

## *Residential Land Use*

### **Recommendation #1: Develop an impartial resource of information that assists local units of government and the public to make educated decisions about managing growth.**

(All units of Government have access to the same information such as demographics, housing trends and studies, innovative housing developments and impacts of growth on natural resources, green space, and wildlife corridors. An impartial resource list should be created and maintained in an easily accessible and user friendly format to encourage governments and residents to obtain necessary information to form an educated opinion and assist in the process of growth.)

- 1) **Benefits:** An impartial resource list will ensure that local units of government are working with a common set of data and comparisons. Community and business access to this resource provides residents and government with a checks and balance system when communicating about the needs and solutions of growth. Everyone using the same data would lead to greater efficiency and more accurate communication.
- 2) **Consequences:** If the same impartial information resource is not readily available to residents, business and government growth concerns cannot be effectively communicated. A patchwork of information creates a patchwork of solutions. Townships and rural districts especially need to be assured that available data is relevant and current. Forming opinions and making decisions on outdated or biased information will have a negative impact on the ability to work together in a productive manner to achieve consensus on how to balance growth with the desire to protect our quality of life.
- 3) **Incentives:** Some locales or residents may be hesitant to use a resource list of information because they may feel they can't find, use or comprehend the data, because they want to hold onto their current opinions or because of a presumed cost to implement the standardized data. To meet resistance to this change the following should be considered:
  - a. Possibility of grant money for training to research, assemble and use the data. Training classes to be provided by an impartial third party such as Region V for any locale or resident.
- 4) **Steps to Implementation:**
  - a. Government entities such as counties, cities, townships etc., residents, Chambers of Commerce and Region V decide what types and/or specific information to initially provide. This could be accomplished by public meetings, or by newspaper ads for a volunteer poll accessible on the Chamber website or by mail in response.
  - b. After the initial response one or two meetings would be necessary for six-12 thoughtful representatives to pull the information together and determine what should be included in the database.
  - c. Organize and categorize the information and present it to the same panel of representatives that pulled the information together. This group would then make any necessary changes and approve the final information.

- d. Townships and smaller locales would need to obtain necessary computers and internet access.
  - e. To reach the greatest number of people it would be necessary to advertise the availability of the database.
  - f. Keep information updated and available. Periodically new data could be included based on needs or requests. This could take approximately one day per quarter or 32 hours per year.
- 5) Timeline: Technology and information is currently available to create the data resource. The process should be able to be completed in 6 months.
  - 6) Stakeholders to Engage: Local governments, residents, Chambers of Commerce, State of Minnesota, DNR and Region V. Perhaps others such as the Mid Minnesota Builders Association, Minnesota Builders Association, Minnesota Housing or Realtor Associations.

**Recommendation #2: The various government entities in Crow Wing and Southern Cass Counties should establish a standardized set of definitions for language relating to growth and development**

- 1) Benefits: Counties, cities, townships and committees would operate more efficiently if definitions were the same across all neighboring communities. Effective communication would increase if regulatory language used words with the same meaning in each locale.
- 2) Consequences: Valuable time is spent trying to determine the definition of words, such as R-1. Development with uniform quality standards will be difficult to achieve without uniform language.
- 3) Incentives: Profit dictates taking the path of least resistance and uniform language would help equalize quality across all locales. Standards of development would be more consistent with less conflict and fewer variances. Neighboring communities would have fewer complications and barriers to decision making once definitions are established.
- 4) Steps to Implementation:
  - a. Counties, cities and townships review existing definitions.
  - b. Representatives of these meet to determine what definitions we have, what is missing and how to build flexibility into the definitions to accommodate future growth needs such as subcategories under zoning classifications. They would need to establish the criterion that defines each classification such as R1S – residential 1 with sewer.
  - c. Once the rough draft has been established a person would be selected to manage and facilitate the completion of the project. This person would present the draft to small forums of several units of local governments with some of the above representatives attending each group session. At these meeting the LGU’s would have the opportunity to critique and evaluate the ideas presented.
  - d. After the conclusion of all the meetings the original representatives would meet, make changes and incorporate any viable new ideas.

