

Lee County Comprehensive Plan



Plan Commission Recommended: _____

County Board Adopted : _____

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Volume I: Background Information

Volume I: Background Information is intended to provide an overview of demographic trends and background information necessary to develop an understanding of the changes taking place in Lee County. The information in Volume I will inform the goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations outlined in Volume II.



Chapter 1.1: Introduction

Located in northwestern Illinois, Lee County is characterized by its rural atmosphere and punctuated by unique cultural and historical attractions. Development is focused in the City of Dixon, also the County seat, and within small cities, villages, and unincorporated hamlets scattered throughout the County. While rural, the County has increasingly easy access to local and regional urban areas via Interstates 88 and 39 and the multimodal transportation hub in Rochelle, Illinois. While Lee County has not experienced rapid growth over the past decade, it is important for the County to consider the forces that might shape it over the next 20 years. In this context, planning for development in an orderly and predictable manner is essential to preserve the County's farmland and farmers, protect its natural features, avoid land use conflicts, provide housing and employment opportunities, and protect and enhance its rural heritage.

Purpose of this Plan

This *Comprehensive Plan* is intended to:

- ◆ Provide a vision for future growth and development in the County;
- ◆ Recommend appropriate future land use for specific areas in the County;
- ◆ Preserve agricultural and natural resources;
- ◆ Guide the “character” of future development and redevelopment;
- ◆ Foster economic development and redevelopment opportunities based on the County's unique assets;
- ◆ Offer a framework for intergovernmental cooperation to help achieve Plan directions;
- ◆ Provide detailed strategies to implement Plan recommendations; and
- ◆ Cover a planning period running through the year 2030.

Plan Organization

This *Plan* is organized into two volumes. The first volume of the *Plan*, Volume I: Background Information, includes demographic information and a general overview of existing conditions throughout the County. The background information in Volume I will form the basis for the goals, objectives, policies, and programs outlined in Volume II.

Volume II is the County's Planning Policy Framework which presents general goals, objectives, policies, programs, and recommendations related to each of the *Plan* elements introduced in Volume I. The final chapter in Volume II, Plan Implementation, includes proposed strategies and timelines to ensure that the recommendations presented in this *Plan* become a reality.

General Regional Context

Map 1 shows the relationship of the County to neighboring communities in the region. Lee County is located in northern Illinois approximately 100 miles west of Chicago, 40 miles southwest of Rockford, and 65 miles northeast of the Quad Cities. Map 2 graphically depicts the County's regional context.

Selection of the Planning Area

Lee County encompasses approximately 725 square miles and includes two cities (Dixon and Amboy) and ten Villages (Ashton, Compton, Franklin Grove, Harmon, Lee, Nelson, Paw Paw, Steward, Sublette, and West Brooklyn). About 44 percent of the County's population resides in Dixon and 7 percent lives in Amboy; another 21 percent live in one of the ten Villages; and approximately 35 percent live in one of the County's twenty-two Townships. The general planning area for this *Plan* has been selected to include all lands within the County that are outside the jurisdictional boundaries of an incorporated municipality.

Map 1: Jurisdictional Boundaries

Chapter 1.2: Issues and Opportunities

This chapter of the *Plan* provides the baseline data and information necessary to develop a comprehensive understanding of the changes and opportunities facing Lee County. This chapter includes population, household and employment trends and forecasts, education levels, and employment and income characteristics. These general trends provide an important starting point for understanding the County's key issues and priorities for the plan. This chapter also includes an overview of past planning efforts and a summary of the planning process. Finally, this chapter includes an overview of the County's economic assets and future opportunities.

Population Trends

Figure 1.2-1a compares historic population trends for Lee County, neighboring counties, and the state. As shown below, Lee County has historically had a lower population than the surrounding counties. The County continued to experience modest population decline between 2000 and 2008. Overall, Lee County's population trends closely echo those of adjacent counties to the west and south.

DeKalb County saw a substantial population increase during this same time period, as a result of the increasing influence of commuter-residential development oriented to employment in the Chicago metropolitan area. Development in Ogle County is associated with commuting to Rockford and with the employment and with the employment growth focused on the intermodal transportation facility in Rochelle.

Figure 1.2-1a: Historic Population for Surrounding Counties, 1970 – 2008

| County | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2008* | Population Change 1990-2000 | Population Change 2000-2008 |
|------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Lee | 37,947 | 36,328 | 34,392 | 36,062 | 35,129 | 4.9% | -2.6% |
| Bureau | 38,541 | 39,114 | 35,688 | 35,503 | 34,933 | -0.5% | -1.6% |
| DeKalb | 71,654 | 74,754 | 77,932 | 88,969 | 106,321 | 14.2% | 19.5% |
| La Salle | 111,409 | 112,033 | 106,913 | 111,509 | 112,474 | 4.3% | 0.9% |
| Ogle | 42,867 | 46,338 | 45,957 | 51,032 | 55,167 | 11.0% | 8.1% |
| Whiteside | 62,877 | 65,970 | 60,186 | 60,653 | 59,153 | 0.8% | -2.5% |
| Illinois (state) | 11,110,285 | 11,426,518 | 11,430,602 | 12,419,293 | 12,901,563 | 8.6% | 3.9% |

*Source: United States Census, *2008 population estimates*

Figure 1.2-1b lists historic population trends for incorporated municipalities within Lee County. Like the County as a whole, population is generally stable. During the decade between 1990 and 2000, the Village of Sublette saw the greatest rate increase in population of Lee County's incorporated communities followed by the Village of Ashton and the Village of Franklin Grove. In terms of numerical population growth, the City of Dixon and the City of Amboy each added close to 200 residents during this period. Alternatively, the Villages of Harmon and Nelson lost nearly 20 percent of their populations during this same time period. Other communities with moderate population gains include the City of Amboy, the Village of Paw Paw, the Village of West Brooklyn, the City of Dixon, and the Village of Compton.

Figure 1.2-1b: Historic Population for Lee County Communities, 1970 – 2000

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | Population Change 1980-2000 | Population Change 1990-2000 |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| City of Dixon | 18,147 | 15,682 | 15,144 | 15,941 | 1.7% | 5.3% |
| City of Amboy | 2,184 | 2,377 | 2,377 | 2,561 | 7.7% | 7.7% |
| Village of Ashton | 1,112 | 1,140 | 1,042 | 1,142 | 0.2% | 9.6% |
| Village of Compton | 399 | 376 | 343 | 347 | -7.7% | 1.2% |
| Village of Franklin Grove | 968 | 965 | 968 | 1,052 | 9.0% | 8.7% |
| Village of Harmon | 205 | 193 | 186 | 149 | -22.8% | -19.9% |
| Village of Lee | 131 | 159 | 319 | 313 | 96.9% | -1.9% |
| Village of Nelson | 215 | 263 | 200 | 163 | -38.0% | -18.5% |
| Village of Paw Paw | 846 | 839 | 791 | 852 | 1.5% | 7.7% |
| Village of Steward | 308 | 298 | 282 | 271 | -9.1% | -3.9% |
| Village of Sublette | 361 | 442 | 394 | 456 | 3.2% | 15.7% |
| Village of West Brooklyn | 225 | 210 | 164 | 174 | -17.1% | 6.1% |

Note: 2008 American Community Survey data is not available at the Village level

Source: U.S. Census 1970-2000

Figure 1.2-1c lists historic population trends for townships within Lee County. In general, the townships nearest urban areas or transportation corridors experienced modest growth between 1990 and 2000. The Harmon Township, located at the far western side of the County saw the greatest decline in population during this time period. Alternatively, Willow Creek Township, located at the far eastern side of the County saw a 27 percent increase in population.

Figure 1.2 -1c: Historic Population for Lee County Townships (Population Outside of Incorporated Areas), 1970 – 2000

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | % Population Change 1980-2000 | % Population Change 1990-2000 |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--|--|
| Alto Township | 363 | 301 | 286 | 306 | -3.7% | 1.6% |
| Amboy Township | 733 | 703 | 670 | 669 | 4.9% | 6.0% |
| Ashton Township | 209 | 235 | 218 | 175 | -4.2% | 4.5% |
| Bradford Township | 430 | 387 | 332 | 362 | -6.5% | 9.0% |
| Brooklyn Township | 516 | 438 | 379 | 355 | -14.5% | -1.1% |
| Franklin Grove Township | 436 | 501 | 421 | 420 | 0.4% | 6.0% |
| Dixon Township | 1,747 | 2,221 | 2,022 | 1,984 | 0.1% | 4.4% |
| East Grove Township | 380 | 330 | 292 | 267 | -19.1% | -8.6% |
| Hamilton Township | 362 | 269 | 224 | 236 | -12.3% | 5.4% |
| Harmon Township | 416 | 395 | 324 | 251 | -32.0% | -21.6% |
| Lee Center Township | 700 | 561 | 537 | 593 | 5.7% | 10.4% |
| Marion Township | 382 | 396 | 301 | 268 | -32.3% | -11.0% |
| May Township | 353 | 350 | 344 | 395 | 12.9% | 14.8% |
| Nachusa Township | 560 | 619 | 584 | 497 | -19.7% | -14.9% |
| Nelson Township | 548 | 581 | 681 | 691 | 1.2% | -3.1% |
| Palmyra Township | 1,587 | 2,275 | 2,188 | 2,610 | 14.7% | 19.3% |
| Reynolds Township | 375 | 359 | 345 | 333 | -7.2% | -3.5% |
| South Dixon Township | 1,109 | 970 | 820 | 828 | -14.6% | 1.0% |
| Sublette Township | 436 | 397 | 351 | 351 | -3.8% | 8.3% |
| Viola Township | 325 | 304 | 300 | 279 | -8.2% | -7.0% |
| Willow Creek Township | 443 | 395 | 231 | 387 | 26.4% | 27.3% |
| Wyoming Township | 436 | 357 | 332 | 384 | 3.3% | 10.1% |
| TOTAL | 12,846 | 13,344 | 12,182 | 12,641 | | |

Source: U.S. Census 1970-2000

Demographic Trends

Figure 1.2-2 compares the County's age and sex distribution in 2000 with surrounding counties and the state. In 2000, the County's median age of 37.9 was higher than the state's, but comparable to the majority of the surrounding counties, with the exception of DeKalb, likely due to the presence of Northern Illinois University. With prolonged life expectancy and a trend toward declining birth rates, the County's median age will likely continue to increase.

Figure 1.2-2: Age and Gender Distribution, 2005-2007

| | Median Age | Percentage Under Age 18 | Percentage 65 and over | Percent Female |
|------------------|------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Lee County | 40.1 | 22.2% | 15.5% | 49.5% |
| Bureau County | 40.6 | 22.7% | 17.7% | 50.9% |
| DeKalb County | 28.1 | 22.0% | 9.3% | 50.0% |
| La Salle County | 39.1 | 23.9% | 15.9% | 50.8% |
| Ogle County | 38.1 | 24.7% | 13.8% | 50.6% |
| Whiteside County | 40.2 | 23.3% | 16.8% | 50.9% |
| Illinois | 35.7 | 25.1% | 12.0% | 50.8% |

Source: U.S. Census, 2005-2007 American Community Survey

Figure 1.2-3 compares Lee County's racial distribution and ethnicity trends with surrounding counties and the state. The vast majority of Lee County residents reported "White" as their race, a trend that is also seen in surrounding counties. Similarly, the majority of Lee County residents indicated "white" as their ethnic background.

Figure 1.2-3: Race and Ethnicity, 2005-2007

| | Racial Distribution | | | | Ethnicity | | |
|------------------|---------------------|---------|---------|--------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| | % White | % Black | % Asian | % Other Race | % Hispanic or Latino | % Not Hispanic or Latino | % White Alone |
| Lee County | 92.2 | 4.2 | 0.4 | 3.2 | 4.1 | 6.4 | 89.5 |
| Bureau County | 95.3 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 3.4 | 6.2 | 2.1 | 91.7 |
| DeKalb County | 85.6 | 5.6 | 2.7 | 6.1 | 9.0 | 9.7 | 81.3 |
| La Salle County | 94.2 | 0.9 | 0.7 | 4.2 | 6.7 | 3.4 | 89.9 |
| Ogle County | 94.1 | 0.5 | 0.7 | 4.7 | 8.2 | 2.5 | 89.3 |
| Whiteside County | 91.6 | 1.3 | 0.4 | 6.7 | 9.6 | 2.7 | 87.7 |
| Illinois | 71.1 | 14.7 | 4.2 | 10.0 | 14.6 | 20.1 | 65.3 |

Source: U.S. Census, 2005-2007 American Community Survey

Population Projections

Population projections are important for helping communities estimate, and plan for, the future needs of residents. When considering population projections, it is important to remember that it is difficult to accurately project populations for small areas (less than 50,000). Therefore, any projections should be considered an educated guess of future growth based on past trends in the community. Unforeseen changes in the local or regional economy, or significant changes in birth, death, or migration rates can dramatically alter population growth in the County.

Figure 1.2-4 presents three different population projection scenarios for Lee County. The Official State Projection is calculated by the State using the Cohort-Survival method through 2030; growth was projected at the same rate through 2050. The Historic Trends projection represents a growth scenario with a population increase at the same rate that the County experience from 1990 through 2008. The Metro Influences projection uses the same rate as the Trend projection through 2020 with an increased growth rate after 2020 (assuming that metropolitan growth will begin affecting the County beyond 2020).

Figure 1.2-4: Lee County Population Projection

| | Official State Projection | Historic Trends Projection | Metro Influences Projection |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 2000 (<i>base year</i>) | 36,118 | 36,062 | 36,062 |
| 2010 | 36,554 | 36,490 | 36,490 |
| 2020 | 37,939 | 36,923 | 36,923 |
| 2030 | 38,923 | 37,361 | 40,384 |
| 2040 | 39,907 | 37,804 | 44,169 |
| 2050 | 40,915 | 38,252 | 48,309 |

Source: Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity; Vandeville & Associates, 2009

Existing Planning Framework

This section briefly describes the existing plans, studies, and ordinances that serve to help guide development in and near the County. Also included is a list of groups or agencies involved in planning-related activities in Lee County.

Lee County Comprehensive Plan (2000)

The County's most recent Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2000. The County's original Plan was adopted in September 1974. This current planning effort is intended to update the 2000 Plan to continue to serve as a useful policy document for the County.

Lee County Zoning Ordinance (2005)

The County adopted its first Zoning Ordinance in 1961. The ordinance has been revised over the years, most recently in June 2005. This document serves as the primary mechanism for regulating land use and development in the County.

Lee County Subdivision Regulations (2005)

Lee County subdivision regulations were initially adopted on March 19, 1991. The most current version of this document was updated and amended in June 2005. These regulations have been amended a few times since adoption. These regulations govern the division of land in the unincorporated portions of the County.

Village of Franklin Grove Plan (2007)

The Village of Franklin Grove adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 2007. The general development plan of the Village's Comprehensive Plan promotes single-family residential development in areas to the west of the existing municipal limits and traditional neighborhood development to the southeast and northeast of the community. Conservation and greenspace areas have been mapped alongside Franklin Creek and extending north along the western side of the Village. The Plan also recommends a large industrial development area to the east of the Village between Interstate 88 and the railroad in the Village's 1.5 mile extraterritorial area. This planned industrial area also extends to the north along Illinois Route 38.

Village of Steward (2005)

The Village of Steward developed its Comprehensive Plan in 2005. The Village's planned land use map designates most land in the Village's extraterritorial area as single-family residential. Land immediately to the west of Interstate 39 and south of Highway 2 has been designated as planned business. A large industrial area has been mapped to the north of the existing Village limits. Existing areas of passive recreation along I-39, and land adjacent to the creek and east of I-39/south of Highway 2 have been designated as passive recreation land uses.

Village of Sublette (2005)

Adopted in October 2005, the Sublette Comprehensive Plan and associated future land use map was designed to guide decisions related to development over a ten-year period. The Village's future land use map designates the majority of land within the Village's 1.5 mile extraterritorial, but outside of its municipal boundaries, as residential. Land to the south of Maytown Road and to the north of Tower Road is primarily designated as agricultural. Strip commercial development is planned to occur along the USH 52 corridor with commercial notes planned to the north of the west side of the and immediately south of USH 52 and west of Green Wing Road. Industrial development is planned to occur north of USH 52 and west of Inlet Road.

State Highway 2 Corridor Land Use Study (2003)

This land use study, prepared by Vandewalle & Associates, makes recommendations for development policies and future land use along State Highway 2 within Palmyra Township. The Planned Land Use Map depicts new Planned Business/Office uses on the south side of State Highway 2, particularly on the eastern side of the corridor. The northern part of the corridor is planned to remain largely in agricultural uses. This Study will be revisited as part of the State Highway 2 Detailed Planning Area.

Village of Lee Plan (2003)

The Village of Lee adopted its Comprehensive Plan in 2003. Lee's future land use plan map designates the majority of land within and to the east and west beyond existing Village limits as "mixed residential." This land use classification is intended to emulate the community's established neighborhoods, which may be comprised of any combination of the following: primarily detached single-family housing units, two-family units (not more than twelve percent), attached single-family (not more than ten percent) multi-family (not more than eight percent), and senior housing units (not more than three percent). The majority of land to the southeast and within one mile of the Village is designated as planned industrial development, with the exception of environmental corridors. Land to the north of the Village and south of Lee Road and west of County Line Road is designated to remain in agricultural uses.

City of Dixon (2001)

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City of Rochelle (2003)

The City of Rochelle adopted its first comprehensive plan in 1973, which was later updated in 1995, and most recently in 2003. The City's current Comprehensive Plan framework plan map designates land south of I-88 and east of Highway 251 as future employment centers. Other areas of future employment and commercial areas are planned to occur along Illinois Route 38, which traverses through the City east to west. New residential development has been planned for areas northeast and northwest of current City municipal boundaries.

The City is currently updating its Comprehensive Plan. The draft Future Land Use Map dated June 2009, depicts additional future industrial/warehousing land uses in Lee County. The map also identifies a "Rochelle/Steward Boundary Agreement" line along Elva Road.

Greenways and Trails Plan (2002)

Developed in 2002, the Lee County Greenways and Trails Plan provides a framework for the development of a coordinated greenway and trail network linking the communities and natural and cultural resource sites of Lee County. The Greenways and Trails Plan and associated map contains recommendations to improve existing and new greenway systems; develop bicycle and pedestrian linkages connections to the Grand Illinois Trail; and establish a network of snowmobile routes, equestrian routes, canoe trails, and interpretive trails.

Comprehensive Plan for Dixon, Illinois (1990)

The City of Dixon adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 1990. This Plan makes growth and development recommendations for the City and its extraterritorial area and will form the basis for the recommendations in the Lee County Comprehensive Plan as they relate to the City of Dixon and its extraterritorial area.

Illinois Lincoln Highway Interpretive Master Plan (2004)

The Interpretive Master Plan was completed by the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, and was provided to the Illinois Lincoln Highway Coalition, in July 2004. The document details the history of the highway, outlines themes and messages of the highway, demarcates interpretive resources along the highway in Illinois, and provides recommendations to enhance tourist experience and interpretive media.

The Interpretive Master Plan singles out the Dillon Home in the City of Sterling (discussed in the Historical Section of this document), a monument dedicated in 1903 outlining the place where Abraham Lincoln spoke on July 18, 1856, and a "Lincoln in Sterling" historic marker on the site where Lincoln once spent the night. The Interpretive Master Plan recommends that a kiosk be located outside of the iron fence at the Dillon Home.

Illinois DNR Conservation 2000

Conservation 2000 is a comprehensive long-term approach to protecting and managing the natural resources of Illinois. Through Conservation 2000, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources initiated the Ecosystems Program which integrates the interests and participation of local communities and private, public, and corporate landowners to enhance and protect watersheds through ecosystem-based management. The

Ecosystems Program is made up of Ecosystem Partnerships, which are coalitions of local stakeholders including private landowners, businesses, scientists, environmental organizations, recreational enthusiasts, and policy makers. Through the Ecosystems Program and Partnerships, more than 62,000 acres in Illinois have been restored and 5,580 acres have been protected through conservation easements or simple acquisition.

The land within Lee County falls primarily within the Lower Rock Ricker Ecosystem Partnership area. Current projects of this partnership include establishment of warm season grasses using no-till planning; development of a learning center at the historic Franklin Creek Grist Mill; and a habitat improvement project using controlled burns to restore native habitat. Small areas of the southeastern portion of Lee County fall into the Fox River and Illinois River Bluffs Ecosystem Partnership areas.

Lower Rock River Area Assessment (1998)

This is a four-volume set of documents containing an inventory and analysis on the natural resources of the Lower Rock River Basin. These documents are part of the Critical Trends Assessment Program (CTAP) and the Ecosystems Program of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. These documents provide a wealth of information on the geology, water resources, living resources, archaeological resources, and environmental quality of the Lower Rock River Basin, which encompasses most of Lee County.

Soil Survey of Lee County Illinois (2005)

The Soil Survey contains useful information for land use planning in the County. It contains predictions of soil behavior for selected land uses and highlights limitations and hazards inherent in the soil, improvements needed to overcome the limitations, and the impact of selected land uses on the environment. Soil surveys are intended to be used by planners, community officials, and developers to plan land use and select the most appropriate sites for building construction.

