

Comprehensive Plan -2002-



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INTRODUCTION

Rice County is located immediately south of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area and is termed a Collar County. This location provides many opportunities and potential problems related to land use and transportation decisions. Growth is a positive influence but it also creates problems with the status quo for existing residents and business people, specifically the farmers. In the recent past there was little population movement from the metropolitan area to Rice County. That has changed. Interstate 35 runs through Rice County in a north/south corridor near the center of the County. This allows easy access to the metropolitan area from all areas of Rice County. Commute time to the southern parts of metro from Rice County is similar to the time spent commuting within the metropolitan area. This fact along with the lower land prices in Rice County accounts for a stronger demand for development in Rice County. For example, not many years ago there was not a home in the "Parade of Homes" located in Rice County or our cities, but in the 2002 event there was a double-digit number of homes included. While being far from scientific documentation it speaks volumes regarding market conditions. This movement of new residents into Rice County has created some significant issues between the new residents and some of the longer Rice County residents. Some of these are the infringement onto lands once exclusively used for agricultural purposes. The plan will attempt to address the questions of these conflicts, demand for more services and how to handle additional growth that is bound to happen in Rice County.

The Rice County Comprehensive Plan is prepared to assist in the decision making to guide the growth and development for the next twenty years. It is understood that no plan can anticipate all the changes that will occur in that time frame so this document will need to be reviewed and amended from time to time. It is for these reasons the plan should be reviewed annually and have an extensive review every five years to keep the plan current and effective. The Rice County Planning Commission shall complete an annual review in January of each year (commence in 2004) with recommendations forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners.

The Comprehensive Plan is a document that must be used in decision making on a regular basis. The plan is a living document and must be used to be effective. The first use of the plan is to provide a basis for a new Zoning Ordinance for Rice County. Starting the new ordinances will commence when the plan is submitted to Minnesota Planning in September 2002. This overlap of processes will allow the County to be in a position to adopt some of the most critical sections of the ordinance at the same time the plan is adopted. It is anticipated the complete ordinance can be in place by June 2003.

This Comprehensive Plan was completed with the assistance of the State of Minnesota through a Community Based Planning and Technology Grant administered by Minnesota Planning. The grant was also necessary to develop a Geographic Information System (GIS), which currently includes all of Rice County except for the Cities of Faribault and Northfield. Rice County is working with both communities so the system may be Countywide by 2004.

The Rice County Planning Staff, along with citizen input, prepared the plan with assistance of several state agencies. Primarily, Minnesota Planning, Minnesota Department of Transportation, Minnesota Historical Society and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources were all active participants in providing information and expertise. Two consultants were used in the preparation of the Origin/Destination Traffic Study and the GIS program.

The commitment to this project by the Rice County Board of County Commissioners was and is exemplary. The Board has been a solid advocate and contributed many hours of time, political support and provided the leadership along with additional financial resources necessary to complete this plan. The Board embraces this project and process understanding the importance of good planning to maximize the quality of life for Rice County citizens. Many hours of volunteer time have been donated by hundreds of Rice County residents and property owners, which shows additional wide spread strong support and interest for this project.

The Comprehensive Plan is broken in two documents. This Comprehensive Plan document along with an extensive Fundamental Inventory Guide. The guide provides extensive background information and data used in the development of this plan. It was purposefully done in this manner to keep the working Comprehensive Plan as a more user-friendly and compact document. The Fundamental Inventory Guide will also be updated as new and more complete information comes available.

The Comprehensive Plan is organized utilizing the eleven goals of the Community Based Planning Program.

- 1. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**
- 2. COOPERATION**
- 3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
- 4. CONSERVATION**
- 5. LIVEABLE COMMUNITY DESIGN**
- 6. HOUSING and POPULATION PROJECTIONS**
- 7. TRANSPORTATION**
- 8. LAND-USE PLANNING**
- 9. PUBLIC INVESTMENTS**
- 10. PUBLIC EDUCATION**
- 11. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**
- 12. IMPLEMENTATION**

VISION STATEMENT

The Rice County Board of Commissioners, along with the Planning Commission and the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, comprised of citizens representing all the cities and townships of Rice County, have developed this Community Based Comprehensive Plan to assure that the quality of life for current and future residents of Rice County shall be preserved and protected.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives are summarized in this section. They are also included in the individual chapters where applicable. The text includes the discussion from the citizen input of the numerous meetings, and general background information for the goals and objectives.

Goal 1—Coordinate annual meetings with all municipalities in Rice County

Goal 2—Coordinate annual meetings with all townships in Rice County

Goal 3—Encourage townships and municipalities to work together to construct orderly annexation agreements and urban growth zones

Goal 4—Invite school districts in Rice County to provide input in pending changes to planning and zoning regulations

Objective 1—Formulate a referral process with school districts on development

Goal 5—Establish a Countywide Economic Development Initiative, in cooperation with municipalities and townships, to promote employment and expand the tax base in Rice County

Objective 1—Continue to work with the cities of Rice County to keep urban growth boundaries up to date

Objective 2—Develop a gateway beautification plan for major entrances into Rice County and into municipalities and villages

Goal 6—Coordinate with all highway agencies, municipalities and townships to facilitate development of a safe and efficient transportation system

Goal 7—Coordinate with state and environmental agencies to provide input to general planning activities and to provide input into the development process

Goal 8—Rice County is committed to continuing a public participation process in planning activities

Goal 9—Coordinate with state agencies on a regular basis

Goal 10—Minimize tax burden on all residents and property owners by planning for the affordable delivery of public services

Objective 1—Lessen the impact of service delivery costs by encouraging development to locate where public utilities and services are available

Goal 11—Create commercial/industrial zones to promote employment and generate tax base in Rice County

Objective 1—Establish proper zoning and subdivision regulations to regulate nonresidential development

Objective 2—Create zoning districts for the unincorporated villages to allow for mixed-use development

Objective 3—Create zoning districts to accommodate a wide variety of nonresidential development

Goal 12—Develop a licensing system for rural businesses, excluding agricultural, and home occupations in rural Rice County

Goal 13—Promote private recreational enterprises by utilizing a recreation zone district

Goal 14—Encourage the development of infrastructure to promote telecommuting and E-business in Rice County

Goal 15—Identify, preserve and protect historic and prehistoric sites and cultural landmarks

Goal 16—Identify and protect areas with sand, gravel and aggregate deposits

Goal 17—Protect and promote agriculture by preserving large tracts of land by encouraging clustering of rural residential development

Goal 18—Promote environmentally sensitive erosion control practices

Goal 19—Support and implement state and federal regulations controlling the use, alteration or filling of wetlands

Goal 20—Preserve, protect and improve the surface and underground waters including, but not limited to, rivers, streams, lakes, groundwater and aquifer recharge areas

Objective 1—Encourage sensitive development in areas of exposed and rapid recharge aquifers

Objective 2—Encourage development to comply with wellhead protection zones

Goal 21—Encourage the preservation of lands for open space that are substandard for development and have limited land use due to slope, soil characteristics wetlands or other physical limiting conditions

Goal 22—Protect forestlands by regulating the density of development and by using effective forest management practices, including reforestation

Goal 23—Encourage the protection and orderly development of Rice County shoreland areas

Goal 24—Encourage and promote a PUD ordinance for shoreland areas

Goal 25—Encourage cooperative utility systems including water and sewer districts in shoreland areas

Goal 26—Complete a park and open space plan, including a natural resource inventory, for the unincorporated areas of Rice County

Goal 27—Promote development of commuter rail and other transit opportunities on the I-35 corridor

Goal 28—Encourage improvement to public transportation systems

Goal 29—Implement a Park Impact Fee for all new residential building permits

Goal 30—Promote the public health, safety and welfare by enacting and timely enforcement of a solid waste material ordinance

Goal 31—Create zoning districts for the unincorporated villages to allow for mixed-use development provided they develop municipal type water and sewer services

Goal 32—Allow for growth within unincorporated villages utilizing the Village Extension provision and require any expansion to abut the current village and provide municipal type water and sewer services

Goal 33—Encourage the development of life-cycle and affordable housing in cooperation with municipal HRAs

Goal 34—Encourage multi-family residential in appropriate areas to help meet life-cycle and affordable housing needs

Goal 35—Encourage municipalities and unincorporated villages to create convenience retail/services and employment opportunities providing they develop municipal type water and sewer services

Goal 36—Encourage all municipalities to implement goals and objectives to sustain liveable community design

Goal 37—Promote housing development in cities and unincorporated villages who can provide municipal or municipal type water and sewer services rather than in the agricultural districts.

Objective 1—Rice County will not encourage residential development without municipal or municipal type water and sewer services

Objective 2—Allow new mobile home parks only in areas with municipal or municipal type water and sewer services

Objective 3—Develop a zoning district for existing mobile home parks to allow for some growth as a conforming use

Goal 38—Allow rural housing of one unit per quarter quarter section with a second allowed when the crop equivalency rating (CER) is 65 or below with clustering of the units encouraged

Objective 1—Discourage residential development from locating near manure-spreading areas for feedlot operators

Objective 2—Require residential developers to create a plan to accommodate manure-spreading areas prior to any approval or construction

Goal 39—Encourage the maintenance and improvements to the existing housing stock

Goal 40—Support the redesigning and construction of Highways 60 and 19 including interchanges with I-35, to better serve current and future traffic demands

Goal 41—Develop a comprehensive transportation plan including review of existing and potential new access to I-35

Goal 42—Promote the design of exit 55 on I-35 into a complete interchange

Goal 43—Support the upgrading of Highway 3 between Faribault and Northfield to a four-lane roadway to accommodate existing and future traffic demands

Goal 44—Encourage the Cities of Faribault and Northfield to continue planning for increased traffic flow on Highway 3

Goal 45—Develop Access Control Policy for all roadways to improve the safety and capacity of the transportation system

Goal 46—Promote recreational trails compatible with existing land use

Goal 47—Support the study of a Highway 19 bypass around Lonsdale

Goal 48—Minimize the potential for air, waters and, land contamination and pollution that could result from the development process

Goal 49—Define, by GIS overlay, and preserve environmentally sensitive areas and other open space (such as the Big Woods) by allowing only compatible land uses and development

Goal 50—Encourage clustering of any rural residential development in close proximity to roads in an effort to protect agricultural land, environmentally sensitive areas and to facilitate emergency service

Goal 51—Encourage multi-user and sanitary sewer and water service districts for shoreland, unincorporated villages and rural residential clusters

Objective 1—Establish a sewer and water entity to research economical methods to construct and maintain sewer and water systems for communities in unincorporated areas

Goal 52—Maintain a diverse economic mix for Rice County by promoting agriculture and associated businesses

Goal 53—Discourage scattered site residential development and promote clustering

Goal 54—Allow for the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) within a township

Goal 55—Minimize conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural uses

Objective 1—Adopt land use regulations that control density and development in agricultural and open spaces, too protect and preserve agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas

Objective 2—Coordinate with Soil and Water Conservation District and Soil Conservation Services to encourage landowners and tenants to implement and maintain good soil erosion practices

Goal 56—The County will provide a zoning district extending one mile from the municipal boundaries that will restrict development until incorporated into the municipal corporate limits

Goal 57—Continue the open planning process by soliciting input from Rice County townships, cities, special districts, surrounding counties and state agencies

CHAPTER 1

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The Rice County Community Based Plan received excellent support from the Board of County Commissioners, Rice County Planning Commission, cities and townships within the County, Minnesota State Agencies, school districts in the County and most importantly the citizens of Rice County. The work program was carried out and the support and participation was excellent. Throughout the plan we encouraged the six operational principles be followed.

- 1. Learn from the past**
- 2. Listen to other opinions**
- 3. Focus on the issue at hand**
- 4. Keep a positive outlook**
- 5. Present clear and concise ideas**
- 6. Participate in the discussions and express your thoughts**

The Comprehensive Plan Citizen Committees (CPCC) consisted of citizens appointed by each of our 14 townships supervisors. Each of the cities that abutted the township was also given a seat on the CPCC so there would be good coordination between city and township. Each township CPCC elected a chair, vice-chair and a steering committee representative. The size of the CPCC varied from 9 members to as high as 28 individuals. Some meetings were more heavily attended than others but overall the participation was excellent. Many of the early meetings consisted of education and presenting information on various topics so all participants developed a good understanding of the relationship of all the interrelated topics. These meetings totaled well over 100 meetings and in each case the CPCC passed their recommendations on to the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC) consisted of the fourteen members from the township CPCC, one from each city, two planning commission members and all Five County Commissioners. The CPSC elected a chair, sub-committee chair and a secretary. The CPSC reviewed each of the recommendations from the CPCC in formulating their recommendations on the comprehensive plan to the Rice County Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission made their recommendations to the Rice County Board and the Board had several meetings and a hearing on these recommendations. The Board also had several meetings with the cities in Rice County to get their direct input. One of the positive outcomes of the Community Based Comprehensive Plan is the discussion that took place with township and city representatives. It was mentioned several times that this was the first time cities sat down with each other, and with the County Board making it a welcome event that they would like to continue. A goal of this meeting follows in the Cooperation Chapter.

This active citizen participation process took over two years to complete and involved well over 300 people attending approximately 200 public meetings. It involved excellent input from a grass roots level to the policy makers from all levels of government. The process was very time consuming but extremely rewarding and developed a knowledgeable population. The list of Rice County citizens involved at the various levels is as follows. We apologize for inadvertently not acknowledging all persons involved in the development of the plan. Without the unselfish commitments in time and energy the plan would not be as meaningful or well thought out.

