

# **A Guidebook to Creating Framework Land Use Plans:**

## **Our Experience with Land Use Planning in Northern Minnesota**

Prepared for  
the Northern Counties Land Use Coordinating Board (NCLUCB)

by Biko Associates, Inc.

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Please review the following draft guidebook. It is in a draft format and will be desk-top published in the format that is included at the end of the guidebook. Biko Associates has found that sometimes more is better - the more critical eyes reviewing a document the better the final document. We appreciate editing, structural and substantive comments. We estimate that this draft is 80% complete. Over the next three weeks we will continue to work on the document and layout. Thank you for your time spent reviewing.

Please send your comments by **June 15, 2000** to:

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## Introduction/Executive Summary

This guidebook is intended to guide communities in rural Minnesota in creating a framework comprehensive land use plan. Framework plans differ from comprehensive plans in several ways:

- ? The level of detail in background studies, definition of plan objectives, and detail of implementation strategies is less for a framework plan than a full comprehensive plan;
- ? The framework plan is intended to rely on other documents or policy-setting processes (existing or planned) while a comprehensive plan is generally a stand-alone document intended to guide other policy processes. A framework plan can serve as a first phase of a comprehensive planning process, or can fill policy niches or expand on existing community policy;
- ? Framework plans require fewer staff and consultant resources than a full comprehensive plan.

The Northern Counties Land Use Coordinating Board (NCLUCB) created the concept of a framework comprehensive land use plan to address a specific need in northern Minnesota counties and local governments. Many local governments in northern Minnesota do not have comprehensive land use plans, or have plans that are substantially out of date. While local planning has not been a priority for these communities, other governmental agencies with significant stakes in northern Minnesota have developed their own planning efforts that greatly affect land uses and use of private property in northern Minnesota. Examples in the following:

- ? Large areas of northern Minnesota are regulated wetlands, for which land uses and development practices are largely by state or federal agencies;
- ? Northern Minnesota has substantial forest areas and a significant forest products manufacturing base. Much of the forest is in public ownership, in national and state forests, and parks. Management plans for public forest areas, landscape planning goals for public and private land, and additional public acquisition of privately-owned land could have substantial economic, social, and environmental effect on local communities;
- ? The evolution of state water and watershed planning to address land and lands uses along waterways and within watersheds of targeted lakes and rivers.

Many local communities in northern Minnesota do not believe that the regional, state, and federal land use plans adequately address local priorities and goals. Consequently the NCLUCB counties set out to create a planning process that was rooted in scientific data and method, reflected the priorities and concerns of the local community, and was flexible enough to fit within each county's existing policy and planning documents without overriding existing planning documents. The framework plans can then inform not only local land use decisions, but provide a foundation for working within the planning processes of regional, state, and federal stakeholders.

## Use of scientific data/factual information

Comprehensive land use planning requires identifying and prioritizing the community's long range goals. Goal-setting is largely a value-driven, rather than scientific, process. Communities must, however, attend to scientific data in setting the stage for goal setting and in creating an action plan that moves the community from current conditions to the goal. Scientific data plays three primary roles in the planning process:

- ? Factual information, sound quantitative analysis, and scientific data identify the community's baseline conditions. Background information tells the community "what is."
- ? Goal identification must be constrained by social, economic, and environmental realities in and around the community. Scientific data and sound quantitative analysis defines the possibilities for "what can be."
- ? Scientific methods, and careful attention to quantitative measurements, will identify fruitful policies and strategies to move the community toward the chosen goal. A strategy of testing and measurement helps the community know to get from "what is" to "what can be."

### Technical Advisory Committee

In the planning process, the community should consider setting up a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC's role is to ensure the use of legitimate background information for setting a baseline, identifying the range of goals, and in testing strategies for achieving goals. TACs are discussed in Section XX of this guidebook.