Summary of Public Participation

The County's planning process was guided by several participation events and tools, in addition to regular meetings of the Planning Committee. The following is a summary of public participation activities conducted during the early information gathering, issues assessment, and priority identification components of this planning process.

2000 Planning Process

The 2000 Comprehensive Plan was developed through a one-year planning process. The Lee County Planning Committee provided guidance throughout the planning process. Input was gathered from the County Board at critical stages in the process. A number of meetings were held with representatives from County agencies, cities, villages, and other interested groups. Most importantly, this Plan was based on deliberate public participation through a Community Planning Forum held in March 1999, and a Community Workshop held in November 1999. The Community Planning Forum helped develop a list of key issues and challenges facing the County, as well as a future vision for the County. The Community Workshop was used to present the detailed plan recommendations to the public and solicit feedback.

Kick Off Meeting

The Comprehensive Plan Kick Off meeting was held on April 30, 2009, and attended by the Planning Committee. The consultants introduced the planning process and timeline, and presented initial information on Lee County's regional position and local economic opportunities (discussed later in this chapter).

Focus Groups

With County staff assistance, the consultants conducted three focus group meetings early in the visioning process, each attended by six to seventeen County residents. The consultants presented an explanation of the *Comprehensive Plan*, the purpose of Detailed Planning Areas, and discussed issues related to each focus group subject. The results of each meeting are outlined as follows.

◆ **Highway 2 Detailed Planning Area Focus Group:**

The group discussed future visions for the Highway 2 Detailed Planning Area as well as unique features, limitations and opportunities for development. The following is a summary of key points identified by attendees:

- Opportunities to expand single-family and senior housing in the County, particularly along the Highway 2 corridor.
- Developing trend of Chicago residents relocating to less urban areas, including Lee County.
- Recreational opportunities associated with the river should be explored, including a potential canoe/kayak launch.
- Continued efforts by the County to expand bicycle facilities and provide connections.

◆ **I-39 Detailed Planning Area Focus Group:**

The group discussed future issues and opportunities associated with Interstate 39. Key ideas from this meeting and via follow-up contact by participants included:

- Community planning efforts have been most prominent in the Village of Steward and the City of Rochelle in Ogle County. Notably, the City of Rochelle’s comprehensive plan identifies a new interchange on Thorpe Road.
- Considerable traffic is generated in the southeast side of Rochelle, which increases traffic congestion near Steward. Options to mitigate heavy traffic could include a new interchange on Interstate 39.

◆ **Agricultural and Food Focus Group:**

This focus group discussed trends, challenges, and opportunities for agriculture in Lee County. The following is a summary of key points identified by attendees:

- Lee County has one of the most diverse varieties of crops in the state; however, there has been limited growth in organic and alternative crops.
- A downturn in the County’s livestock population has negatively affected livestock operations—they are no longer able to compete with cash crops.
- New residential development conflicts with agriculture. New residents need to be aware that Lee County is characteristically “agricultural,” which creates negative impacts for residential areas such as dust, noise, and smells.
- Industrial and commercial uses do not belong in agricultural areas.
- Careful consideration should be given to the appropriate quantity and location of potential for wind farms.
- Lee County is set up for large scale production and commercial agriculture, which is unlikely to change due to the character of farmland (large fields).
- Maintenance of infrastructure will continue to be a challenge in the future without new development (increase in tax base) to finance it.
- A unique opportunity exists in Lee County to develop or recruit a container manufacturer to be used in conjunction with the Rochelle intermodal transportation facility.

Planning Committee Meetings

Lee County’s standing Planning Committee served two major functions throughout the process. The first was to serve as a “steering committee” to advise the consultant and City staff as to the specific strategies that should be employed throughout the process. The second role was the statutory role of the Planning Committee—to review the comprehensive planning policies and programs and make recommendations to the Common Council for formal adoption. The Planning Committee met six times during the visioning process. These meetings are summarized below.

- ◆ July 7, 2009: The consultants presented the draft Volume I: Background Information. The Planning Committee discussed the document and provided minor corrections. The Planning Committee also discussed the 2000 Comprehensive Plan including completed recommendations, components that should be carried over to the updated Plan, and new recommendations.
- ◆ September 17, 2009: TO BE COMPLETED AT A LATER DATE

Intergovernmental Meetings

TO BE COMPLETED AT A LATER DATE

Draft Plan Open House and Public Hearing

TO BE COMPLETED AT A LATER DATE

Lee County Assets and Opportunities

Lee County's future vision should be bold, yet realistic, and based on a clear understanding of the County's unique, place-based assets. This future vision should recognize local, regional, national, and global trends so that the County is positioned to take advantage of future opportunities as they arise. This section of the *Comprehensive Plan* aims to identify existing assets and trends, and evaluate the future opportunities in Lee County.

Regional Position

As illustrated on Map 2, Lee County is centrally located in northern Illinois, which has historically been anchored by Chicago. This connection to the Chicagoland area, in addition to the broader regional trends in the Upper Midwest, will continue to influence the County in the future. It is important to understand this broader regional context before focusing in to the County level.

The economy of the Upper Midwest has historically been linked to its natural assets, particularly the unique landscapes of the Driftless Area and its position at the edge of America's breadbasket and within the nation's Grain Belt. Within the Upper Midwest, Chicago is the predominant economic center and the region's primary portal to the global economy. As the Chicago metropolitan area continues to grow, its commuter shed will also continue to expand. This expansion will have consequences for Lee County, given its location at the western edge of the commuter shed and existing transportation connections provided by the highway network and the development of the future high speed rail system, which is proposed to have a station minutes from the County. This Midwest Regional Rail System will be comprised of a 3,000-mile rail network and will serve nearly 60 million people.

Local Economic Opportunities

A view closer to home suggests additional opportunities for the County's future. These local opportunities are illustrated in Map 3 and described below.

Sustainable Agriculture

Lee County's prime agricultural land is its most abundant and important economic and natural resource, covering over 83 percent of the County's land area. According to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, Lee County is one of the State's top producers of corn. In addition, a significant number of soy bean and hay crops are grown in the County. Lee County ranks 11th, out of the 102 counties in Illinois, in cash crop receipts, representing a significant component of the local economy.



Agricultural land near the I-39 and Chicago Rd

Agriculture faces many challenges in the future—primary is the loss of agricultural land resulting from development. Between 1992 and 1997, 148,000 acres of prime farmland was developed and converted out of farming. In 2005, the United States imported more farm products by value than it exported. These trends are amplified by the continued growth in demand for food to support the world's growing population, while at the same time, productive agricultural lands are diminishing everyday.

In the face of these global and national trends, it will be important for Lee County to continue to support agriculture as a critical component of its economy and culture. Further, to continue to sustain and augment the local agricultural economy, the County should endeavor to support new approaches for agriculture—more specifically, by introducing “sustainable” agriculture into the County’s farm-based economy. Sustainability is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In an agricultural context, sustainability integrates three main goals—environmental health, economic profitability, and social and economic equity. These concepts and recommendations for County-wide opportunities to initiate sustainable agricultural practices are described in Chapter 2.3.

In addition, education and research about this topic will be critical as technologies and approaches evolve. Locally, Sauk Valley Community College has partnered with the University of Illinois’ College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) on an innovative collaborative initiative called ACES ACCESS. This initiative offers, through Sauk Valley Community College, a state-wide Associate of Science degree in the areas of Agriculture or Agribusiness. Regionally, the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program has helped advance farming systems that are profitable, environmentally sound, and good for communities through a nationwide research and education grants program.

Local Food

According to the USDA, Illinois consumers spend \$48 billion annually on food and very few of these dollars stay in the state. Recently, the State has recognized this issue and has established a 32-member Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force to develop a plan for expanding and supporting a statewide local farm and food system. The Task Force determined that in order to retain a larger share of Illinois food dollars, public, private, and civic sectors must work together to build a farm and food system that meets consumer demand for “local” food. The popularity of farmer’s markets is a measure of consumer demand and has expanded into large-volume wholesale markets.

As an agricultural community in close proximity to raw products and growing local and regional populations, Lee County is well positioned to take advantage of the local food movement as an economic, farmland preservation, and community health initiative. This effort could build on existing local food markets such as the farmer’s markets in downtown Dixon and Sublette; local producers such as Crooked Row Farm, Little Farm at American Prairie, Rocky Hill Farm, and Trackside Poultry; and local processors such as County Village Meats, Wyanet Meats, and Bay Valley Foods.

Alternative Energy

There are currently three large wind farms in Lee County—the Mendota Hills Wind Farm, GSG Wind Farm, and Big Sky Wind Farm. Mendota Hills was the first utility scale wind farm in the state of Illinois, consisting of sixty-three 214-foot wind turbines. The County recently approved a fourth wind farm, which will span Lee and DeKalb Counties, with 133 turbines in DeKalb County and 18 in Lee County.

Lee County supports this category of alternative energy generation as wind farming presents multiple economic benefits including farmland preservation, additional income for farmers, creation of “green-collar” jobs, and millions of dollars in property tax revenue. However, County leaders will need to consider the extent to which wind turbines will be allowed in the County. This decision will be based in part on location—there are limited areas that meet both sustained wind speed and setback requirements—and in part on policy. The County also encourages the use of other “green” energies including solar and geothermal.



Wind farm in Lee County

In addition to wind energy, other alternative energy operations are located in and near Lee County. For example, several nuclear power plants have been developed near Lee County. Illinois also happens to be home to more nuclear plants than any other state in the nation. A hydroelectric dam has been constructed on the Rock River in Dixon. Several power plants operate in the area including Duke Energy.

Intergovernmental Cooperation and Communication

The County's towns, villages, and cities not only share common boundaries, but also school attendance areas, existing and future recreational trails, emergency services, roads, and natural resources. Decisions made in surrounding counties may impact Lee County now and in the future. Recognizing this interconnectedness, the County intends to engage communities, agencies, and organizations in an effort to take a more purposeful approach to intergovernmental cooperation, resource sharing, and communication. Volume II includes recommended strategies for expanding intergovernmental cooperation and communication.

Future Economic Development Areas

Map 3 identifies four future economic development areas or Detailed Planning Areas (DPA): three at the I-39 interchanges and one along Highway 2 east of Dixon. As recommended in the 2000 Comprehensive Plan, this planning effort will explore the unique context and opportunities associated with each DPA. See Chapter 2.3 for conceptual development plans and policies for these areas.

Map 2: Regional Position

Map 3: Local Economic Opportunities

Chapter 1.3: Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources

This chapter of Volume I of the *Plan* contains background information related to agricultural resources, natural resource conservation, and historical and cultural resource preservation.

Agriculture is a prominent land use in Lee County. Farmland covers approximately 91 percent of the County's total land area, according to a 2009 Geographic Information Systems survey. Farming is also an important component of Lee County's local economy, heritage, and character. The character, location, and viability of farming in the County are described below.

Agricultural Resources

Character of Farming

Local farmers produce a variety of agricultural commodities including grains, floriculture, hogs, and cattle. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, Lee County ranks in the top ten counties in the State for sale of harvested vegetables, corn for grain, and chicken.

According to the U.S. Census of Agriculture, the number of farms in Lee County has been declining from 1,330 in 1978; to 1,006 in 1992; and to 842 in 2002. However, the 2007 Census of Agriculture counted 898 farms in Lee County, an increase of nearly seven percent from 2002. This increase was similar to national trends with 2,204,792 farms in the United States, a four percent increase from 2002. The number of farms nationwide had been on a declining trend since World War II. The latest figure indicates a leveling of this trend, with a net increase of 75,810 farms.

Land in farming also decreased between 1978 and 2000, from 421,412 acres (91 percent of the county's land) in 1978; to 393,043 acres (85 percent) in 1997; and to 389,037 acres (84 percent) in 2002. However in 2007 land in farming increased slightly to 395,624 acres (85 percent). This could be the result of lands being removed from government programs and placed back into productive agricultural uses.

Average farm size has continue to increased from 317 acres in 1978, to 412 in 1992, to 435 in 1997, to 462 in 2002, and to 441 in 2007.



Agriculture building near Steward

Assessment of Farmland Viability

Agriculture is an important component of the economy and culture of Lee County. This is due to Lee County's large share of the state's prime farmland. Prime farmland is composed of soils that are best-suited for agricultural production—soils that will sustain a wide variety of crops without deteriorating over a long period of time. According to the U.S. Census of Agriculture, about 86 percent of the total acreage in Lee County is made up of prime soils.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service groups soils based on their capability to produce common cultivated crops and pasture plants without deteriorating over a long period of time. These capability classifications are based on numerous criteria that include, but are not limited to, the soil's salinity; capacity to hold moisture; potential for erosion; depth, texture, and structure; as well as local climatic limitations (e.g., temperature and rainfall). Under this system of classification, soils are separated into eight classes.

Generally, Class I and Class II soils are the best suited for the cultivation of crops. Class I soils have few limitations that restrict their use for cropland. These soils can sustain a wide variety of plants and are well

suited for cultivated crops, pasture plants, range lands, and woodlands. Class II soils have moderate limitations that restrict the types of plants that can be grown or that require simple conservation practices or soil management techniques to prevent deterioration over time. However, these practices are generally easy to apply, and, therefore, these soils are still able to sustain cultivated crops, pasture plants, range lands, and woodlands.

Soils in Class III have limitations that, under natural circumstances, restrict the types of plants that can be grown, and/or that alter the timing of planting, tillage, and harvesting. However, with the application and careful management of special conservation practices, these soils may still be used for cultivated crops, pasture plants, woodlands, and range lands. Soils in capability classes IV through VIII present increasingly severe limitations to the cultivation of crops. Soils in Class VIII have limitations that entirely preclude their use for commercial plant production.

Map 4 depicts the locations of Class I agricultural soils, which cover nearly 16 percent of the County.

The loss of highly productive farmland is a significant concern in many areas across the country, including Lee County. A primary reason for this loss is due to the income generated by selling farmland for non-agricultural development, such as rural home sites. As agricultural land is converted to non-agricultural uses, the viability of agriculture in the County (and across the country) continues to decline.

An alternative trend that is also occurring is the development of wind farms in agricultural areas. The placement of turbines on agricultural land provides a steady source of additional income for farmers. Rental income from wind turbine placement competes with land sales for development and discourages additional residential intrusions into agricultural areas. In addition, the low density spacing of wind turbines provides a unique visual aesthetic that is compatible with agricultural uses and allows for the continuation of agriculture. Further, the clean renewable energy provided by wind farms serves not only the general welfare and economic viability of the County, but also creates “green-collar” jobs and contributes significantly to property tax revenue in the County.

Farmland Preservation Efforts

The County currently participates in a Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) system, a numeric rating system that scores sites to help formulate policy or make land-use decisions regarding farmland protection and conversion. In addition, Lee County farmers can participate in several federal, State, and Countywide programs and initiatives that are intended to preserve long-term farming activities. The 2008 Farm Bill reauthorized several federal programs, including:

- ◆ The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which provides technical and financial assistance to eligible farmers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on their lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner.
- ◆ The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, which focuses on providing technical assistance to help new grazers begin using rotational grazing methods. Trained grazing specialists work one-on-one with farmers to develop grazing plans including seeding recommendations, fencing, and watering plans.
- ◆ The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which provides a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers that promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land.

Natural Resource Inventory

A survey of Lee County’s natural resources provides an important framework for guiding several elements of the comprehensive planning process. The natural features of the County provide a basic framework for analysis and suggest possible locational advantages for particular land uses. The natural resource base, especially environmentally sensitive areas with respect to soils, environmental corridors, wetlands, and floodplains are critical factors in local planning decision-making. Maintenance of these, and other environmentally sensitive natural features, is important for both the visual attractiveness of the community, as

well as for the prevention of severe developmental or environmental problems that may be difficult and costly to correct in the future.

Landscape and Topography

The northwestern part of Lee County is a rolling glacial till plain that is drained by the Rock River. The central part of the County is a relatively level landscape characterized by prominent sand ridges and dunes, drained by the Green River. The southeastern part of the County is a till plain characterized by broad low ridges.

Hilltops and Ridges

Important natural features that are often overlooked in comprehensive planning efforts are hilltops and ridgelines. Hilltops and ridgelines serve to define the horizon—and perhaps provide a “natural edge” for a community. Large structures constructed on top of them (including homes) tend to be visually prominent—especially if they do not blend with the area’s rural-agricultural character in terms of color, material, or style. Significant hilltops and ridgelines are present in various areas throughout the County, particularly along the moraine ridgelines in the southeast portion of the County.

Soils

The soils in Lee County vary widely in texture, natural drainage, and other characteristics. Those in the northwestern and southeastern parts of the county are dominantly well drained or moderately well drained, gently sloping, and silty. Erosion is a severe hazard in these areas. Conservation measures help to control erosion and thus help to prevent sedimentation. If properly managed, the soils are well suited to field crops, pasture, hay, and trees. They are suited to building site development. The soils in the central part of the County dominantly are poorly drained or somewhat poorly drained, nearly level, and loamy. Wetness is a major limitation affecting the use of these soils. Because of an extensive tile drainage system, these soils are well suited to field crops. Because of wetness, however, they generally are poorly suited to most other uses. Please refer to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service’s Soil Survey of Lee County Illinois for more detailed soil information.

Steep Slopes

Generally, the County is predominated by gently rolling or flat areas. Steep slopes (exceeding 12 percent) occur infrequently. These areas are scattered throughout the County and are generally associated with either directly adjacent waterways or ridgetop systems.

Woodlands

Significant areas of woodlands are located throughout the County. These woodlands are generally located in areas of steep topography or along water features. Existing woodlands that have not been broken up by residential development are valuable contributors to the area’s character and beauty. As such, these remaining woodland areas should be preserved, and any development in and around them should take special care not to destroy these resources.

Metallic and Non-Metallic Minerals

According to the Illinois State Geological Survey, there are no operational coal mines in Lee County. Further, only a small portion in the southwest portion of the County, primarily the East Grove Township, contains coal bearing Pennsylvanian rocks. There are, however, several mineral extraction sites in operation in Lee County, primarily in the northern portion of the County. Figure 1.3-1 provides an inventory of operational mineral extraction sites in Lee County.

Figure 1.3-1: Lee County Operational Mineral Extraction Sites**-TO BE UPDATED**

| Company | Location | Product(s) |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Frank Butler, Co. | Franklins Grove Township | Stone |
| St. Barbara Cement, Inc. | Dixon Township | Cement, stone |
| Macklin Brothers, Inc. | | Sand, gravel |
| Bob Propheter, Aggregates | Palmyra Township | Stone |
| Renner Quarries, LTD. | | Stone |
| Wastone, Inc. | | Stone |

Source: ISGS, Directory of Illinois Mineral Producers, and Maps of Extraction Sites, 1997

Surface Waters and Watersheds

The Rock River and the Green River drain most of Lee County. The width of the Rock River varies from 500 to 1,000 feet with a depth generally ranging from 6 to 15 feet. The Rock River maintains a fairly consistent gradient of about one foot per mile. The Green River was a meandering stream until it was dredged and channelized beginning in the 1880s.

Floodplains

Flood hazard areas are located along the Rock and Green Rivers and their tributaries. These have been identified and mapped FEMA for risk management purposes. The 100-year flood area—where the flooding probability is greater than one percent in any given year—is generally restricted to no development. These areas are depicted on Map 4, with particularly large floodplain areas of the Green River in the far southwest (Hamilton and Harmon Townships) and the northeast (Lee Center, Bradford, Viola, and Reynolds Townships).

Wetlands

Wetland areas are located along streams and drainageways and in isolated low spots. These have been identified and mapped by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. These areas are important for aquifer recharge, groundwater and surface water quality improvement, and wildlife habitat. Significant wetland areas are located throughout the planning area. Generally, these areas are restricted to no development by federal and state regulations.

Groundwater

Lee County has an abundant supply of water. Most of the groundwater in the northern part of Lee County is obtained from sandstone, limestone, and dolomite of Ordovician and Cambrian ages. The buried Paw Paw Valley in the eastern part of the County is an excellent source of groundwater. Shallow aquifers suitable for driven points are along the valley of the Rock River. Other shallow aquifers are in a low-lying area near the western margin of the County and along the Green River. In areas of granular soils, these shallow aquifers are susceptible to contamination from both surface and subterranean sources. Deep aquifers in the County are generally of higher quality and considered substantially less susceptible to contamination.

Environmental Corridors

Environmental corridors are, in effect, a composite of the most important individual elements of the natural resource base occurring in a linear pattern on the landscape and have immeasurable environmental, ecological, and recreational value. These corridor areas normally include elements that are essential to the maintenance of an ecological balance and diversity, and the preservation of natural beauty in the County.