The Rice County Comprehensive Plan 2002

Board of Commissioners:

**Chair - Milt Plaisance
Commissioner Dan Minnick
Commissioner Donald Olson
Commissioner Heather Robins
Commissioner Marybeth Rogers**

Planning Commission:

**Chair - Ross Nelson
Frederick Brough
Willard Estrem
John Martin
Steven McKelvey
Donald Olson
Keith Sammon**

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC) Members:

Chair - Fred Brough, Planning Commission
Vice Chair - Ross Nelson, Planning Commission
Secretary - Nancy Marth, Erin Township
Jerry Anderson, City of Dundas
Preston Bauer, Walcott Township
Carl Denkinger, Cannon City Township
Jim Donkers, Richland Township
Steve Drewitz, Warsaw Township
Evelyn Duban, City of Lonsdale
Robert Duban, Forest Township
Rafi Dworsky, Shieldsville Township
Mike Erickson, Wheeling Township
Aaron Evenson, Northfield Township
Steve Felix, City of Morristown
Wendy Francis, Walcott Township
Kent Jones, Wheatland Township
Vernon Koester, Northfield Township
Ann Laue, City of Dennison
John Martin, Wells Township
Randy Meyer, Morristown Township
Dan Minnick, Commissioner
Donald Olson, Commissioner
Phil Parsons, City of Northfield
Ken Pautz, Webster Township
Milt Plaisance, Commissioner
Heather Robins, Commissioner
Marybeth Rogers, Commissioner
Debra Sullivan, Bridgewater Township
Steve Underdahl, City of Faribault
Tom Voge, City of Nerstrand

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CITIZEN COMMITTEE (CPCC)

Bridgewater

Andrew Albers
Dennis Brown
Gary Hanson
Leif Knecht
Mike Ludwig
Charles Morse
Phil Parsons
Bob Ruddle
Don Thomas

Jerry Anderson
Georgiana Campbell
Stephanie Henriksen
Rob Lamma
Dan Melchert
Jerry Norgaard
Kraig Quamme
L. Stremcha
Charles Unbanhowar

Sheila Bomegl
Jeanne Daniels
Gordon Kelley
Peter Little
Dan Morris
Vance Norgaard
Geraldine Reuvers
Debra Sullivan
Gary Van Erp

Cannon City

Orland Anderka
Dawn Cherwinka
Carl Denkinger
Margaret Elstad
Lisa Jackson
Wayne Little
Willard Tripp

Mark Bauer
Greg Chmelik
Jim Donglore
Rich Ernste
Bob Lewis
Bob Nesvold
Gary Walker

Roger Bongers
Jeanne Daniels
Jim Douglas
Colin Glarner
Margaret Lewis
Dick Peterson
Steve White

Erin

Billy Brown
Leonard Duffney
Gary Mogren
Bob Schmidt
Vikki Henry

Peter Cephlecha
Bryan Kaisershot
Gary Moyer
John Titus
Tony Vikla
Glen Wondra

George Douda
Nancy Marth
Steve Schatz
Glenn Tuma
Leesa Wisdorf

Forest

Ann Arnold
Randy Ascherman
Chip Edstrom
Jeff Jasnoch
Dick Nugent
Ann Passe
William Storch
Craig Waterston

Craig Arnold
Stan Burmeister
Rachel Fisher
Bill Malecha
Chris Oatis-Skinner
Jim Rehnke
Diane Von Ruden
Kathleen Wellentin

Mike Ascherman
Bob Duban
William Honken
Mark Morris
Jim Pagel
Charles Skinner
Milton Vosejпка
Lester Wellentin

Morristown

Dave Becker	Loren Dahle	Steve Felix	Gerald Gehrke	Faye Golombeski
Kim Halvorson	Daniel Heyer	Dan Melchert	Randy Meschke	Randy Meyer
Dan Morris	Mark Morris	Nancy Morris	Steve Normeier	Roy Schmidtke

Northfield

Al Alberg	Marvis Canon	Neal Canon
Rick Estenson	Williard Estrem	Aaron Evenson
Jim Fiebelhan	John Hill	Brian Karlsson
Joe Klinkhammer	Vern Koester	Donald Meese
Vance Norgaard	Deb Thomforde	Jim Trebelhorn
Ron Nuebel	Cindy Opatrny	Rick Opatrny
Phil Parsons	Rich Patrey	Brian Peterson
Burton Peterson	Kay Peterson	Mike Peterson
	Bill Tusyeniski	

Richland

David Derscheid	Jim Donkers	Judy Johnson
Steve Johnson	Robert Megey	Bob Meyer
Arnold Petricka	Joe Purfeerst	Terry Schwake
	Scott Story	

Shieldsville

Glen Cain	Terry Donovan	Rafi Dworsky
Marvin Edel	Barbara Gieseke	John Kotek
Allen Kuball	Dale Kuchinka	Roger Madden
Dan Melchert	Jim Melchert	Sue Melchert
	Bud Norman	

Walcott

Preston Bauer	Walt Jandro	Richard Langeslag
Mary Milbert	Jim Neubert	Greg Poe
George Schneider	Margaret Van Esch	Marty Van Esch

Warsaw

C. Pat Brown
Ellie DeMars
Ron Else
Tarrin Johnson
Linda Kiekenapp
Keith Nelson
Diane Sammon
Vivian Schneider

Eileen DeGrood
Steve Drewitz
Dale Herbst
Rich Keife
Don Michel
Mary O'Neil
Keith Sammon
Elmer Schneider
Joel Winkel

George DeGrood
Loritta Dwyer
Lance Johnson
Gary Kiekenapp
Dan Morris
Richard O'Neil
Linda Sammon
Ron Wegner

Webster

William Beam
Delanne Christiansen
Joe Dupay
Susan Jacobson
Paul Linse
Bob Michel
Rosemary Nowack
Lawrence Regar
Linda Ruprecht

Ollie Byrum
Don Docken
Al Foridgus
David Jawfsen
Joan Lucas
Ken Mracek
Arnold Pavek
Russ Rogers
Rodney Smisek
Pat Wallin

Debra Christians
Jeff Docken
John Jackson
Deb Horejsi
Ray Malecha
Ross Nelson
Rodney Pavek
Marybeth Rogers
Verena Streefland

Wells

Ed Berens
Juanita Chavie
Twila Henning
Liz Krogh
Ervin Langer
Dick McDonough
Slim McShane
Larry Penon
Dick Scherfenberg

Kenneth Brazil
Donald Hanson
Ken Kangas
Daniel LaCanne
Larry Malecha
Carol McGuire
Bob Misgen
Marlene Pohl

Fred Brough
Jeff Henning
Pat Kangas
Cindy Langer
John Martin
Richard McGuire
Nancy Morris
Charles Schema
Steve Underdahl

Wheatland

Judd Dow
Ken Franek
Kent Jones
Bridget Pieper
Mark Salaba
Eugene Simon
Roger Trittelwitz

Evelyn Duban
Al Hertaus
Barb Kivisto
Bernie Rosckes
Jim Schombour
William Simon
Don Tupy

John Duban
Fritz Hertaus
Jim Kivisto
Clarence Salaba
Bernard Simacek
Dan Sticha
Don Zimanske

Wheeling

Duane Bailey
Todd Lein
Keith Schrader

Mary Chmelik
Dirk Peterson

Jeanne Daniels
Kenneth Sahlin
John Story

Delber Dellman
Kirk Sandager

Michael Erickson
Gary Schlossin
Fred Willner

Goal 57—Continue the open planning process by soliciting input from Rice County townships, cities, special districts, surrounding counties and state agencies

CHAPTER 2

COOPERATION

The citizen participation portion of the plan led Rice County to meet with the local township, municipal and school officials. The meetings were well attended and allowed all participants to better understand each other's objectives and plans. The communication lines were opened and the goal is to maintain and grow this working relationship. The participants are anxious to have this communication forum on a regular basis (Goals #1, #2, #3 and #4).

The County has encouraged each of the cities to develop and get agreement on orderly annexation agreements. The City of Northfield has completed the orderly annexation agreements with the Townships of Northfield and Bridgewater. They have also developed orderly annexation agreements with Greenvale and Waterford Townships in Dakota County. The agreement with Bridgewater Township is a 20-year agreement that allows for 150 acres to be annexed over a 5-year period. Similarly, the agreement with Northfield Township is a 20-year agreement allowing for 160 acres to be annexed over a 5-year period.

Other cities are working on orderly annexation agreements as they develop their revised comprehensive plans. The Cities of Dundas, Faribault and Lonsdale are all in the process and their orderly annexation agreements will be made part of this document, as they become available. The City of Lonsdale has been working with Wheatland and Webster Townships to allow for their anticipated growth, but at this time the agreement are not completed. It is likely that the agreements will be available prior to adoption of the Rice County Plan. The City of Faribault has requested Rice County to facilitate the meetings they need to complete their orderly annexation agreements. Faribault is working on their comprehensive plan and once they determine their growth boundaries, negotiations can commence. It is imperative the growth boundaries reflect the ability of the municipality to provide urban services. The City of Dundas has just begun their planning process and the County will continue to work with the City in formulating their orderly annexation agreements.

Goals #5 and #6 are self-explanatory and deal with the creation of an economic development partnership in the County and continuing to meet with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and other agencies to coordinate roadway improvements.

Rice County has committed to an open planning process and governmental coordination throughout the development of this plan. The County secured letters of support from its cities, townships and abutting counties before the planning process started. Throughout the planning process Rice County maintained open communication with the participants and utilized direct mail, newspapers, newsletters and the County Website to provide information and current status of the project. Not all organizations participated at each step of the process as envisioned in the work program but their input was garnered prior to the development of the plan. Rice County received excellent support from Minnesota state

agencies including: Minnesota Planning, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Historical Society, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The draft Comprehensive Plan was submitted to each of the participants for review to solicit comments before a final plan was completed.

Goal 1—Coordinate annual meetings with all municipalities in Rice County

Goal 2—Coordinate annual meetings with all townships in Rice County

Goal 3—Encourage townships and municipalities to work together to construct orderly annexation agreements and urban growth zones

Goal 4—Invite school districts in Rice County to provide input in pending changes to planning and zoning regulations

Objective 1—Formulate a referral process with school districts on development

Goal 5—Establish a Countywide Economic Development Initiative, in cooperation with municipalities and townships, to promote employment and expand the tax base in Rice County

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Goal 8—Rice County is committed to continuing a public participation process in planning activities

Goal 9—Coordinate with state agencies on a regular basis

CHAPTER 3

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Maintaining a healthy tax base is an important function of government. In 1993 the commercial/industrial tax base in Rice County was approximately 26% of the tax capacity. With the rapidly expanding residential development steps must be taken to maintain a healthy balance to ensure an acceptable residential tax rate. The percentage of the tax capacity for commercial/industrial has fallen to about 16% in 2002. This is a significant drop when considering a healthy tax base should be approximately 30% or higher from national criteria for economic development. In light of the new tax law, Rice County needs to analyze and develop an optimum goal for maintaining a healthy balance in the tax base. This study is needed not only for the County but also for the other taxing districts including townships, cities and school districts. In any case it is evident an increase in the commercial/industrial development is necessary in Rice County. Considering the most recent Minnesota tax law changes, the percentage of commercial/industrial development may need to exceed the 30% figure because the state is also collecting a property tax from commercial/industrial development. Rice County would like to see the majority of new commercial/industrial development occur within municipalities where public water and sewer services are available. However, we must look at other options, including commercial/industrial development along I-35 at activity centers.

The latest per capita income figures (Minnesota Planning 1998) for Rice County show an income of \$22,421. This is lower than the Minnesota average of \$29,263 and also lower than all the counties that border on Rice County. The lower incomes are a concern. The median family income for Rice County is \$38,406 (Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development, 1998), in which there is more than one wage earner per household. One very interesting statistic, is that the median family income for the township bordering a city is higher than the corresponding city.

Job growth in Rice County from 1990 to 1999 shows 2,610 new jobs. The two fastest growing sectors are manufacturing (1,324), retail (441), and account for 68% of new job growth. The largest decrease was in state government due to the closing of state run facilities.

Throughout the land use discussions with the townships and cities there is a significant difference in philosophy on how to add more commercial/industrial development. The townships overwhelmingly want to develop new commercial/industrial along Interstate 35 while the cities want to have the commercial/industrial development within the corporate limits. Both opinions have merit. The cities argue that they are better prepared to provide the necessary services such as public water and sewer. The townships see the freeway as an economic magnet as evidenced by development along the freeway in other communities. Any development along I-35 will need to be reviewed with MnDOT's involvement in order to maintain a safe and efficient transportation system.

Large box retailers have found their way to Rice County. A large general retailer has recently opened and a large grocery and home improvement center will be opening in the next year. All of these developments are in the Cities of Northfield and Dundas.

The recent more difficult economic times have led to the closing of several businesses and other businesses have reduced payroll by laying off employees. Prior to the economic downturn businesses were experiencing severe labor shortages and were finding it difficult to hire adequate labor. This phenomenon is not unique to Rice County, as it has occurred throughout Minnesota and the United States.

Rice County is home to many new and start-up businesses. These companies have found the older unused farmsteads to be a good place to start a business. These rural businesses include construction companies, sub-contractors, trucking companies, sign shops, specialty retail and many more. Many of these businesses are non-conforming, based on the current ordinance and have not created major problems for their neighbors. Many others have used the home occupation opportunity and are conforming to the ordinance requirements. Standards for these businesses will need to be developed in the new zoning ordinance, such as number of employees, size of operation, traffic and other potential nuisance characteristics. The County needs to require licensing of these businesses to make sure they stay within these acceptable standards and not creating an unfair competition with businesses locating within properly zones areas. Another benefit with licensing is creating a database, including any hazardous materials, which can be supplied to the law enforcement and fire departments for their safety in emergency situations.

The technology age is upon us and the use of telecommuting is growing rapidly. Studies have indicated the productivity levels actually increase and at the same time reduce overhead. It is not for everyone but there will be an increasing number of Rice County residents utilizing telecommuting. This will also have a potentially significant positive impact on the traditional transportation system. The infrastructure will need to be constructed to avail our residents to the system.

Economic development programs have not been utilized at the county level to encourage expanding businesses or new business development. The Cities of Faribault and Northfield have established programs. It would be beneficial to the County to establish a countywide economic development program to (Goal #5) pool resources in an effort to attract business. This program could be developed under similar formats that have been successfully implemented in other communities. Coordination with the Department of Trade and Economic Development would be essential. Once established an inventory of opportunities along with a plan to attract certain businesses would be necessary. The marketing effort along with an incentive system could be beneficial, to each of the members individually and for the County, in building the needed tax base.

The seventh goal is an ongoing program to minimize the tax burden on the citizens by maintaining affordable service delivery. Goals #11, #12 and #13 will be more completely discussed in the Chapter 8, land use. Goal # 14 will be integrated into Chapter 7, Transportation.

Goal 5—Establish a Countywide Economic Development Initiative, in cooperation with municipalities and townships, to promote employment and expand the tax base in Rice County

Objective 1—Continue to work with the cities of Rice County to keep urban growth boundaries up to date

Objective 2—Develop a gateway beautification plan for major entrances into Rice County and into municipalities and villages

Goal 10—Minimize tax burden on all residents and property owners by planning for the affordable delivery of public services

Objective 1—Lessen the impact of service delivery costs by encouraging development to locate where public utilities and services are available

Goal 11—Create commercial/industrial zones to promote employment and generate tax base in Rice County

Objective 1—Establish proper zoning and subdivision regulations to regulate nonresidential development

Objective 2—Create zoning districts for the unincorporated villages to allow for mixed-use development

Objective 3—Create zoning districts to accommodate a wide variety of nonresidential development

Goal 12—Develop a licensing system for rural businesses, excluding agricultural, and home occupations in rural Rice County

Goal 13—Promote private recreational enterprises by utilizing a recreation zone district

Goal 14—Encourage the development of infrastructure to promote telecommuting and E-business in Rice County

Goal 53—Maintain a diverse economic mix for Rice County by promoting agriculture and associated businesses

CHAPTER 4

CONSERVATION

Major discussion throughout the entire planning process concentrated on preserving items listed in the following goals. In addition, the overriding desire was to maintain a rural quality of life. One of the principle items in maintaining the rural feel is to maintain large amounts of open space. Agriculture, by its nature, provides vast areas of open space and even though in private ownership serves to maintain the rural setting. The words agriculture and open space were frequently used and the meaning in each case was to foster the existing rural character of Rice County.

The Fundamental Inventory Guide contains extensive history of Rice County and identifies historical sites throughout the County. Local and Minnesota Historical Societies contributed to this extensive inventory. The goal to protect and preserve these sites will be further advanced with a GIS overlay identifying each site to be reviewed with each development proposal.

The Fundamental Inventory Guide also identifies sand, gravel and aggregate deposits in Rice County. The basis for the locations included the Geologic Atlas of Rice County along with the most recent soil survey. This map is not prepared from exhausted testing and core samples of the products so the economic value is not determined. There may be other unidentified deposits throughout the County that have not been identified in inventory. This GIS layer will be used in reviewing all development proposals. This review will allow decisions to be made as to the economic viability of the resource and the effect the proposed development will have on the resource.