- e. The polished draft would then be re-submitted to each LGU for their final approval. It would be beneficial for each government unit to review and adopt the common set of definitions and language.
- f. Timeline: Approximately three months would be necessary to determine what we currently have and prepare the first rough draft, three months for LGU's to meet and evaluate the ideas and six months to refine and complete the project for a total of 12 months.
- g. Stakeholders to Engage: Counties, Cities, Townships, landowners and residential and commercial developers

**Recommendation #3: Consider the benefits and implications of mixed use developments that incorporate clustered residential housing across the broad area of Southern Cass County and Crow Wing County instead of an isolated approach without connection to the entire region.**

- o Residential development is drawn to areas with transportation, recreational and commercial components. There is a need for local businesses to support families and neighborhoods and encourage development to cluster around mixed use services. This type of development has broad appeal across the entire region.
  - o Mixed use development will naturally occur near major intersections and therefore any discussion of mixed use development should include the Department of Transportation and the townships, cities and counties affected.
  - o Under current statutory authority, cities can extend their planning and zoning or subdivision authority 2 miles beyond their current municipal boundaries (Minn. Statute 414.033, Subdivision. 2(4)). This authority should be evaluated for the creation of mixed use development where appropriate.
- 1) Benefits: We already have mixed use developments occurring mostly by accident. By putting a well thought out plan in place we can help smaller locales deliberately incorporate viable mixed use developments in their growth strategy. In some situations mixed use developments may provide the ability to optimize the best use of the land. Mixed use development may attract more residents which in turn enhances the opportunity to attract and retain commercial enterprise. Clustered developments may provide more affordable housing, less negative environmental impact over a large area and the efficient installation and maintenance of services.
  - 2) Consequences: Large tracts of land are being broken up and sold for development without enough concern for the success of the development. It is more difficult to start and maintain a small business and attract labor in a traditional rural setting because the customer base is widely dispersed. They may also have a higher cost to operate due to cost of transportation and services. Residents in a traditional rural setting may have limited services or higher cost services, have higher transportation costs and may not enjoy the sense of community that neighborhood developments provide.

- 3) Incentives: Community loyalty enhances business viability and sustainability. There may be a lower development cost in cluster developments and the possibility of faster housing sales because amenities are attractive and smaller lots are more affordable.
- 4) Steps to Implementation:
  - a. Investigate successful models such as Winona and determine what the universal success parameters are and what a successful mixed use development might look like to us.
  - b. Evaluate the geography of Southern Cass and Crow Wing Counties (note, development of a comprehensive land use map as recommended from the water planning group would support this initiative).
  - c. The local government units would meet to draft and adopt ordinances for mixed use developments with common, cohesive definitions based on the recommendations from the project manager and discussed by the group.
  - d. In addition, statutes exist for land owners within a city's two mile radius to petition for annexation if orderly annexation is desirable. This could provide necessary land and services for mixed use developments which may be more affordable to a city rather than a township.<sup>1</sup>
- 5) Timeline: Approximately 15 months
- 6) Stakeholders to Engage: State, counties, cities, townships, DNR, residents, business owners and the Minnesota League of Cities. Perhaps others such as Mid Minnesota Builders Association and the Greater Lakes Association of Realtors.

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<sup>1</sup> 2-mile zone around any city. Under current statutory authority, cities can extend their planning & zoning or subdivision authority 2 miles beyond current municipal boundaries. According to Minn. Stat. § 414.033, Subd. 2 (4), any land owner within a 2-mile radius of the city can petition to annex in using a simple annexation by ordinance providing the City has extended certain land use control over the fringe area of a township. See Minn. Stat. § 462.357 and 462.358. The city can annex non-contiguous land by ordinance providing, in non-contiguous annexation cases within the 2-mile zone, the City has previously passed a resolution granting the City extra-territorial land use authority within the fringe area and/or the City approves preliminary plats through subdivision regulations and the Township doesn't have similar authority over the same area. Only then can a city accept preliminary plats utilizing half acre lot sizes as state statute requires.