Protection of environmental corridors from additional intrusion by incompatible land uses, and thereby from degradation and destruction, should be an essential planning objective for the preservation of open natural spaces. These corridors should be preserved and protected in essentially natural open uses. Environmental corridor features include:

- ◆ Surface waters and their undeveloped shorelands and floodplains;
- ◆ Wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife habitats;
- ◆ Rugged terrain and high relief topography;
- ◆ Elements, closely related to the natural resource base, having recreational, scenic, and historical value:
 - Existing outdoor recreation sites
 - Potential outdoor recreation sites
 - Historic, archaeological, and other cultural sites
 - Scenic areas and vistas
 - Natural and scientific areas

Detailed analysis of landscapes throughout both Illinois and Wisconsin, pioneered by Professor Phil Lewis, have demonstrated that approximately 90 percent of the key environmental and cultural resources of a region are located within or adjacent to environmental corridor features. With this in mind, this *Plan* emphasizes the protection of environmental corridors and their constituent parts.

Natural Areas

The **Franklin Creek State Natural Area** is located in the Nachusa and Franklin Grove Townships, about one mile northwest of the village of Franklin Grove. This 960-acre natural area features several large natural springs, hardwood forests, bedrock outcroppings, and a large variety of flora and fauna comprise a pristine ecosystem. Franklin Creek flows throughout the park. The park also features the reconstructed Franklin Creek Grist Mill, an original early American corn meal and wheat flour producer. The mill was originally built in 1847, and was the largest and most complete grist mill in Lee County.



Franklin Creek State Natural Area (Source: IL DNR)

The 160-acre **Maytown Pheasant Habitat Area** is located in East Grove Township about 18 miles south of Dixon. The park is comprised of a mixture of cool season grasses and legumes, warm season grasses, shrub plantings, old field, creek bottoms, food plots, and some wooded areas.

The **Sand Prairie State Habitat Area** contains 316 acres of native prairie, small wildlife ponds, and wetlands scattered across the site. The park is located on the County border in the Hamilton Township.

The **Steward Habitat Area** is located on the northeastern corner of McGirr and Locust Roads, approximately five miles southeast of the Village of Steward. This 80-acre habitat area was established in 1994. The habitat includes mixture of legumes such as clover and alfalfa, warm season grasses, shrub windbreaks, and food plots. In addition, a wetland area was constructed in 1997.

The **Green River State Wildlife Area**, located about 12 miles southwest of Amboy, is a 2,565-acre wildlife restoration area consisting of mainly wetland areas, but includes prairie restoration areas, open fields, cultivated areas, and timberlands. Many of these areas have been specially planted and managed to provide

more food and cover for a variety of wildlife species. Native prairie plants are found in many portions of the Green River Area.

Located near Franklin Grove, **Nachusa Grasslands** is one of the largest native prairies in the state with 2,826 acres, 725 of which are protected through easements. Nachusa Grasslands is home to more than 600 plant species, 180 native birds, as well as many rare species including Blanding's turtles, grasshopper sparrows, dickcissels, and Henslow's sparrow.



Nachusa Grasslands (Source: www.encounterleecounty.com)

Map 4: Natural Features

Historic and Cultural Resources

Cultural resources are the invaluable cultural and historical assets that offer a tangible connection to the history and cultural heritage of a place. Cultural resources include historic buildings and structures, archeological sites, landscapes, and the cultural components of a place such as public art and festivals. Cultural resources are often overlooked in planning efforts, but are critical components of not only how a community views itself, but also the perception of the County to the outside world.

History of Lee County

Lee County's earliest settlement occurred in 1828, where the City of Dixon now stands. In February 1839, the General Assembly approved the creation of Lee County, which was named in honor of Richard "Lighthouse" Henry Lee, an orator and popular statesman of the Revolutionary Period. Shortly thereafter, on May 31st, Dixon was selected as the County seat. The development of the railroad spurred population growth in the County. In 1840, the population of the County had reached 2,035, which rapidly increased to 5,289 by 1850; and 27,252 in 1870.

Archaeological and Historic Resources

The Illinois Historical Preservation Agency administers the Historic Architectural and Archaeological Resources Geographic Information System (HAARGIS) which contains data on a wide range of historic structures throughout the state including markers, buildings, sites, objects, and districts. The HAARGIS documents 257 historic structures in Lee County. While there are several unique properties like Ronald Reagan's boyhood home, this list is mainly comprised of farm buildings and residences.

The National Park Service (NPS) administers the National Register of Historic Places and the National Historic Landmarks programs. There are nine properties in Lee County listed on the National Historic Register including the Amboy Illinois Central Depot, Christopher Brookner house, Illinois Central stone arch railroad bridges, Lowell Park, Nachusa house, Ronald Reagan's boyhood home, William Van Epps house, Colonel Nathan Whitney house, and the Stephen Wright house. National Historic Landmarks are nationally significant historic places that have been designated by the Secretary of the Interior for their exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States.

In addition, the national headquarters for the Lincoln Highway Association is located in the Village of Franklin Grove. The Lincoln Highway was the first transcontinental highway in the United States, passing through Franklin Grove. The Highway spanned more than 3,000 miles from Times Square in New York City to Lincoln Park in San Francisco, through 14 states. Later called "The Main Street Across America," the Lincoln Highway brought great prosperity to hundreds of cities, towns, and villages along the route. The Lincoln Highway Association, organically established to plan, promote, and sign the Highway, is now dedicated to promoting and preserving it.



Lincoln Highway National Headquarters – Franklin Grove

County's Present Day Cultural Resources

Each generation of residents has added to the cultural, religious, and architectural flavor of the County. Preservation of these historic and cultural resources fosters a sense of pride, improves quality of life, and provides an important feeling of social and cultural continuity between the past, present, and future. The County's culture is much more than its history; it is the people, places, and events that define what the County is today.

Lee County's culture is also observed in the array of festivals and events held throughout the year—examples include farmer's markets, local summer festivals, Dixon Petunia Festival, Reagan Trail Days, Scarecrow Festival, Autumn on the Prairie, and many more. These events and celebrations provide an opportunity for residents to come together as a community and for visitors to see what makes the County unique and special. Arts, culture, and history venues are also a part of the County's cultural assets—for example the Lee County Historical Society, Historic Dixon Theater, and the Next Picture Show in Dixon.

Chapter 1.4: Land Use

This chapter is intended to provide information on existing land use and land use trends in Lee County. It contains a compilation of background information that will be used to form policies and programs to guide the future preservation and development of public and private lands in Lee County. The policies and programs will be included in Volume II.

Existing Land Use

Map 5, Existing Land Use, divides existing land uses in the County (outside of cities and villages) into several categories. These categories are representative of existing (2009) land use categories and do not necessarily reflect the current zoning district designation, or the desired future land use pattern.

Existing Land Use Categories and Pattern

The land use pattern as of June 2009 is shown in Map 5. The categories below were used to prepare the existing land use map for the County.

- ◆ Agricultural: agricultural uses, farmsteads, other open lands, and single-family residential at or below one dwelling per 40 acres;
- ◆ Rural Residential: single-family residential development in rural subdivisions not served by public sewer and water;
- ◆ Single-Family Residential: sewerred single-family residential development at densities up to five dwelling units per acre;
- ◆ Mixed Residential: mobile home and two-family residential development at densities up to eight dwelling units per acre;
- ◆ Multi-Family Residential: multiple-family residential units at densities above eight dwelling unit per acre;
- ◆ Business/Office: indoor commercial, office, institutional, and controlled outdoor display land uses, with moderate landscaping and signage;
- ◆ General Industrial: indoor industrial land uses and controlled outdoor storage areas, with moderate landscaping and signage;
- ◆ Heavy Industrial: heavy manufacture, storage, and disposal land uses, with moderate landscaping and signage;
- ◆ Extraction: quarries, gravel pits, clay extraction, peat extraction, and related land uses.
- ◆ Institutional: large-scale public buildings, hospitals, and special-care facilities. Small institutional uses may be permitted in other land use categories;
- ◆ Active Recreation: open space facilities generally devoted to playgrounds, play fields, play courts, and related recreation activities;
- ◆ Passive Recreation: open space facilities generally devoted to trails, picnic areas, natural areas, and related recreation activities;
- ◆ Special Recreation: carefully controlled mixed-use recreational developments such as campgrounds, private recreation/hunting grounds, or other tourism-related development;
- ◆ Open Space: undeveloped lands in open space uses including cemeteries; and
- ◆ Surface Water: lakes, rivers, and perennial streams.



Agricultural land in Lee County

Lee County's existing land use pattern is primarily rural, with large areas of contiguous farmland defining the County's landscape. Recreational land uses, including the Green River State Wildlife Area and Woodhaven Lakes Private Recreational Camping Resort, are concentrated in the southern portion of the County. Large extraction operations are located in Dixon Township, with smaller sites scattered throughout the County. Population is focused in city, villages, historic rural settlements, and waterfront areas. There are pockets of single-family residential development located in most townships, usually along roads or in unincorporated hamlets.

Figure 1.4-1: Existing Land Use Totals, 2009

| Land Use | Acres | Percent |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|
| Agricultural | 425,725 | 91.3% |
| Rural Residential | 6,866 | 1.5% |
| Single-Family Residential | 654 | 0.1% |
| Mixed Residential | 73 | > 0.1% |
| Multi-Family Residential | 45 | > 0.1% |
| Business/Office | 693 | 0.2% |
| General Industrial | 1,849 | 0.4% |
| Heavy Industrial | 298 | 0.1% |
| Extraction | 2,341 | 0.5% |
| Institutional | 292 | 0.1% |
| Active Recreation | 404 | 0.1% |
| Passive Recreation | 3,038 | 0.7% |
| Special Recreation | 2,395 | 0.5% |
| Open Space | 3,925 | 0.8% |
| Surface Water | 2,520 | 0.5% |
| Right of Way | 3,446 | 0.7% |
| Land in Cities and Villages | 11,774 | 2.5% |
| Total | 466,339 | 100% |

Source: GIS Inventory, 2009

Map 5: Existing Land Use

Chapter 1.5: Transportation Facilities

This chapter includes background information to guide policies toward the future development and maintenance of various modes of transportation in Lee County over the 20-year planning period that will be included in Volume II. The chapter also compares County transportation policies and programs to State and regional transportation plans.

Existing Transportation Network

The County is very well connected to the region by existing roads and highways. This section describes the County's existing transportation facilities.

Roadways

Lee County is connected to Chicago and the Quad Cities via Interstate Highway 88—a toll road, and connected to Rockford and Bloomington via Interstate Highway 39. Lee County is also served by United States Highways 30 and 52, as well as several State Trunk Highways (STHs), all of which link the County with the region's major cities. These links channel commuter flows and provide excellent access for residents.

Airports

Lee County residents are served by several primary passenger airports located in Rockford, Moline, Peoria, and the Chicagoland area. The Chicago Rockford International Airport is about 32 miles from Dixon and offers low fares and free parking and is the air package hub of the United Parcel Service. The Chicago O'Hare airport offers 56 passenger carriers that operate out of 178 gates. In 2006, more than 76.5 million passengers flew out of O'Hare. Walgreen Memorial Airport in Dixon is the only general aviation airport in the County. There are numerous privately owned airfields throughout Lee County.



Chicago Road and I-39

Truck Transportation

Freight trucks travel via designated truck routes in Illinois. Interstates 88 and 39 serve as Class I truck routes through Lee County. State Highways 52 and 30, and County Highways 26, 2, 38, and 251 serve as Class II truck routes.

Rail

Three rail lines traverse Lee County. Within Lee County, Union Pacific operates a line running west from Rochelle to Sterling and beyond with a second running from the Village of Nelson south through Bureau County and beyond. Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad operates a line that runs through the northeast corner of Lee County originating in Rochelle and running to the Chicago metropolitan area.

Located just outside Lee County in the City of Rochelle, the Rochelle Global III Intermodal Terminal is an intermodal transportation facility that serves as a critical interchange hub and loading/unloading terminal for rail shipments, capable of handling over 3,000 containers/trailers per day. The facility is serviced by three railroads including Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Union Pacific, and the City's own railroad. The facility covers 1,200 acres and includes a 720,000-pound lift capability, a ten-lane gate entrance and a 7,200-unit container/trailer yard.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Illinois Department of Transportation designates and maps roadways that are most suitable for bicycling, many of which are located in the southern half of the County and provide convenient access to the Green River State Wildlife Area.

Existing bicycle/pedestrian trails in the County include the Lowell Parkway and Joe Stengel trails, both which originate in Dixon. These trails are planned to eventually connect to the Grand Illinois Trail System, which consists of 500 miles of existing and proposed state and local trails.

Review of State and Regional Transportation Plans

The following are State and regional transportation plans and studies relevant to this *Plan*.

Illinois State Transportation Plan

The Illinois State Transportation Plan addresses how the state's transportation system will continue to meet the mobility needs of residents, support the state economy, preserve the environment, and enhance the quality of life for Illinois residents in a safe, secure, and cost-effective manner. This plan is composed of a number of special reports to address varying modal choices in the state as well as safety, economic, and social issues related to transportation.

Fiscal Year 2010-2015 Proposed Highway Improvement Program

The Illinois Department of Transportation's Fiscal Year 2010-2015 Proposed Highway Improvement Program prioritizes state roadway system improvements, bridge maintenance projects, and other transportation facilities projects. This six-year program is funded primarily by federal, state, and local funds. Thirty-three improvement projects are scheduled in Lee County including roadway resurfacing, land acquisition, construction engineering, and bridge replacement projects.

Fiscal Year 2009-2012 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

The FY 2009-2012 STIP is a four-year program of highway and transit projects developed to fulfill the requirements set forth in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and its successors the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and in the Safe Accountable Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

For the Record 2007: Fiscal Year 2007 Highway Improvements Accomplishments

Illinois DOT's FTR report is an annual report of the awards made by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) for the Illinois highway improvement program. The FTR includes improvements made to both the state and local highway systems. The majority of Lee County projects listed in the FTR report have been "accomplished," with only three projects "not accomplished" or delayed. These include: (1) improvements at Willow Creek rest area, three miles south of US 30; (2) intersection improvements and resurfacing of an eight-mile segment of Eldena Road to US 30; and (3) reconstruction of 0.2 miles of Hennepin Avenue from River Street to Third Street in Dixon.

Midwest Regional Rail Initiative

The Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI) is a cooperative effort between Amtrak; the Federal Railroad Administration; and the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin to develop an improved and expanded passenger rail system in the Midwest.

In February of 2000, MWRRI released a report prepared by Transportation Economics, & Management Systems, Inc. that outlines a new vision for passenger rail travel across the Midwest. This Midwest Regional Rail System would be comprised of a 3,000-mile rail network, and would serve nearly 60 million people.

As part of this initiative, a rail system is proposed to provide a high-speed connection between Chicago and the Quad Cities on the existing BNSF line running south of Lee County. In the interest of maintaining efficient service between major cities, it is unlikely that rail stops will be planned for smaller communities along the proposed corridor. Mendota in La Salle County is the closest proposed station to Lee County.

Chapter 1.6: Utilities and Community Facilities

This chapter describes the existing utilities and community facilities that serve the County including municipal buildings, schools, police and fire services, health care, and solid waste. This information will help shape policies and recommendations regarding future utilities and community facilities.

Existing Utilities and Community Facilities

County Facilities

The Lee County Old Courthouse is located on East Second Street in Dixon, the County seat. This facility houses the Animal Control, County Clerk and Recorder, Coroner, Solid Waste, Supervisor of Assessment, Health Department, County Treasurer, and County Zoning offices. The Lee County Courts building, which houses the Circuit Clerk, Probation, Public Defender, State's Attorney, and all Judge's offices, is located at 309 S. Galena Avenue in Dixon. The Lee County Highway Department is located in Amboy.

Public Safety

The Lee County Sheriff's Department, 316 S Hennepin Avenue in Dixon, serves as the primary law enforcement in the County. The department currently has a total of 27 corrections and patrol officers. Local police departments are located in Dixon, Amboy, Franklin Grove, and Ashton. Lee County is served by ten fire department districts. Fire department district headquarters are located in Amboy, Ashton, Compton, Dixon, Franklin Grove, Harmon, Paw Paw, Sublette, and West Brooklyn. Lee County is served by District One of the Illinois State Police, which also serves Ogle, Carroll, and Whiteside Counties.

Education Facilities

Lee County school-aged children are served by the Lee/Ogle Regional Office of Education and six public school districts. Generally, school district enrollment throughout the County has been declining—most markedly the Nelson School District, which has lost 34 percent of its enrollment since 2004. These trends parallel the County's population trends as discussed in Chapter 1. The Steward Elementary School District is the only district serving the County that has seen positive increases in enrollment since 2004; however, with only a slight increase of six percent.

Figure 1.6-1: Lee County School District Enrollment

| School District | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | Percentage Change 2004-2009 |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------------------|
| Nelson | 32 | 41 | 32 | 30 | 21 | -34% |
| Dixon | 3,000 | 2,939 | 2,894 | 2,939 | 2,891 | -4% |
| Steward | 80 | 93 | 82 | 79 | 85 | 6% |
| Paw Paw | 324 | 324 | 318 | 320 | 325 | 0% |
| Amboy | 1,067 | 1,044 | 1,027 | 976 | 961 | -10% |
| Ashton-Franklin Center | 669 | 635 | 636 | 611 | 631 | -6% |
| Total | 5,172 | 5,076 | 4,989 | 4,995 | 4,914 | |

Source: Illinois State Board of Education, 2009

In addition to the County's public schools, the Sauk Valley Community College serves the County by providing a comprehensive education in the following academic departments: Business, Health Careers,

Humanities, Natural Science, Social Science, and Wind Energy. Sauk Valley Community College campus is located in northwest Lee County, just west of Dixon on Highway 2.

Health Care Facilities

The Lee County Health Department, located in Dixon, was established to promote health and wellness of Lee County residents through programs designed to protect individual health and safety. Program areas include environmental health, maternal and child health, health and wellness, infectious disease, mental health, and developmental disabilities.

Cemeteries

There are three cemeteries in the County operated by local jurisdictions. These include the Oakwood and Chapel Hill Cemeteries in Dixon and the Prairie Repose Cemetery in Amboy. The Lee County Genealogical and Historical Societies have documented a total of 95 cemeteries.

Solid Waste Disposal

Located in the Highway Department offices in Amboy, the Lee County Office of Solid Waste Management strives to divert as much material as possible from final disposal and to oversee the environmentally safe disposal of the remainder of the County's municipal solid waste. In 1993, the Department adopted a Solid Waste Management Plan in order to comply with the Illinois Solid Waste Planning and Recycling Act (SWPRA), which requires counties every five years to adopt and update solid waste management plans. This plan has since undergone two updates—in 1998 and again in 2003.

The County implemented its drop-off recycling program in 1998. Drop off sites are now located in Dixon, Ashton, Franklin Grove, Sublette, Paw Paw, and Steward. Curbside recycling is offered in Amboy, Lee, Sublette, and Paw Paw. Lee County has also collaborated with Ogle County on events to collect household hazardous waste and electronic waste materials.

Chapter 1.7: Housing

This chapter describes housing trends and existing conditions in the County that will shape the County's policies and recommendations regarding housing.

Existing Housing and Framework

According to 2007 American Community Survey data, there were an estimated 14,718 housing units in Lee County. As shown in Figure 1.7-1, the majority of the County's housing stock is single-family homes. Lee County also has a fairly significant share of multi-family housing for a rural county, with nine percent of all multi-family unit types. The pace of housing development in the County has remained steady since 2000. A total of 408 units have been constructed during this seven-year period, at about 58 units per year. This growth is primarily in and around the City of Dixon.

Figure 1.7-1: Lee County Housing Types, 2000 and 2007

| Units per Structure | Number | | Percent | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 2000 | 2007 | 2000 | 2007 |
| Single-Family Detached | 11,124 | 11,786 | 77.7 | 80.1 |
| Single-Family Attached ¹ | 113 | 162 | 0.8 | 1.1 |
| Two-Family (duplex) | 648 | 759 | 4.5 | 5.2 |
| Multi-Family: 3-4 units | 555 | 490 | 3.9 | 3.3 |
| Multi-Family: 5-9 units | 461 | 510 | 3.2 | 3.5 |
| Multi-Family: 10-19 units | 99 | 60 | 0.7 | 0.4 |
| Multi-Family: 20 or more units | 437 | 310 | 3.1 | 2.1 |
| Mobile Home or Other | 873 | 641 | 6.1 | 4.4 |
| Total | 14,310 | 14,718 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Source: U.S. Census, Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2007

¹ Includes townhouses and zero lot line duplexes.

Figure 1.7-2 compares the County's other 2007 housing stock characteristics with surrounding counties, the region, and the state. In 2007, the County had an average homeowner vacancy rate of about 1.3 percent, and about 75 percent of the County's housing units were owner-occupied. The 2007 estimated median housing value in Lee County was \$110,700, an increase of \$27,300 from 2000 (33 percent). About 60 percent of the County's 2000 housing stock was valued in the \$50,000 to \$99,000 price range.