Agricultural land preservation is one of the major objectives of this plan. Many other goals throughout other chapters of the plan support this goal. There have been many discussions of preserving prime agricultural land but determining the definition of prime was somewhat subjective. Therefore the goal was to worded to protect agriculture by preserving large tracts of land and by encouraging the clustering of rural residential housing.

Agriculture is going through many changes and the future of agriculture is likely to be significantly different than it is today. Farms generally have been increasing in size but there have been significant increases in smaller “hobby” farms with the growth from the metropolitan area. Other changes affecting the agricultural industry are the economics associated with farming. Land prices have been accelerating, partially due to demand of building sites, which puts a further strain on agricultural profitability. Partially due to this reality many of the farmers next generation are leaving the agricultural industry for jobs outside of farming. This begs the question “Who is going to farm the land when the current farmers retire”. Most of the real programs affecting economic factors governing farming are at the Federal Government level and are outside of the ability of the County to make a significant difference.

The Wetland Conservation Act regulates the wetlands in Rice County and the Soil and Water Service is empowered to implement the requirements of the Act. We have used the National Wetland Inventory to identify many of the existing wetlands. A more detailed and complete wetland inventory would be very helpful and the County will work to complete this improved GIS layer. Currently Rice County uses the best available data and conducts individual site inspections to make wetland determinations along with requiring wetland delineation reports.

Wetlands are very important resources for the overall drainage system in Rice County. The wetlands serve many purposes including snowmelt storage, storm water storage, sediment filtration, wildlife habitat, aquifer recharge, open space and beautify the County. The northwestern portions of the County have been more recently glaciated than the easterly portions of the County and have a less defined drainage system. Without defined watersheds for streams and rivers the storm water needs to be stored over longer periods of time in the wetland basins. This is also the area of the County containing many of the lakes and the wetlands serve a very important function by providing a staging area for storm water.

Water resources, in addition to the wetlands, need to be protected including: surface water, groundwater and aquifer recharge areas. Rice County has many lakes, streams and rivers that are protected with shoreland zoning. There are several goals set up to protect the surface water including #19 to use environmentally sensitive erosion control practices to protect water from siltation and other contaminants. Goal #21 relates to the protection of waters by discouraging development of environmentally sensitive sites. Goal #25 encourages combined utility systems and reduces the dependence of individual water and sewer systems. Goal #24 is to encourage the use of Planned Unit Development for shoreland areas so negotiated environmental regulations will allow for more sensitive development. A combination of all of these goals will enable the County to make strides towards improving the surface water quality. Water quality is an important goal. Providing higher quality water for our residents and for the tourism industry benefits the County. The Rice County Water Plan and a new Lake Management Plan are in the development stages and should be completed in early 2003. The Lake Management Plan that is being developed is built on the success of the French Lake Watershed Project and will provide a guideline for all lakes in the County. Both the Rice County Water Plan and the Lake Management Plan will be adopted as part of this Comprehensive Plan and provide more detailed goals and objectives for the County. These plans will provide a more detailed action plan and be supportive of this Comprehensive Plan.

Protecting the aquifer recharge areas is critical for the protection of our groundwater system. The conservation of our groundwater is essential for the future of the inhabitants of the County as most of the water is derived from wells using groundwater. It is essential that these areas be protected from pollutants including chemicals and individual waste treatment systems. The transmission time of the surface conditions to the groundwater varies depending on the geology. The Geologic Atlas of Rice County identifies these areas and is included in the Fundamental Inventory Guide. This information will be used in reviewing development proposals and be a factual basis for making changes in development patterns.

Another method to protect our water supplies is to comply with the wellhead protection requirements. The City of Northfield has completed their plan for wellhead protection and the Cities of Faribault and Lonsdale are working on their plans. All public water supplies need to complete this plan to protect their water supplies. As these plans are completed they will be incorporated into the County Comprehensive Plan.

Forestlands are another priority for protection. Prior to settlement and development the “Big Woods” forest covered the northwesterly portions of the County. The remaining areas of the County were generally prairies with scattered forestland. There remain some scattered forest and it is ironic the largest remnant of the big woods is in the eastern part of the County. The Big Woods State Park contains most of this treasured resource. Rice County encourages the reforestation around this area and for other scattered sites as a method to promote the survival of the big woods. Development in and around these areas will have to be evaluated to best protect the resource and possibly enhance the forest. A professional forester should complete recommendations for forest improvements, including the tree species.

Goal 15—Identify, preserve and protect historic and prehistoric sites and cultural landmarks

Goal 16—Identify and protect areas with sand, gravel and aggregate deposits

Goal 17—Protect and promote agriculture by preserving large tracts of land by encouraging clustering of rural residential development

Goal 18—Promote environmentally sensitive erosion control practices

Goal 19—Support and implement state and federal regulations controlling the use, alteration or filling of wetlands

Goal 20—Preserve, protect and improve the surface and underground waters including, but not limited to, rivers, streams, lakes, groundwater and aquifer recharge areas

Objective 1—Encourage sensitive development in areas of exposed and rapid recharge aquifers

Objective 2—Encourage development to comply with wellhead protection zones

Goal 21—Encourage the preservation of lands for open space that are substandard for development and have limited land use due to slope, soil characteristics wetlands or other physical limiting conditions

Goal 22—Protect forestlands by regulating the density of development and by using effective forest management practices, including reforestation

Goal 23—Encourage the protection and orderly development of Rice County shoreland areas

Goal 24—Encourage and promote a PUD ordinance for shoreland areas

Goal 25—Encourage cooperative utility systems including water and sewer districts in shoreland areas

CHAPTER 5

LIVEABLE COMMUNITY DESIGN

Livable community design requires integration of goals from other sections of the Comprehensive Plan and the first nine goals came from preceding chapters. The second nine goals were inserted into this chapter but will also be used again in the following chapters. Rice County will suggest that each of the cities in the County include goals in their respective plans that address livable community design standards.

Rice County has several concentrations of housing in locations in the unincorporated areas of the County and in communities around some of lakes. These are the only areas where the pursuit of livable design standards would have a more urban setting. These areas contain small concentrations of population and the objective of the plan is to encourage their expansion in population and services. Goals throughout this plan are recommending more urban type services in these areas for environmental and livable reasons.

Currently these villages have minimal public services other than those provided by Rice County. There is some limited use of public wells for water supply, some with cluster septic systems and some of these communities have a nearby County park. At the present time most of the shopping and employment activities occur outside of the villages and in the cities nearest to the respective villages. Providing commercial and industrial zoning in these areas is a possibility but the market and labor force could not support any large facilities. When development of commercial and industrial uses occur it is recommended that public utilities be available unless the users require minimal service. For these reasons the County is suggesting the use of planned unit development to encourage a mixed-use development scenario. This approach can allow for small non-residential uses to be included within these smaller communities. Marketing these businesses will be difficult, as the population is small and can not support the business like a larger community having a larger customer base. Locating the business adjacent to a major roadway will increase the potential customer base and potential for success by capturing additional business from the traveling public. There is the possibility of a unique or specialty business that can capture customers for a much larger population base. Examples of such a business would be an antique shop, a resort, specialty restaurant or similar business that has a much larger market area or can attract by advertising or reputation.

There is a wide range in the price of existing housing opportunities but very little choice in the type of housing. The existing housing stock ranges from mobile homes and small cabins to very large single-family homes. It is the intent of the plan to encourage a wider range of housing types including two-family, townhouses and multi-family homes. However when the density of development increases there will be a necessity for public utility systems.

Some villages have access to bicycle and pedestrian trails while others are many miles from these facilities. The communities near these facilities have an opportunity to expand sooner as there are more facilities to attract new residents.

Rice County will provide technical assistance and input to all local jurisdictions in the preparation of their respective comprehensive plans. These plans should incorporate the applicable goals and objectives contained in the Rice County Plan. The plans will be reviewed for consistency with the Rice County Plan before being included by reference in the Rice County Plan. This will be similar to the relationship between Minnesota and Rice County in this Community based Planning Initiative.

Public transportation is not currently available, however the County has several goals to encourage transit as an option in the County. The Cities of Faribault and Northfield have some bus service available to their residents. The County should explore the possibility of working with the existing systems to provide some service to the villages. The population in all of the villages is aging and will become more dependent on public transportation. Considering dial-a-ride systems tend to make more economic sense as the population densities are currently very low and could not sustain a scheduled route system.

Another related factor of liveable communities is solid waste. The Rice County Landfill is 300 acres with approximately 70 acres currently being used for solid waste. The landfill will reach full capacity in 24 years if the current volume of material is disposed each year. The landfill also has a recycling program and encourages the continuation of recycling in the County.

Rice County wants to work with these unincorporated communities to improve the appearance and provide gateway monumentation to create a sense of place. The enforcement of the current and proposed solid waste ordinances will also improve the appearance and livability of these villages and communities.

The only method that will facilitate positive changes in these communities is if the individuals from the local community get together to push for change. Without local support the County can develop improvement plans but the community or village must accept the challenge for the improvements with governmental assistance. The most productive procedure is for the County to develop a dialog session with the local community to establish specific goals for improvement. Items that need to be discussed include a transportation plan, roadway improvements plan including street standards, a land use plan, a clean up-fix up (beautification) program, a water and sewer plan and a capital improvement plan to assist in the funding of improvements. With involvement of the County, township and local community major improvements and change can be accomplished. In this procedure the local village will dramatically improve its quality of life and move toward a livable community standard.

Goal 5—Establish a Countywide Economic Development Initiative, in cooperation with municipalities and townships, to promote employment and expand the tax base in Rice County

Objective 1—Continue to work with the cities of Rice County to keep urban growth boundaries up to date

Objective 2—Develop a gateway beautification plan for major entrances into Rice County and into municipalities and villages

Goal 10—Minimize tax burden on all residents and property owners by planning for the affordable delivery of public services

Objective 1—Lessen the impact of service delivery costs by encouraging development to locate where public utilities and services are available

Goal 12—Develop a licensing system for rural businesses, excluding agricultural, and home occupations in rural Rice County

Goal 13—Promote private recreational enterprises by utilizing a recreation zone district

Goal 14—Encourage the development of infrastructure to promote telecommuting and E-business in Rice County

Goal 19—Support and implement state and federal regulations controlling the use, alteration or filling of wetlands

Goal 22—Protect forestlands by regulating the density of development and by using effective forest management practices, including reforestation

Goal 24—Encourage and promote a PUD ordinance for shoreland areas

Goal 25—Encourage cooperative utility systems including water and sewer districts in shoreland areas

Goal 27—Promote development of commuter rail and other transit opportunities on the I-35 corridor

Goal 28—Encourage improvement to public transportation systems

Goal 29—Implement a Park Impact Fee for all new residential building permits

Goal 30—Promote the public health, safety and welfare by enacting and timely enforcement of a solid waste material ordinance

Goal 31—Create zoning districts for the unincorporated villages to allow for mixed-use development providing they develop municipal type water and sewer services

Goal 32—Allow for growth within unincorporated villages utilizing the Village Extension provision and require any expansion to abut the current village and provide municipal type water and sewer services

Goal 33—Encourage the development of life-cycle and affordable housing in cooperation with municipal HRAs

Goal 34—Encourage multi-family residential in appropriate areas to help meet life-cycle and affordable housing needs

Goal 35—Encourage municipalities and unincorporated villages to create convenience retail/services and employment opportunities providing they develop municipal type water and sewer services

Goal 36—Encourage all municipalities to implement goals and objectives to sustain liveable community design

CHAPTER 6

HOUSING and POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Housing in Rice County has been presented in a housing study completed in 2000. The title of the study is “Rice County Housing Study” completed in January 2000. The study included a comprehensive analysis of the overall housing needs of Rice County with specific findings and recommendations for the Cities of Dundas, Faribault, Lonsdale, Morristown, Nerstrand and Northfield. The study analyzed the existing conditions and makes recommendations as to the type of housing and various programs to accomplish housing goals. It addressed rental housing, senior housing, home ownership, single family, life-cycle housing (attached units), housing rehabilitation, affordability and support for livable community objectives. This study will continue to guide housing development in the listed communities and will need to be updated within the next 5 years to address changes in the communities and the ever changing housing demand characteristics.

Rural Rice County historically provides for approximately 30% of the new housing stock. One of the principle concerns of this development is that it has been dependent on individual water and wastewater systems. The County has whenever possible provided encouragement to construct multi-family systems to better serve the needs of residents. In recent years several of these cluster wastewater systems have been constructed, primarily for developments around our lakes, to be more environmentally friendly. Rice County will continue to pursue the additional use of these systems, and continue to study more municipal type options, to most effectively and efficiently address the need from a sanitary and environmental standpoint. In the meantime, Rice County has adopted individual septic system standards, which allow for performance systems, to provide more environmentally sensitive options for housing units not having available multi-family systems.

As stated in earlier chapters of the plan Rice County has several unincorporated villages with residential concentrations. Some of these communities have researched the possibility of connecting to nearby municipal systems. In each case the cost of this connection was economically prohibitive. The County, with the support of the local villages, will pursue environmental and financial options to accomplish municipal type systems for these villages.

The following goals relate to the unincorporated areas of Rice County and will also be encouraged within the municipalities within the County. Two areas containing the concentration of housing is the shoreland and villages throughout the County. In both cases the County is encouraging the use of Planned Unit Development requirements. This planning tool allows for more creative, flexible and sensitive land use patterns. For small villages and lakeshore areas this tool will allow for a wider range of uses to accommodate livable community standards.

Goal #37 is recognizing the importance of providing adequate water and sewer services to residential developments. The County promotes residential development within cities and villages having water and sewer systems. Without adequate services growth in the small villages will be severely limited. Once water and sewer services are available the encouragement of life-cycle housing will follow to provide for higher densities and more efficient use of the land.

In the rural areas the density is established at one unit per quarter-quarter but each quarter-quarter having a crop equivalency rating of 65 or lower may have a second home site. This is the current density requirement and it has served well in our transitional development period. Discussions regarding increasing and decreasing the density was discussed at length and also the topic of a special public hearing conducted by the Board of Commissioners. Sentiments on both sides of the issue were extensive and well thought out.

Discussion regarding having several densities and several agricultural zoning districts were discussed. The northern portion of the County, being nearer to the metropolitan area, has more development pressure than the southerly townships. The northerly townships also have somewhat less productive soils than is commonly found in the southern townships. The reasons for not changing the density was that many homes have been developed under the existing requirements and would become non-conforming uses if the density were to change. The other reason not to change is that many of the landowners have planned for the eventual development of home sites and land values are determined on the number of building sites. Therefore, by changing the density, land value would be lost to the landowners.

Rural Rice County needs to have more housing variety to provide additional housing choices for County residents. Due to the current lack of services the density of development must be controlled. As services become available townhouse and two-family structures can be accommodated. The rural nature of the land could support some larger structures but the buildings should not exceed heights of 35 feet. Building design and siting must be done very carefully so the rural character is maintained.

