

3.0 Land Use

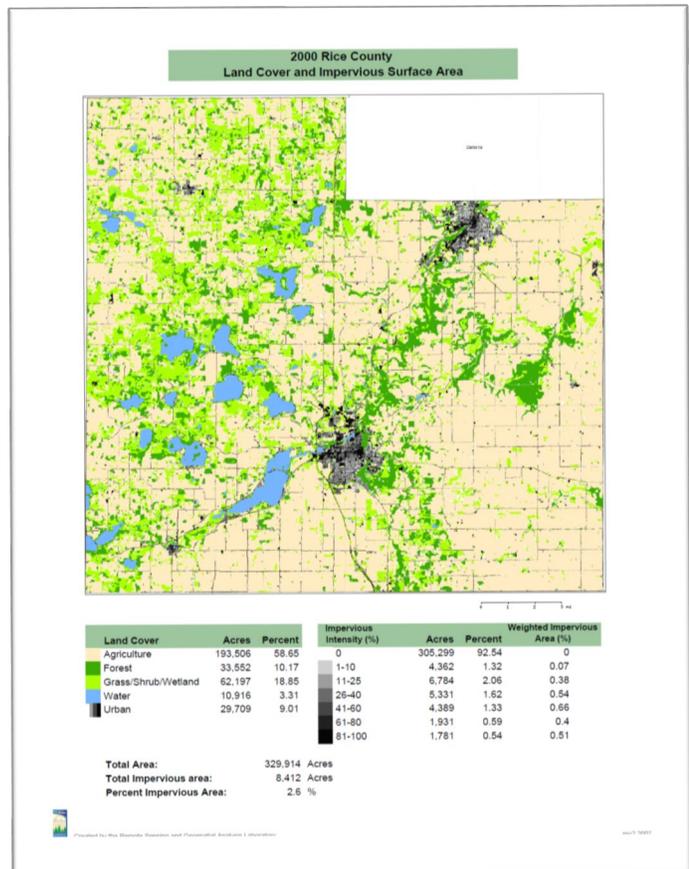
3.1 Introduction

The use of land and the pattern of development affect everything from the location and expansion of roads and central utilities to the state of agriculture, the provision of emergency services, the protection of natural resources, and the intangible qualities that constitute “rural character.” That is why Land Use is an imperative element in a Comprehensive Plan (The Plan).

The Land Use section of The Plan is intended to provide the framework that will guide County policies, priorities and investments. This section will help guide the County’s actions in the areas of sustainable growth, economic development, active lifestyles, transportation, and agricultural and natural resource protection.

Rice County is located in a transitional area of Minnesota between south-central and southeastern Minnesota. The location has contributed to diverse land uses and development patterns.

The County is predominately rural in nature with a total land area of roughly 496 square miles (329,914 acres). In 2000, approximately 59% was comprised of agricultural land; 19% grass, shrub, or wetland; 10% forested; 9% urban; and the remaining 3% was water. For more information on Rice County’s land use, see the Land Map and Land Cover documents in the FIG.



3.2 Goals, Strategies and Action Items

The following goals and strategies are general statements that focus on the land use topics identified through the planning process. Goals are broadly worded, while strategies are actions that can be taken to achieve a goal. The action items are related to the goals and strategies, but are more specific and detailed. Many of the goals for 2040 are the same or similar to those of the 2002 plan, but have been updated to address progress toward the goals and improved understanding of the relationship between land use and natural resources. It should be noted that goals, strategies, and action items are in no particular order of importance.

3.2.1 Growth and Development

Goal 1. Support and encourage orderly growth and development.

Strategy 1. Support land use planning, which encourages orderly growth and sustainable development and redevelopment.

Action Item 1: Coordinate infrastructure expansion with development; and encourage development where the infrastructure is adequate to serve that growth.

Action Item 2: Support the provision of joint services among jurisdictions.

Action Item 3: Remain apprised of expected future urban growth areas.



Photo: Faribault Energy Park, Faribault. Taken by County Staff.

Strategy 2. Encourage a diverse economic mix for Rice County by promoting existing assets and identifying new opportunities.

Action Item 1: Create commercial/industrial zones to promote employment and generate tax base in Rice County.

Action Item 2: Identify appropriate areas for commercial and industrial developments, including along the I-35 corridor.

Action Item 3: Promote agriculture and associated businesses.

Action Item 4: Identify and reserve areas with sand, gravel and aggregate deposits for extraction.

Strategy 3. Identify additional areas for mixed-use development and further support urban growth.

Action Item 1: Continue to evaluate and implement urban growth zones where municipal infrastructure is likely to extend.

Action Item 2: Continue to have zoning districts for the unincorporated villages to allow for mixed-use development encouraging the development of municipal type water and sewer services.