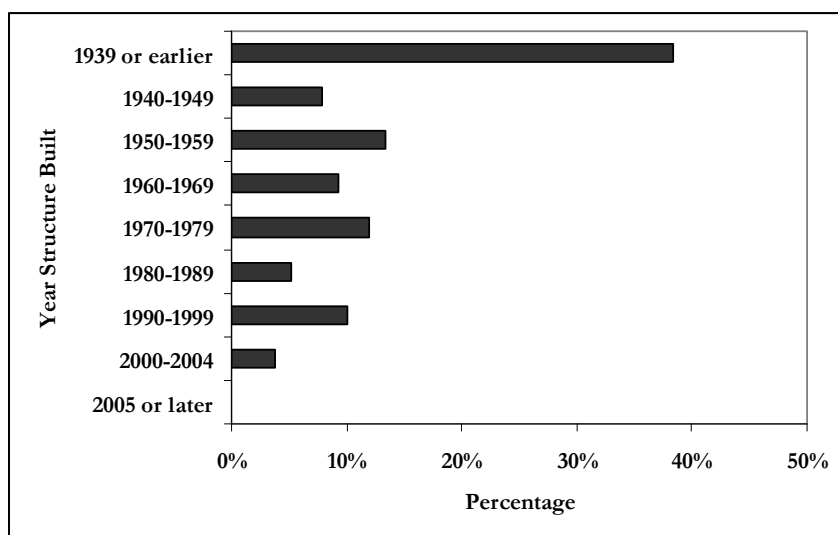
Figure 1.7-2: Household Characteristic Comparisons, 2007

| | Total Housing Units | Total Households | Average Household Size | Median Home Value | Percent Owner Occupied |
|------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Lee County | 14,718 | 13,490 | 2.45 | \$110,700 | 74.9 |
| Bureau County | 15,530 | 14,750 | 2.34 | \$101,600 | 75.4 |
| DeKalb County | 37,637 | 35,451 | 2.63 | \$189,700 | 64.6 |
| La Salle County | 48,885 | 45,375 | 2.41 | \$118,800 | 73.3 |
| Ogle County | 21,784 | 20,282 | 2.67 | \$137,000 | 76.6 |
| Whiteside County | 25,526 | 23,855 | 2.44 | \$90,500 | 75.5 |
| Illinois | 5,196,936 | 4,724,462 | 2.64 | \$198,100 | 70.1 |
| United States | 126,237,884 | 111,609,629 | 2.60 | \$181,800 | 67.3 |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007

Figure 1.7-3 illustrates the age of Lee County's housing stock based on the 2007 American Community Survey data. The age of a community's housing stock is sometimes used as a measure of the general condition of the community's housing supply. Lee County has a relatively old housing stock, with periods of increased construction interspersed with periods of less housing construction. Nearly 40 percent of the County's homes were built before 1940. The past decade has shown a very slow rate of construction, with only about four percent of housing added since 2000. Over the planning period, owners of older homes in the County may be interested in rehabilitation efforts.

Figure 1.7-3: Age of Housing as a Percent of the Total 2007 Housing Stock



Chapter 1.8: Economic Development

This chapter contains a compilation of background information that will inform goals, policies, and programs to strengthen the economic base in the County.

Existing Economic Development Framework

This section details labor force trends, educational attainment, employment forecasts, income data, and other economic development characteristics of the County.

Workforce Flow

Approximately one third of Lee County's workforce travels outside the County for employment according to the 2000 Census. Of the 5,873 workers that commute to places outside the County, 28 percent (1,594 workers) commuted to Ogle County to the north. Whiteside County was the second most common workplace destination, drawing 26 percent (1,520 workers). DeKalb and LaSalle Counties were third and fourth most common workplace destinations, drawing 10 and 8 percent of the commuting workforce respectively (557 and 456 workers). Only 2 percent of commuters traveled out of Lee County to Bureau County. Of the surrounding counties, Whiteside and Ogle Counties have the highest percentage of workers commuting to Lee County, 31 percent and 13 percent respectively.

The average time a County resident traveled to work increased only slightly from 21.8 minutes in 2000 to 22.2 minutes in 2007. That being said, gas prices have been increasing since 2000, which may affect the overall tolerance for commutes in the future.

Labor Force Trends

The County's labor force is the portion of the population that is employed or available for work. The labor force includes people who are in the armed forces, employed, unemployed, or actively seeking employment. According to 2008 Illinois Department of Workforce Development data, 17,585 County residents age 16 or older are in the labor force. Of those in the labor force, 15,940 are employed. As of April 2009, the County's civilian unemployment rate stood at 9.4 percent. For comparison, in April 2009 the unemployment rate for the State was around 9.3 percent. The high unemployment rate for both the County and the State is attributable to the current national economic recession.



Ethanol plant on Steward Rd just north of Lee County

Figure 1.8-1 shows Lee County's employment industries for 2000 and 2007. The Wholesale Trade industry experiences the most growth during this seven-year period. The Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance industry sector also saw a considerable increase of 25 percent. Information industries declined in Lee County during this period by 29 percent. Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and Rental Leasing also declined by 27 percent. The Public Administration sector remained the same.

Figure 1.8-1: Lee County Employment Industries, 2000 and 2007

| Industry | 2000 | 2007 | Percent Change |
|--|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining | 569 | 701 | 23% |
| Construction | 1,059 | 1,130 | 7% |
| Manufacturing | 3,566 | 3,281 | -8% |
| Wholesale trade | 475 | 780 | 64% |
| Retail trade | 1,918 | 1,875 | -2% |
| Transportation and warehousing, and utilities | 1,129 | 989 | -12% |
| Information | 263 | 188 | -29% |
| Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing | 667 | 485 | -27% |
| Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services | 840 | 1,038 | 24% |
| Educational services, and health care and social assistance | 3,059 | 3,809 | 25% |
| Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation, and food services | 1,069 | 1,106 | 3% |
| Other services, except public administration | 757 | 934 | 23% |
| Public administration | 960 | 960 | 0% |

Sources: U.S. Census, 2000; American Community Survey, 2005-07

Lee County employment projections are shown in Figure 1.8-2. Note that the employment categories used below are based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Employment Statistics classification system and vary from the previous figure so direct cross comparisons are not possible. These data predict the County's total employment to grow approximately three percent, at a rate of about 0.3 percent per year by 2016. Over this time period, the most significant increase in jobs is projected to be in the Education Services and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation sectors. The overall percentages of employees working in the Accommodation and Food Services and Health and Social Assistance sectors are also projected to increase, while employment in the overall Manufacturing, Agricultural Production, and State Government sectors are project to decline over this period.

Figure 1.8-2: Lee County Employment Forecasts, 2006-2016

| Industry Title | 2006 Estimated Employment | 2016 Projected Employment | Total Employment Change | Percent Change 2006-2016 |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Accommodation and Food Services | 624 | 708 | 85 | 14% |
| Administrative and Waste Management Services | 350 | 375 | 25 | 7% |
| Agricultural Production | 865 | 802 | -63 | -7% |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | 173 | 204 | 30 | 17% |
| Construction | 461 | 501 | 40 | 9% |
| Educational Services | 1,172 | 1,380 | 208 | 18% |
| Finance and Insurance | 266 | 291 | 25 | 9% |
| Healthcare and Social Assistance | 2,311 | 2,616 | 305 | 13% |
| Information | 84 | 86 | 2 | 2% |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | 21 | 22 | 1 | 5% |
| Manufacturing | 756 | 683 | -74 | -10% |
| Natural Resources and Mining | 22 | 22 | 0 | 0% |
| Personal and Other Services | 725 | 798 | 73 | 10% |
| Professional, Scientific, Technology Services | 268 | 279 | 11 | 4% |
| Real Estate and Rental Leasing | 74 | 76 | 2 | 3% |
| Retail Trade | 1,269 | 1,301 | 31 | 2% |
| State Government | 1,336 | 1,262 | -74 | -6% |
| Wholesale Trade | 1,442 | 1,470 | 28 | 2% |
| Total—All Industries | 15,840 | 16,291 | 451 | 3% |

Source: IL Dept. of Employment Security, Projections Unit

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is an important component of a community's labor force. According to 2007 American Community Survey data, more than 86 percent of the County's population age 25 and older had attained a high school level education or higher. Approximately 16 percent of the County's population had attained a bachelor's degree or higher. Overall, Lee County's educational attainment status is comparable to surrounding counties, lagging only behind DeKalb County, where more than a quarter of the population has attained a bachelor's degree or higher.

Figure 1.8-3: Education Characteristics, 2007

| | High School Graduates or higher (%) | Bachelor's Degree or Higher (%) |
|------------------|--|--|
| Lee County | 86.1% | 16.2% |
| Bureau County | 87.6% | 16.5% |
| DeKalb County | 89.8% | 28.4% |
| La Salle County | 87.3% | 14.7% |
| Ogle County | 86.3% | 18.3% |
| Whiteside County | 84.6% | 14.2% |
| Illinois | 85.2% | 29.0% |

Source: American Community Survey, 2005-07

Income Data

Figure 1.8-4 shows income characteristics for Lee County and surrounding counties and the state. According to 2007 American Community Survey data, the median household income in Lee County was \$49,518, an increase of \$8,551 from 2000.

Figure 1.8-4: Income Characteristics, 2007

| | Median Household Income | Per Capita Income |
|------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Lee County | \$49,518 | \$23,031 |
| Bureau County | \$44,204 | \$22,828 |
| DeKalb County | \$53,758 | \$23,647 |
| La Salle County | \$46,741 | \$23,201 |
| Ogle County | \$52,309 | \$23,478 |
| Whiteside County | \$53,745 | \$21,100 |
| Illinois | \$53,745 | \$27,511 |

Source: American Community Survey, 2005-07

Primary Employers

Figure 1.8-5 below lists the top employers in Lee County. Collectively, the largest employers roughly reflect the County's overall pattern of employment by sector as shown in Figure 1.8-1 above.

Figure 1.8-5: Lee County Major Employers, 2009

| Employer | Location | Industry Sector | Number of Jobs |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Katherine Shaw Bethea Hospital | Dixon | Healthcare | 1000-4999 |
| Raynor Garage Doors | Dixon | Manufacturing | 500-999 |
| Crest Foods, Inc. | Ashton | Grocery | 500-999 |
| Dixon Correctional Center | Dixon | Corrections | 500-999 |
| Allied Lock Industries | Dixon | Manufacturing | 250-499 |
| Kreider Services, Inc. | Dixon | Personal Services | 250-499 |
| Sauk Valley Community College | Dixon | Education | 250-499 |
| Wal-Mart Supercenter | Dixon | Retail sales | 100-249 |
| Dixon Direct | Dixon | Marketing products | 100-249 |
| Plews/Edelmann | Dixon | Manufacturing | 100-249 |
| Tompkins PLC/Plews Edelman | Dixon | Manufacturing | 100-249 |
| KSB Medical Group | Dixon | Healthcare | 100-249 |
| Donaldson Company | Dixon | Retail Sales | 100-249 |
| Do It Best Corp | Dixon | Retail Sales | 100-249 |
| Jack Mabley Developmental Center | Dixon | Healthcare | 100-249 |
| Ken Nelson Auto Group | Dixon | Vehicle Sales | 100-249 |
| Sinnissippi Centers, Inc. | Dixon | Healthcare | 100-249 |
| Woodhaven Lakes Realty, Inc. | Sublette | Real Estate | 100-249 |
| Anchor Coupling | Dixon | Manufacturing | 100-249 |
| Sensient Flavors | Amboy | Technology | 100-249 |
| Bay Valley Foods | Dixon | Food distribution | 100-249 |
| Lutheran Social Services | Nachusa | Social service | 100-249 |
| Shopko | Dixon | Retail sales | 100-249 |

Source: Illinois Workforce Information Center, 2009

Economic Development Programs and Agencies

The following list provides information on programs and agencies designed to stimulate economic development in developed areas in the County.

Dixon Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The Dixon Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry was established in 1887, to promote the economic vitality of the City of Dixon and surrounding area via business retention and recruitment programs. The Chamber works in partnership with the Lee County Industrial Development Association (LCIDA) and manages the marketing and business and economic development functions of the LCIDA.

Lee County Industrial Development Association (LCIDA)

Established in 1960, LCIDA (formerly Dixon Industrial Development Association) facilitates economic development activities in Lee County. LCIDA maintains an inventory of demographic and statistical information including population, marketplace, traffic counts, and laborshed information at city, township, market, and regional levels of detail. LCIDA also works with the Dixon Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry to assist with business relocations, recruitment of new businesses, and retention of existing businesses and industries.

The Lee County Industrial Development Association administers development in the County's business parks and development sites. The Lee County Business Park is located at the intersection of Highway 26 and Interstate 88 in Dixon, approximately 23 miles from Union Pacific Global III Intermodal Facility in Rochelle. The Green River Industrial Park is located along Highway 30, approximately 9 miles south of Interstate 88 and 20 miles east of Interstate 39. Other business and industrial development sites ranging from 2 to 1,200 acres which are located throughout the County.

Lee County Tourism Council

The Lee County Tourism Council promotes tourism in the County via visitor information on the Encounter Lee County website. The Council provides visitors with Lee County cultural, historical, lodging, event, and recreational information as well as a calendar of events for communities in the County. The Council also promotes eco-tourism within the County including Lee County wind farms and the Nachusa Grasslands.

Blackhawk Hills Resource Conservation and Development Center

Established in 1974, the Blackhawk Hills Resource Conservation and Development Area (BHRCD) is a 3,778-square mile region consisting of the six Illinois counties (Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, Whiteside). The mission of the BHRCD is to assist the people of Northwest Illinois with rural economic development by improving and preserving local resources. The BHRCD also serves this region as an Economic Development District, whose mission is to develop and implement a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that will enhance job opportunities and improve the quality of life for local communities.

Chapter 1.9: Intergovernmental Cooperation

In a state with overlapping units of government and in an era of diminishing local government resources, it is increasingly important to coordinate decisions that affect neighboring communities. This chapter of the *Plan* contains a compilation of background information on neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions relevant to the County's planning effort. Volume II will outline strategies for cooperation, collaboration, and minimizing potential and existing conflicts.

Existing Regional Framework

Map 1, presented earlier in Volume I, shows the boundaries of Lee County's neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions. All play an important part in the area's future. Relationships among those jurisdictions are analyzed to identify future opportunities and potential planning conflicts below, and in Volume II. The following is a summary of existing relationships and planning context:

City of Dixon

The City of Dixon, the county seat, is located in northwest Lee County. Dixon's 2000 population was reported to be 15,941. Dixon's comprehensive plan, adopted in 1990, makes growth and development recommendations for the City and its extraterritorial area. The recommendations related to Dixon in the Lee County 2000 Comprehensive Plan were formed based on Dixon's comprehensive plan.

City of Rochelle

The City of Rochelle is located to the north of Lee County in Ogle County, but its sphere of influence extends into Lee County—particularly with regard to transportation facilities. Rochelle's 2000 population was reported to be 9,424. Rochelle's most recent comprehensive plan was adopted in 2003. The framework plan map designates land south of I-88 and east of Highway 251 as future employment centers. Other areas of future employment and commercial areas are planned to occur along Illinois Route 38, which traverses the City east to west. New residential development has been planned for areas northeast and northwest of current City municipal boundaries.

Bureau County

Bureau County is located to the south of Lee County. Bureau's county seat is Princeton. According to the Census estimates, Bureau County's 2008 population is estimated to be 34,933.

DeKalb County

DeKalb County is located directly east of Lee County. DeKalb County's 2008 population was estimated to be 106,321. The City of DeKalb is the focal point for much of the County's population, commerce, and industry; Sycamore is the County seat. The DeKalb County Unified Future Land Use Plan was adopted in December 2003. This plan proposes substantial urban development surrounding the City of DeKalb as well as the counties other urban areas. The majority of land outside of urban areas, particularly on the west side of the County, is designated to remain as agricultural, open space, or conservancy.

LaSalle County

LaSalle County, located to the southeast of Lee County, is the most populous of all of Lee's adjacent counties. According to 2008 Census estimates, the County had an approximate population of 112,474. LaSalle County prepared a comprehensive plan in June 2008. LaSalle County's proposed land use map plans potential residential expansion to occur around existing urban areas including those nearest Lee County—Mendota, Earlville, and Leland. Commercial expansion is proposed to occur in the Mendota and Earlville areas.

Ogle County

Ogle County is located to the north of Lee County. Ogle County's 2008 population was estimated to be 55,167. Rochelle is the primary urbanized area of Ogle County, and the regional transportation hub. The County adopted its comprehensive plan in 1996 and most recently amended it in June 2008. The County's General Development Plan map designates development to occur within the extraterritorial area of existing

municipalities. Primarily development is anticipated to occur in and around the City of Rochelle, with industrial development designated at the Lee County/Ogle County border.

Whiteside County

Located to the west of Lee County, Whiteside County is home to Sterling and Rock Falls. Whiteside County's estimated 2008 population was 59,153.

Important State Agency Jurisdictions

The Illinois Department of Transportation's Region 2 office, located in Dixon, and a second office in Ottawa, serves all of Lee County. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources Region 1 provides service to Lee County residents through its office in Sterling.

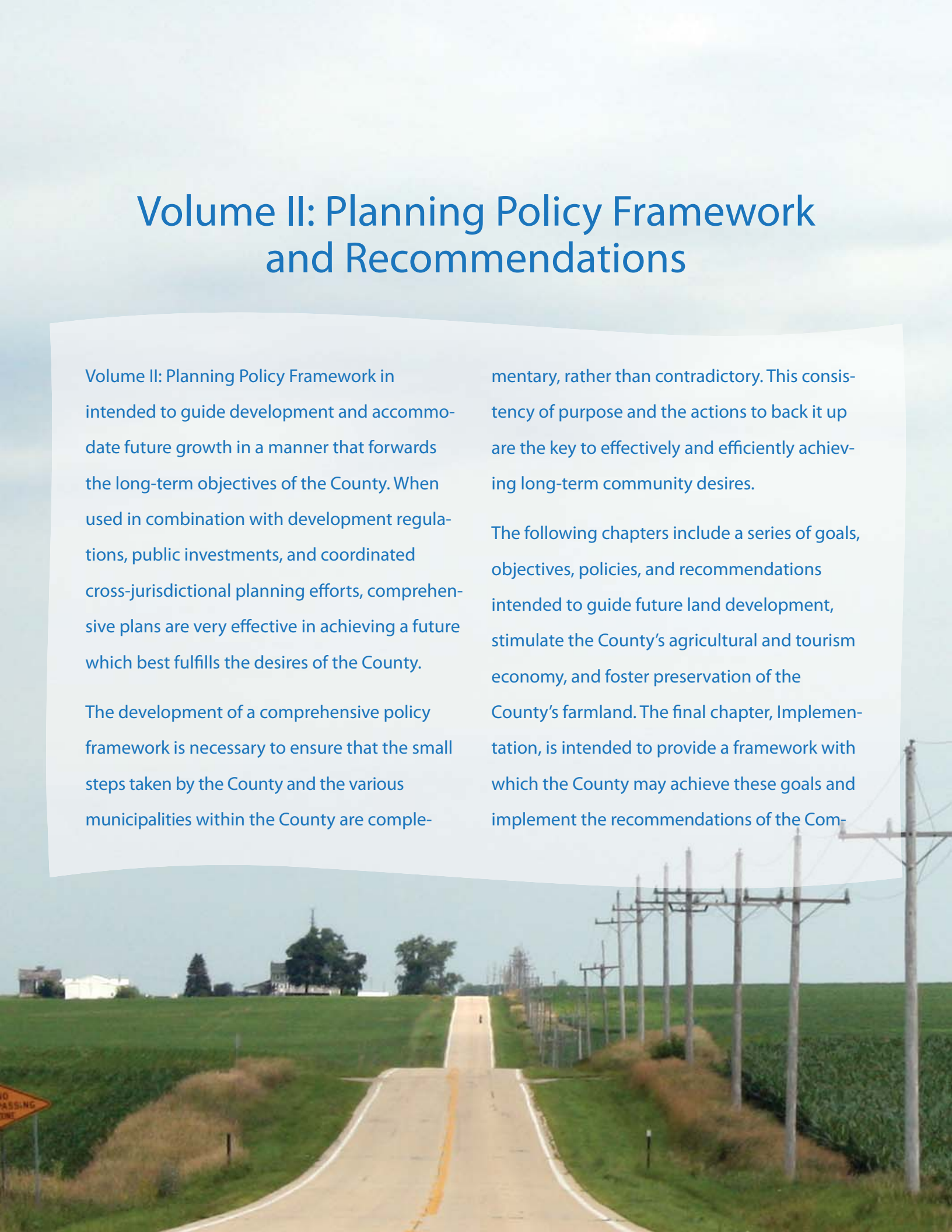
Volume II: Planning Policy Framework and Recommendations

Volume II: Planning Policy Framework is intended to guide development and accommodate future growth in a manner that forwards the long-term objectives of the County. When used in combination with development regulations, public investments, and coordinated cross-jurisdictional planning efforts, comprehensive plans are very effective in achieving a future which best fulfills the desires of the County.

The development of a comprehensive policy framework is necessary to ensure that the small steps taken by the County and the various municipalities within the County are comple-

mentary, rather than contradictory. This consistency of purpose and the actions to back it up are the key to effectively and efficiently achieving long-term community desires.