The development of housing in the rural area can create some conflicts with the agricultural uses existing nearby. Agriculture frequently creates more noise, dust and odor than is typical in residential areas. For several reasons the plan includes an encouragement to cluster the units rather than continue to scatter the units across the landscape. As the homes are concentrated in clusters more agricultural land will not be encumbered by residential expectations. More attention to buffering and screening between the residential and agricultural land uses will create a more pleasant living environment without providing as many restrictions on agricultural practices. One concern is for the existing manure spreading areas, which occasionally creates unpleasant odors for neighbors. It will be required for residential developers to arrange for a plan that is acceptable to the County prior to approval to construct homes.

Finally, and possibly the most important goal is to encourage the continual maintenance and improvement of the existing housing stock. Areas of existing housing where environmental concerns exist may need to be rebuilt at another location to minimize environmental degradation. Redevelopment and design plans for these areas should be a joint effort with the landowner, neighboring property owners and the responsible government authority.

Population projections have been completed using the population trends established over the past several decades. The 2000 census provides timely information, however some of the detail information was not available at the time this plan was prepared. Housing starts obtained from building permit information and household information from the 2000 census data was also used to confirm the projections. The projections have been prepared utilizing trends and not a detailed demographic study using natural increases (births/deaths) in and out migration.

One of the major reasons that Rice County is growing is our proximity to the Twin City Metropolitan Area. This urban region has experienced a long lasting growth that has affected Rice County. The Metropolitan Council recently developed new projections for the region that show the growth curve increasing. The study "Blueprint 2030" projects the metro area to grow by 930,000 inhabitants by 2030, a rate of over 35%. One interesting detail in the study is that the rural areas and small cities in the rural area are projected to have a household growth rate of 88% between now and 2030. These same rural areas and small towns are projected to have a household growth-rate of over 61% by the year 2020. The year 2020 was selected because it is the year used for the Rice County Plan. Similarly, the employment projections for the same rural area and rural small towns are projected to have a 2020 growth-rate of 68%.

Why is this important to Rice County?

- It is an indication of growth from the largest influence on Rice County population
- The Southwest quadrant of the metro is the fastest growing and it abuts Rice County
- The Southwest quadrant has the largest employment base
- The Southwest quadrant will grow by over 200,000 new jobs
- The Southwest quadrant will contain over one-third of all the jobs in the metro area
- Expert demographers show major growth in rural areas and rural towns and cities

Another important consideration is the travel time and distance from these rural areas to the metropolitan area. Many of the rural areas and rural communities in the metro are equally as distant from the jobs as we are in Rice County. Travel time and traffic congestion are two very important factors in selecting a home. With I-35 providing a direct link to the metro area the residents of Rice County are as near or closer than many of the rural areas and communities projected to have very high growth rates.

Job locations are very important in choosing where a family wants to live. There is easily over 200,000 metro jobs located within 30 minutes driving time from Rice County. This would generally include the area of the I-494 strip and communities to the south all the way to Rice County. If the projected job creation occurs in the Southwest quadrant it has the potential to have a dramatic affect on the population growth in Rice County. Coupled with job availability is the affordability of housing. Land prices are increasing but remain lower than in the metro area. As long as land prices and the cost of housing remain lower in Rice County a more rapid growth scenario is almost assured.

The plan projects a conservative estimate of the population growth. The growth rates shown in the following table represent increases over the 15.2% increase that has occurred over the past 10 years (1990 to 2000). Projections are just that and many factors can derail the best projections. Still using these conservative projections for Rice County it will be home to nearly 90,000 people in 2020. This represents a 24.2% growth for 2000 to 2010 and a slightly larger 26.6% for 2010 to 2020.

RICE COUNTY POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Township or City	1990 Population	2000 Population	2010 Population Est	2020 Population Est
Bridgewater	1,612	1,898	2,350	2,950
Cannon City	1,109	1,212	1,500	1,825
Erin	685	797	1,000	1,150
Forest	872	1,136	1,555	1,880
Morristown	641	665	775	825
Northfield	781	780	890	970
Richland	461	471	490	525
Shieldsville	969	1,153	1,440	1,850
Walcott	1,584	984	1,135	1,400
Warsaw	1,284	1,433	1,790	2,340
Webster	1,452	1,825	2,150	3,400
Wells	1,677	1,743	2,130	2,410
Wheatland	1,276	1,358	1,645	2,000
Wheeling	462	541	665	710
Twp. Total	14,865	15,996	19,515	24,235
Dundas	473	547	1,000	1,350
Faribault	17,085	20,818	26,000	33,000
Lonsdale	1,252	1,491	2,500	3,950
Morristown	784	981	1,200	1,500
Nerstrand	210	233	310	400
Northfield	14,514	16,590	19,900	25,000
City Total	34,318	40,669*	50,910	64,900
County Total	49,183	56,665*	70,425	89,135
% Change	----	15.2%	24.2%	26.6%

* Includes 9 people attributed to Dennison

With the housing goals in place the percentage of residents living in the rural areas of Rice County will continue to decrease from the 30% it was in 1990. If all of the villages stay unincorporated the percentage of rural residents will drop to approximately 27% by 2020. This condition is consistent with Goal #37 encouraging housing development to occur in areas with municipal services.

The State Demographer is working on population projections for Rice County, which will be completed by October or November 2002. These projections will be incorporated into the plan as they become available. If the projections are substantially different the population projections contained herein may be modified at that time.

- Goal 24—Encourage and promote a PUD ordinance for shoreland areas*
- Goal 31—Create zoning districts for the unincorporated villages to allow for mixed-use development provided they develop municipal type water and sewer services*
- Goal 32—Allow for growth within unincorporated villages utilizing the Village Extension provision and require any expansion to abut the current village and provide municipal type water and sewer services*
- Goal 33—Encourage the development of life-cycle and affordable housing in cooperation with municipal HRAs*
- Goal 34—Encourage multi-family residential in appropriate areas to help meet life-cycle and affordable housing needs*
- Goal 37—Promote housing development in cities and unincorporated villages who can provide municipal or municipal type water and sewer services rather than in the agricultural districts.*
- Objective 1—Rice County will not encourage residential development without municipal or municipal type water and sewer services*
- Objective 2—Allow new mobile home parks only in areas with municipal or municipal type water and sewer services*
- Objective 3—Develop a zoning district for existing mobile home parks to allow for some growth as a conforming use*
- Goal 38—Allow rural housing of one unit per quarter quarter section with a second allowed when the crop equivalency rating (CER) is 65 or below with clustering of the units encouraged*
- Objective 1—Discourage residential development from locating near manure-spreading areas for feedlot operators*
- Objective 2—Require residential developers to create a plan to accommodate manure-spreading areas prior to any approval or construction*
- Goal 39—Encourage the maintenance and improvements to the existing housing stock*

CHAPTER 7

TRANSPORTATION

The transportation system in Rice County is the backbone for commerce and assists in establishing development patterns. The system is comprised of roadways, railroads, airports, waterways, transit, technology and trails for pedestrians and non-motorized bikeways. Improvements to this multi-modal transportation system are necessary to keep up with the changing needs of the citizens of Rice County.

This chapter will address all of the modes of transportation but will concentrate on the roadway system because it is the most heavily used portion of the system and received the most comments throughout the planning process. The description of the existing transportation system is presented in the Fundamental Inventory Guide.

Goal #28 encourages improvement to all elements of the public transportation system. The goal covers all of the multi-modal system discussed in this chapter.

Airports

The airport system includes the Faribault Municipal Airport located at the southwest quadrant of I-35 and Highway 21 in northwest Faribault. The airport is primarily a recreational general aviation airport with some private business planes using the facility. The County supports the use of this airport but did not include a specific goal to address the airport.

There are other personal or private airstrips within the County and the most used is an airstrip in Webster Township called Sky Harbor. This field was constructed, along with a subdivision of single-family homes, specifically for the use of the facility by the residents of the development. This was one of the first “theme” developments in Rice County.

Railroads

Likewise the railroad service provides an efficient method of moving products but there are no specific goal addressing railroads. The County supports the railroad activity and looks forward to working with the railroad companies to improve the rail facilities. Completion of a detailed analysis of the railroad/roadway crossings is necessary to continue to improve public safety for the entire transportation system.

Technology

Rice County understands the potential of new and changing technological products that will assist in reducing the number of vehicular trips on the transportation system. As we enter the new millennium there are an increasing number of employees that telecommute and work at home. Goal #14 encourages the development of infrastructure to promote telecommuting and e-business in Rice County.

Currently the connections to homes and businesses for these services are through hardwired systems. The opportunity or potential exists that in the not to distant future wireless connections will be possible. If that technological advancement occurs the infrastructure may include receiving and transmitting dishes.

Larger municipalities have hardwired service available but because of the lower density development in the rural areas it is frequently not an economically viable option. The companies providing the service to customers typically will provide the service to a customer but their investment is based on consideration of adding additional customers. The use of existing lines remains a possibility as long as the owners of the useable line and the provider can agree to the terms subject to many approvals.

Trails

Rice County has the Sakatah Singing Hills Trail, operated by the DNR, running west of Faribault along the north side of Highway 60 all the way to Mankato, Minnesota. The trail utilizes an old abandoned rail line and is used extensively by bicyclists and snowmobiles. Another trail is in the planning stages that will run from Northfield to Faribault and connect up to the Sakatah Singing Hills Trail. Negotiations with land owners for right-of-way for this Mills Town Trail is underway at the present time. The Mills Town is proposed to run through Dakota County and into northern Goodhue County to connect with the existing Cannon Valley Trail. This will complete a trail connecting Mankato to Cannon Falls. This trail, which has received funding from the Department of Natural Resources, will likely be constructed in the near future.

Trails were the topic of discussion throughout many of the plan discussions with township groups. The positions varied as to the acceptance of trails but Goal # 46 promotes recreational trails compatible with existing land uses. The primary function of these trails is recreational but they can also provide another method of accessibility to many destinations including work, shopping and services.

Transit

Rice County is an advocate of transit even though it does not provide direct transit opportunities to the residents. The Cities of Faribault and Northfield both provide transit service to their local residents and Rice County is working with both Cities to provide rural transit service. One of the principal requirements in providing transit services is the concentration of population. Typically in rural areas the density of population is too sparse to justify a bus or van service.

Rice County completed a Transit Study in January of 2001. A Rice County Transit Study Task Force consisted of representative's from Faribault, Northfield, MN/DOT and the County. This extensive study reviewed the existing services in both Cities and through many personal interviews input was gained on the service currently being offered. One of the objectives of the study was to determine how transit service could be provided to the rural portions of the County. After analysis it was determined the best way to provide transit service outside of the Cities was to have the two existing systems provide an initial limited service. The City of Faribault was to consider providing service to the communities of Morrystown and Nerstrand. Northfield was to provide service to Dundas and to

Lonsdale. This Study, completed by SRF Consulting Group, is incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan by reference.

In addition to the Transit Study this plan includes Goal #27 relating to transit issues. Goal #27 promotes the development of commuter rail on the I-35 corridor. The County followed with interest the study of the Dan Patch Line between Northfield and Minneapolis. The results of the study are not promising to the development of rail transit line in that corridor. Rice County understands the development of a commuter rail line along I-35 will not occur any time soon but the County will continue to support this concept. Rice County continues to be interested in the possibility of providing ride share opportunities in the form of park-n-ride or kiss-n-ride facilities. The population projections indicate a significant growth to be likely in Rice County and the transit needs and desires will need to be monitored.

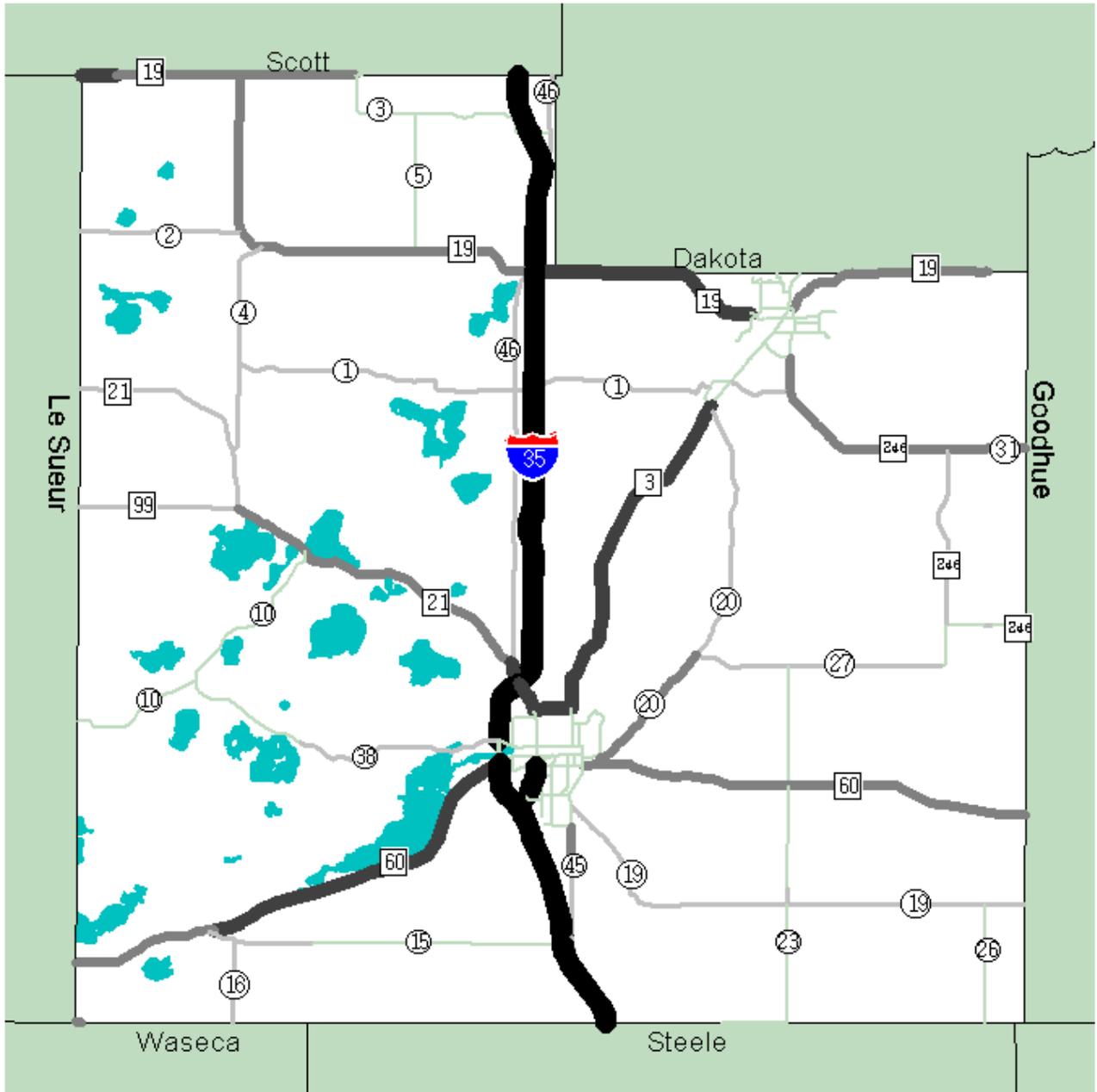
Roadways

The roadway portion of the plan involves just about every level of government including federal, state, county, city and township. Because of all the agencies involved the communication and coordination is of highest priority and has been included as Goal #6.