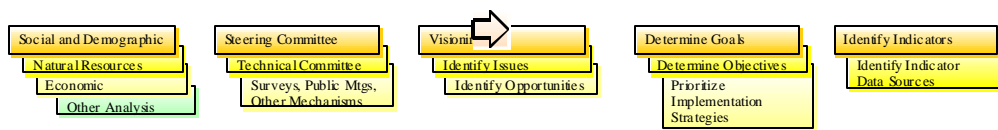
### Sustainable Development and Scientific Method

The principles of sustainability require setting and prioritizing goals in recognition of scientific and factual contexts. A sustainable goal is consistent with the environment, economic, and social realities in the community. The principles of sustainable development adopted by the Minnesota Sustainable Development Initiative include the following principle:

*Minnesotans need to have and use clear goals and measurable indicators based on reliable information to guide public policies and private actions toward long-term economic prosperity, community vitality, cultural diversity and healthy ecosystems.*

The above principle notes the primacy of scientific and factual data in both meeting community goals and in monitoring the community's progress toward goals.





## Role of Residents in Creating Local Land Use Policy

Local plans should reflect the values and priorities of those people most affected by the plan. Comprehensive land use planning requires identifying and prioritizing the community's long range goals. The framework plan must identify how the planning process will be driven by local residents.

### *General NCLUCB Framework Planning Process*

“Community” is defined to include a wide range of stakeholders that may include local and non-local interests. Local residents, however, are always the foundation of the community, and should be the controlling element of stakeholder involvement in the planning process. Planning goals should defer to those affected by the final plan. The planning process must not only include local residents, but should ensure that local residents are engaged, active in the planning process, and that their decisions substantially inform the results (within the constraints of scientific, economic, and social contexts).

The planning process can use one or more means of ensuring that local priorities inform the plan, including public meetings, surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder and resident representation on the planning body. All public participation must be facilitated to ensure that issues and priorities remain within the scientific and factual boundaries of the community. Facilitating public surveys and hearings, as well as ensuring adequate turnout can consume a substantial amount of the community's staff and consultant resources. The framework planning process, therefore, meeting the goal of ensuring local control over land use planning goals by creating a Steering Committee with representation of all stakeholders to the process. The community can supplement the Steering Committee process with other means of public participation, depending on the resources the community is willing to invest in the public process, and whether other planning or policy initiatives have already gathered such input.

To ensure that the community's priorities drive the framework planning process, the Steering Committee must have final say (other than the formal approval by the County Board) on goals and priorities in the Framework Plan. The framework plan must document the public involvement process, and demonstrate that local priorities shaped the plan. A later chapter describes in more detail how to recruit and administer a steering committee.

## **NCLUCB' s Role in Creating this Guidebook**

This guidebook is the final product of a multi-phase planning effort conducted by the Northern Counties Land Use Coordinating Board (NCLUCB). NCLUCB received a grant from the State of Minnesota to conduct a science-based land use planning process specific to the economic, natural resource, and social circumstances of NCLUCB counties. As stated in the joint powers agreement that formed NCLUCB, the planning effort was designed to accomplish the following:

Develop a county based water and land use planning system which uses sound scientific principles and an open decision making process to understand and manage the economic and environmental health of Northern Minnesota.

The CSE Final Report to NCLUCB, concluding the first phase of the multi-phase planning effort, noted that a planning resource guide would greatly assist northern Minnesota communities in completing useful planning efforts. The CSE report recommended that NCLUCB provide multi-county coordination and leadership in member county planning efforts. One recommendation noted the following role:

Develop and distribute a multi-county are planning resource guide. One of the needs within the multi-county area is to assist some of the counties in the development of their own land-use plans. One approach to addressing this need would be to develop an inexpensive planning resource guide that could assist counties.

Local governments have access to a number of guides on comprehensive land use planning, as described later in this guidebook. The framework plans completed as part of the NCLUCB planning process are distinct from comprehensive plans created through other planning processes as noted earlier in the introduction. The framework plan process explicitly recognizes the following planning functions:

- ? the role of scientific analysis and method in defining land uses and planning goals,
- ? the multi-jurisdictional dilemmas that create conflicting planning goals in northern Minnesota counties,
- ? An explicit balancing of individual property rights and the public good, and
- ? the sometimes limited resources to conduct planning efforts.

This guidebook describes the general model for completing a framework plan, and details the different shapes the model took in implementation in the NCLUCB counties. Like any model, the model framework plan must be adapted to the specific conditions of the community, and must reflect the goals and priorities of stakeholders in the local community. The myriad forms of the Framework Plan process, as described herein, demonstrate both the strengths and weaknesses of the model.

