



Meeting Notes

February 20, 2018 Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
Rice County Environmental Services
www.co.rice.mn.us/planning

Steering Committee Members – Attendance

Jake Gillen, District 1 County Commissioner – Present
Galen Malecha, District 2 County Commissioner – Present
Dave Miller, District 3 County Commissioner – Present
Steve Bauer, District 4 County Commissioner – Absent
Jeff Docken, District 5 County Commissioner - Present

Tom Sammon, Planning Commission Chair - Absent
Preston Bauer, Planning Commissioner - Present
Michael Streiff III, Planning Commissioner - Absent
Charlie Peters, Planning Commissioner – Absent

Staff Attendance

Julie Runkel, Environmental Services Director
Nicole Bonde-Jones, Environmental Services Planner
Anna Aguilar, Administrative Coordinator
Trent McCorkell, Zoning Administrator

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee met on February 20, 2018 at the Board of Commissioners Committee of Whole meeting at 8:30 a.m. Staff facilitated an hour long work session to get consensus on land use goals and strategies. Staff distributed a land use goals and strategies survey to assist with that discussion. The following topics and comments were gathered at the meeting.

1. Land Use Statistics

Staff shared further Land Use data related to the 2004 and 2017 Rice County Tax Parcel Classification maps shown at the February 1, 2018 meeting. Staff presented a breakdown of acreage amounts per tax classification from 2004 compared to 2017.

Discussion included that using Parcel Classification is not a perfect way to separate out land uses and that the decrease in Agricultural land percentage could be, in part, due to changes in parcel classification coding.

As recommended, Staff contacted the US Farm Service Agency to consolidate Conservation Reserve Programs (CRP) statistics. Staff presented a comparison of the amount of land (acreage) enrolled in CRP in 1990, 2000 and 2016. This data demonstrated a decrease in acreage enrolled in CRP over the past twenty-six years which was opposite of what was expected when discussing the University of Minnesota remote sensing Land Use maps and data from 1990 and 2000 on February 1, 2018.

It was discussed that advances in remote sensing technology could play a part in the large increase in Grass/Shrub/Wetland areas displayed on the 2000 remote sensing map compared to the 1990 version.

2. Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Analysis

Staff presented TDR statistics and trends from 2004 to 2016. Statistics included the total number of sending (conservation areas) and receiving (buildable) sites, the total amount of acreage by type of TDR, the amount of acreage by type of TDR per year, the number of lots created and conservation area acreage by township, as well as information on all the subdivisions in the County to include the year they were created and the townships they are located in. Aerial photos of the Charles Ridge subdivision before and after were also presented.

Discussion included the following:

- a) The aerials were a good visual for consolidating development in subdivisions and for the number of quarters and acres covered by conversation easements.

- b) One member thought maybe the Urban Reserve district is, in a sense, idle land that could be a more desirable location for cluster developments with easier access to municipalities compared to in the Ag district. Something to think about.
- c) There seems to be a small number of TDRs utilized compared to what was initially expressed and that the spike of TDRs in 2005 was caused by the proposed population increase that did not happen.
- d) TDRs created building options for those that did not have any and offered an option for those with lost rights to transfer the building right off the parcel.

Staff are working with the cities to create an updated version of the Urban Reserve area to be more realistic as to where the cities may expand based on infrastructure, etc. rather than just a generic distance from current city limits.

Data on subdivisions in Shoreland districts, number of new development and population changes per Township will be presented at future meetings.

3. Land Use Goals & Strategies

Members of the Steering Committee were asked to take a survey prior to the meeting to assist in deciding which Land Use goals & strategies to move forward with. Eight of the nine Steering Committee members participated.

In the survey, members were asked to rate eight goal/strategy pairs, related to Land Use, on a scale of Strongly Support to Strongly Oppose. Below is a summary of the results from the survey and what was discussed for each Land Use pair presented.

Goal: *Support and encourage orderly growth and development*

Strategy: ***Support land use planning which encourages orderly growth and development and redevelopment.***

- 5 Strongly Support
- 3 Support
- One comment submitted: "I picked support as I think the strategy wording should be tweaked on this goal. I think folks see land use planning as an obstacle as opposed to a tool for achieving the county's growth objectives. The strategy could possible use a tweak such as adding the word "sustainable" development and redevelopment?"
- Discussion: None opposed to wording change.
- New strategy wording is: *Support land use planning which encourages orderly growth and sustainable development and redevelopment.*

Strategy: ***Encourage a diverse economic mix for Rice County by promoting existing assets.***

- 3 Strongly Support
- 4 Support
- 1 Oppose
- Two comments submitted: "Can do both." & "The strategy on this does not make sense to me. If the county promotes existing assets that does not guarantee a diverse economic mix even though this may be the case today."
- Discussion: In response to second comment, could add "and identify new opportunities". Don't want to take away but can definitely add to strategy. None opposed to wording addition.
- New strategy wording is: *Encourage a diverse economic mix for Rice County by promoting existing assets and identifying new opportunities.*