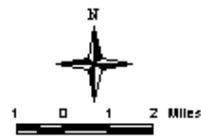
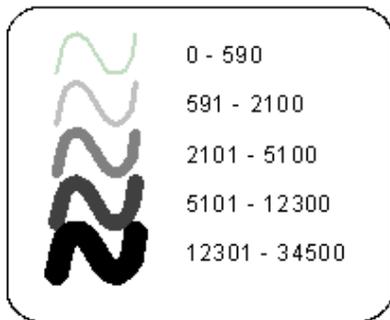
The roadways in Rice County range from freeway (I-35) to narrow gravel roads and all types of roads in between. Mn/DOT is the agency responsible for the I-35 and State Highways 3,19, 21, 60, 246, 298 and 299. The County is responsible for the County State Aid Highways and other County roads. The Cities are responsible for the city streets and the townships have their own roadway system. Each of the governmental agencies is responsible for the design, construction and maintenance of their respective roads.

The roads that Mn/DOT manages are all surfaced and constructed with rural design standards in the rural part of the County and generally with urban design standards in the Cities Faribault and Northfield. The County roads are generally 24' wide rural section roadways either constructed with asphalt or gravel surfaces. Township roads generally are 24' wide and have a gravel surface, however a limited number have an asphalt surface. A rural section typically has the driving surface and shoulders along with the drainage ditch on each side of the road. Not all of the older roads are constructed to this standard. An urban section typically has a width based on traffic demand and has concrete curb and gutter and drainage system rather than the standard rural ditch section.

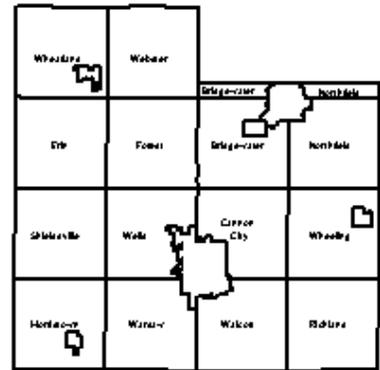
Map 1 is the traffic flow map based on the 2001 traffic counts. The map reflects the traffic counts and it is no surprise that I-35 is the most heavily traveled roadway carrying at the northern part of the County 34,500 daily trips. Highway 60, just west of Faribault has a volume of 9,400 trips, Highway 19 just west of Northfield has 8,300 trips and Highway 3 just north of Faribault is carrying 7,700 cars. These are the most heavily traveled roads in Rice County. The rate of increase on number of trips is 34.7% in I-35, 17.5% on 60, 5% on 19 and 15% on Highway 3 from the 1997 traffic counts. It is interesting to note that the rate of increase at the southern part of the County on I-35 is 21%, which is significantly lower



TRANSPORTATION FLOW



Scale: 1: 250,000



Map 1: Average Traffic Flow for Rice County, Minnesota

than the northern part of the County. Most of the County roads also experienced significant increases in trips from the 1997 data.

Roadway design, improvement and maintenance are a major responsibility of Rice County. The maintenance is extremely critical as it is mandatory to protect the investment in infrastructure. Coordination of the improvements and maintenance with the townships will improve the efficiency of both units of government.

The County must look at the existing roadway system as a system that will be constantly upgraded. If or when urbanization of Rice County occurs the existing roadways, with some minor modifications, will serve as the arterials and collectors of the future. In urbanized and suburban areas the original one-mile grid of rural roadways is still evident and becomes the backbone of the transportation system. For example if an entire section of land was to be developed with suburban densities there would be approximately 3,000 dwelling units that would be generating over 30,000 trips per day. Therefore, roadway location, design standards, and access become more critical as development occurs.

The Comprehensive Plan discussions about roads were very lively. There is strong feelings on keeping gravel roads to maintain the rural quality of life and others saying pave the roads so my car will last longer. The County and Townships will need to keep an open process with citizen involvement when it comes to road improvements.

The County needs to develop roadway design standards based on classification of the roadway. The design standards will need to address right-of-way (ROW) width with an eye on the future. Requiring the proper ROW (possibly 100') at the time of development is a standard requirement and should be agreed to before development occurs. The construction standards need to be included along with the required width of the surface, shoulders, type of surface and ditch. These standards will need to be reviewed with the township officials and it would be the intent to have the township accept and require the County roadway standards.

Goals #40, #41 and #42 are priorities for interchange improvements with I-35. The redesigning of the interchanges at Highway 19 and Highway 60 is the highest priority to serve the Counties largest cities. The goal also supports the redesign and reconstruction of Highway 19 and 60 through Rice County. Mn/DOT is currently working on replacing an expanded bridge on northbound I-35 at Highway 19 with the southbound bridge to follow. The bridge reconstruction will allow Mn/DOT to improve Highway 19 once the bridges are completed. On Highway 60 there have been discussions and Mn/DOT will be preparing plans for the interchange redesign.

Rice County supports new access or interchange locations at County Roads 86, 9, 39 and 15, listed from the north to the south in the County. The number of existing interchanges with I-35 are located at Highway 19, County Road 1, Highway 21, Highway 60, and exit 55 at the south side of Faribault is a limited (1/2) interchange. Less populous counties have greater access to the interstate system the citizen of Rice County. Mn/DOT has been advised of this request and the County will continue to work with Mn/DOT to make these interchanges happen. Some of the interchanges receiving support in this plan will provide alternative interchanges and access points while other interchanges are reconstructed.

Rather than building bypass lanes during construction it is more efficient to construct a new interchange to accommodate the traffic while reconstruction is proceeding on the existing interchanges.

Goals #43 and #44 support the upgrading of Highway 3 to a four-lane facility between Faribault and Northfield to accommodate existing and future traffic demand. There is extensive commercial development commencing along Highway 3 in the Cities of Northfield and Dundas. These communities have used frontage roads to assist with the access into the development. The County does not want to see strip commercial development along Highway 3. Access improvements need to be made along Highway 3 as the number of access points needs to be restricted to three per mile and some geometric modifications will allow for improved sightlines and safety. Goal #44 encourages the Cities of Faribault and Northfield to plan for an increased traffic flow in the Highway 3 corridor. Direct routes need to accommodate the increasing vehicle flow. The discussions with the townships encouraged the construction of a bypass in the Northfield area.

Bypass construction was suggested for Highway 19 and Highway 3 in the Northfield and Dundas area. Highway 19 would need to go north of Northfield and Highway 3 would be on the west side of the City. These roads would have an intersection on the west side of Northfield. Discussion also included a bypass of Faribault for Highway 60. These were not included as goals because the funding is not likely for at least ten years but provisions for a bypass or beltway concept should be reviewed by the respective cities. The bypass of Lonsdale (Goal #47) for Highway 19 is supported to do a study of the options. Lonsdale is experiencing rapid growth and if the study is not completed in a reasonable time frame the opportunity may be lost.

Rice County needs to develop a street naming policy to be used in the unincorporated areas of the County. In developing the policy the surrounding counties should be asked to submit their policy on street naming so the names are consistent to the greatest extent possible. We must try to make the traveling public as comfortable with the road names as possible to not confuse the motorist with ever-changing road names.

Another area Rice County needs to work with our neighboring counties is on road alignment. Generally the east/west connections are direct but several of the north/south connections have some difficult offsets in alignment. Plans to correct these connections should be a joint project with the abutting county with agreed upon design standards to minimize changes in road appearance and condition.

Rice County will need to complete an intersection analysis initially for the County roads and later expanded to include township roads. This analysis will help determine the number of intersection improvements needed to improve the safety on the County roads. Currently there are offset intersections and roads entering at angles, which reduce sight lines and jeopardize the safety on the roadway.

Goal #45 is the access control policy requirement to improve the safety and capacity of the roadway system. MnDOT has developed access management guidelines which will be used as a guide in developing Rice County's Comprehensive Transportation Plan. Access control is a necessary responsibility to provide for a safe network of roads. It must be

understood that once an access is allowed it will cost public dollars to get it removed unless the owner gives up his right of access. All of the arterial and collector roads will have the most restrictive limit on property access and roadway intersections (possibly ¼ mile or 3 per mile of road). The number of accesses to other township and local roads will also have a restriction (possibly 1/6 mile or 6 per mile of road). When determining access to a roadway a priority should be given to a public street intersection over a property service access. It should be noted that any offset intersections, either street or driveways, must be offset a minimum of 300 feet.

Benefits to a good access management program have the following major benefits to the citizens of Rice County.

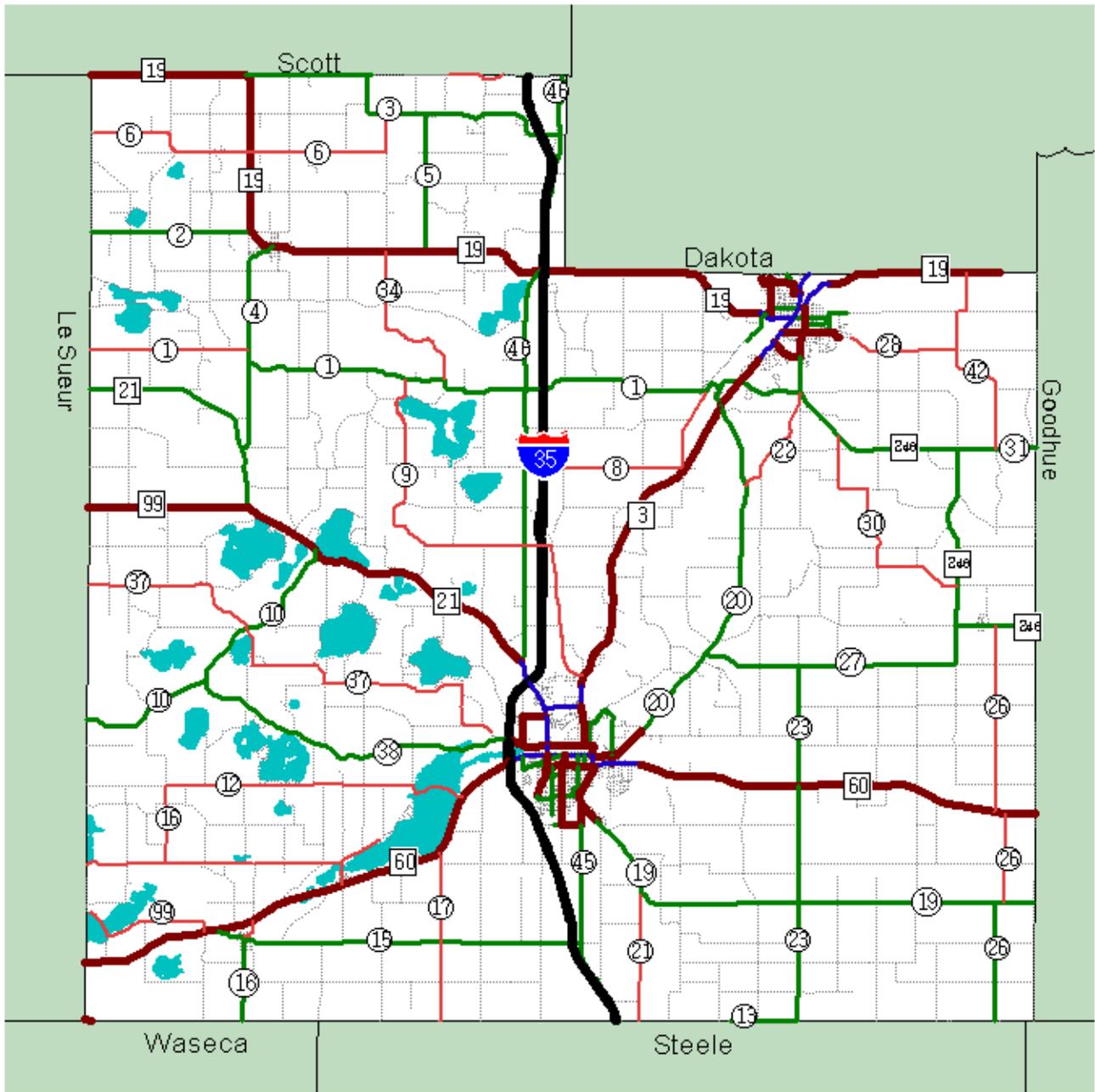
- Reduce congestion and accidents
- Preserve road capacity and postpone costly reconstruction
- Reduce travel time
- Provides easier movement to destinations
- Promote sustainable community development
- Reduce stress and environmental impacts

The cluster development proposed for Rice County should require an improved street section to include an urban section road including curb and gutter along with a paved surface. The ROW for this type of roadway can be reduced to 60' because the ditches require take up a lot of space. This will also reduce the dust in the neighborhood and make it a more pleasant place to live.

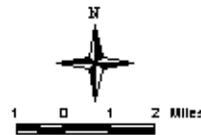
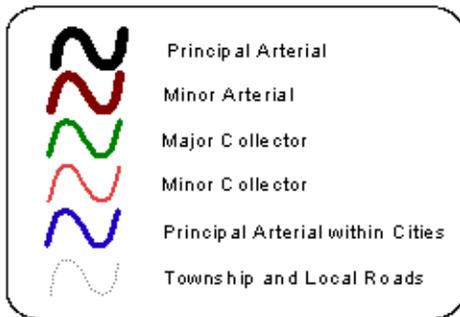
The policy for turn back and take over of roadways should include specific requirements such as but not limited to the following items.

- One to one swap or monetary supplement to offset the inequities
- Must maintain continuity with the County road system
- Must not impact plans for other roadway improvements
- Must improve the overall transportation system
- Must be consistent with existing development patterns

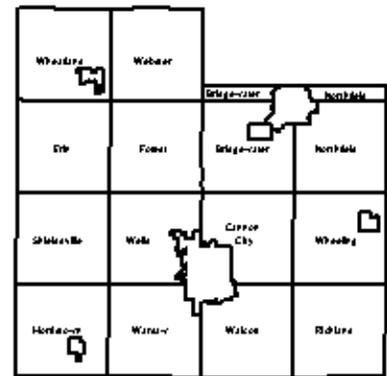
Map 2 illustrates the Rice County Transportation Plan.



TRANSPORTATION PLAN



Scale: 1: 250,000



Map 2: Transportation Plan for Rice County, Minnesota

- Goal 6—Coordinate with all highway agencies, municipalities and townships to facilitate development of a safe and efficient transportation system*
- Goal 14—Encourage the development of infrastructure to promote telecommuting and E-business in Rice County*
- Goal 27—Promote development of commuter rail and other transit opportunities on the I-35 corridor*
- Goal 28—Encourage improvement to public transportation systems*
- Goal 40—Support the redesigning and construction of Highways 60 and 19 including interchanges with I-35, to better serve current and future traffic demands*
- Goal 41—Develop a comprehensive transportation plan including review of existing and potential new access to I-35*
- Goal 42—Promote the design of exit 55 on I-35 into a complete interchange*
- Goal 43—Support the upgrading of Highway 3 between Faribault and Northfield to a four-lane roadway to accommodate existing and future traffic demands*
- Goal 44—Encourage the Cities of Faribault and Northfield to continue planning for increased traffic flow on Highway 3*
- Goal 45—Develop Access Control Policy for all roadways to improve the safety and capacity of the transportation system*
- Goal 46—Promote recreational trails compatible with existing land use*
- Goal 47—Support the study of a Highway 19 bypass around Lonsdale*

CHAPTER 8

LAND USE

This land use element is organized in four basic sections including general requirements, agriculture, residential and commercial/industrial. Many of the goals pertain to more than one of these sub-topics and all items will be used in the preparation of the implementing ordinances.