## **What is a Framework Plan?**

The framework plan can serve a variety of different purposes. The NCLUCB counties decided to conduct land use planning efforts for a variety of reasons. As part of the NCLUCB funding, all counties implemented a planning process based on the scientific findings of the first phase of the NCLUCB grant, reflecting scientific method, and including public or stakeholder participation.

Communities may choose to conduct a framework planning process for the following reasons:

- ? Preliminary or reconnaissance study for a larger and more comprehensive planning effort;
- ? To meet a need for land use planning in a sub-section of the community;
- ? To establish a baseline set of policies and priorities without incurring the cost or the time required for a complete comprehensive plan;
- ? To study and set policies for a particular kind of land use or natural resource for which the community does not have adequate policy directives.

Each NCLUCB county shaped the framework planning process to meet the specific needs of the county. In several counties, the framework plan substituted for a full comprehensive plan, becoming the primary document wherein county policies and priorities were set. Other counties choose to use the framework plan as a first phase in a broader comprehensive land use planning effort, or to supplement existing county policies or planning documents.

## **Planning at the County Level**

Counties occupy a unique place in the hierarchy of local governments, providing both site specific land use planning for unincorporated areas, and brokering or coordinating intergovernmental land use decisions.

Townships and cities are important stakeholders in a county planning process. Townships and cities have land use planning authority independent of the county, are the most immediate form of community and governance for county residents, and express land use goals and planning priorities that will inevitably shape the county. Counties have an opportunity, as part of their planning efforts, to coordinate city and township goals, and broker solutions to conflicts stemming from different city or township goals and policies.

The framework planning process creates an opportunity for the community to broker intergovernmental planning actions. The process can include stakeholder entities such as the



following:

Cities  
Townships  
Native American Reservations or Settlements  
Joint Powers Boards  
Economic Development Agencies  
State Agencies (Department of Natural Resources, Pollution Control Agency)  
Federal Agencies (U.S. Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Agency)

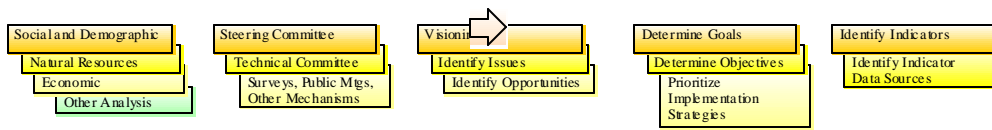
## **How To Use the Guidebook**

This guidebook describes the framework planning process, and identifies how NCLUCB counties used the general process to meet their unique planning needs. The experiences of NCLUCB counties can guide other communities in using the framework planning model, both to meet specific planning needs and to avoid problems and stumbling blocks.

The guidebook is organized into the following sections:

Involving the public in the planning process  
Developing a Background Profiles  
Creating a Local Vision  
Identifying issues  
Consensus Building and Conflict  
Creating Goals  
Creating Objectives and Implementation Tools  
Monitoring Progress and Framework Plan Indicators

Each section describes one or more methods of completing a portion of the general framework process, how the NCLUCB counties addressed each section's issue, and the potential stumbling blocks faced by communities and how such obstacles could be resolved.



## The Framework Land Use Planning Process

The next five sections of this guidebook describe elements of the planning process used to create each NCLUCB county's framework plan. The NCLUCB framework land use planning process provides for background research, public or stakeholder participation, identifying a vision or desired future condition, setting goals and policies, and identifying indicators.

All of the NCLUCB counties included these elements in their framework land use planning process (although the names of each element varied from county to county). As shown in the above graphic, each element of the planning process has several sub-components. In the application of the above model some NCLUCB member counties chose to emphasize or leave out certain sub-components.

### Common Elements of the NCLUCB Process

Some sub-components were present in every framework land use planning process. Listed below are common elements across all NCLUCB counties:

- ? Background research providing demographic, natural resource, and economic profiles of the county;
- ? Creating a Steering Committee comprised of residents, local and regional organizations, businesses, and local governments;
- ? Completing a visioning exercise and identifying priority issues by the Steering Committee;
- ? Identifying guiding goals or principles, sub-goals or objectives, and priorities for action or implementation;
- ? Identifying monitoring systems or indicators to track progress toward the plan's goals.

