

Traverse County Comprehensive Plan

Traverse County, Minnesota

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE LAND USE POLICY PLAN

The purpose of the Traverse County Land Use Policy is to provide a set of policies applied to specific areas (in this case the Traverse County Zoning Districts) or to specific land uses (such as confined feedlots, residential subdivision and other uses). The policies are designed to guide land use decisions in Traverse County. Such decisions include those made by both the private and the public sector that affect private land use.

It is a basic premise of local government land use planning that the community as a whole has an interest in how land is used. Land use decisions have an effect on the need for public expenditures and taxes, on environmental quality, on the consumption of energy, land, and other resources; and, where mixtures of incompatible uses are created, on the stability of property values. The adverse impacts of poor land use decisions are felt at the neighborhood, community, and the county levels, and, in general, affect the quality of life of the entire area.

The authority to plan has been granted to counties by Minnesota state law for the purpose of promoting the "health, safety, morals and general welfare of the community." According to M.S. 394.21.

Planning is an ongoing process. When county policies and ordinances fail to achieve desired results or create new problems, these policies and ordinances should be changed. Likewise, this Plan should be reviewed and updated every 5 years.

The Traverse County Land Use Policy Plan is closely tied to the County Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances. Prior to reviewing requests to change the zoning on an individual parcel or to approving a subdivision, these request should be evaluated for conformity to the stated Traverse County Land Use Policies.

As stated, the Traverse County Land Use Policies are set forth in two categories--those relating to specific areas such as the flood prone areas of the County, and those concerned with specific land uses such as confined feedlots. In both cases, the policies serve as the basis for the Traverse County Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance.

The intended use of the Traverse County Land Use Policy Plan is two-fold. The primary use of the Policy Plan is to act as the basis for the County Zoning Ordinance by providing guidelines useful for delineating areas of existing land use and development characteristics to the appropriate zoning district classification so as to afford such areas the regulation necessary to maintain their essential qualities and to assure that additional development will be keeping with that which has been already established. Second, the Policy Plan is intended as a guideline to be used to make adjustments to the land use system of the County by (1) establishing policies for

reclassifying land to a more appropriate zoning district (rezoning) when it is demonstrated that it is necessary and desirable and, that the proposed change cannot be achieved without the rezoning; (2) acting as the basis for promoting economic growth through the formulation of general policies for the use and development of land; and, (3) establishing policies for the review of specific land use changes via the conditional use permit process.

The policies presented in this plan are, for the most part, general in nature providing the County with guidelines in making land use decisions.

This Policy Plan is not a regulation or an ordinance. It is a guideline for land use decisions. As such, it is recommended that it be adopted by resolution of both County Planning and Zoning Commission and County Board of Commissioners.

These policies are translated into specific development standards in the County's Zoning Ordinance.

In their simplest form, the Land Use Policy Plan and County Zoning Ordinance are intended to guide development decisions and regulate land uses for the convenience, comfort and welfare of the entire County. If this plan and ordinances fail in that respect, it is the responsibility of the County to amend these documents.

Finally, all of the policies guiding the decision making process for designating land to the various land use classifications should be used to evaluate proposals for future land use decisions. No single policy should be used solely or even primarily to justify the approval or disapproval of a proposed to change the designated land use. For this reason, it is important that County officials, staff and the general public are familiar with the Traverse County Land Use Policy Plan.

POLICIES

FLOOD PRONE AREAS

1. The “FP” Flood Plain Districts are created for the public purpose of reducing flood damage through flood plain management and emphasizing the use of nonstructural measures to control potential flood damage. Such measures may include a flood plain zoning designation as well as flood proofing and flood warning practices.
2. The “FP” Flood Plain Districts regulations are intended not to prohibit development, but to guide development in flood plain areas so that it is consistent with the flood threat and the land use needs of the County.
3. The “FP” Flood Plan Districts are designed to guard against the unwise use of flood plains which may cause loss of life and property, disruption of commerce and government services, unsanitary conditions, and interruption of transportation and communications. Sound land use development can reduce flood damages, decrease public expenditure and inconveniences, and ensure that the County’s lands are put to their most appropriate use.

SHORELAND AREAS

1. The “S” Shoreland District regulations are created because lakes and streams are two of Minnesota’s most valuable natural resources for rapidly expanding recreational needs. Lakes and streams also meet the increased agricultural, domestic and industrial demands for water, which must be satisfied from a fixed natural supply. The economy of many areas is related to the fate of water bodies and their shorelands. As man is drawn to shoreland areas, he often creates problems such as water pollution, overcrowding, unwise development, destruction of fish and wildlife habitat, and the impairment of natural beauty. These policies and regulations seek to provide a balance between the use and beneficial enjoyment of shoreland and the conservation and preservation of valuable natural resources.
2. The Shoreland regulations are implemented through the Zoning Ordinance and are an overlay zone. As an overlay zone, these regulations are applied in addition to other zoning restrictions. Shoreland regulations serve as minimum guidelines for County Shoreland Management Programs.