General Land Use Requirements

Goal #16 relates to the protection of aggregate resources. The map of these areas is included in the Fundamental Inventory Guide and a requirement to protect these areas will need to be included in the new Zoning Ordinance. Rather than create a separate zone district it will be more effective to include a finding for all developments that will require a developer to prepare a plan to preserve the resource. If the deposit is compromised by the proposed development it will be required of the developer to determine the economic value of the resource. For example, if it is not economical to remove the material the developer will have to prove that fact to the satisfaction of the County.

Performance standards for the mining of these resources should be included in a new ordinance to give more direction to the operators. Establishing requirements by ordinance will more teeth to the County rules while giving clear direction to the operator. Additional conditions may be imposed on the operator at the time a conditional use permit is requested and granted to make sure the operation is consistent with the neighborhood in which the mine or pit it is located. As more development occurs the operation of a pit will likely become more difficult and with more restrictions.

Goal #17 promotes the environmentally sensitive use of erosion control measures. This includes the movement of soil from wind and water. Best management practices for agricultural uses affect the largest amount of land in Rice County. Farmers must be good stewards of the land as the land is their most important tool in maintaining the productive topsoil. The farmers of Rice County are encouraged to meet with the Soil and Water office to develop and implement the suggested best management practices. New developments throughout the County will be required to prepare and install proper erosion control methods included but not limited to silt fence, hay bales and or erosion mats and seeding. With active support from the farmers and developers erosion in the County will be improved. Part of the education process will be the understanding as to why erosion control is in their best interest as well as the County. Without controlling erosion there will be loss of topsoil and siltation of watercourses, lakes and wetlands. Long term uncontrolled erosion can increase the potential and severity of flooding.

Goal #19 is a support statement for the implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act. The protection of wetlands has been addressed earlier in the plan and will need to be a requirement within the Zoning Ordinance. If a wetland alteration is required for a specific project the mitigation plan must be approved and inspected by the Soil and Water Conservation District.

Goal #20 requires the protection of Rice County water resources. The County Water Plan and the Lake Management Plan are in the process of being updated and prepared and shall be part of the Comprehensive Plan by reference. Both of these plans will provide additional direction and protection for this important resource. Making improvements to surface water is an ongoing long-term project that will take many years to show noticeable results. Groundwater and aquifer recharge areas is even a slower process, but positive steps must be taken at once to preserve and improve the quality and quantity of groundwater. The general threats to surface and groundwater include erosion (silt), chemicals, septic systems, wells, petroleum products, improperly managed animal waste and solid waste. The wellhead protection for all public wells must be completed and implemented as soon as possible to protect the water supply and our citizens. The new zoning ordinance will need to address water protection issues with input derived from the Water Plan and Lake Management Plan.

Shoreland protection is addressed in Goals #23 and #24. Shoreland areas are a limited resource and must be managed properly to protect the lake and provide for public access and enjoyment for all of the County Citizens. Development is allowed in the shoreland areas under the County ordinance, which was modeled after the Department of Natural Resources model ordinance. Rice County encourages the use of a planned unit development (PUD) for shoreland development and redevelopment. The flexibility a PUD offers allows the County and the developer an opportunity to create plans that can be more environmentally sensitive and allow for some variation from the standard shoreland requirements. With any development proposal the development plan is referred to the DNR for comment through the public hearing process.

Goal #29 relates to a park impact fee. While the use of impact fees has been challenged it appears that park dedication fees are reasonably accepted. This source of revenue can be used to acquire additional parkland for new parks or to expand existing parks. Throughout the discussions on this plan a variety of opinions existed on expanding the parks in the County. While counties typically do not run active parks they frequently provide more passive park reserves. Development of a park plan is the method which allows the County to review past policies and to determine how many and what type of parks are needed. With a rapidly growing population there may be a need for additional facilities. The plan will address the needs and prioritize locations for acquisition if that is the objective. With land prices accelerating the park plan should be completed as soon as possible to maximize investment.

Access control, Goal #45, recreational trails, Goal #46, was addressed at length in the previous chapter.

Goal #48 establishes a policy to minimize environmental issues from the development process. Providing performance standards in the Zoning Ordinance and require that developers comply with all of the requirements or have a pro-active plan to comply at the time of approval is the best protection. If developers do not comply with the requirements a stop work order shall be issued until the problem is corrected.

Utilizing the GIS mapping capability for creating an overlay showing environmentally sensitive areas and open space is the purpose for Goal #49. The overlay can then be used to identify areas sensitive to development and more specific performance standards can be

developed to further protect these areas such as the Big Woods State Park. In order to generate this overlay other GIS layers will be used to identify areas needing further protection.

Goal #51 is one of the most important policies in the plan as it encourages multi-user utility systems for shoreland areas, unincorporated villages and rural residential clusters. In order to accomplish the goal an objective to create a countywide sewer and water authority is included to research economical methods to construct and maintain the utility systems. As stated in earlier in the plan the community support is essential for the success of any of these efforts. The appointments and staff assignments will be a Board of County Commissioners responsibility. Without success in this goal the opportunity to experience the projected growth in the shoreland and village locations is highly unlikely.

Agriculture

The agriculture industry has experienced major changes on a continuing basis and that change has continued for the past 30 years. To the industries credit they are today producing more product on fewer acres then ever before in history. What is important in this plan are the more recent trends that will continue to affect agriculture in Rice County. Additional statistical data is available in the Fundamental Inventory Guide. Generally the farms are getting larger and the number of persons involved with farming on a full time basis is decreasing. Generally the number of farms with livestock are decreasing and the farms having livestock generally are having larger numbers of animals.

The family farm has been the mainstay of agriculture in Rice County and has experienced many changes in the past decades. Many of today's farmers are second and third generation farmers who have continue the family farm tradition. Through the extensive discussions on this plan it was said many times that the current farmers children are choosing not to stay on the farm but rather seek other jobs or professions.

The farming operations have also changed and have increased the amount of land farmed because of the more efficient larger farm implements. The larger machinery has allowed the farmers to till more acres of land in the same amount of time it took to farm the smaller farms of 30 years ago. The crop yields have continued to increase with the development of various hybrid seeds. These factors allow fewer farmers to farm more land while producing more agricultural products.

In 1969 nearly 10% of the County work force were engaged in farming and the farm industry produced almost 11% of the total earnings in the County. In 1997 these number changed dramatically to 4.4% of the workforce was farmers and only 2.4% of the Counties earning were from farm earnings. Reviewing these trends does not paint a bright future for agriculture unless some major changes are forthcoming from the Federal government.

The County has little affect on agriculture as an industry. One issue discussed at length was the allowable housing sites in the rural area. For many years Rice County has maintained a single building site on a quarter-quarter section and allows a second site if the CER is 65 or lower. This policy has resulted in many scattered site housing throughout the County. Scattered housing further reduces large tracts of tillable land and is frequently not a friend

of agriculture. Due to the demand of housing in Rice County land prices have increased steadily for many years. The farmer is forced to face a difficult question.

The good news is “the price of land is going up” and the bad news is “the price of land is going up”. The good news is landowners are seeing their investment increase in value and for many farmers the land is their retirement nest egg. The bad news is if they want to expand the farm the additional land is very expensive and will change the economics of their operation. If housing sites were not available the agricultural land prices would likely be lower and create a similar scenario with a different tune.

Goal #17 is to preserve large tracts of agricultural land and encourage the clustering of rural residential housing. The intent is to discourage the continuation of scattered site housing and require housing to be constructed in clusters to preserve more of the agricultural land. At the current time the rural residential minimum lot size is 2 ½ acres and when clustering the housing the lots will be considerably smaller with central septic and well systems. For example if the minimum lot size becomes ½ acre at least 2 additional acres of agricultural land will be retained for each building site. Clustering is a smart growth concept that preserves more agricultural land and still provides for the same number of homes on more reasonably sized lots. The existing lot size provides more space than necessary especially when the utilities are shared. The number of driveways can be reduced as well making the road system safer. This goes hand in hand with the discussion on access control in the previous chapter.

Goal #38 addresses the rural density of housing. The decision to maintain the one unit per quarter/quarter will continue and allow a second unit if the CER is 65 or lower on the quarter/quarter. The goal goes on to encourage the clustering of the units, which will eliminate the scattered site housing. The clustering of the units will minimize the residential and agricultural conflict. The two objectives under the goal relate to housing and manure spreading areas. The first discourages the location of residential development where there exist manure-spreading areas near feedlots. The second objective would allow for residential units as long as the developer provides a plan to accommodate manure spreading in close proximity to the development. This will put the burden of proof on the developer and not the County to work out a plan with the neighboring farmers.

The County will continue to work to maintain a diverse economy by continuing to promote agriculture and agricultural businesses. Because agriculture has long been the primary business within the County it is a base for many of our businesses. It makes sense to continue to build on the strengths of Rice County. Throughout the public discussions on the plan there was not a specific definition of agricultural business. These decisions will need to be made on a case-by-case basis by industry type and location.

Goal #55 requires the agriculture and non-agricultural uses to minimize their conflicts. Many steps can be taken to help minimize the conflict and these are more ordinance requirements. Increased setbacks, screening, buffering, landscaping and separating traffic are all methods to be used effectively. The goal to encourage clustering will make accomplishing this goal more feasible. The two objectives are similar to previously mentioned goals to protect agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas and to encourage the implementation and maintenance of good soil erosion practices.

Residential

The growth in Rice County is just beginning and most of the growth is flowing out of the metropolitan area. The growth will likely accelerate in the as the population of the metro area continues to grow as was discussed earlier. Two primary reasons for this growth is the price of land and housing is substantially lower in Rice County than in the Metro, and the access and distance from the metro area. I-35 provides a direct and relatively rapid route into and out of the metro area. This rapid growth will continue into the foreseeable future as the population projections indicate that the metro area will grow by some 930,000 inhabitants by the year 2030.

Goals # 31, #32, and #37 provide one of the two major recommendations for residential development. The significant recommendation is that the Rice County promotes housing development in our cities and the unincorporated villages as long as they can provide municipal or municipal type water and sewer services. At the present time only the cities have the desired services available and this infrastructure will need to be constructed within the villages. The issue of constructing these services has already been addressed and will remain a top priority until successful completion.

The creation of zoning districts for these villages to allow for mixed-use development abutting the villages will occur with the Zoning Ordinance rewrite. The creation of the districts will not allow development until the necessary services are installed and operational.

The goal objectives proceed to say that Rice County will not encourage residential development without municipal or municipal type services. The final two objectives relate to mobile home parks. New mobile home parks must have municipal or municipal type services or the request will not be considered. The second is to develop a zoning district to enable existing mobile home parks to improve and expand as conforming uses. Currently many of the existing mobile home parks are non-conforming and are not allowed to improve or expand. It will be determined at the time of the ordinance re-write if a separate zone district or if this provision can be written into a broader zoning district.

The second major residential policy is contained in Goals #38, #50, #53 and #54. Goal #38 allows for one housing unit on a quarter/quarter with a second allowed if the CER is 65 or lower. Both Goals #38 and #50 encourage the clustering of the residential units and #45 encourages the clustering to occur in close proximity to the road to preserve agricultural land and to allow for better emergency services. Our current scattered site housing development frequently requires long driveways be constructed that are equally if not more intrusive to the agricultural land than the housing itself. When development occurs the County encourages the incorporating of greenspace consistent with greenways that will be identified in the park and open space plan.

The last two goals in the residential area are #53, which discourages the scattered site residential development and Goal #54, which allows for the transfer of development rights within a township. The plan allows for the discussion of areas where residential development should not occur at the time of ordinance re-write. Two areas to be considered are sensitive environmental sites and locations with negative characteristics to

residential development. The transfer of development rights is another strong step in trying to maximize the preservation of agricultural land. The rights from the better agricultural land can be transferred within a township to less productive areas and as a result a landowner will see benefit without breaking up the farm. The use of expanded transfer development rights may want to be considered at the time of ordinance preparation to help preserve sensitive environmental sites. In that case the County will need to identify an area where the transfer development rights could reach beyond a township.

The following map depicts the urban expansion areas, the shoreland areas, and the unincorporated villages. The urban expansion areas as described earlier in the plan are areas where little development is allowed until the areas are annexed into the municipalities. The shoreland areas graphically depict locations where lakeshore development can occur. The village's show where additional development could occur if the municipal or municipal type services is constructed. The areas of clustering in the rural areas were not shown because they will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

The half-mile village growth zones around the unincorporated communities will continue to be zoned in the appropriate general agricultural or shoreland zoning district. Any development in this zone should be located adjacent to existing urban development and any leap-frog development is discouraged. When development occurs the intent is to have the development controlled by a new planned unit development district, including a provision for mixed-use development. The County will not consider rezoning land in this area until adequate proof of an actual municipal or municipal type water and sewer service is available.

The one-mile urban expansion area around municipalities will be zoned and only allow restricted development similar to the existing A-1 urban expansion district. This zone is intended to protect the city from premature and unserved development and will allow the municipalities to plan and approve development to fit within their urban fabric. Development within a second mile from the corporate limits will be encouraged to use the provision of cluster development with input from the affected municipality. Details of the cluster development design and improvements will be included in the new County zoning ordinance. These provisions will include standards to simplify their potential inclusion in the municipality.

Municipalities, in their comprehensive planning process, will be required to provide detailed urban growth areas. These areas will be determined utilizing availability of utility capacities, transportation opportunities and land use patterns. These urban growth areas will have a greater potential for urban development than the urban expansion areas shown in Rice County Plan. The urban growth areas will be included in the Plan as municipal plans are completed along with approved orderly annexation agreements. The urban expansion areas shown in the Rice County Plan are holding areas to protect municipalities from inappropriate development.

Commercial/Industrial

As stated in the economic development chapter, Rice County needs to add to the tax base. The percentage of the Rice County commercial/industrial tax capacity has been reducing. One of the main reasons for this is the more rapid growth of the residential sector.

