

**From:** [Association Board](#)  
**To:** [CompPlan Input](#); [Sara Folsted](#); [Jake Gillen](#); [Galen Malecha](#); [Dave Miller](#); [Steve Underdahl](#); [Jeff Docken](#)  
**Cc:** [Association Board](#)  
**Subject:** Comprehensive Plan Input  
**Date:** Thursday, October 15, 2020 11:01:07 AM

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October 15, 2020

TO: Rice County Commissioners  
Rice County Administrator  
Rice County Question and Comment Address

Sent via Email

FR: Forest Economic Development Association

RE: Comprehensive Plan Input

The purpose of this letter is to provide input to the County from the Forest Economic Development Association (FEDA) regarding the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. FEDA is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit established to encourage all the members of our community to take a proactive role in working with the Rice County Board of Commissioners and the board of supervisors from each of our townships to determine what type of development would be compatible with and acceptable to the existing communities.

Developing a template for the next twenty years is an ambitious undertaking. FEDA thanks the staff and elected officials for work performed toward this goal. While much of the material developed has merit, FEDA has some concerns about the Plan process and the product. For reasons highlighted below, FEDA believes it is imperative that the industrial designation on the map be removed and that the County mount a reasonable effort to study the issue.

FEDA asserts that the process is flawed because following a negligible amount of citizen involvement in 2015 (less than one percent of the population attended the meetings), a draft plan was developed. Subsequently, the planning process stalled until 2020 when the County pulled the Plan off the shelf to be considered for approval. The significant changes in the County that have occurred during the intervening five years are ignored in the current process. The population has grown during this five-year period. These new residents join the 99% of previous residents who are disenfranchised by the County with regard to input. Perhaps the most glaring flaw in the process is the dusting off of the Plan for approval during a raging pandemic that shows no signs of abating. Many people are confined to their homes and dogged by uncertainties and dealing with a new way of life. Clearly, the focus of Rice County residents at this time is on the safety and future of their loved ones rather than the Plan.

A document intended to guide a large, populous county for the next twenty years should be written in a professional manner and have a foundation in data. The current draft Plan current plan includes a significant amount of

the author's opinion, content without rationale, and inaccuracies. Citing merely two examples, on page 9, the statement "It is evident an increase in commercial / industrial development is necessary in Rice County" is asserted without providing any supporting evidence. The next sentence states that the commercial / industrial tax base has increased to "roughly 18%" in 2017. Yet the accompanying figure (page 8) shows Commercial at 3.08% and Industrial at 19.07%, the sum of which is not roughly 18%, but rather 22.15%. It is noteworthy that Dakota County's commercial / industrial percentage is 22%. These are just two of many conclusory statements and inaccuracies in the Plan.

The most obvious problem with the proposed Plan is the fact that the map does not reflect the narrative. The Plan includes multiple statements that concern the effort to locate appropriate industrial areas. Why would a map inexplicably show a commercial / industrial swath along Forest Townships' interstate frontage when the narrative clearly states that a variety of factors should be employed to *determine where* to place industrial areas? FEDA requests that the County remove this industrial designation from the map and pursue a valid process to determine the siting of any industrial areas in the County. A reasonable approach would include engaging an environmental design and engineering firm to study what types of development would be feasible, economically viable, safe, and compatible with existing land use.

As you are aware, FEDA recognizes that development will and should come to Rice County. FEDA welcomes the "orderly growth and a diverse economy" that is a part of the Rice County vision. However, the process of determining how development happens should be solid. It should be informed by data from many sources.

Again, thank you for the work you have done toward the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. If FEDA can be of assistance in any way, please let us know. Thank you for your consideration.

Truly yours,

Forest Economic Development Association

[FEDAInfo.org](http://FEDAInfo.org)

Board@FEDAInfo.org

**From:** [Kristi Pursell](#)  
**To:** [CompPlan Input](#)  
**Cc:** [Galen Malecha](#); [Jake Gillen](#); [Dave Miller](#); [Steve Underdahl](#); [Jeff Docken](#); [Sara Folsted](#)  
**Subject:** Comment from Cannon River Watershed Partnership  
**Date:** Thursday, October 29, 2020 9:41:23 PM

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Hello Commissioners and Comp Planning staff,

On behalf of the Cannon River Watershed Partnership's board of directors and members, I would like to submit three broad, overarching preliminary comments about the draft county comprehensive plan at this time.

Firstly, thank you for proposing an inclusion of a Sustainability section to the plan. If we want Rice County to be a livable, farmable and viable place for future generations, the work begins now.

Secondly, we would love to see some measurable goals included in this plan over the next 20 years. How will we know we're living up to the ideas the plan lays out if we can't measure our progress? The Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Board has come up with some measurable goals and outcomes for the next 10 years as outlined in their [Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan](#). You recently approved and adopted this plan and it would be a great place to begin and possibly coordinate goals and efforts in the realm of water and land management for the county.

Our final general comment to share at this time is to encourage you to take bold action now. It's wonderful that a Sustainability chapter is being considered for inclusion in the plan, but we recognize there will almost always be a gap between what is politically feasible in the moment and the actual distance we will need to go to achieve meaningful change. We encourage you to set ambitious goals and then put time, energy, and funding behind the work to get there! We *need* to take action in order to truly stop a climate catastrophe and we hope that you will be forward-looking enough to follow the lead of so many Rice County residents and groups of people who are willing and able to lend their time, and their expertise to assist in this process, including CRWP. Please consider us a partner in this important work.

We hope to give more specific feedback once there is another draft available for public comment. Thank you for taking into consideration our comments and suggestions.

~Kristi Pursell

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Please note I will be taking time away Thursday November 19th & 20th.