The following chapters include a series of goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations intended to guide future land development, stimulate the County's agricultural and tourism economy, and foster preservation of the County's farmland. The final chapter, Implementation, is intended to provide a framework with which the County may achieve these goals and implement the recommendations of the Com-



NO
PASSING
ZONE

Chapter 2.1: Goals and Objectives

The development of goals, objectives, and policies is an important step in the comprehensive planning process—these statements represent the basic values and needs of the community and serve as a strategic guide for *Plan* realization. The goals and objectives included in this chapter were formed based on existing plans and ordinances, community forum outcomes, meetings with community representatives, and basic planning principles. Together, goals, objectives, and policies (Chapter 2.2) provide the guidance to effectively direct future growth and development in Lee County. They will be used by the County Planning Committee, cities, and villages as a decision making tool and as a measure to implement the overall recommendations of this *Comprehensive Plan*.

- ◆ **Goals** are broad statements that express general public preferences for the long-term development of the County over the next 20 years or more. Goals specifically address key issues affecting the County and its communities.
- ◆ **Objectives** are more specific than goals and are usually attainable through strategic planning and implementation activities.
- ◆ **Policies** are specific activities or regulations used to ensure Plan implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Plan.

The planning goals and objectives on the following pages are designed to establish the comprehensive policy framework to effectively respond to key issues facing the County. These goals and objectives are organized by *Plan* elements (e.g. Land Use, Transportation, Community Character). Because policies often address more than one goal or objective, and because some policies are specific to certain land uses, policies are included separately in Chapter 2.2 immediately following the Goals and Objectives chapter.

Land Use, Agricultural Preservation, and Natural Resource Protection

A. Goal: Preserve agriculture as a viable land use, economy, and way of life in Lee County.

Objectives:

1. Discourage non-agricultural development in areas of prime farmland through continued use of the LESA system, zoning regulations, and subdivision regulations.
2. Preserve large tracts of contiguous, productive agricultural land through County and local community cooperation, and by minimizing zoning map amendments in the “Rural/Agricultural” areas on the Future Land Use Map.
3. Encourage value-added agricultural opportunities to boost the County’s agricultural economy.

B. Goal: Limit new development to appropriate locations.

Objectives:

1. Encourage development to occur in areas contiguous to existing development in cities and villages where it can be efficiently served with a full range of municipal services.
2. Promote redevelopment and infill development to occur in areas already served by public services and facilities.
3. Discourage development in areas that cannot be easily or efficiently served with municipal utilities such as sanitary sewer; water and storm sewers; and public services such as police, fire, libraries, schools, etc.
4. Guide rural development to established named hamlets shown for additional development on the Future Land Use Map.

C. Goal: Protect natural resources in the County.

Objectives:

1. Preserve environmental corridor features including waterways, floodplains, wetlands, woodlands, steep slopes, wildlife habitats, and scenic vistas through the adoption and implementation of environmental protection zoning and subdivision ordinance standards.
2. Protect the groundwater and surface waters of the County.
3. Preserve the air quality of the County.
4. Encourage the cleanup of contaminated sites that threaten the public health, safety, and welfare in the County.
5. Support the clustering of new rural development on areas of non-prime farmland and away from sensitive environmental areas.

Community Character

A. Goal: Preserve the "rural character" and farming lifestyle of the County.**Objectives:**

1. Encourage development to occur in an orderly and efficient pattern that preserves agricultural resources and minimizes the conflicts between urban and rural uses, such as residential development in areas planned for agricultural preservation.
2. Preserve the aesthetic character of the rural countryside.
3. Locate urban development that requires urban services within the County's cities and villages.
4. Develop a document that identifies the essential qualities defining the rural character of Lee County.

B. Goal: Maintain and enhance the aesthetic quality of the County.**Objectives:**

1. Preserve the historic and architecturally significant structures in the County.
2. Upgrade signage, landscaping, screening, site design, and related development standards for existing and planned commercial, industrial, and office development areas.

C. Goal: Maintain and enhance the neighborhoods in the County.**Objectives:**

1. Design neighborhoods that are oriented to the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists.
2. Discourage high traffic volumes in residential neighborhoods.

D. Goal: Provide adequate park and recreational facilities for County residents.**Objectives:**

1. Provide a diverse range of public recreational facilities at acceptable service standards.
2. Ensure that all residents of the County, of all ages and abilities, have adequate access to a diverse range of park and recreational facilities.
3. Work jointly with the school districts to provide adequate recreational facilities and to avoid duplication.

E. Goal: Offer safe and affordable housing for all Lee County residents.**Objectives:**

1. Provide adequate housing for all income groups in the County, including sufficient affordable housing to serve the needs of the labor force employed in business and industry focused in established cities and villages.
2. Encourage mixed-housing neighborhoods focused in established cities and villages that provide a range of housing types, densities, and costs while maintaining a predominantly single-family character.
3. Create attractive and safe neighborhoods focused in established cities and villages that are well served by police, fire, and emergency medical services.

Economic Development

A. Goal: Maintain the agricultural economy in the County.**Objectives:**

1. Develop policies that preserve and protect the natural resources of the County while allowing for continued growth and economic development in the most suitable areas.
2. Direct non-agricultural development to the County's cities and villages to avoid creating conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses.
3. Promote agribusiness and farm-related services that will help support agriculture in the County.
4. See Land Use, Agricultural Preservation, and Natural Resource Protection, Goals A and B.

B. Goal: Encourage redevelopment in the downtowns of the County's cities and villages.**Objectives:**

1. Support the maintenance and revitalization of traditional downtown business districts in the County.
2. Encourage joint public/private investment in business district improvements.
3. Enhance the aesthetic quality of city and village business districts.
4. Promote infill development on underutilized or blighted central business district properties.
5. See Land Use objectives A.1 and A.2.

C. Goal: Promote new commercial and industrial development in the County.**Objectives:**

1. Follow the recommendations of this *Comprehensive Plan* for the Detailed Planning Areas.
2. Provide an appropriate supply of developable or re-developable land for commercial, industrial, and office uses.
3. Identify and reserve strategic locations for high quality industrial and office developments.
4. Discourage unplanned, incremental strip commercial development along community entryways.
5. Adopt stronger standards for new commercial and industrial development, in terms of site design, aesthetics, and conditions of operations, such as those elaborated in Part II, Section C. Development Guidelines.
6. Promote a variety of industrial and business uses in the County.

D. Goal: Maintain and enhance the quality of life in the County to help draw commercial and industrial development.

Objectives:

1. Encourage the creation of well-planned, mixed-use centers that include employment, shopping, housing, and recreation opportunities in a compact, pedestrian-oriented setting.

Tourism

A. Goal: Promote tourism in the County.

Objectives:

1. Support the activities of the Lee County Tourism Council.
2. Promote recreational and cultural opportunities in the County.
3. Link the dispersed tourism features of the County to lodging establishments with rural bicycle trail facilities.

B. Goal: Preserve the natural, cultural, and historical features of the County that draw tourists.

Objectives:

1. See Land Use, Agricultural Preservation, and Natural Resource Protection, Goal C.
2. See Community Character, Goals A and B.

Transportation

A. Goal: Provide a safe and efficient transportation system that meets the needs of the pedestrian, bike, car, bus, truck, and train.

Objectives:

1. Coordinate land development with transportation system improvements.
2. Maintain County roads to provide adequate capacity and road quality.
3. Coordinate multi-jurisdiction transportation system improvements.
4. Provide safe and convenient access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and autos between neighborhoods, park, recreational facilities, schools, service centers, and employment centers.
5. Encourage pedestrian-oriented neighborhood designs as new developments are platted and existing neighborhoods are revitalized.
6. Foster a land development pattern that minimizes absolute reliance on the automobile.
7. Position the County to take full advantage of potential future high-speed regional passenger rail currently proposed as part of the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative, with a route through Bureau County.
8. Encourage the development of multi-use trails within the County to connect to regional trails.

Fiscal Performance

A. Goal: Provide a cost effective and efficient system of utilities and public services.

Objectives:

1. Consider partnerships between the County and developers to pay for infrastructure and service improvements necessitated by new development.
2. Maximize the use of existing utility systems and plan for an orderly and cost-efficient extension of municipal utilities.

3. Ensure that city and village utility systems have adequate capacity to accommodate planned future growth.
4. Avoid urban development in areas that cannot be easily or economically served with municipal utilities and public services.

B. Goal: Take full advantage of economic development programs offered by State and Federal government and private sources.

Objectives:

1. Consider the full range of brownfield-oriented economic development grants and related programs.
2. Consider the full range of greenfield-oriented economic development grants and related programs.
3. Consider the full range of livability and “smart growth” economic development grants and related programs.
4. Consider the full range of tourism-related grants and related programs.

Administrative

A. Goal: Encourage public participation in the planning and decision-making processes.

Objectives:

1. Encourage greater public awareness of planning-related issues.
2. Promote and enable increased public participation in the planning process and in decision-making processes.

B. Goal: Assure fair and consistent decision-making based on the County's Goals, Objectives, and Policies.

Objectives:

1. Adhere to *Comprehensive Plan* Future Land Use Map and Transportation Facilities Map when making decisions.
2. Insist upon *Comprehensive Plan* Recommendations and Goals, Objectives, and Policies when making decisions.
3. Promote administrative flexibility by allowing for a process to periodically review and revise the *Comprehensive Plan*. A five-year review cycle is typical.
4. Encourage cities and villages to respond to and process planning and development-related applications in a timely manner.
5. Adopt policies and regulations consistent with the recommendations of this *Comprehensive Plan*.

C. Goal: Ensure high-quality development design.

Objectives:

1. Adopt a cost-recovery system to fund the professional review of development proposals.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

A. Goal: Establish mutually beneficial intergovernmental relationships among the County, cities and villages, and other jurisdictions.

Objectives:

1. Encourage collaboration among the County, cities and villages, townships, school districts, and other jurisdictions with regard to planning initiatives and development policies.
2. Support intergovernmental cooperation and the shared provision of services between the County and the cities and villages.
3. Promote intergovernmental discussions and agreements within the Detailed Planning Areas identified in this *Plan*.

Chapter 2.2: Policies

The following policies follow from the Goals and Objectives in the previous chapter.

Land Use, Agricultural Preservation, and Natural Resource Protection

1. Except where otherwise identified in this *Plan*, all non-agricultural development on lands located within the Detailed Planning Areas (DPA) should be served with the full array of available municipal services where available. Unsewered development is strongly discouraged within this area because large unsewered lots and subdivisions and dispersed non-residential development cannot be efficiently served with public services, including sanitary sewer and water, storm sewer, sidewalks, high levels of police and fire service, street maintenance, parks, and schools/bus routes.
2. Cluster non-farm development in predominantly agricultural areas in a manner that will minimize the conversion of prime agricultural land and minimize the impact on the operations of adjoining farms. This should be accomplished through LESA and site plan review.
3. Continue to limit rural residential development in the AG-1 Agricultural Zoning District to no more than four new homes per quarter section.
4. Encourage mixed-use developments that include a combination of densities and an integration of residential and commercial uses.
5. Protect sensitive natural areas such as wetlands and floodplains that provide for natural stormwater storage and flood control.
6. Plan for the Rock River as a continuous scenic, natural, and recreational corridor with any development along the shore controlled to maintain the aesthetic, recreational, and natural resource qualities of the corridor.
7. Adopt uniform setbacks from all navigable streams, intermittent streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands and require a vegetative buffer within these setbacks to trap silts and nutrients, slow the movement of stormwater, increase water infiltration, and provide wildlife habitat.
8. Discourage development on hilltops, ridgetops, and on hillsides where the roofline of a proposed structure will exceed the crest of the hill. Encourage reforestation of hilltops and ridgetops above areas of steep slopes and other erodable soil areas.
9. Continue to implement countywide construction site erosion control and stormwater management standards to help protect water quality, reduce the risk of flooding, and avoid other associated problems.
10. Require site plan review for all multi-family, commercial, office, industrial, recreational, and institutional land uses in order to ensure the compatibility of adjacent land uses.
11. Buffer incompatible land uses from each other through strategic use of plant materials, decorative fences, walls, or berms.
12. Require that all new development and redevelopment projects include high quality building design, landscaping, and signage. Consider amending existing ordinances to ensure that this policy is implemented in a fair and consistent manner.
13. Continue to support wind energy conversion systems as a use that is generally compatible with the County's agricultural preservation objectives in areas for rural and agricultural uses in this *Plan*.

Community Character

1. Approve a County Park and Open Space Plan to evaluate countywide recreation needs.
2. Encourage all urban neighborhoods to be located within a ten-minute walk of a neighborhood park facility.

3. Design new and adapt existing park facilities to meet the needs of all residents of the County including special groups such as the elderly, the disabled, and pre-school age children.
4. Adopt a property maintenance code to ensure that existing residential and non-residential development maintains a minimum level of quality to ensure the health and safety of residents and to maintain neighborhood property values.
5. Adopt stricter and more clearly defined regulations regarding “junk” in residential areas.
6. Adopt more detailed regulations regarding site design, landscaping, and signage (see Development Guidelines in the following section).
7. Encourage commercial, industrial, residential, and agricultural developments to fit within the character of the area in terms of site design and building character (see Development Guidelines in the following section).
8. Advance Planned Neighborhood design where new residential areas are platted and developed (see Planned Neighborhood Design Standards in Chapter 2.3: Development Guidelines).
9. Avoid speculative commercial rezonings on the fringes of communities in order to prevent the creation of unplanned, uneconomical, and unattractive strip commercial areas.
10. Provide a range of housing types and densities to provide housing for all Lee County residents.
11. Encourage large developments to include a variety of housing types and price ranges.

Economic Development

1. Recognize the importance of agriculture and agribusiness and take care not to adopt land use and other regulations that undermine agricultural viability.
2. Direct new development into DPAs to support tax base and local job growth per the recommendations of this Plan in Chapter 2.3.
3. Continue to support wind energy conversion systems and wind farms as an economic development initiative with multiple benefits including: farmland preservation, additional income for farmers, creation of “green collar” jobs, and millions of dollars in property tax revenue.
4. Provide a sufficient inventory of sites in planned business and industrial parks to accommodate expansion of existing businesses and provide sites for new businesses and industry.
5. Maintain transportation infrastructure, including highways, railroads, and air fields to support industrial and business development.
6. Promote adequate infrastructure improvements in and around industrial parks including sufficient sewer and water capacity, and streets of sufficient width with curb and gutter.
7. Strengthen the retail power of established commercial areas by discouraging excessive “replacement-oriented” development on the fringes of cities and villages.
8. Consider incentives for industrial development in desired locations where development may not otherwise occur through use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts and other means.
9. Work with the Lee County Industrial Development Association to attract and retain industrial users to the County.
10. Avoid locating or expanding industrial uses in areas close to residential areas, or other incompatible development, and near sensitive environmental resources.

Tourism

1. Promote and adequately fund the Lee County Tourism Council.
2. Buffer environmental resources and natural areas from development that would detract from the natural character of the area and undermine tourism opportunities

Transportation

1. Adopt and enforce an “Official Map” showing locations of future or expanded roads and public facilities.
2. Establish a countywide system of wayfinding signage to direct travelers to key destinations in the County, particularly at the interchanges where visitors are likely to access the country.
3. Implement the Lee County Greenways & Trails Plan to link communities with one another and with natural and cultural resource sites, and to provide tourism and recreational opportunities.
4. Promote the conversion of unused railroad rights-of-way to multi-use trail facilities.
5. Review proposed highway and county road projects for opportunities to provide extra right-of-way for bicycle lanes or paths.
6. Consider the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and the physically challenged in all new developments.
7. Investigate ways to provide alternative modes of travel (buses, shared-rides, taxis, etc.) for County residents, particularly for people with limited access to the automobile system such as the elderly and disabled.
8. Limit the number of driveway access points along arterial streets and County roads in order to maintain traffic flow and improve safety.
9. Require new subdivisions to provide more than one vehicular access point whenever feasible.
10. Avoid cul-de-sacs except in very limited situations (e.g. topography or existing development pattern necessitates their use). When used, cul-de-sacs should not exceed 800 feet in length.
11. Ensure that subdivision streets can connect to future streets on abutting properties wherever feasible.
12. Require that developer-provided roads meet minimum County standards.
13. Limit new rail crossings, and eliminate existing crossings whenever feasible, to improve safety.

Fiscal Performance

1. Consider the privatization of service provision and intergovernmental initiatives where feasible.
2. Consider shared provision of governmental services between the County and the cities and villages where appropriate.
3. Apply for state, federal, and/or private grants to implement recommendations of this *Plan*.
4. Consider the concept of new residential development paying sufficient impact fees or other assessments to cover all, or part of, the cost of providing new infrastructure and services.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

1. Encourage cooperative planning among the County, cities, villages, and townships to ensure that the goals and objectives of this *Plan* are achieved.
2. Hold an annual meeting of County, city, village, and township officials and staff to discuss planning issues of countywide importance.
3. Actively participate and help to institutionalize cooperative, mutually beneficial planning efforts with communities along the I-39 corridor, including the City of Rochelle.
4. Establish consistent standards for major development projects in and around the County including “big box” commercial, “strip” commercial, and larger scale industrial/transshipment uses among zoning jurisdictions including the cities of Dixon, Amboy, Rock Falls, Rochelle, and Sterling.

Administrative

1. Adopt policies and regulations that are clear and readily understood by the general public.
2. Ensure that land use regulations are fair and treat all owners of land with comparable resource and location characteristics equitably.

3. Hold periodic Planning Committee meetings for the specific purpose of reviewing the *Comprehensive Plan* and assessing implementation progress.
4. Implement the recommendations of this *Plan* through the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, Official Map, and Capital Improvements Program of the County and each municipality, amending or creating as necessary.
5. Require that all site plans, preliminary plats, and certified survey maps accurately depict all natural resource/environmental corridor features (e.g., wetlands, floodplains, woodlands, steep slopes, drainageways, etc.) that are located on the site.
6. Ensure that this *Plan* is consulted by the County Board, Planning Committee, Zoning Board of Appeals, other governmental bodies or agencies, County staff, and the private sector before any decisions related to community development or redevelopment are made.
7. Update this *Plan* regularly (at least once every five to ten years or as changing conditions warrant) to ensure it remains a useful planning tool.

Chapter 2.3: Land Use Plan

This chapter of the *Plan* is intended to guide land use and development in the County through the year 2030. Map 6, the Future Land Use Map, is the centerpiece of this chapter and the *Plan's* land use direction. Map 6 was prepared based on an analysis of a variety of factors including overall development trends, location of areas logical for future development based on existing development, environmental constraints, public and property owner input, and this *Plan's* overall vision and goals.

The Future Land Use Map and related policies described below should be used as a basis to update the County's regulatory land use tools, such as the zoning ordinance and map. They should also be used as a basis for all public and private sector development decisions. These decisions include annexations, rezonings, conditional use permits, subdivisions, extension of municipal utilities, and other public or private investments. Changes in land use to implement the recommendations of this *Plan* will generally be initiated by property owners and private developers. In other words, this *Plan* does not automatically compel property owners to change the use of their land.

Not all land shown for development on Map 6 will be immediately appropriate for rezoning and other land use approvals following adoption of this *Plan*. The County advocates the phased development of land that focuses growth in areas and types of land uses that advance the vision of the community and can be efficiently served with transportation, utilities, public services, and other community facilities.

The land use plans for those communities in the County with adopted comprehensive plans, including the City of Dixon and the Villages of Franklin Grove, Lee, Sublette, and Steward, are generally reflected on Map 6. Since future land use categories varied among communities, there was not always a direct translation from the local plan to this County *Plan*.

Planned Land Use Categories

Rural/Agricultural

This future land use category is established and mapped to preserve productive agricultural lands in the long-term, protect existing large and small farm operations from encroachment by incompatible uses, promote further investments in farming, and maintain farmer eligibility for incentive programs.

This category focuses on lands actively used for farming, with productive agricultural soils and with long-term suitability for farming. This category also includes scattered open lands and woodlots; farmsteads; small-acreage farms/hobby farms; agricultural-related uses, such as associated home occupations and small family businesses which do not interfere with the interests of nearby property owners; and limited single-family residential development with a maximum density of one new home per 40 acres.

The appropriate zoning district to implement this category is AG-1 Rural/Agricultural.



Agricultural land in Lee County

Rural Residential

This future land use category is mapped over existing areas of mainly single-family detached residential development, generally at densities of more than one new dwelling unit per two acres, and served by

individual on-site waste treatment (septic) systems. This category is not intended to permit large areas of new low density residential development outside of existing hamlets, cities, and villages.

The appropriate zoning district to implement this category is R-1 Rural Residential.

Single-Family Residential

This category includes single-family detached and duplex residential development, generally at densities of more than one new residence per acre, and served by a public sanitary sewer system or a group on-site waste disposal system. This future land use category also allows the continuation of pre-existing farm and forestry operations.

The appropriate zoning district to implement this category is R-2 Single-Family Residential.

Mixed Residential

The Mixed Residential future land use category is intended to allow a variety of residential units including single-family detached homes; single-family attached dwellings (e.g., town homes); duplexes; and multiple-family housing (three or more unit buildings) including condominiums, apartments, and senior housing developments; and manufactured home parks or mobile home parks, generally served by a municipal sanitary sewer system.