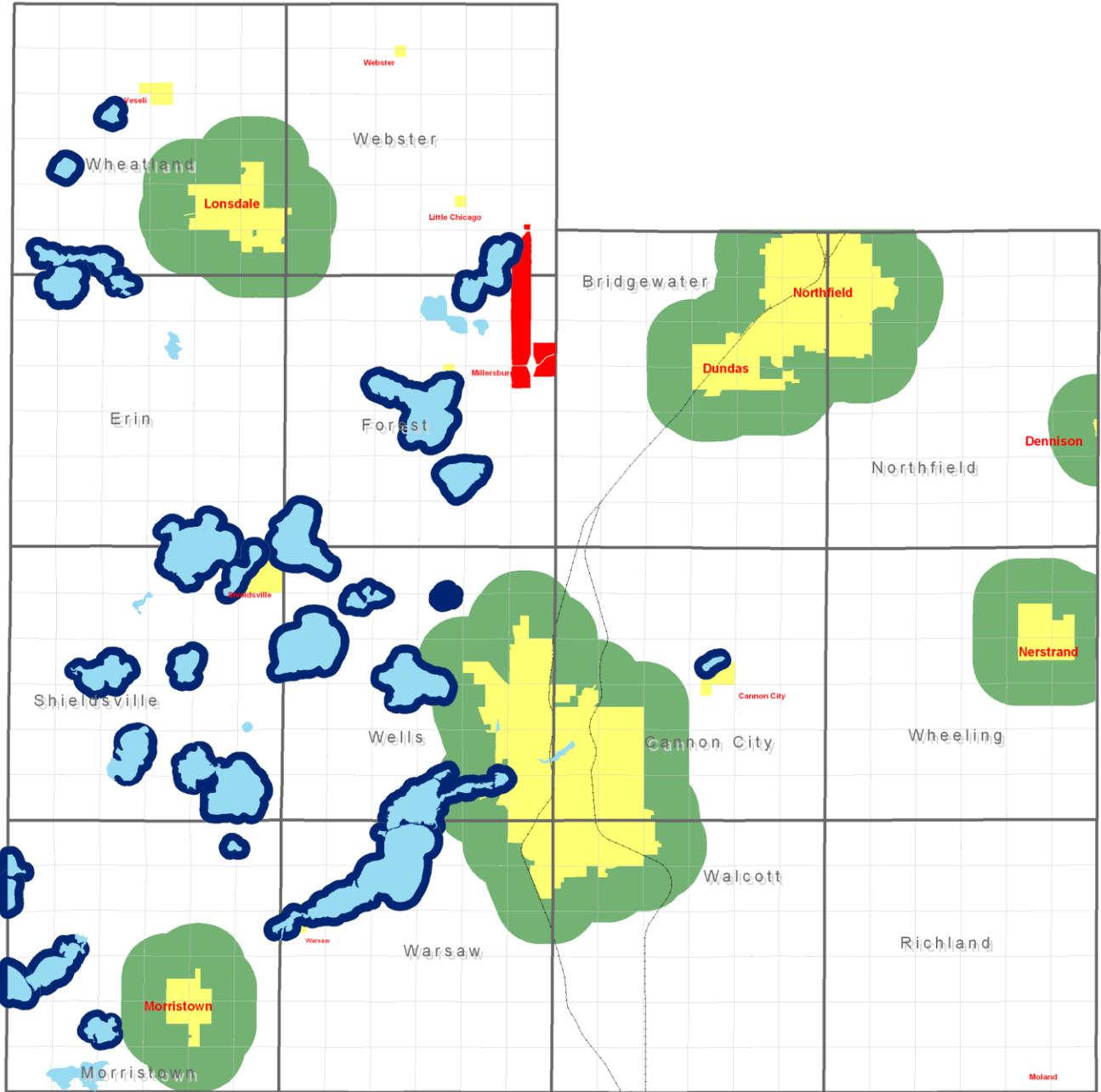
Goal #11 is a policy to create commercial/industrial zones to promote employment and generate tax base. The cities have the ability to zone areas to accommodate these businesses and have attracted business to their respective communities. Rice County is looking at the possibility of encouraging business to locate in the unincorporated villages. In order to actively pursue business the villages will need to address the water and sewer systems to provide the necessary service. Other objectives for Goal #11 include establishing the proper zoning and subdivision requirements to effectively regulate non-residential development and relate to zoning to allow for mixed-use development in the villages. Preserving the I-35 corridor for potentially long-term commercial/industrial development needs to be considered when the new zoning ordinance is drafted. The freeway location is not the most desirable location for residential development because of traffic volume and noise considerations. Planning for this lands ultimate development potential requires long-term planning and short-term use restrictions.

On page 18 of this document there was information as to how the tax base of Rice County was becoming more dependent on residential development. Because Rice County desires to become a self-sustaining community it is essential that employment opportunities and non-residential development be a focus. An area of approximately 1,100 acres is designated for commercial/industrial development and will need to be properly planned to optimize development potential and benefit to Rice County. Creation of a Land Use Master Plan, an Infrastructure Plan and environmental review utilizing an Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) process will be necessary to guide the development. The AUAR will need to address more specifically the implementation of the Infrastructure Plan including Rice County Policy on improvements.

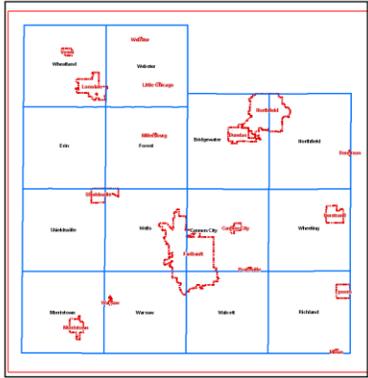
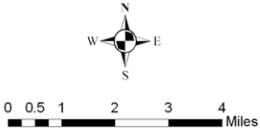
Currently the majority of the commercial and industrial development occurs in the municipalities within the County. There is very limited commercial/industrial in the villages and some scattered activities throughout the County, some of which have conditional use permits. The businesses are generally agriculturally based, contractors or automotive related. The actual number of businesses is not known because some are grandfathered in because they preceded the zoning in the County. Other businesses have started up without any contact with the County or township and very little is known about these businesses. Goal #12 initiates a business licensing system for all rural businesses except for agricultural related and home occupations. This will allow the County to locate the business and collect data on the enterprises. Information will include data on products and processes that could prove to be harmful to emergency service personnel. The more information police and fire services have the more efficient, effective and they can operate and with a higher level of safety.

Promoting private recreational enterprises utilizing a recreation zone district is Goal #13. Rice County has had considerable amount of recreational businesses. With the number of lakes and its proximity to the metro area the County can expand its recreation business. With the proper recreational zoning district private investment may follow.

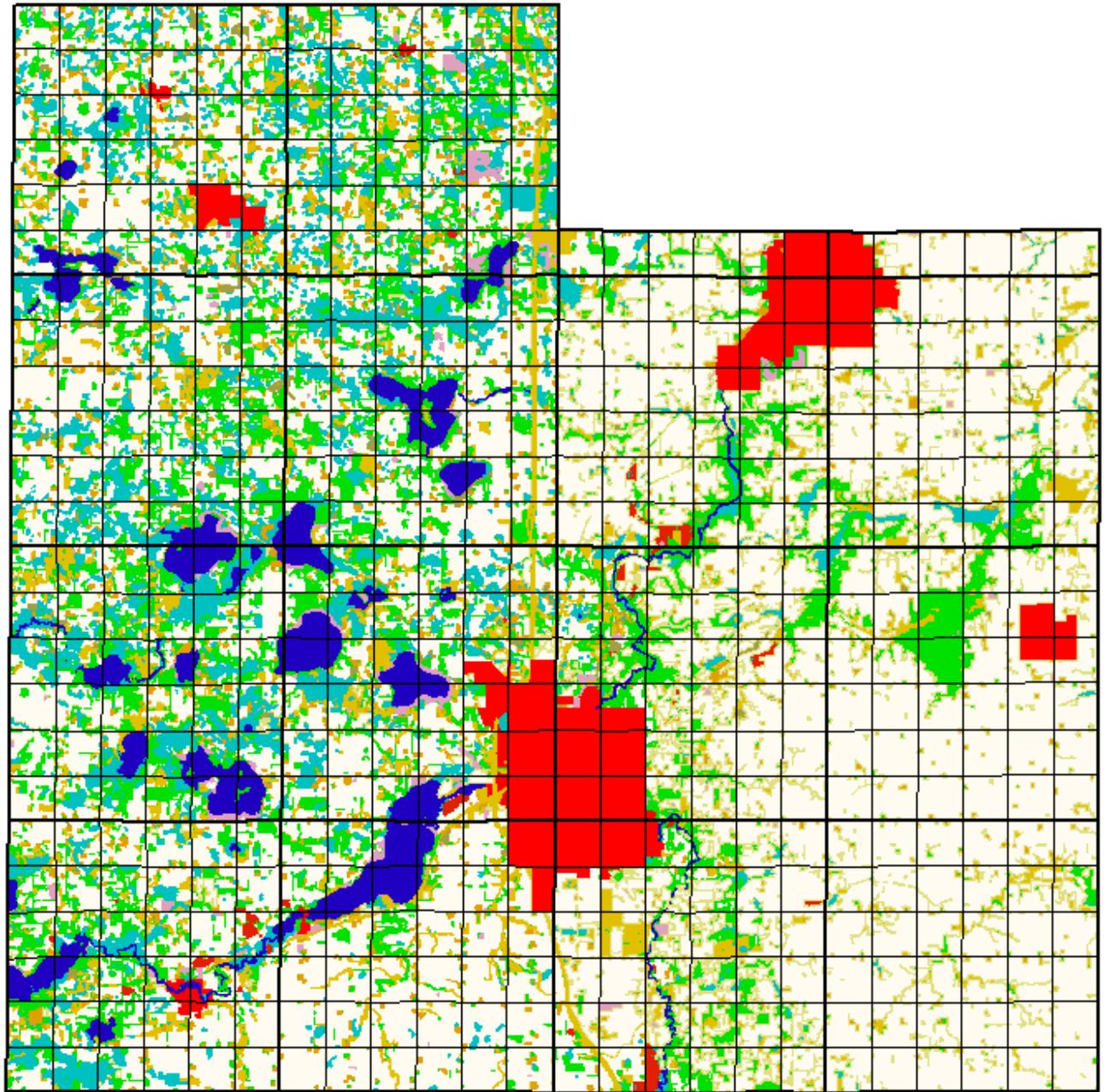
Goal #35 is a smart growth oriented requirement as it encourages municipalities and villages to provide for convenience retail/services and employment opportunities. The municipalities generally do as much as they can with the market limitations and the villages have very little commercial/industrial uses because of limited municipal type services and market conditions. This subject was also addressed elsewhere in the plan.



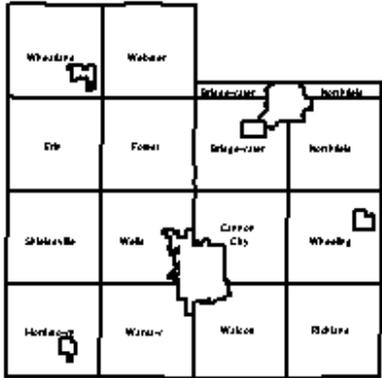
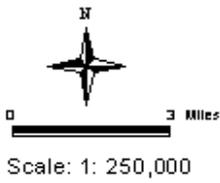
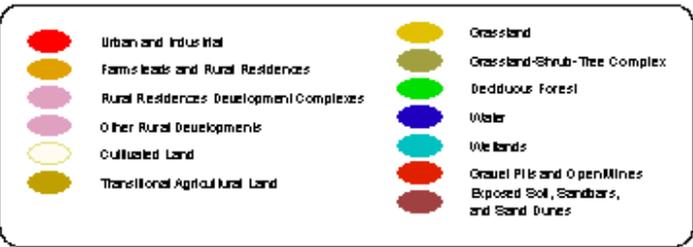
Rice County Comprehensive Plan



Map 3: Comprehensive Plan for Rice County, Minnesota



LANDUSE



Map 4: Rice County, Minnesota Landuse based on 1999 Orthophotography

- Goal 11—Create commercial/industrial zones to promote employment and generate tax base in Rice County*
- Objective 1—Establish proper zoning and subdivision regulations to regulate nonresidential development*
- Objective 2—Create zoning districts for the unincorporated villages to allow for mixed-use development*
- Objective 3—Create zoning districts to accommodate a wide variety of nonresidential development*
- Goal 12—Develop a licensing system for rural businesses, excluding agricultural, and home occupations in rural Rice County*
- Goal 13—Promote private recreational enterprises by utilizing a recreation zone district*
- Goal 16—Identify and protect areas with sand, gravel and aggregate deposits*
- Goal 17—Protect and promote agriculture by preserving large tracts of land by encouraging clustering of rural residential development*
- Goal 18—Promote environmentally sensitive erosion control practices*
- Goal 19—Support and implement state and federal regulations controlling the use, alteration or filling of wetlands*
- Goal 20—Preserve, protect and improve the surface and underground waters including, but not limited to, rivers, streams, lakes, groundwater and aquifer recharge areas*
- Objective 1—Encourage sensitive development in areas of exposed and rapid recharge aquifers*
- Objective 2—Encourage development to comply with wellhead protection zones*
- Goal 23—Encourage the protection and orderly development of Rice County shoreland areas*
- Goal 24—Encourage and promote a PUD ordinance for shoreland areas*
- Goal 29—Implement a Park Impact Fee for all new residential building permits*
- Goal 31—Create zoning districts for the unincorporated villages to allow for*

mixed-use development provided they develop municipal type water and sewer services

Goal 32—*Allow for growth within unincorporated villages utilizing the Village Extension provision and require any expansion to abut the current village and provide municipal type water and sewer services*

Goal 35—*Encourage municipalities and unincorporated villages to create convenience retail/services and employment opportunities providing they develop municipal type water and sewer services*

Goal 37—*Promote housing development in cities and unincorporated villages who can provide municipal or municipal type water and sewer services rather than in the agricultural districts.*

Objective 1—*Rice County will not encourage residential development without municipal or municipal type water and sewer services*

Objective 2—*Allow new mobile home parks only in areas with municipal or municipal type water and sewer services*

Objective 3—*Develop a zoning district for existing mobile home parks to allow for some growth as a conforming use*

Goal 38—*Allow rural housing of one unit per quarter quarter section with a second allowed when the crop equivalency rating (CER) is 65 or below with clustering of the units encouraged*

Objective 1—*Discourage residential development from locating near manure-spreading areas for feedlot operators*

Objective 2—*Require residential developers to create a plan to accommodate manure-spreading areas prior to any approval or construction*

Goal 45—*Develop Access Control Policy for all roadways to improve the safety and capacity of the transportation system*

Goal 46—*Promote recreational trails compatible with existing land use*

Goal 47—*Minimize the potential for air, waters and, land contamination and pollution that could result from the development process*

Goal 49—*Define, by GIS overlay, and preserve environmentally sensitive areas and other open space (such as the Big Woods) by allowing only compatible land uses and development*

Goal 50—Encourage clustering of any rural residential development in close proximity to roads in an effort to protect agricultural land, environmentally sensitive areas and to facilitate emergency service

Goal 51—Encourage multi-user and sanitary sewer and water service districts for shoreland, unincorporated villages and rural residential clusters

Objective 1—Establish a sewer and water entity to research economical methods to construct and maintain sewer and water systems for communities in unincorporated areas

Goal 52—Maintain a diverse economic mix for Rice County by promoting agriculture and associated businesses

Goal 53—Discourage scattered site residential development and promote clustering

Goal 54—Allow for the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) within a township

Goal 55—Minimize conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural uses

Objective 1—Adopt land use regulations that control density and development in agricultural and open spaces, too protect and preserve agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas

Objective 2—Coordinate with Soil and Water Conservation District and Soil Conservation Services to encourage landowners and tenants to implement and maintain good soil erosion practices

Goal 56—The County will provide a zoning district extending one mile from the municipal boundaries that will restrict development until incorporated into the municipal corporate limits

CHAPTER 9

PUBLIC INVESTMENTS

The cost of development and growth has been discussed at length at all governmental levels. There are definitely costs in new development even though the developer in most cases pays for the needed improvements within the development. The development cost need to be broken down to capital dollars and ongoing operational funding. The extent of capital improvements is dependent on the amount of growth anticipated for a geographic area or region.