Strategy 4. Promote the opportunity to lead active and healthy lifestyles through the coordinated development of infrastructure or supporting programs that promote active lifestyles.

Action Item 1: Develop connections between existing communities, parks and other destinations to promote safe and active options.

Action Item 2: Create land use regulations to improve proximity to nutritious foods and encourage local wholesome food-related businesses and activities.

Strategy 5. Support and further develop land use patterns that encourage alternative modes of transportation.

“Over 92% of Rice County residents that participated in the citizen survey either agreed or strongly agreed that local food production is important to the future of Rice County.”

Action Item 1: Identify and map concentrations of compact residential and employment development that has potential to be served by transit.

Action Item 2: Identify existing land uses and travel corridors in the county that could be transformed into transit-friendly corridors.

Action Item 3: Encourage local planning for mixed land use areas in or adjacent to transit corridors.

Action Item 4: Continue to expand existing partnerships and look for new opportunities to collaborate on providing alternative modes of transportation.

3.2.2 Agriculture and Natural Resources

“86% of citizen survey respondents either agree or strongly agree that preserving existing agricultural land should be a planning priority for Rice County.”

Goal 2: Preserve Agricultural Land and Natural Resources.

Strategy 1. Minimize conflicts between agricultural, residential, and other uses.

Action Item 1: Adopt land use regulations that control density and development in agricultural and open spaces, to protect and preserve agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas.

Action Item 2: Develop management methods for accommodating diverse types of agricultural activity.

Action Item 3: Allow and encourage complementary commercial or industrial uses.

Action Item 4: Protect and promote agriculture by preserving large tracts of land by encouraging clustering of rural residential development through use of transfer of development rights.

Action Item 5: Promote higher density housing development in cities and unincorporated villages that can provide municipal or municipal type water and sewer services rather than in the agricultural districts.



Grazing cows in rural Rice County. Taken by County staff.

Strategy 2. Preserve, protect, and improve the surface and underground waters including, but not limited to, rivers, streams, lakes, groundwater, and aquifer recharge areas.

“Citizen Survey respondents felt that river/stream (85%) and lakes (82%) are natural resources that need the most attention in order to improve or maintain the quality of life in Rice County.”

Action Item 1: Encourage development to comply with wellhead protection zones.

Action Item 2: Develop and employ land use regulations and other techniques for natural resource protection, including transfer of development rights or density, and best management practices.

Action Item 3: Recognize the relationship between land use and water quality, and continue to support water quality improvements through land use plans and regulations.

Action Item 4: Encourage shore land protection and restoration methods such as vegetative buffers.

Action Item 5: Continue to address wastewater treatment and water quality through watershed plans, funding opportunities and various collaborations and partnerships.

Strategy 3. In working through land development, the potential for air, water, and land contamination will be considered and minimized throughout the entire process.

Action Item 1: Encourage conservation design to preserve natural and scenic values.

Action Item 2: Support and implement state and federal regulations that pertain to environmental review.

Action Item 3: Define, by GIS overlay, and preserve environmentally sensitive areas and other open space by allowing only compatible land uses and development.

Action Item 4: Recognize that soil conditions may limit development potential.