The appropriate zoning districts to implement this category are R-3 Mixed Residential or R-4 Multi-Family Residential.



Example of Mixed Residential development

Planned Neighborhood

This future land use category is intended for a carefully planned mix of primarily single-family residential development combined with mixed residential; active recreation; and small scale business, office, and community facilities consistent with the residential character of the area and generally retaining the area's existing balance of residential types. This category also includes unique neighborhood design using the principles of conservation neighborhood design. See the detailed design standards presented earlier in this Volume.

While these areas will generally develop in a municipality subject to local zoning, the PUD zoning district is most appropriate to implement this category; a combination of residential districts and C-1 Neighborhood Office and Business may also be appropriate.

Neighborhood Office/Business

This future land use category is designed to accommodate smaller-scale neighborhood supporting retail, service, and office uses that preserve residential character. As depicted on Map 6, Neighborhood Office/Business uses are generally planned for small areas adjacent to existing and future residential neighborhoods.

The appropriate zoning district to implement this category is C-1 Neighborhood Office and Business.



Example of Neighborhood Office/Business development

Planned Office

This future land use category is intended for high-quality office, institutional, research, and office-support land uses with generous landscaping and limited signage, served by public sewer, public water, and other urban services and infrastructure.

The appropriate zoning district to implement this category is C-2 Planned Office and Business.

Planned Business

This category is intended for areas appropriate for indoor commercial, retail, service, office, and community facility uses, excluding manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution uses.

New development should include generous landscaping, screened storage areas, and modest lighting and signage, and should comply with detailed design standards. In general, these uses are recommended along major roadways and interchange areas. They are also recommended in areas where communities are interested in higher standards of development than may have been the norm or prior expectation.

The appropriate zoning district to implement this category is C-2 Planned Office and Business.



Example of Planned Business development

General Business

This category includes a range of commercial, office, institutional, light industrial, warehousing, distribution, telecommunication, and outdoor display land uses. New development should adhere to high-quality building design, modest levels of landscaping and lighting, screened storage areas, and limited and attractive signage. The General Commercial land use category is mapped along major roadways and over areas of existing commercial and/or light industrial development that is expected to remain in a mix of uses for the long-term.

New non-residential development should be reviewed to ensure that it is consistent with the area's character, population, needs, and public service capabilities. The types of uses envisioned at interchange locations and along major roadways may include those services related to traveling—including a hotel, restaurant, retail, etc.

The appropriate zoning district to implement this category is C-3 General Business.

Central Business

This future land use category includes pedestrian-oriented commercial, office, institutional, and residential uses in a traditional city or village “downtown” or “rural hamlet” historic centers of rural communities. New development should incorporate adequate landscaping, screened storage areas, modest lighting and signage, and should comply with detailed design standards. These areas are an appropriate location for a range of commercial, institutional, and recreational development serving communities.

These areas will generally develop in a municipality subject to local zoning.



Central Business development in Amboy

Rural Industrial

This future land use category is intended for rural manufacturing and warehousing uses associated with agricultural operations such as grain collection and storage, agricultural processing facilities, and implement sales and repair.

The appropriate zoning districts to implement this category are AG-1 Rural/Agricultural and I-2 General Industrial.

Planned Industrial

This future land use category is intended for high-quality indoor manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, and office uses with generous landscaping, screened storage areas, modest lighting and signage, and compliance with design standards. Light Industrial land uses are generally found in cities and villages, or other areas served by public utilities.

The appropriate zoning district to implement this category is I-1 Planned Industrial.

General Industrial

This future land use category is intended for indoor manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, and office uses, often with outdoor storage areas.

The appropriate zoning district to implement this category is I-2 General Industrial.

Heavy Industrial

This future land use category is intended for carefully controlled heavy industrial; storage; and disposal land uses, with limited landscaping and signage.

The appropriate zoning district to implement this category is I-3 Heavy Industrial.

Extraction

This future land use category is intended to for quarries, gravel pits, clay extraction, waste disposal sites, and related land uses. Lands within this future land use category may be converted to recreational and open space uses in the long-term or other land uses if detailed reclamation or other plans have been approved by the County and local community.

The appropriate zoning district to implement this category is AG-1 Rural/Agricultural as special uses.

Community Facilities

This future land use category is designed to facilitate public buildings, hospitals, airports, power substations, and special-care facilities. Smaller community facilities may be accommodated in other future land use categories.

Uses included in this category are considered special uses in AG-1, residential, and commercial zoning districts.



Example of Planned Industrial development



Community Facilities development in Franklin Grove

Active Recreation

This future land use category generally includes lands devoted to playgrounds, play fields, play courts, and related recreation activities.

The appropriate zoning district to implement this category is AG-1 Rural/Agricultural.

Open Space

This future land use category generally includes undeveloped lands in open space uses including cemeteries.

The appropriate zoning district to implement this category is AG-1 Rural/Agricultural.

Passive Recreation

This future land use category generally includes all publicly-owned land designated as state parks, picnic areas, natural areas, and other recreational facilities owned by public, private, or non-profit agencies.

The appropriate zoning district to implement this category is AG-1 Rural/Agricultural.

Special Recreation

This future land use category generally includes carefully controlled mixed-use recreational developments such as campgrounds, private recreation/hunting grounds, or other tourism-related development such as Woodhaven Lakes.

The appropriate zoning district to implement this category will vary based on the type and purpose of the facility.

Environmental Corridor Overlay

This overlay category includes generally continuous open space systems based on lands including sensitive natural resources characteristics that severely limit development potential. This category includes wetlands, FEMA designated floodplains, shoreland setback areas, woodlands, and slopes of 12 percent or greater, which if disturbed can result in erosion and unstable building sites. Environmental Corridors are shown on Map 6 throughout the County as an overlay over the top of one of the “base” future land use categories described above.

The appropriate zoning district to implement this category will vary based on the situation, however, the WS Water and Steep Slope Overlay District should be considered.



Special Recreation development in Amboy Township

Map 6: Future Land Use Map

Agriculture Recommendations

Preservation of the agricultural economy and family farm operation way-of-life is one of the most important goals of the residents of Lee County and of this *Comprehensive Plan*. The following tools and approaches will be utilized to achieve the goal of preserving prime agricultural land and the rural character of the County.

LESA-Based Approach

The County currently uses the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA)-based point system to evaluate new development in the County and direct development to non-prime areas. This approach does not limit the amount of development in the rural areas, but prevents most development on prime land.



Agriculture operation in Lee County

Agricultural Preservation Zoning

The County's updated zoning ordinance includes an AG-1 Rural/Agricultural district which allows one new home per 40 acres. This approach disperses limited additional development throughout the rural areas of the County.

Community Focused Development

The County continues to direct the majority of new development to incorporated cities and villages where a full range of urban services are available, while supporting infill of existing subdivisions and hamlets. This policy preserves the County's agricultural economy and rural character and at the same time supports healthy vibrant cities and villages.

Sustainable Agricultural Practices

Agriculture is an important component of the economy and character of Lee County. As such, the County intends to encourage sustainable agricultural practices that integrate environmental stewardship while maintaining farming as a profitable enterprise.

Sustainable agriculture has been defined as a way to raise food that is healthy for humans, does not impose hazards to the natural environment, and provides economic support for the farmer and the rural community. The County encourages farmers to adopt the following sustainable agriculture practices:

- ◆ Conserving and preserving resources by ensuring that water, soil, and air are protected and farm waste stays within the farm's ecosystem. No-till farming can reduce agricultural land degradation.
- ◆ Fostering biodiversity through crop rotation, preventing disease and pest outbreaks, and minimizing the use of chemical pesticides.
- ◆ Supporting the continuation of farming by mentoring the next generation of farmers. "Farm matchmaking" programs, which pairs aspiring farmers with those leaving agriculture, have been successful in Iowa, Oregon, Virginia, Nebraska, and Washington.
- ◆ Producing and using bio-based fuels such as bio-diesel and ethanol using agricultural by-products; food and feed wastes; and native, low-input fuel stock crops grown on marginal soils.

In addition, the agricultural community should consider:

- ◆ Animal welfare—animals are treated humanely and are permitted to carry out natural behaviors (e.g. grazing, pecking) and are fed a natural diet appropriate for their species.
- ◆ Economic viability—farm laborers earn a competitive wage and are not dependent on government-provided wage subsidies.
- ◆ Social justice—farm laborers work in a safe environment and are paid competitive wages and benefits.

Sustainable agriculture is often locally-based to minimize transportation costs and fossil fuel use. Funding opportunities are available for farmers and communities seeking to enhance sustainability in local farming practices. For example, the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program awards grants to advance sustainable innovations in agriculture. SARE also maintains a grants list for each state describing available grants and funding level.

Village/City Planning Areas

The previous section dealt with planning and development in the rural areas of the County. One of the goals of this *Plan* is to encourage development to occur in the cities and villages in the County. This section provides details on planning and development within the County's incorporated municipalities. Planning areas for cities and villages within the County were generally based on the existing Facility Planning Area (FPA) boundary as defined by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. The FPA is the area in which each municipality is authorized to provide services, particularly water and sanitary sewer. Given the modest growth rate in the County, planning for the FPAs, rather than the larger 1.5-mile Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) areas, is more logical.

The timing of development within the planning area (i.e., the FPA) should be based on the ability of the municipality to adequately provide services, particularly utilities. Growth should occur more or less contiguous to existing development, avoiding "leap-frog" development. Therefore, an area shown for development on the Future Land Use Map should not be construed to confer a right to immediately develop. All new development within a municipal FPA is planned to be developed with all available urban services, including public sewer and water where available. Therefore, these areas should remain in agriculture, or other open space uses, until the time is appropriate for development within the city or village with the full range of available public services.

Amboy Land Use Plan

Over the 20-year planning horizon, it is anticipated that the City of Amboy will annex lands within exiting municipal boundaries and to the east of Highway 26. Industrial development is planned for these areas. Future Planned Neighborhoods are planned for land located primarily to the east and west of Highway 52 and to the southwest of the City. Little or no urban growth is planned south and east of the Green River due to the difficulty in extending urban services across the Green River floodplain.

Ashton Land Use Plan

The Village of Ashton is planned to expand to the southwest, north, and east of exiting municipal boundaries. The County's Future Land Use Map designates the majority of new growth to occur in Planned Neighborhoods. An area of Planned Industrial development is designated for land to the southeast of Highway 38 and existing Village limits. Because the toll highway acts as a barrier to development, no development is planned south of I-88. This area is planned to remain in Agriculture.

Compton Land Use Plan

The County's Future Land Use Map designates land to the north of Compton as Planned Neighborhood. Significant areas to the south of existing Village limits are reserved for Planned Industrial uses.

Dixon Land Use Plan

Future growth in and around the City of Dixon will be planned and guided by the City of Dixon Comprehensive Plan. This County *Plan* acknowledges the City's role in planning for future growth and development within the City and its environs. The recommendations of this *Plan* are based on the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan and discussions with City elected officials and staff.

Franklin Grove Land Use Plan

Future growth in and around the Village of Franklin Grove will be planned and guided by the Village of Franklin Grove Comprehensive Plan. The recommendations of this *Plan* are based on the Village's adopted Comprehensive Plan. Most of the future development in the Village of Franklin Grove is planned for residential in the Planned Neighborhood category. Planned Industrial development is planned east of the

Village along the north and south of the railroad tracks. Planned Business is designated north of Highway 38 at the northeast entrance of the Village.

Harmon Land Use Plan

Most of the development in the Village of Harmon is planned for residential in the Planned Neighborhood category. An area of Planned Industrial is designated east of existing Village limits and south of Sterling Road.

Lee Land Use Plan

The Village of Lee lies on the boundary of Lee County and DeKalb County. This *Plan* only makes recommendations for the portion of the Village within Lee County. Future development in the Village of Lee is planned to be mostly single-family residential with a mixture of other neighborhood-compatible uses in the Planned Neighborhood land use category.

Nelson Land Use Plan

Most of the development in and around the Village of Nelson is planned for residential development in the Planned Neighborhood category. General Business is designated north of the Rock River and west of Sauk Valley Community College. Areas of Planned Industrial development are planned for the southwest of the Village, with access to the railroad. An area of Planned Business is planned for the east side of Nelson Road across from the mobile home park.

Paw Paw Land Use Plan

Most of the development in and around the Village of Paw Paw is planned for residential development in the Planned Neighborhood category. Planned Industrial development is planned for the west side of the Village, which provides access to the interstate while avoiding heavy traffic, particularly truck traffic, through town.

Steward Land Use Plan

Most of the development in and around the Village of Steward is planned for residential development in the Planned Neighborhood category. A significant portion of land surrounding the I-39 corridor has been designated as Planned Business. This area should be reserved for high-quality uses. The area south of Perry Road and north of the railroad tracks is planned for Planned Industrial uses. See Map 8 for more detailed land use recommendations.

Sublette Land Use Plan

Future growth in and around the Village of Sublette will be planned and guided by the Sublette Comprehensive Plan. The majority of the land use recommendations of this *Plan* are based on the Village's adopted Comprehensive Plan.

Sublette is expected to grow considerably over the 20-year planning period. Most of the development in and around the Village of Sublette is planned for residential development in the Planned Neighborhood category. A node of Planned Business is planned along the north side of US Highway 52 from the edge of existing development to Inlet Road and north to Tower Road. Another larger node of Planned Business is planned along US Highway 52 in the area within the triangle formed by the highway, Inlet Road, and Tower Road. An area for future Planned Industrial uses is planned for the area south of US Highway 52, west of Inlet Road.

West Brooklyn Land Use Plan

All new development in the Village of West Brooklyn is planned for Planned Neighborhood development. It is expected that most of this development will be single-family residential, with the possibility for limited amounts of neighborhood-compatible commercial, office, institutional, and small multi-family.

Detailed Planning Areas (DPA)

There are particular areas of the County that present unique opportunities for economic development. These areas are referred to as "Detailed Planning Areas." Detailed plans for land use, community character, utility provision, stormwater quantity and quality management, and economic development are needed before substantial development is approved in these areas. Allowing these areas to develop prematurely and inefficiently in the short-term will harm the long-term economic potential of these areas. These areas should

be reserved for high-quality, high-tax base uses. Other moderate quality uses should be guided to more appropriate locations that do not have the same potential for high-value uses as these DPAs. Other DPAs should be established in the future as necessary (for example, if a new interchange is added on I-88).

Southern Palmyra Township DPA

The Southern Palmyra Township DPA focuses on the lands along State Highway 2 between Dixon to the east and Sterling to the west. The planned land uses reflect the State Highway 2 Corridor Land Use Study completed by the Township of Palmyra in 2003. The plan capitalizes on the exposure to HWY 2 by allowing planned business/office adjacent to the highway. Existing and future residential neighborhood opportunities are planned between HWY 2 and the Rock River. A majority of the area north of HWY 2 is planned to remain agriculture or residential.

Past efforts have addressed road alignments, intersections, and frontage roads along HWY 2 to better access the surrounding areas and provide a safer transportation network. Trails are shown according to the Lee County Greenways & Trails Plan. It should be a priority to link the Sauk Valley College and future business/office to the regional trails. Parks and stormwater management systems will depend on the land use and intensity of development. Parks should be emphasized in residential areas and be located within $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile walking distance of all residents. Additional public access, canoe sites, and parks along the river should be explored as nearby development occurs. Stormwater management systems should both infiltrate and detain stormwater with special efforts to protect the water quality of the Rock River.

Steward/Rochelle Economic Development Corridor DPA

The Steward/Rochelle Economic Development Corridor DPA centers on the interchange at I-39 and Perry Road, just east of Steward. Planned business/office is shown in the northern interchange quadrants responding to the visibility and access of the interstate. The southern interchange quadrants are limited by environmental corridors and the bisecting rail line; and therefore, the southeast area shows an area of planned industrial. This planned industrial takes advantage of visibility and access while providing opportunity to also utilize the adjacent rail line. Planned residential neighborhood growth is shown around Steward, away from the interstate area. An area of planned mixed-use is shown north of Steward to transition from the business/office and neighborhood land uses to the planned industrial areas to the north.

Trails are shown according to the Lee County Greenways & Trails Plan. Paw Paw Road is a planned north-south county bike route and also a possible location for upgrades to facilitate a future regional truck route around the City of Rochelle. Parks and stormwater management systems will depend on the land use and intensity of development. Parks should be emphasized in residential areas and be located within $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile walking distance of all residents.

Stormwater management systems will depend on the specific development. Stormwater systems should both infiltrate and detain stormwater. Detention basins will be located in low areas; often near environmental corridors in the south and west portions of this DPA. In the northeast quadrant a regional basin should be located in the low area near Paw Paw Road. In the northwest quadrant a regional basin should be located in the lower lands of the northern portion. Special efforts should be made to protect environmental corridors and farmland from runoff.

US 30/I-39 Interchange Area DPA

The US 30/I-39 Interchange Area DPA centers on the interchange at I-39 and HWY 30. This, the smallest of the detailed planning areas, shows areas of economic development at the quadrants surrounding the interchange and agriculture preservation for the balance of the study area. The northwest and southwest quadrants capitalize on the best visibility and right-off, right-in access by showing planned business/office. The southwest and northeast quadrants show planned industrial.

Stormwater management systems will depend on the specific development. Stormwater systems should both infiltrate and detain stormwater. Detention basins will be located in low areas; often near environmental corridors in the southern quadrants of this DPA. The northern quadrants are relatively flat; detention basins

should be located to facilitate the natural hydrology of the area. Special efforts should be made to protect environmental corridors and farmland from runoff.

Paw Paw/Compton I-39 Interchange Area DPA

The Paw Paw/Compton I-39 Interchange Area DPA centers on the interchange of Chicago Road with I-39. Located directly between Paw Paw and Compton, this interchange is about three miles from each city. Similar to the HWY 30 interchange, this DPA shows planned business/office in the northwest and southeast quadrants, and planned industrial in the southwest and northeast quadrants. Planned mixed-use is also shown on the northwest side of the interstate. Environmental corridors frame the outer areas and preserve the rural/agriculture land use.

Stormwater management systems will depend on the specific development. Stormwater systems should both infiltrate and detain stormwater. Detention basins will mostly be located near the environmental corridor network that rings virtually the entire DPA. In some cases, detention basins will be necessary in low areas along I-39 or Chicago Road. Special efforts should be made to protect environmental corridors and farmland from runoff.

Map 7: Southern Palmyra Township DPA

Map 8: Steward/Rochelle Economic Development Corridor DPA

Map 9: US 30/I-39 Interchange Area DPA

Map 10: Paw Paw/Compton I-39 Interchange Area DPA

Chapter 2.4: Community Character

This *Plan* reflects the community's support for Lee County to retain its rural and agricultural character, with new growth occurring primarily within and adjacent to the existing municipalities in the County. These communities should retain their "village" character by preserving historic downtowns, creating and maintaining attractive community entryways and corridors through the community, and maintaining their "traditional neighborhood" character. Only limited amounts of rural residential development should occur and should be allowed only on non-prime farmland, per the Land Evaluation Site Assessment (LESA) determination.

Historically, Lee County has enjoyed only modest increases in population, development, and traffic, which have been accommodated with a blend of both elegant and disruptive results on the quality of life of the community as a whole. The County's recently updated zoning ordinance and carefully controlled zoning map amendment and special use decisions are the most effective tool to ensure a land use pattern that is consistent with the County's character and future vision by reducing undesirable uses and land use conflicts. This and other sections of this Volume include recommendations for enhancing the zoning ordinance to address critical aesthetic components of development such as architecture, landscaping, and signage.

Community Character Components

A wide variety of elements contribute to the creation of community character. These include:

Geographic Context

A key element of the character of Lee County is its rural location. Large areas of the County are covered by farmland, mixed with natural areas of hills and trees. Residents of Lee County strongly identify with this rural character and desire to maintain that character to the greatest extent possible. The County is committed to continuing preservation of rural character through regulatory tools such as the zoning and subdivision ordinance and by directing development to cities and villages.

Urban Form

Historically, growth in Lee County has occurred within the incorporated cities and villages, with very little non-farm rural development. The dominance of these central places, both for residential and non-residential development, should be maintained.

Community Gateways

Community gateways serve as the entryway into a community. These gateways provide visitors with their first impression of the community and are the most visible portions of the community for residents. Careful attention should be paid to these areas to make sure that these key community entryways present a high-quality character, particularly in regards to the aesthetic concerns of signage, landscaping, and building materials. Key community gateways are indicated on Map 3.



Downtown Amboy

Key Corridors and Interchanges

Beyond the symbolic aesthetic treatment of community gateways, this *Plan* also recommends the careful treatment of key community corridors and interchanges. Key corridors represent the most heavily traveled

routes through the County and set the tone for the overall community character of the County in the minds of both residents and visitors. The following key corridors are indicated on Map 3: Rock River corridor, I-88, I-39, USH 52, USH 30, and STH 2. Each of the existing and planned Interstate Highway interchanges represent opportunities for both economic development and presentation of a high-quality community character for the County.

Aesthetics

The following are the most prominent aesthetic elements in the County over which the County has some element of control through zoning, subdivision, and building regulations.