In looking at Rice County we must first determine what improvements are needed to maintain the status quo. Transportation facilities discussed in Chapter 7 include some of the more expensive and ongoing cost to Rice County and any governmental agency. Rice County is not the sole provider of funds for the transportation system improvements. The Federal and State governments are responsible for the more major roadways classified in the plan. The interstate system and the state highway system improvements are typically completed through the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). Frequently there is a cost share to the local government that is determined on a project-by-project basis.

The highway system is an expensive infrastructure item. Rice County has identified several projects that will require substantial dollars from outside of Rice County. Interchange improvements on I-35 are approximately 40 years old and are not able to accommodate the current traffic demands. Redesign of the existing interchanges and improvements to their geometric design are needed to safely move current traffic levels. Rice County will need to communicate on a regular basis with MnDOT to keep our projects on the improvement schedules. The County is aware of the shortages in available funding for all the projects in the State, but we must continue to build a strong case, with the support of the sites, for our projects.

The larger financial issue of roadways is with the County highway and roadway system. The maintenance of the system has received adequate funding in the past but there is a concern if the funding is adequate for the future. Throughout the discussion on the plan the citizens it is obvious the citizens are very concerned about their roadways. The County system will need to have improvements to maintain and improve the safety of the roads for the users. The roadway system must be studied to determine the magnitude of improvements necessary to maintain a quality system. The projects will need to be prioritized and included in the Five Year Capital Improvement Program including a plan to fund the improvements implemented. Seeking outside sources of funds is an ongoing task but an internal analysis will need to be presented to the Board of Commissioners regarding local funding options. Bonding programs and general tax levy are two of the more likely revenue sources.

Schools are another potentially large cost of development. The major responsibility is to keep the communication lines open between the appropriate school district and the County or respective municipal governments. School districts will need to keep the local townships and governments apprised of capacity issues within their individual school districts including their facilities. It is very important for the local government to communicate all development requests to the school districts so the district maintains adequate capacity. If there are funding limitations the local government should be advised so appropriate steps could be taken.

The provision of central water and sewer systems is a costly item. For new developments the developer will typically fund the system and the County will work with the developer regarding over-sizing the proposed system to accommodate additional connections within the geographic area. Rice County has substantial development currently on individual systems. To date the County has established a funding source of \$800,000 to assist in creating cluster waste water systems. This has been funded out of the Rice County Fund Balance but has the potential to be funded through a bonding program. Rice County, through a yet to be established Countywide Sewer and Water Authority, will pursue funding from all potential sources. If the growth in our smaller villages and shoreland areas become a reality it will be because of new public utilities that are environmentally friendly have been constructed.

Impact fees have been discussed in providing funding for many of the capital improvements. Recent decisions have severely limited this as a source of revenue and the only one implemented is the park dedication fee. The park dedication fee will enable the County to use these funds for park acquisition for new parks or to expand existing parks and open space.

Economic development has not been funded at the County level. The necessity of funding comes with the desire to establish a Countywide Economic Develop Initiative. The framework of this program will need to be created and discussed with our potential municipal and township partners. Additional funds will eventually be needed to implement a gateway beautification program to assist the economic development initiative

Additional resources are and will continue to be spent on the implementation of the Wetland Conservation Act and enforcement of County solid waste requirements. Both programs need additional funding to be more effective in accomplishing the livable communities and sustainable development programs. It will be important to develop a more streamlined program to improve efficiency and effectiveness of our solid waste clean-up program.

In addition to the aforementioned items there will be some short-term costs associated with the comprehensive plan. The County is going to complete the GIS program for the entire County by completing the parcel layer for the Cities of Faribault and Northfield. At the time the initial parcel map was prepared the two Cities could not get the information gathered to complete the layer at one time. The County had no choice but to proceed to maintain the schedule to complete the plan. The completion of this parcel layer will give complete coverage for Rice County making the system more user-friendly for all of units of

government and the citizens. This layer should be completed in 2003. The other cost will be the preparation of the official controls needed to implement the comprehensive plan. The Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances will need to be rewritten, and this task needs to be completed as soon as possible to direct development as recommended by this plan. Rice County will likely prepare a request for proposal and submit it to planning and legal consultants. The cost has not been determined for this process and starting to work on these official controls will commence prior to the adoption of the plan. In order to give quality service and direction to property owners it is beneficial to minimize confusion by having consistency between the plan and ordinance.

Goal 5—Establish a Countywide Economic Development Initiative, in cooperation with municipalities and townships, to promote employment and expand the tax base in Rice County

Objective 1—Continue to work with the cities of Rice County to keep urban growth boundaries up to date

Objective 2—Develop a gateway beautification plan for major entrances into Rice County and into municipalities and villages

Goal 6—Coordinate with all highway agencies, municipalities and townships to facilitate development of a safe and efficient transportation system

Goal 13—Promote private recreational enterprises by utilizing a recreation zone district

Goal 19—Support and implement state and federal regulations controlling the use, alteration or filling of wetlands

Goal 25—Encourage cooperative utility systems including water and sewer districts in shoreland areas

Goal 29—Implement a Park Impact Fee for all new residential building permits

Goal 30—Promote the public health, safety and welfare by enacting and timely enforcement of a solid waste material ordinance

Goal 51—Encourage multi-user and sanitary sewer and water service districts for shoreland, unincorporated villages and rural residential clusters

Objective 1—Establish a sewer and water entity to research economical methods to construct and maintain sewer and water systems for communities in unincorporated areas

CHAPTER 10

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Promoting public awareness is an ongoing goal of responsive governmental agency. In Rice County the quarterly newsletter and the County web site are two of the methods the local government uses to keep the citizens informed. The standard public hearing notices in the newspaper and direct mail are methods used to notify residents and other governmental agencies off pending development items.

Rice County intends to place the Comprehensive Plan on our web site and also have copies of the plan for public review in the public libraries. These are two effective methods of having the public become familiar with the goals of the County without significant costs. The newspapers within the County are another source of getting information to the citizens through news and informational articles.

The staff of Rice County is also a source for getting information out on the requirements contained in the plan. With the new plan it will require the staff of Rice County to spend more time on questions so the inquiries are completely answered and the reasons are understood. This direct contact and open communication will be the easiest way for citizens to more fully grasp the plan.

Public hearings will be held on the plan to receive additional citizen input. Several hearing have already been conducted and prior to submitting the plan to Minnesota Planning by October 1, 2002 more public hearings will be held on the plan as it nears its final draft.

The Planning Commission and the County Board will use the plan as a guide in all future planning and development decisions. The plan is a working document and will be of little value if it remains on the bookshelf. It will be the guide for the Rice County Zoning Ordinance and will be used indirectly for all matters of zoning in the unincorporated areas of the County. Throughout the public hearings on the new Zoning Ordinance frequent references will be directed to the plan as the basis for the new ordinance.

The goals listed will require public forums to get the information to the citizens of Rice County so there will be an understanding of how the regulations affect each citizen. Handout information will need to be developed once the plan and its implementation process is established. Information on **business licensing, wetland regulations, solid waste enforcement, access control, individual and multi-family waste water systems, water systems, transfer development rights, agricultural preservation and erosion control practices for agriculture and development sites** will need to be prepared for public use.

Goal #4 is working with the school districts on the plan and the ordinances. When we have these informational meetings we will together create a referral system and review the type of information that each party needs to assist in the decision making process. To simplify the referral process, the development of a simple checklist for the school district representative to return to the County including space for additional comments. The checklist should concentrate on capacity, busing and other fiscal concerns.

Extensive public education will be needed in the area of encouraging multi-user sanitary sewer and water systems. As addressed earlier in the plan it is essential that these villages provide local leadership to accomplish community buy-in to the potential new systems. There is limited discussion of the concept at the current time throughout discussion and preparation of the Water Plan and a Lake Management Plan. The discussions will start as a general overview of the issues but will get very specific and detailed in short time. The key element in addition to local community acceptance is the ability to make the systems happen. Only talk and no action will not make these systems a reality. Therefore, before these meetings commence, a method of how to construct and finance these systems will have to be researched and developed for local use.

Public education has been an integral part of Rice County system for many years. This Comprehensive Plan will assist the County in providing additional direction and improve public awareness.

This entire Community Based Comprehensive Plan process has been an educational process. Volumes of information was shared with the participants. By continuing this process we will continue to provide important information and create a more knowledgeable citizenry.

Goal 4—Invite school districts in Rice County to provide input in pending changes to planning and zoning regulations

Objective 1--Formulate a referral process with school districts on development

Goal 12—Develop a licensing system for rural businesses, excluding agricultural, and home occupations in rural Rice County

Goal 19—Support and implement state and federal regulations controlling the use, alteration or filling of wetlands

Goal 30—Promote the public health, safety and welfare by enacting and timely enforcement of a solid waste material ordinance

Goal 45—Develop Access Control Policy for all roadways to improve the safety and capacity of the transportation system

Goal 51—Encourage multi-user and sanitary sewer and water service districts for shoreland, unincorporated villages and rural residential clusters

Objective 1—Establish a sewer and water entity to research economical methods to construct and maintain sewer and water systems for communities in unincorporated areas

Goal 53—Allow for the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) within a section of land

Goal 55—Minimize conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural uses

Objective 1—Adopt land use regulations that control density and development in agricultural and open spaces, too protect and preserve agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas

Objective 2—Coordinate with Soil and Water Conservation District and Soil Conservation Services to encourage landowners and tenants to implement and maintain good soil erosion practices

CHAPTER 11

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This final chapter is what the entire plan is about as evidenced by the Vision Statement included in the Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan and repeated here.

VISION STATEMENT

The Rice County Board of Commissioners, along with the Planning Commission and the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, comprised of citizens representing all the cities and townships of Rice County, have developed this Community Based Comprehensive Plan to assure that the quality of life for current and future residents of Rice County shall be preserved and protected.

Nearly half of the goals used throughout the plan are included in this sustainable development chapter. All of the goals have had extensive clarification in the previous chapters and there is little more to add other than the Vision Statement listed above.

Rice County is committed to providing a better quality of life for the residents and businesses of the County. This will be accomplished through protecting the environment, minimizing waste, improving efficiency and work to stabilize the economy through economic development efforts. With the anticipated growth for Rice County opportunities are available and the management of development will allow the County to construct quality and viable agricultural and municipal environment.

Goal 3—Encourage townships and municipalities to work together to construct orderly annexation agreements and urban growth zones

Goal 12—Develop a licensing system for rural businesses, excluding agricultural, and home occupations in rural Rice County

Goal 14—Encourage the development of infrastructure to promote telecommuting and E-business in Rice County

Goal 19—Support and implement state and federal regulations controlling

the use, alteration or filling of wetlands

Goal 20—Preserve, protect and improve the surface and underground waters including, but not limited to, rivers, streams, lakes, groundwater and aquifer recharge areas

Objective 1—Encourage sensitive development in areas of exposed and rapid recharge aquifers

Objective 2—Encourage development to comply with wellhead protection zones

Goal 23—Encourage the protection and orderly development of Rice County shoreland areas

Goal 25—Encourage cooperative utility systems including water and sewer districts in shoreland areas

Goal 27—Promote development of commuter rail and other transit opportunities on the I-35 corridor

Goal 28—Encourage improvement to public transportation systems

Goal 29—Implement a Park Impact Fee for all new residential building permits

Goal 30—Promote the public health, safety and welfare by enacting and timely enforcement of a solid waste material ordinance

Goal 31—Create zoning districts for the unincorporated villages to allow for mixed-use development provided they develop municipal type water and sewer services

Goal 32—Allow for growth within unincorporated villages utilizing the Village Extension provision and require any expansion to abut the current village and provide municipal type water and sewer services

Goal 33—Encourage the development of life-cycle and affordable housing in cooperation with municipal HRAs

Goal 34—Encourage multi-family residential in appropriate areas to help meet life-cycle and affordable housing needs

Goal 35—Encourage municipalities and unincorporated villages to create convenience retail/services and employment opportunities providing they develop municipal type water and sewer services

- Goal 36—Encourage all municipalities to implement goals and objectives to sustain liveable community design*
- Goal 37—Promote housing development in cities and unincorporated villages who can provide municipal or municipal type water and sewer services rather than in the agricultural districts.*
- Goal 39—Encourage the maintenance and improvements to the existing housing stock*
- Goal 45—Develop Access Control Policy for all roadways to improve the safety and capacity of the transportation system*
- Goal 48—Minimize the potential for air, waters and, land contamination and pollution that could result from the development process*
- Goal 51—Encourage multi-user and sanitary sewer and water service districts for shoreland, unincorporated villages and rural residential clusters*
- Objective 1—Establish a sewer and water entity to research economical methods to construct and maintain sewer and water systems for communities in unincorporated areas*
- Goal 54—Allow for the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) within a township*
- Goal 55—Minimize conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural uses*
- Objective 1—Adopt land use regulations that control density and development in agricultural and open spaces, too protect and preserve agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas*
- Objective 2—Coordinate with Soil and Water Conservation District and Soil Conservation Services to encourage landowners and tenants to implement and maintain good soil erosion practices*

CHAPTER 12

IMPLEMENTATION

One of the more important elements of the Comprehensive Plan is the actual implementation and putting the plan to use on a daily basis. The Plan has been developed using many hours of volunteer assistance and input through the CPCC, CPSC, township and municipalities, the Rice County Planning Commission and the Rice County Board of Commissioners. While the Plan itself is nearing completion, much work remains to fully implement the Comprehensive Plan.

The zoning/subdivision ordinance is the most recognized implementation tool and Rice County has taken steps to make sure this becomes a reality. The current zoning/subdivision ordinance was substantially modified in 1992 and the current discussion has been to develop a new ordinance that is more user-friendly. Responses to a Rice County request for proposals have already been received and the process of developing the new ordinance may precede the actual adoption of the Comprehensive Plan scheduled for December. No projected completion date has been developed but the objective is to complete the ordinances by mid 2003.

Rice County is committed to the community based strategy established in completing the Comprehensive Plan and will use a similar open process in development of the new zoning/subdivision ordinance.

In addition to the zoning/subdivision ordinance the following list of documents must be completed and incorporated into the comp plan:

1. Comprehensive Transportation Plan
2. Comprehensive Park and Open Space Plan
3. Updated Water Plan (in process)
4. Economic Development Initiative
5. Municipal Plans (to be completed by municipalities)
6. Orderly Annexation Agreements (to be completed by cities and townships)

Like the zoning ordinance, community wide involvement and input will be utilized in development of each of the plans the County is responsible to complete. For example, the Comprehensive Transportation Plan will involve substantial participation from the municipalities, townships and MnDOT to develop a workable and understandable policy plan for the future. A similar process will be used for the Park and Open Space Plan with the DNR, MPCA, US Fish and Wildlife Service and the municipalities and the townships. The economic development plan will also require substantial involvement from municipalities and township officials to develop a workable plan.

The new municipal plans for the incorporated areas and orderly annexation agreements, while not the responsibility of Rice County, are being completed by their respective organizations and will be included in the Rice County Comprehensive Plan after review of their plans for consistency with the overall Rice County Comprehensive Plan. The citizen

participation for each of the municipalities plans is the responsibility of the individual cities and each involve numerous citizens in the preparations of these plans.

Rice County is committed to working with individual state and local government and agencies to share information and have input into local decision-making. One major accomplishment of this community-based plan has been an increased awareness of other agencies and local governments. Several times during discussion on this Plan it was mentioned by township, municipal and state agencies alike how these meetings would not have taken place be it for the Rice County Comprehensive Plan.