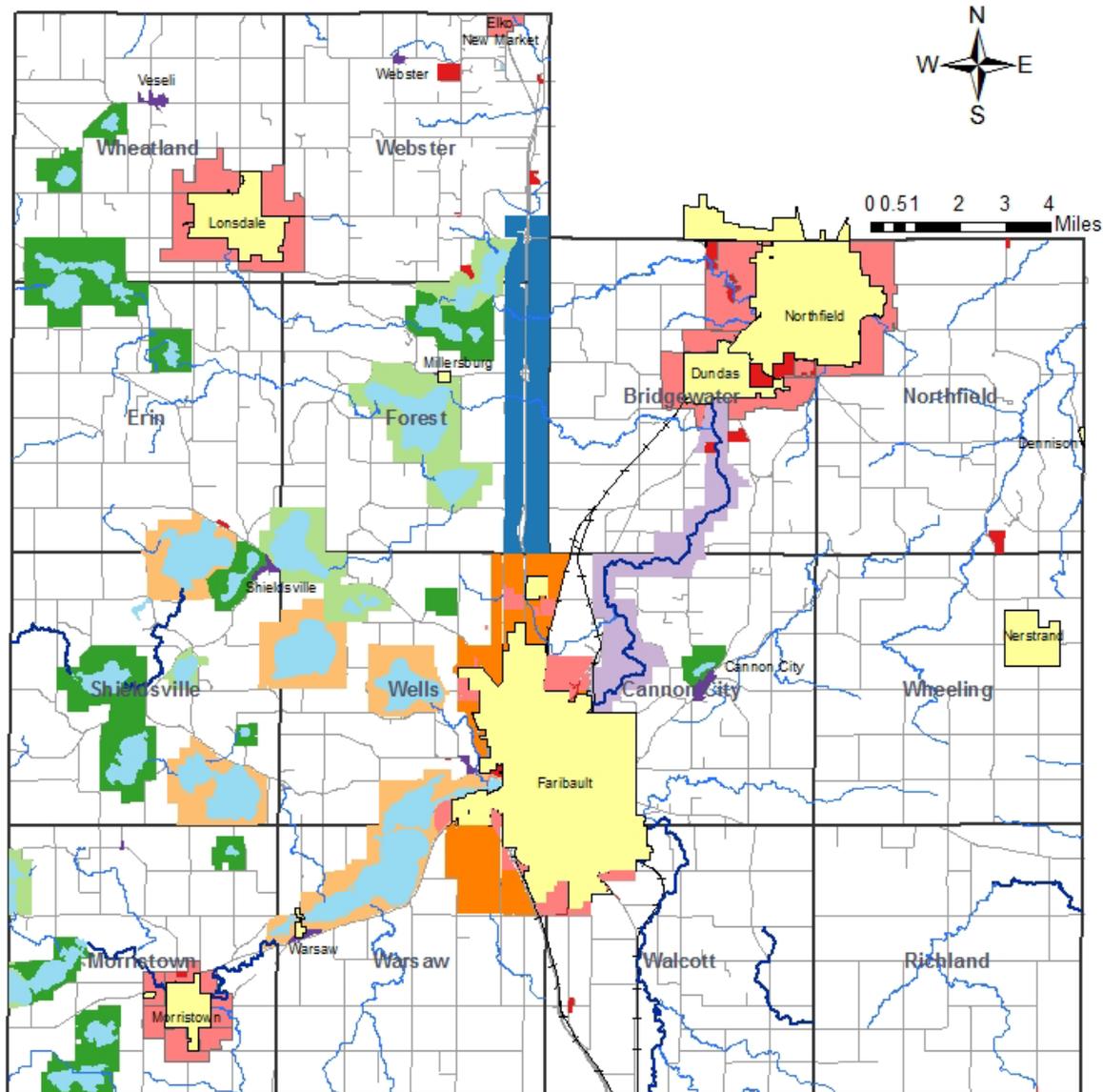
Action Item 5: Coordinate with Local, State and Federal agencies and organizations to encourage landowners and tenants to implement and maintain good soil erosion and healthy soil practices.



Photo: Cannon River Wilderness Area, Bridgewater Township. Taken by County staff.

3.3 Future Land Use Map

Rice County 2040 Future Land Use Preliminary Draft



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|------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| — Roads | General Development Shoreland | Urban Expansion |
| — Rivers | Commercial/Industrial | Urban Expansion- Industrial |
| — Streams | Limited Industrial | Village Mixed-Use |
| — Railroads | Natural Environment Shoreland | Wild and Scenic River |
| — Lakes | Recreational Development Shoreland | Cities (Not under County Planning Authority) |
| — Shoreland Area | Rural Residential | — Rice County Townships |

GIS by Rice County
January 24, 2020

Map features are representations of original data sources and do not replace or modify land surveys, deeds, or other legal instruments defining land ownership or use.

Land Use Map Legend Descriptions:

General Development Shoreland – Shoreland around lakes that are classified as General Development. These lakes are categorized as large, deep lakes or lakes of varying sizes and depths with high levels and mixes of existing development. These lakes are extensively used for recreation and are heavily developed around the shore.

Commercial/Industrial – Areas adjacent Interstate 35 that promote employment and generate tax base in Rice County.

Limited Industrial – Commercial/industrial land use to promote employment and generate tax base in Rice County.

Natural Environment Shoreland – Shoreland around lakes that are classified as Natural Environment. These lakes are categorized as small, often shallow lakes with limited capacities for assimilating the impacts of development and recreational use. They often have adjacent lands with substantial constraints for development such as high water tables, exposed bedrock, and soils unsuitable for septic systems.

Recreational Development Shoreland – Shoreland around lakes that are classified as Recreational Development. These lakes are categorized as medium-sized lakes of varying depths and shapes with a variety of landform, soil, and groundwater situations on the lands around them. They often are characterized by moderate levels of recreational use and existing development.

Rural Residential – An area that recognizes exiting low-density residential development in already-developed areas. Most of these areas are located in agricultural areas or on the outskirts of unincorporated villages.

Urban Expansion – An area around the municipal boundary of an incorporated City/Village that is reserved for future residential and business growth.

Urban Expansion -Industrial – An area reserved in the urban expansion zone for the growth of industrial business.

Village Mixed-Use –Existing unincorporated villages that are compatible for new development and a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Wild and Scenic River – This district protects and preserves the scenic, recreational, natural and historical values of the Cannon River in Rice County by ensuring that development within this river corridor is consistent with the Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers Statewide Standards.