- ◆ Signage: Low-quality signs and excessive signage can have a detrimental impact on community aesthetics and property values. Off-site advertising signage (i.e., billboards), particularly along the interstate and U.S. highways in the County, can significantly impact the character and appearance of the County. The County should develop sign regulations that limit on-site commercial signage and strongly limit or eliminate off-site signage to help preserve the rural and natural character of the County.
- ◆ Landscaping: Landscaping can significantly improve the visual character of development. Adequate landscaping should be required for all forms of development, except single-family residential uses (which virtually always provide adequate landscaping without need for public regulation) and family farm structures. For all other uses, landscaping should be required around building foundations, in and around paved areas, within yard areas, and along streets. Landscaping materials should be of adequate size to ensure both a high degree of survivability and immediate visual effectiveness.
- ◆ Building Architecture and Materials: Architectural styles and building materials should enhance the property and surrounding properties. Minimum requirements and review procedures for building styles and building materials should be in place to prevent new developments from detracting from the overall community character and aesthetics of the community.

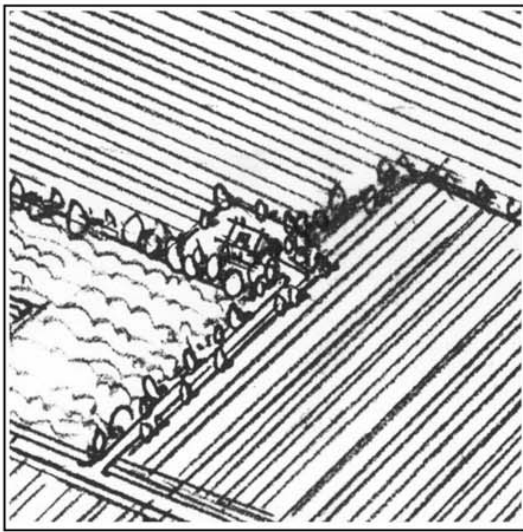
Chapter 2.5: Development Guidelines

The following development guidelines should be considered when reviewing development proposals.

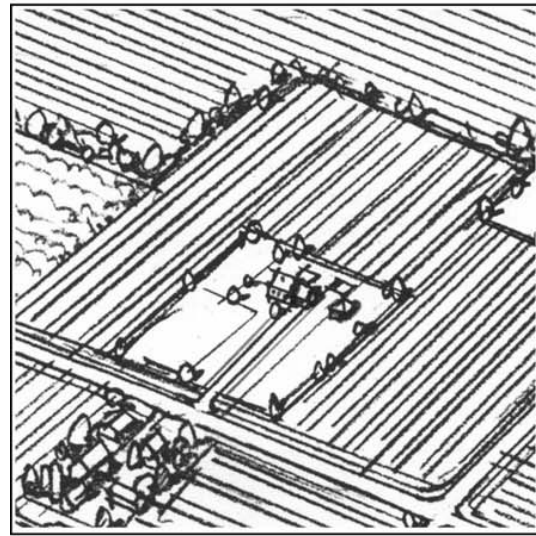
Single-Family Residential Development Standards

1. Housing in rural areas of the County should be designed and located in a manner and at densities that minimize adverse impacts on agricultural resources and the rural character of the countryside.
2. “Strip-development” along county roads should be discouraged to minimize adverse impacts to the transportation system and the rural character of the countryside.

Figure 2.5-1: Conceptual Individual House Siting



Example of good house siting



Example of poor home siting

Multi-family Residential Development Standards

Consider the following design guidelines for all new or expanded multiple-family residential development through additions to the County’s Zoning Ordinance, and enforce them during site plan review, special use, and planned unit development processes:

- ◆ Balconies, porches, stoops, garden walls, varied building and facade setbacks, varied roof designs, bay windows, and similar design features are strongly encouraged. Large, monotonous building facades and boring, box-like buildings that detract from the visual quality of the community should be avoided. In general, multi-family dwelling units should be designed to appear as a grouping of smaller residences.
- ◆ The architectural design should be compatible with and fit the context of the surrounding neighborhood, and with the community’s historic character. This includes proper selection of building and facade materials, building height, building bulk, setbacks, window and door styles and placements, roof designs, and colors. Use of brick and other natural and historical building materials is strongly encouraged.
- ◆ Parking lots and garages should abide by the following design guidelines: (a) garage doors and parking lots should be located so that they are not the dominant visual element; (b) all outdoor parking areas should be partially screened from public view by peripheral hedges and ornamental trees; (c) large parking lots should be broken up with landscaped islands and similar features; (d) parking lots should be directly linked to building entrances by pedestrian walkways that are physically separated from vehicular

movement areas; and (e) large, unarticulated parking garages are undesirable and should be avoided wherever possible. When such structures are necessary to meet parking requirements, the facades of the structures should be broken up with foundation landscaping, varied facade setbacks or projections, and recessed garage doors.

- ◆ Landscaping should be provided (a) along all public and private street frontages; (b) along the perimeter of all paved areas (parking lots, driveways); (c) along all building foundations; (d) along yards separating land uses which differ in intensity, density, or character; (e) around all outdoor storage areas such as trash receptacles and recycling bins; (f) around all utility structures or mechanical structures that are visible from public right of ways or less intensive land uses; and (g) within open areas of the site.
- ◆ On-site open space areas and age-appropriate recreational equipment should be provided to serve the needs of the project's residents.
- ◆ Facilities for bicyclists (bike storage racks, bike paths, etc.) should be included.

Planned Neighborhood Design Standards

Planned Neighborhoods are indicated by the yellow and brown polka dots on the Future Land Use Map and Detailed Planning Area Maps. The concept of Planned Neighborhoods includes a compatible mix of residential and non-residential uses, while maintaining the predominance of single-family residential uses. It is recommended that new housing development in Planned Neighborhoods mirror the historic mix of residential uses within the applicable community. This planning strategy will help to disperse different land use and housing types throughout the community and will limit the concentration of any one type of development in any one area.

The following guidelines should be applied to new Planned Neighborhood developments:

1. Include a mixture of land uses, including:
 - ◆ Single-family residential.
 - ◆ Two-family residential.
 - ◆ Mixed residential.
 - ◆ Community facility.
 - ◆ Parks and open space.
 - ◆ Neighborhood office and businesses.
2. Connect to other neighborhoods by a network of streets that discourage high travel speeds but still allow access to emergency and maintenance vehicles and bicycle and pedestrian facilities (e.g. sidewalks, paths, bike routes).
3. Preserve and enhance scenic vistas, neighborhood gathering places, and visual focal points.
4. Include design elements commonly found in planned neighborhoods:
 - ◆ Reduced building setbacks that create a distinct sense of place and charming human scale by bringing buildings close to the sidewalk and street.
 - ◆ Use of picket fences, wrought iron fences, masonry walls, or hedgerows to define the outdoor space between the home and the street and to create human scale spaces.
 - ◆ Use of front porches and stoops to encourage social interaction between neighborhood residents and to create visual interest in building facades.
 - ◆ Garages located behind the front façade of the home as much as possible or placing the garage in the rear yard of the home with access from an alley, lane, or parking court.
 - ◆ Use of public plazas, greens, and squares to provide focal points for the neighborhood, create visual interest, and generate highly prominent building sites.
5. Continue to implement this concept through the Traditional Neighborhood Overlay Zoning District.

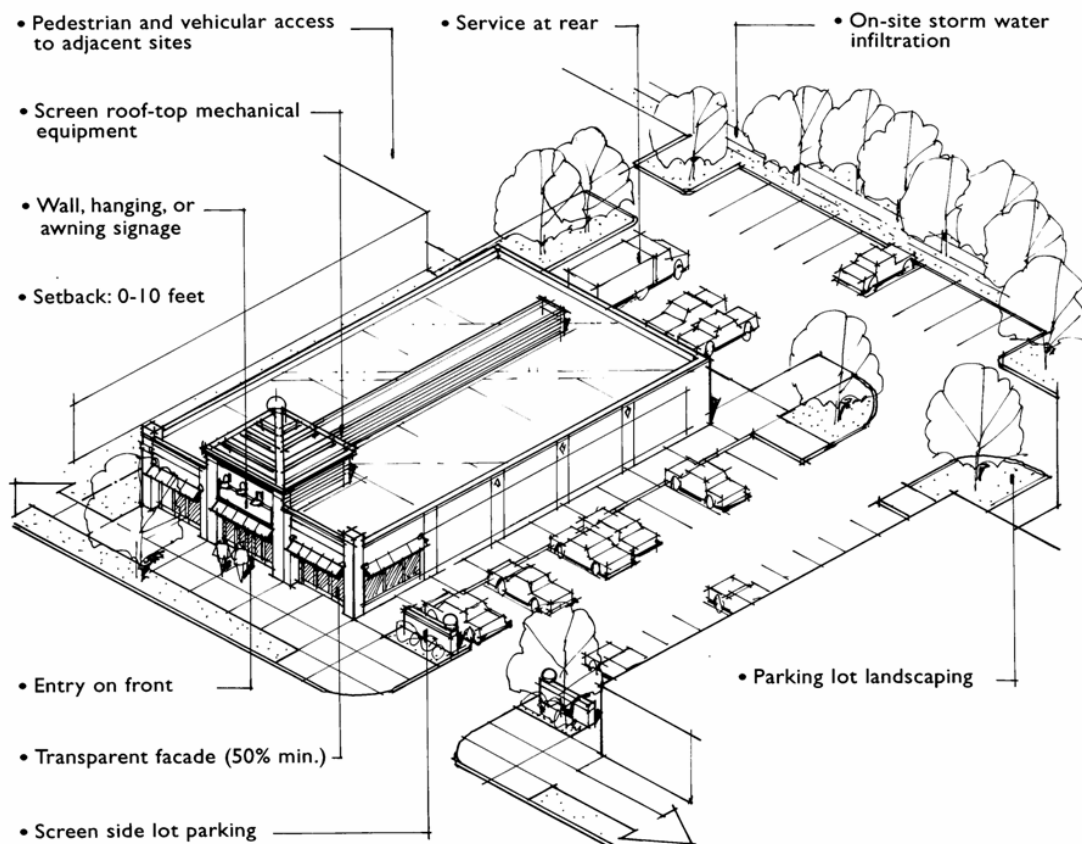
As a result of the complex mix of land uses within Planned Neighborhoods, thoughtful planning is essential. Therefore, the development of Detailed Neighborhood Plans is highly recommended to implement the Planned Neighborhood concept. The result of this detailed planning and design process will be new neighborhoods that capture much of the charm and unique character of the best historic neighborhoods in the community—with the added benefit of more completely coordinated land use, open space, and transportation patterns. Areas planned in this manner will be more marketable to a greater diversity of ages, incomes, and lifestyles, and will typically appreciate in value faster than single-use neighborhoods that employ “cookie-cutter” street patterns, lot sizes, and structures. The combination of a fine-grained land use pattern with careful aesthetic planning is one of the critical factors in maintaining a distinct community character and a high quality of life.

Commercial Development Standards

1. Continue to require that all new or expanded commercial uses adhere to the following design standards through the County’s zoning ordinance and site plan review process:
 - ◆ New driveways with adequate throat depths to allow for proper vehicle stacking.
 - ◆ Limited number of access drives along arterial and collector streets.
 - ◆ Common driveways serving more than one commercial use wherever possible.
 - ◆ High quality landscaping treatment of bufferyards, street frontages, paved areas and building foundations.
 - ◆ Street trees along all public street frontages.
 - ◆ Parking lots heavily landscaped with perimeter landscaping and/or landscaped islands.
 - ◆ Screening (hedges, berms, trees, and decorative walls) to block the view of parking lots from public streets and adjacent residential uses.
 - ◆ Signage that is high quality and not excessive in height or total square footage.
 - ◆ Location of loading docks, dumpsters, mechanical equipment, and outdoor storage areas behind buildings.
 - ◆ Complete screening of loading docks, dumpsters, mechanical equipment, and outdoor storage areas through use of landscaping, walls, and architectural features.
 - ◆ Provisions for safe, convenient, and separated pedestrian and bicycle access to the site, and from the parking areas to the buildings.
 - ◆ Site design features that allow pedestrians to walk parallel to moving cars.
 - ◆ Illumination from lighting confined on-site, preferably through use of cut-off luminaries.
2. Continue to encourage that all new or expanded commercial developments adhere to the following design features through site plan review:
 - ◆ High quality building materials such as brick, wood, stone, and tinted masonry.
 - ◆ Low reflectant, solid earth-tone and neutral building colors.
 - ◆ Canopies, awnings, trellises, bays, and windows to add visual interest to facades.
 - ◆ Variations in building height and roof lines including parapets, multi-planed, and pitched roofs.
 - ◆ Staggered building facades (variations in wall depth and/or direction).
 - ◆ Prominent entryways.
 - ◆ All building façades of similar quality as the front building façade.
 - ◆ Animating features on the building façade.
 - ◆ Repeated elements of architectural detail and color on the building.
 - ◆ Use of landscaping and architectural detailing along building foundations to soften the visual impact of large buildings.

- ◆ Appropriate pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods.
 - ◆ Central features which contribute to community character such as patios, benches, and pedestrian areas.
 - ◆ Parking to the sides and rear of buildings, rather than having all parking in the front.
3. Continue to discourage the following design features in new commercial developments through site plan review:
- ◆ Large, blank, unarticulated walls on visible building facades.
 - ◆ Unpainted concrete block walls.
 - ◆ Metal siding.
 - ◆ Large, bulky, monotonous “box like” structures.
 - ◆ Inappropriate mixtures of unrelated styles and materials.
 - ◆ Extra deep building setbacks.
 - ◆ Excessive signage (e.g. height, square footage, color).
 - ◆ Unscreened outdoor storage, loading and equipment areas.
 - ◆ Poorly designed, unscreened parking lots.
 - ◆ Excessive number of driveway access points along arterial and collector streets.
 - ◆ Creation of inadequately designed driveways and entryways.

Figure 2.5-2: Desired New Commercial Project Layout



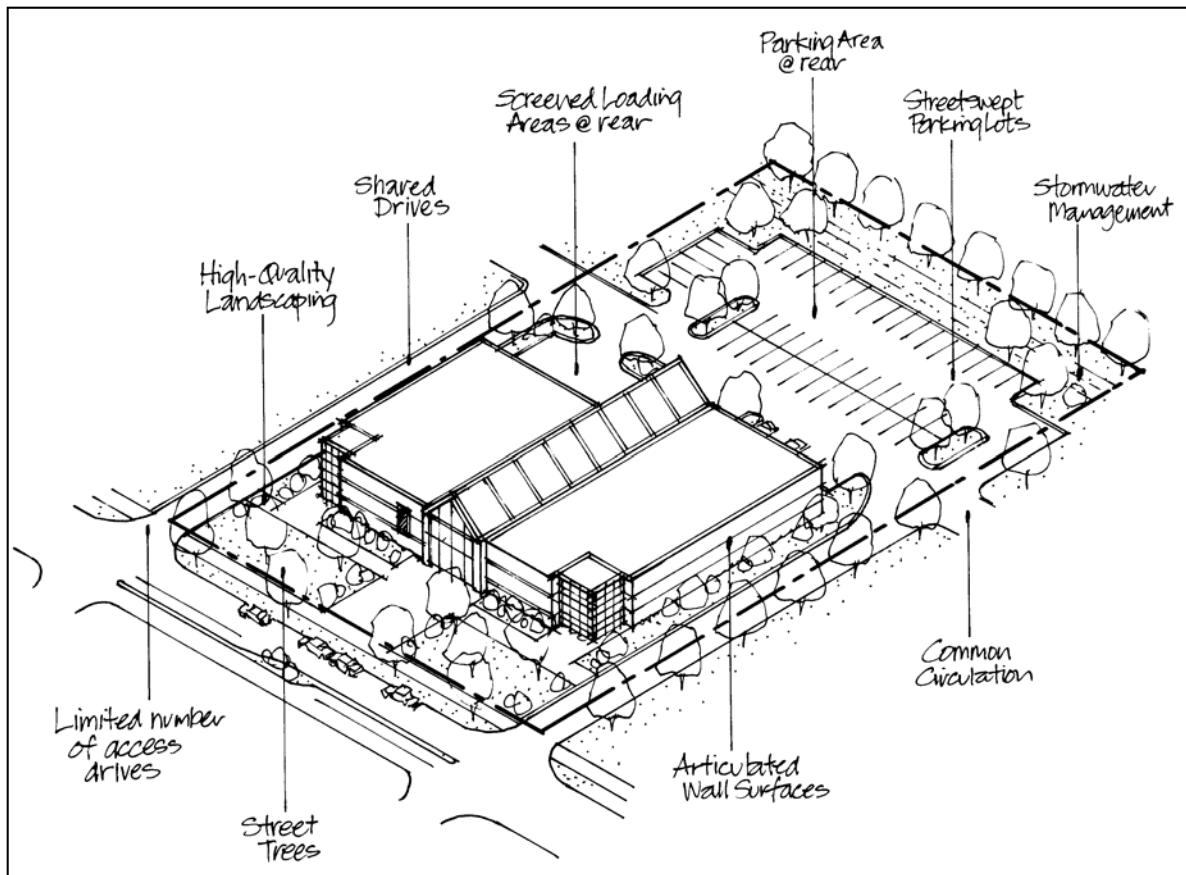
4. In multi-building commercial developments and adjacent commercial developments, link all buildings with safe pedestrian walkways that are separated from vehicular traffic areas.
5. Adopt by ordinance high quality signage regulations that base the area of signs on building frontage, street frontage, and facade area.
6. Strongly encourage shared driveway access, service drives, shared parking spaces, and coordinated site plan designs in order to avoid the creation of new commercial strips.
7. Allow outdoor storage of materials or products only as a special use.
8. Orient intensive activity areas such as building entrances, service and loading areas, parking lots, and trash receptacle storage areas away from less intensive land uses.
9. Use the zoning process as conditions warrant to limit hours of operation for certain types of land use (e.g. night clubs) that have the potential to have significant negative impact on less intensive neighboring land uses.
10. Carefully consider the impact of proposed commercial rezonings on the economic viability of existing commercial areas in the community before making a decision on the request.
11. Preserve and enhance the historic business districts within the County's cities and villages by:
 - ◆ Promoting the expansion, retention, and upgrading of specialty retail, restaurants, financial services and offices, neighborhood retail and services, and community uses.
 - ◆ Encouraging strong public-private investment and incentives, such as Tax Increment Financing, to enhance the viability of these districts.
 - ◆ Supporting new residential development and redevelopment nearby to provide "built-in" markets for goods and services and to increase foot traffic.
 - ◆ Adopting a central business zoning district that includes a unique set of mixed permitted uses, customized building setbacks, sign requirements, and architectural standards.
 - ◆ Continuing to provide adequate and safe public parking within the business districts.

Industrial Development Standards

1. Continue to require that all new or expanded industrial uses adhere to the following design standards through the County's zoning ordinance and site plan review process:
 - ◆ New driveways with adequate throat depths to allow for proper vehicle stacking.
 - ◆ Limited number of access drives along arterial and collector streets.
 - ◆ High quality landscaping treatment of bufferyards, street frontages, paved areas, and building foundations.
 - ◆ Screening where industrial uses abut non-industrial uses, in the form of hedges, evergreen trees, berms, decorative fences, or a combination.
 - ◆ Screening of parking lots from public rights-of-way and non-industrial uses.
 - ◆ Complete screening of all loading areas, outdoor storage areas, mechanical equipment, and dumpsters using berms, hedges, or decorative walls or fences.
 - ◆ Street trees along all public road frontages.
 - ◆ Location of loading areas at the rear of buildings.
 - ◆ Separation of pedestrian walkways from vehicular traffic and loading areas.
 - ◆ Design of parking and circulation areas so that vehicles servicing the site are able to move from one area of the site to another without re-entering a public street.
 - ◆ Variable building setbacks and vegetation in strategic locations along foundations to break up building facades.

2. Continue to discourage the following design features in new industrial developments through site plan review:
- ◆ Long, monotonous industrial building facades.
 - ◆ Large, blank unarticulated wall surfaces.
 - ◆ Non-architectural facade materials such as untreated exterior cement block walls and metal siding with exposed fasteners.
 - ◆ “Pole barn” type metal or wood buildings.
 - ◆ Large parking lots between the building and the public rights-of-way. Smaller parking lots (i.e. visitor parking lots) may be located in front of the building if well screened.
 - ◆ Use of public streets for truck parking, loading, or staging activities.
 - ◆ Unscreened chain link fences and barbed wire.

Figure 2.5-3: Desired New Industrial Project Layout



Institutional Development Standards

1. Allow institutional uses such as schools, churches, and civic buildings as special uses in all zoning districts.
2. Locate institutional uses in areas that serve as focal points for communities and neighborhoods and, where appropriate, support downtown activity levels and redevelopment.
3. Require site plan review and high-quality site design, building design, landscaping, lighting and signage for all institutional uses.
4. Use the following standards when considering proposed institutional development projects:
 - ◆ The use should not have a negative effect on existing traffic flows and volumes in the surrounding neighborhood.
 - ◆ The existing street system must be adequate to meet increased traffic demands.
 - ◆ Nearby residential uses should be adequately buffered from the institutional use via the use of decorative fencing, vegetative screening, berms or similar features.
 - ◆ Institutional uses should not generate on-street parking in residential neighborhoods. All parking needs for institutional uses should be met on-site.
 - ◆ Institutional uses should be designed to be easily served by transit vehicles.