AGRICULTURAL AREAS

1. The “A” Agricultural District is for land in the County where the preservation and conservation of land for agricultural purposes is important or where appropriate non-farm uses of land cannot be determined within the existing pattern of land use or within present growth and economic needs.

- A. Areas identified as agricultural land should be managed in such a way as to preserve that use and prevent a decline of agricultural uses.
2. The principal use of land in the “A” Agricultural District is for agriculture and farm dwellings, although certain uses related to the needs of the people of the County such as limited development of non-farm dwellings, religious, health, education and recreation facilities and other uses that are compatible with open land may be developed.
 - A. Additional limiting factors for limited, non-farm development are: wetlands, drainage ways, high water tables, and poor soil permeability. Areas possessing rolling or steep topography and extensive ground cover, especially native prairie land and forested areas, should be preserved and protected.
 - B. Residential lot size should be sufficient to meet all Traverse County Health and Sanitation Regulations.
 - C. Non-farm, residential development should occur only at very low density.
 - D. Non-farm, residential, commercial, and industrial uses should not be allowed to locate in agricultural land unless a need for the use is demonstrated.
 3. The intent of the “A” Agricultural District is to protect agricultural and open land from the intrusion and premature development of uses not performing a function necessary to the agricultural use of the land of meeting of the social, cultural or economic growth needs of the County.
 4. Because land in the “A” Agricultural District is subject to being placed in another zoning district as growth and land use changes occur in the County, such changes should be made with due concern to the protection of established uses.
 - A. Changes in land use should be accomplished through the use of rezoning or conditional use permits recognizing the present and foreseeable future needs of the area so that new uses and land development can be accomplished in an orderly manner conducive to the growth, stability and long range desirability of the area.

URBAN EXPANSION AREAS

1. The “UE” Urban Expansion District provides areas adjacent to municipalities for the purpose of providing urban expansion through cooperative planning by the County, municipality and township.
2. The County, through its staff, Planning and Zoning Commission, and County Board, will coordinate planning and development activities with affected cities and townships by:

- A. Promoting cooperative planning in land use matters and issues of mutual concern.
 - B. Working with the cities and townships to promote orderly growth and annexation when warranted.
 - C. Recommending to the local units of government ordinance changes which will aid coordinated planning activities.
 - D. Exchanging plans and policies between the County and adjoining units of government to ensure general knowledge of the on-going urbanization process.
3. The "UE" Urban Expansion District is designated to accommodate urban growth, preserve agricultural land and protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- A. The development of land for urban expansion purposes should occur as a logical extension of existing urban development.
 - B. The areas designated for urban expansion should only include land which accurately represents an area of mutual planning concern.
4. The "UE" Urban Expansion District recognizes that development is a process. Plans, policies, and ordinances must reflect that land adjacent to cities is the area most frequently under pressure to be developed for new and different uses.

COMMERCIAL - INDUSTRIAL AREAS

1. The "C-I" Commercial - Industrial District provides areas throughout the County which promote a convenient and efficient distribution of a broad range of commercial and industrial establishments serving a large area. These commercial and industrial uses are intended to meet consumer demands, to satisfy commercial land use requirements for the County, to provide employment, to achieve a stable and compatible land use pattern, and to encourage economic growth.
2. The proper development of the "C-I" Commercial Industrial District is the responsibility of the County.
- A. Because commercial/industrial areas are subject to public use which is a matter of important concern to the entire community, these uses should provide an appropriate appearance, ample off-street parking, controlled traffic movement, and suitable relationship adjacent properties.
 - B. When deemed necessary for the public safety and convenience, service drives should be required when new commercial/industrial area are developed.

3. The "C-I" Commercial - Industrial District is provided in recognition of the need to allocate adequate space in appropriate locations for commercial and industrial uses.
- A. Lot sizes for the commercial/industrial areas are not predetermined by ordinance, rather each use will be examined to assess its needs for space to provide off-street parking, landscaping, setback and other site requirements.
 - B. These areas are intended to encourage the development and maintenance of industrial uses, thus providing a variety of location opportunities to industrial establishment.
 - C. Important in determining the location and size of these areas is the accessibility of the location to regional transportation facilities, the availability of public utilities, and the adequacy of fire and police protection. The topography of the area should be relatively level with no flood hazard.
 - D. These areas may be in close proximity to other land use areas, but whenever possible, appropriate physical features should be used as boundaries.

_____, _____, Adopted by Traverse County Planning Commission.

_____, _____, Adopted by Traverse County Board.