Objectives:

- A. Promote the proper management of natural resources of McLeod County (surface water, ground water, woodlands, farmland, wildlife, and varied topography) for future generations.
- B. Protect the natural scenic qualities of McLeod County while accommodating low-density rural development.
- C. Provide adequate solid waste collection and recycling programs for County residents.
- D. Reduce the negative impacts of landfill and gravel pit operations on County residents.
- E. Achieve orderly development of mineral resources through sound mining management practices, mitigation of adverse environmental impacts, and planning for the re-use of the sites.

- F. Preserve evidence of the cultural and social history of McLeod County.
- G. Minimize air and water pollution.
- H. Promote the goals and objectives of the McLeod County Comprehensive Water Management Plan. Specifically, protect the county's water resources through programs and policies that address agricultural runoff, surface water management, and wetland, shoreland, and floodplain protection.

Economic Development

Goal 6: Growth Promotion.

Promote economic development in McLeod County through sound land use planning.

Objectives:

- A. Increase the tax-base of the county in order to reduce the burden on individual tax-payers.
- B. Help provide more and better job opportunities for county residents.
- C. Reduce the need to commute outside the county for employment.
- D. Diversify the local economy.

URBAN EXPANSION AREA

The concept of the Urban Expansion Area, already included in the County Zoning Ordinance, was continued. Its purpose is to coordinate land planning and zoning between the townships and cities so that the cities can expand economically and efficiently, attracting jobs, housing and tax base. Aiding city growth should also relieve the agricultural areas of some development pressure, thus preserving farmland.

The minimum lot size in the Urban Expansion Area will be 1-1/4 acres. Each lot must have a shape and width that allows easy resubdivision if or when city utilities become available to it. Also, before

any division of land is allowed, the city and the township must conduct a joint review of the original parcel to ensure that the possible future extension of city streets and utilities is not being precluded or hampered. Any Lot of Record at the time the County Zoning Ordinance is amended to implement this policy can be used for at least one house. All lots must meet the County's on-site sewage treatment requirements.

AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION AREA

The minimum lot size in the Agricultural Protection Area is 1-1/4 acres and the maximum allowable housing density is 1 house per Quarter-Quarter Section (40 acres). Parcels that are judged to be "difficult to farm" may have up to 8 houses per 40 acres (or proportionately less depending on the size of the parcel. Parcels "difficult to farm" should be small and physically isolated from other farm fields by roads, steep hills, ditches or similar features and/or wooded.

ON-SITE SEWAGE SYSTEMS

McLeod County will work to protect groundwater through proper siting, design and maintenance of all septic systems. Development in rural areas will only be allowed where tests indicate that the soils are suitable for on-site treatment systems over the long-term. Minnesota Rules Chapter 7080 and MPCA standards will be used as a guide to design systems. A site proven suitable for a backup (replacement) leaching field for all septic systems will be required. Septic systems should be required to meet minimum standards when property is sold or transferred by mortgage, contract for deed or other device.

SHORELANDS, WETLANDS AND FLOODPLAINS

To protect surface water quality, life, property and appearances, McLeod County will continue to enforce its zoning regulations pertaining to shorelands, wetlands and floodplains.