Chapter 2.6: Transportation Plan

Expanding on the planning policies listed previously, this chapter of the *Plan* provides specific recommendations for providing a safe, functional and flexible transportation system for the County.

Highways and County Roads

It is expected that no new roads will be needed in the rural areas of the County within the next 10 to 20 years. As the need arises, many roads will need to be resurfaced and existing dirt or gravel roads may be improved (this should be done based on planning and needs analysis performed by the County Highway Department). Anyone proposing development that does not have access to a paved road should be aware that paving of dirt or gravel roads serving limited development is not a high priority of the County. In addition, the County should consider pursuing traffic calming measures (reduced speed limits, stop signs, etc.) on county roads that experience significant “through-traffic” (for example, Kilgore Road in Palmyra Township) to help address traffic safety concerns on these more heavily traveled roads.

The City of Rochelle’s 2007 Transportation Plan also includes roadway upgrades to the following truck route roads that “ring” the City: Thorpe Road, Elva Road, Paw Paw Road/Mulford Road, Bethel Road, and Center Road.

State and US Highways should have reserved rights-of-way of 120’ to accommodate future expansion of these roadways. Other “section line” roads exceeding one mile in length should have 80’ reserved rights-of-way. New development should not be permitted within these reserved rights-of-way. Dedication of these rights-of-way to the public should be required as a condition of approval for new subdivisions along these roadways.

The County should plan for a new interchange on Interstate 88 in the vicinity of Franklin Grove. Also, the City of Rochelle’s 2007 Transportation Plan includes a new interchange on Interstate 88 at Thorpe Road in Lee County. Since it is unlikely that both of these interchanges would be necessary in the future, the County will work with Illinois Department of Transportation, Tollway Authority, and local officials on siting a new interchange, if warranted in the future.

Railroad ROW Preservation

Map 11 depicts inactive rail lines in Lee County. Unused rail right-of-way should be preserved whenever possible for recreational trail use and future potential rail use. This can be accomplished through “railbanking,” or the preservation of railroad corridors through interim conversion to recreational trail use. Recreational trails created on unused railroad rights-of-way have proven very popular across the country. In addition to providing recreation and transportation opportunities and preserving open space, these recreational trails have been shown to positively impact the local economies of small communities along these corridors. These trails could become an important part of destination tourism activity in Lee County, as they have in other counties in Illinois.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

The County should support the implementation of the Lee County Trails and Greenways Plan, as part of the statewide master plan for trails and greenways. This future network will provide access to the Grand Illinois Trail and other existing or planned regional trails and greenways.

In addition to the abandoned rail-based recreational trails mentioned in the previous section, the County should encourage the inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian needs into transportation planning in the County. New residential and non-residential development in cities and villages should provide an interconnected network of sidewalks within the community, particularly connecting neighborhoods with schools, parks, and shopping. Safe bike routes should be identified throughout the County, both within the cities and villages and along County Highways. The addition of bike lanes or paths should be considered along County, State, and Federal Highways, particularly when these highways are due for reconstruction.

Freight Rail

The Rochelle Global III Intermodal Terminal will continue to have an impact on land use and transportation within Lee County. In fact, improved access from the proposed new I-88 interchange on Thorpe Road could result in increased traffic volumes and transshipment-related land uses in Lee County. The County should support the growth of this facility and coordinate with the City of Rochelle and other stakeholders on any initiatives that would affect Lee County.

Future High Speed Rail

A future high speed rail system is planned as part of the Midwest Rail Initiative which will be comprised of a 3,000-mile rail network and will serve nearly 60 million people. The development of this system will have consequences for Lee County, given its location at the western edge of the Chicago metro area commuter shed and a potential future station in Mendota, just minutes from Lee County. The County should support this high speed rail system as a transportation, economic development, and tourism initiative.

Public Transportation

Because people are living longer, the number of elderly people in the County will continue to rise in the future. As the population of the County ages, it will be important to provide alternative means of transportation for those elderly people with physical limitations (disabilities, poor eyesight, etc.) that prevent them from driving. It is also important to provide transportation options for non-elderly people who are not able to drive due to physical disability. Federal transportation funds are available for rural public transit systems and transportation alternatives for the elderly. The County should consider new programs, or expand existing programs, to help serve these transportation needs.

New Streets within Cities and Villages

Recommendations for new collector and arterial streets within the planning areas of each city or village are included on each city/village Future Land Use Map located in Appendix A. Future development in and around each city or village should be laid out in a way that will preserve these identified arterial and collector street corridors. Exact street location should be determined by detailed engineering performed in advance of development in the area of these proposed roadways, generally through the planning and land division processes.

Map 11: Transportation Facilities

Chapter 2.7: Plan Implementation

Few of the recommendations in this *Plan* will be automatically implemented. Specific follow-up action will be required for the *Plan* to become reality. This final chapter is intended to provide the City with a roadmap for these implementation actions.

Plan Adoption and Amendments

To become effective, this *Plan* must be adopted by Lee County under the process outlined by State Statutes. Each municipality in the County may also adopt this *Plan*. Amendments to the *Plan* are a key part of keeping it vital. Generally, the location of development, and the implementation of both community character and quality of development standards, should be considered as more specific and important than recommendations for a particular land use. However, the avoidance of scattered rural and exurban development, strip commercial or industrial development patterns along arterial routes, and the avoidance of over-concentrations of heavy industrial or multi-family development, are important planning strategies that pertain to land use. In general, all proposed development should be made to conform to the adopted *Plan*. Where logical amendments to the *Plan* are proposed, the *Plan* should be amended prior to development approval. Although more time consuming, this rigorous approach will ensure that the *Plan* remains both vital and coordinated throughout the County.

The County Planning Committee should hold an annual or semi-annual “Planning Forum” to gauge progress on the *Plan* and to review *Plan* recommendations for logical amendments based on changes in conditions within the County. A more detailed review and update of the *Plan* should be performed every five to ten years.

Additional Planning

By necessity, a *Comprehensive Plan* (particularly one for a County) is a general document. Planning experience over the last 100 years has conclusively demonstrated that the most effective implementation of comprehensive plans occurs where detailed planning efforts are directed at both growth and redevelopment areas. Such Neighborhood Plans or Small Area Plans are substantially more detailed in relation to specific areas, land uses, community character, and specific public facilities and services. A second type of more detailed planning essential to strong comprehensive plan implementation involves system plans for utilities and public facilities, and detailed plans for specific public projects.

Neighborhood and Small Area Plans

Neighborhood Plans and other Small Area Plans provide the key link between the general land use, community character, and facility network recommendations of a comprehensive plan, and the combination of private and public real estate development and/or redevelopment projects. Many more aspects of planning, that directly address the cost of living and quality of life balance that is the general focus of all planning, can be examined at this scale. This is particularly true of the efforts needed to coordinate multiple jurisdictions and agencies at this level. Here, the full implications of land use and community character transitions can be fleshed out, as can opportunities for the sharing and complementing of various public facilities and services. Detailed plans will be critical in the enhancement of the neighborhoods and downtowns of the cities and villages in the County.

An excellent time for more detailed planning is before or in conjunction with the planning of major infrastructure projects and/or facility planning area creation and expansion.

Facility Plans

A wide range of detailed facility plans will be necessary to support the implementation of this *Comprehensive Plan*. These range from school facility plans, to park and open space plans, to utility plans, to public service delivery plans. These also include the very detailed plans for site-specific public facilities and services. As such, this *Comprehensive Plan* should provide an excellent general basis for long-range facility planning of all

sorts. In this light, amendments to the *Comprehensive Plan* – particularly those that involve changes in development areas, land use, and development character or intensity, must be judged in light of their impact on other service providers – particularly roads, schools, and utilities.

Regulation

Development regulation is the most cost-effective method of implementing a comprehensive or neighborhood plan. It must be remembered that a community generally develops one real estate project at a time – whether it is a subdivision, shopping center, office building, or fast food restaurant. Where development regulations are carefully designed to directly implement the objectives of a comprehensive plan – particularly in relation to land use, community character, site design, and public impact issues – plan implementation is mostly automatic. In a sense, every development project brings the *Plan* closer to full implementation. Where development regulations are generic, and/or poorly enforced, plan implementation is impossible. Every development project can bring the County closer to or further from the desired future.

Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA)

The County's LESA system is an advisory tool that helps define appropriate locations for development through a point system based on a variety of natural resource and locational factors. This provides a very effective way to fairly assess land suitability. The LESA system in the County has worked well to accomplish the County's goals and the County intends to continue using the LESA system as the primary method of determining the location of rural development. However, a number of minor changes could be made to improve its overall effectiveness, particularly to implement many of the recommendations of this *Plan*. These suggested modifications are listed below:

- ◆ Continue to apply the LESA system to all building permits, subdivisions, special uses, and rezonings from Agriculture in the unincorporated parts of the County in order to provide consistency for all growth-related decision making. However, the LESA score would only need to be established once. For example, if an applicant applied for a rezoning and received a passing score, another LESA would not be recalculated at the time of a building permit.
- ◆ Explicitly define a Special Use process to allow a variance from the LESA (for example, to allow an additional farm-family dwelling on prime farmland).
- ◆ Continue to carefully regulate properties zoned AG-2 or AG-3 in order to reduce potential conflicts between concentrated livestock facilities and non-farm land uses.
- ◆ Continue to establish the LESA score only once. For example, if an applicant applied for a rezoning and passed the LESA score, another LESA would not be calculated at the time of building permit or subdivision.
- ◆ Add a new criterion to address distance from an Interstate interchange in order to allow growth near these interchanges.
- ◆ Change the question regarding availability of water/sewer to discourage rural residential development (in order to preserve these areas for future development of public facilities) within a City or Village Facility Planning Area (FPA) for cities and villages that provide water and sewer.
- ◆ Remove the question regarding distance to city/village/town so as not to favor rural development near cities, villages, and towns.

Zoning

Zoning regulations control the location, type, character, and design of development on individual properties. They are the basic mechanism of cost effective plan implementation. As such, proper Zoning Ordinances use a system of zoning districts that are directly related to community character objectives and development intensity, bulk, and aesthetic regulations that forward such objectives in a detailed manner.

Lee County's existing zoning regulations were updated in 2006 and serves as an excellent tool to forward the objectives of this *Plan*. Where zoning standards are used that are not intentionally designed to forward *Plan* objectives, each new development project will tend to take the County and its communities away from

Comprehensive Plan recommendations. Particularly in a county like Lee, which currently enjoys an excellent balance between the quality of life and the cost of living, failure to employ this most cost-effective approach to comprehensive plan implementation will result in missing a golden opportunity, which cannot be overcome or cost-effectively corrected by public expenditure.

It should be noted that not all municipalities in Lee County are served by the new County Zoning Ordinance, or other modern zoning regulations. For these municipalities, the County Zoning Ordinance may serve as a good model for a zoning code update.

Land Division

Land division regulations control the design of public facilities, and the layout of lots, blocks, and local streets and utilities. Although not nearly as important as zoning to ensure the implementation of this *Plan*, they are nevertheless essential for keeping public costs as low as possible. That is because most development exactions and the provisions of Official Mapping are most commonly applied in the land division process, and because most detailed utility planning occurs during the land division process as well. Critical environmental protection objectives are also often addressed in this process – particularly as related to keeping development out of environmental corridors and other sensitive areas, and in terms of detailed planning for grading and erosion control. Lee County’s existing subdivision regulations were updated in 2005 and serve as an excellent tool to implement this *Plan*. The County should consider enhancing requirements for natural resources identification and protection as part of future updates.

Stormwater and Erosion Control

Stormwater management, both in terms of water quantity and quality, helps minimize damage to public and private property, prevents inconvenience to residents caused by flooding, protects water quality of surface and groundwater, maintains and enhances fish and wildlife habitat, protects public open space, and helps maintain the quality of life in the community. The County should continue to implement its stormwater management plan and ordinances designed to manage stormwater quality and quantity.

Official Mapping

Official mapping remains a critical tool for cost effective plan implementation, because of its ability to reserve sites and corridors for essential public facilities. An “Official Map” shows the locations of planned public facilities, including new roads and expanded road rights-of-way, in order to notify the community and to prevent development within these reserved lands. As detailed public facility planning is done in response to this *Comprehensive Plan*, Official Mapping throughout the County should be updated. This may be particularly true to secure appropriate utility corridors, road extension rights-of-way, and the community facilities.

Driveway Access Permitting

The County should continue to utilize the driveway access permit system to limit “strip” residential and non-residential development along county roads and to ensure the long-term function of these roads as collectors and arterials rather than as residential streets. Specific standards for driveway spacing and access should be periodically reviewed by the Planning Committee in conjunction with the County Highway Department to ensure that they continue to meet these objectives.

Financing

Financial factors continue to increase in their importance to planning. In communities with few planning and regulatory implementation programs, public investment remains the most common method of plan implementation. Unfortunately, such approaches are generally limited to correcting basic planning and regulatory mistakes, and then, often, only to a very limited degree and at a high public expense. These kinds of public investments are often critically needed, but are frequently highly resented, because it is often clear that public expenditures are merely being used to correct a problem that the unit of governments somehow allowed to happen. In contrast, in communities with strong planning and regulatory implementation programs, public investment becomes a strong supplemental plan implementation device – typically limited to enhancing the quality of life with uniquely public facilities and services. For this reason, jurisdictions with the strongest planning and regulatory implementation programs are most frequently involved in public

investment projects that substantively improve the local quality of life, rather than expending similar financial resources on correcting evolving public problems.

Grants

Numerous sources of state and federal grants are available to cover transportation, economic development, and alternative energy projects. Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity administers and connects counties and communities to numerous grant and incentive programs, for example: Community Development Assistance Program (CDA) and the Renewable Energy Business Development Grant Program. In addition, the Illinois Housing Development Authority and the Illinois Department of Transportation provide grant funding and incentives to eligible projects and programs. County officials should continue to be apprised of applicable grant opportunities and pursue them as appropriate.

Exactions/Impact Fees

Development exactions can be imposed during either the land division or zoning process, and can also occur in relation to special assessment approaches. Generally, communities in Lee County are not requiring development exactions or impact fees. To reduce the burden on existing taxpayers and to promote partnerships between the County and developers, the County, and individual municipalities in the County, should consider adopting a system of full or partial impact fees or development exactions for roads, schools, parks, and other public services and facilities.

Development Review Cost Recovery

Development review services are often provided through a combination of County staff and outside consultants (planners, attorneys, engineers, architects, etc.). The County has the ability to adopt regulations to ensure that the costs incurred by the County to hire such experts are reimbursed or pre-paid by the applicant whose project is initiating the cost.

Intergovernmental Coordination and Planning

Strong intergovernmental coordination is essential to the implementation of this *Plan*. The goals of this *Plan* related to agricultural preservation, community character, and economic development are, in many ways, dependent upon effective intergovernmental coordination.

Strong efforts should be made to ensure that neighboring municipalities with overlapping areas of interest (such as Dixon/Sterling/Palmyra Township, Steward/Rochelle, or Paw Paw/Compton) coordinate with each other and the County regarding future planning. Where appropriate, these jurisdictions should develop intergovernmental agreements establishing long-term boundaries, community separation areas, responsibilities for service provision, minimum standards for quality of development, etc. This will help to avoid future conflict over these areas of mutual interest. Potential intergovernmental agreements include:

- ◆ Dixon, Sterling and Palmyra should consider entering into an intergovernmental agreement about land use, quality of development, transportation, boundaries, and urban services along the Highway 2 corridor. Ideally, this agreement would be completed soon, while development pressures are low. This corridor can be promoted for high quality residential and commercial development. Without such an agreement intergovernmental conflicts are likely since developers will be able to negotiate for lower development quality and more public subsidies resulting in isolated and poorly designed strip commercial and residential developments. Instead, this area may be the best location in both counties for well-designed mixed use development and high-quality residential projects. The West Hills Neighborhood Plan and the Boone County Highway 173 Corridor Plan are potential models for developing corridor design standards that would be adopted by all communities.
- ◆ Northeastern Lee County villages and towns should seek intergovernmental agreements with Rochelle. Given substantial differences in municipal staffing and experience, these Lee County communities should be represented in these negotiations by an experienced team with municipal law, intergovernmental planning, and civil engineering expertise. By pooling financial resources, these costs could be shared between the involved towns and villages.

- ◆ An intergovernmental agreement should also be considered for each of the I-39 interchanges to help refine and implement the land use and transportation recommendations for these critical economic development areas, and to reduce the potential for intergovernmental conflict over boundaries, and the resulting public subsidies for development.

Procedures

The final key to successful plan implementation entails the processes by which development proposals and County actions are evaluated. The most effective results are produced by proposal review systems that integrate plan recommendations, regulatory controls, consultant recommendations, appointed body consideration, elected official actions, and public input.

Role of Plans

Plans should be detailed enough to provide effective guidance on typical development and public investment actions. In instances where the *Plan* is becoming irrelevant or contradictory to emerging policy or common sense, the *Plan* should be carefully re-evaluated and revised if necessary. Any future changes or amendments to the *Plan* should be made through the formal public hearing process. As with the original adoption of the *Plan*, amendments must be approved by the County Board. Relevant portions of this *Plan* may also be adopted by municipalities in the County as their guide for growth and development within their community.

Role of Regulations

Ideally, planning-related regulations should provide a bridge between the recommendations of adopted plans and day-to-day proposed development or public investment actions. Good regulations should help staff and officials focus on the critical technical and policy issues.

Role of County Staff

County staff must assist applicants in following procedures and provide officials with all information necessary to make an informed decision. In this light, staff should help applicants refine their proposals to bring them into full consistency with established policies and standards.

Role of the Planning Committee and Other Advisory Boards and Committees

Advisory boards and committees must evaluate proposals from a substantive, rather than a political, point of view. As individuals, and as a group, they are less constrained by political expediency, and therefore should feel comfortable challenging applicants and staff to make the best possible case for their proposal and recommendations.

Role of Elected Officials

Elected officials must make their decisions from the standpoint of overall community impact – tempered by site-specific factors. In this task, they must balance the recommendations made by plans and policies, the objectives of the applicant, the technical advice of staff, and the politically-neutral recommendations of advisory boards, with their own judgment on the matter at hand.

Citizen Participation

Finally, a critical element in the ongoing planning and review process is the active involvement of the public. The effort to involve citizens should be directed at general planning issues to ensure that the *Comprehensive Plan* for the County reflects both short-term and long-term public objectives and at project-specific plans to ensure that the ultimately selected design best meets the public's needs. Effective public participation is an essential method for keeping a project or plan on target, and for building public support for the planning program as a whole.

Figure 2.7-1: Implementation Table TO BE COMPLETED

| Recommendation | Implementation Team | Prioritization Level |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
| Land Use, Agricultural Preservation, Natural Resource Protection | | |
| Adopt uniform setbacks to protect waterways. | County, Cities, Villages, Townships | |
| Adopt countywide construction site erosion control standards and a stormwater management program. | County | |
| Community Character | | |
| Adopt a County Park and Open Space Plan. | County | |
| Adopt a property maintenance code, including regulations regarding “junk” in residential areas. | County | |
| Adopt more detailed regulations regarding site design, landscaping, and signage. | County | |
| Economic Development | | |
| Work to attract and retain industrial users to the County, considering incentives, such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts. | County, Cities, Villages, Lee County Industrial Development Association | |
| Tourism | | |
| Promote and adequately fund the Lee County Tourism Council. | County, Cities, Villages, Lee County Tourism Council. | |
| Transportation | | |
| Adopt and enforce an “Official Map.” | County, Cities, Villages, Townships, IL DOT | |
| Implement the Lee County Greenways & Trails Plan. | County, IL DNR IL DOT, | |
| Establish a countywide system of wayfinding signage. | County, Cities, Villages, Townships | |
| Fiscal Performance | | |
| Apply for state, federal, and/or private grants to implement recommendations of this <i>Plan</i> . | County, Cities, Villages, Townships | |
| Intergovernmental Cooperation | | |
| Hold annual meetings to discuss planning issues of countywide importance. | County, Cities, Villages, and Townships | |
| Actively participate in cooperative planning efforts with communities along the I-39 corridor, including the City of Rochelle. | County, Cities, Villages, Townships | |
| Establish consistent development standards among zoning jurisdictions including the cities of Dixon, Amboy, Rock Falls, Rochelle, and Sterling. | County and Cities | |

| Recommendation | Implementation Team | Prioritization Level |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Administrative | | |
| Adopt policies and regulations that are clear and readily understood by the general public. | County, Cities, Villages, Townships | |
| Hold periodic Planning Committee meetings for the specific purpose of reviewing the <i>Comprehensive Plan</i> and assessing implementation progress. | County | |
| Update this <i>Plan</i> at least once every five to ten years or as changing conditions warrant. | County | |

Appendix A: City/village Future Land Use Maps