Strategy: ***Identify areas for mixed use development and support urban growth***

- 1 Strongly Support

- 7 Support
- One comment submitted: "Again, the wording is okay here but does "pop" as to a strategy for orderly growth and development. Possibly change to; "Identify additional areas for mixed use development and further support urban growth."
- Discussion: What is the definition of urban in this strategy? One member stated the county only has jurisdiction over the Urban Reserve, not cities. Staff reminded the members that the comprehensive plan is not just about zoning regulations but other action items as well and there may be multiple programs the county is involved in that support both urban and rural areas. Most thought that the definition of urban to them in this strategy means municipalities. None opposed the wording change.
- New strategy wording is: *Identify additional areas for mixed use development and further support urban growth.*

Strategy: ***Promote the opportunity to lead active and healthy lifestyles through the coordinated development of infrastructure or supporting programs which promote active lifestyles.***

- 1 Strongly Support
- 6 Support
- 1 Strongly Oppose
- Two comments submitted: "Priorities as far as county tax dollars go. Perhaps a grant or trail tool/license could help pay for trails." & "This strategy does not fit my definition of encouraging orderly growth and development. I equate orderly growth and development with new business and expansion of existing businesses. I could be way off in looking at it this way though."
- Discussion: Staff reminded the Steering Committee of previous meeting's discussion that this is not just about bike trails but a variety of things such as housing density with accessible parks, providing connections, other active lifestyles and accessibility to local, healthy food options. It was decided to leave strategy as is for now.

Strategy: ***Support land use patterns that encourage alternative modes of transportation.***

- 7 Support
- 1 Oppose
- Two comments submitted: "Going to be more than a county effort." & "This strategy is a little foggy for me as well...I don't think we have existing land use patterns that encourage alternative modes of transportation. The only land use that supports alternative transportation is farm equipment on county roads! I think if this is a strategy we need to add "Further Develop" instead of "support"."
- Discussion: Again a reminder that alternative transportation is not just bikes but a multitude of options. Basically anything other than automobiles which are currently the primary mode of transportation. It could mean local bus networks, transit, walking, etc. There has been discussion in the past about creating a transit hub to support travel north of and to other cities within the county. Need to determine what the need is for this. Could add "further develop" after "support" instead of replacing. None opposed the wording change.
- New strategy wording is: *Support and further develop land use patterns that encourage alternative modes of transportation.*

Goal: ***Preserve agricultural land and natural resources.***

Strategy: ***Minimize conflicts between agricultural, residential and other uses.***

- 4 Strongly Support
- 4 Support
- One comment submitted: "I think the strategy needs some adjustments such as "Prioritize the needs of agricultural and non-agricultural land uses to ensure conflicts today and in the future are minimal."

- Discussion: Possible re-wording could be “Prioritize and Preserve”. This could also tie into the mixed-use strategy. Decided proposed re-wording in comment could be used more as an objective/action item that is a little more specific than the overarching strategy.

Strategy: ***Preserve, protect and improve the surface and underground waters including, but not limited to, rivers, streams, lakes, groundwater and aquifer recharge areas.***

- 1 Strongly Support
- 7 Support
- One comment submitted: "This goal and strategy make sense."
- Discussion: There is general support for this strategy, some just worry about going overboard with it.

Strategy: ***Minimize the potential for air, water and land contamination that could result from the development process.***

- 3 Strongly Support
- 5 Support
- Two comments submitted: "Already do that but maybe more environmental studies of some sort?" & "Possible adjustment of the strategy too; "In working through land development, the potential for air, water, and land contamination will be considered and minimized throughout the entire process."
- Discussion: Most of these make you think of a specific instance but overall the strategies are very broad. The proposed wording change includes after the actual development is complete. Steering Committee is in agreement of wording change.
- New strategy wording is: *In working through land development, the potential for air, water, and land contamination will be considered and minimized throughout the entire process.*

Members were asked *"In the space provided below, please indicate if you feel any goals and/or strategies pertaining to land use in Rice County were missed."*

- Four comments submitted:
 - a) "I think the main ones were addressed."
 - b) "What are the current & future projections for our county in regard to demographics? What is changing? What is growing & what is declining? What do we want to look like in the future? Is our plan fair to our goals?"
 - c) "No"
 - d) "I'm thinking out loud here some, however when the planning commission hears public hearings around zoning changes it seems like there is some misunderstanding in the community as to how and why this comes about. It would be nice if we could develop a goal and a strategy that addresses the changes in zoning that take place and how the needs of all stakeholders will be considered by the county when making these changes. It might be as simple as just laying out the importance of these decisions and how they are not made lightly."
- Discussion: Group in general felt comfortable with these goals and strategies and at this time did not have additional ones they felt were missing. Staff suggested as other areas of the comp plan are completed, goals and strategies will likely overlap and it will make it easier to see if we have missed or need to add anything.

Next Meeting: Thursday, March 1st at 6:00 pm (prior to BOA & PC meeting).