Later sections of this guidebook describe these common elements to a framework land use planning process. The descriptions include both how to complete each of these sub-components, and the varied experiences and perceptions of the NCLUCB counties.

### Variations on the NCLUCB Process

Depending on the resources brought by each county to the planning process and the choices by each county, not all sub-components were included in each county's planning process. Most counties (seven of the 10) for instance, did not include public meetings or public surveys, other

than open Steering Committee or County Board meetings, as part of their planning process. Three additional counties will conduct public meetings in a separate process. The reasons for not conducting public meetings varied from county to county. Respondents to the county survey noted the following reasons for not conducting public meetings or surveys as part of the framework land use planning process:

- ? Public meetings were conducted, or would be conducted, in another phase of the planning process;
- ? Public meetings could not fit into the budget without skipping some other element of the planning process;
- ? The steering committee was quite large (20-30 people) and fully representative of residents, businesses, and other stakeholders in the planning process.

Another variation among NCLUCB counties was using a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) separate from the Steering Committee. TACs are generally comprised of local or regional experts in subjects covered by the framework plan, such as forestry, economic development, transportation, agriculture, or housing. As described in a later section, TACs oversee and assist in compilation and interpretation of technical and scientific data that informs the visioning, policy, and prioritization work of the Steering Committee.

Less than half the counties (four of the ten) created a TAC that was separate from the Steering Committee. Most counties relied on the consultant, county staff, and Steering Committee members to gather and interpret scientific data.

Survey respondents in the counties that did create a TAC, however, all believed that a separate TAC played an important role in the planning process.

# Developing a County Background Profile and Integrating Scientific Information into the Framework Planning Process

In *Science and the Land-Use Planning Process: A Roadmap for Northern Minnesota*<sup>1</sup> the authors note that natural science and quantitative measurement can greatly assist the land-use planning process in four specific areas:

1. *Making ecological land-use decisions* based on assessments of carrying capacity and historical range of landscape variation.
2. *Managing vital natural resources of the region* by identifying and mapping areas of natural resources.
3. *Assessing and reducing possible natural and manmade hazards* by identifying hazard areas and land-use limitations associated with particular hazards.
4. *Selecting suitable areas for development* by profiling characteristics suitable for a variety of land uses and mapping potential development areas for these land uses.

The report notes the following:

Land-use planning can utilize natural science as a basis for determining the most appropriate use of land. The underlying concept is that the characteristics of the land will define which areas should be protected, and which areas should be developed.

Scientific method cannot, however deliver a comprehensive plan to a community. Some issues are of more importance to the community than others. The community must also choose between alternatives that are equally supported by scientific analysis.

*Text box -* Science is to land-use decision makers what movie reviews are to movie goers - information to help make the best choice given the information available at the time. . . Science and scientists cannot tell land-use decision makers how to manage land-use, they can only inform them of the consequences of their choices.

## Marshall County Framework Plan

The Framework Plan process helps communities structure their values and priorities within the context of historic development, on-going natural and economic processes, and the likely range of outcomes for alternative actions.

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<sup>1</sup>Botkin, Parker, Sobel. Prepared for the Northern Counties Land Use Coordinating Board, October, 1998.

## **Background Information and Priority Issues**

The principles of sustainability require setting and prioritizing goals in recognition of scientific and factual contexts. Sustainable goals and sustainable strategies for local government are consistent with the environmental, economic, and social realities in the community. The Framework planning process therefore includes the assembly of background information and analyses in a structure that recognizes the community's priority issue areas.

The NCLUCB Framework Plan process identified three issue areas that captured many of the regional concerns of residents and stakeholders in northern Minnesota; demographics, economic development, and natural resource issues. Each NCLUCB county had the opportunity to add or substitute issue areas as required to address local priorities. Most of the NCLUCB counties (six of nine counties that provided information) included demographics, economic development, and natural resource issues as initial issues areas. Three of the six supplemented these issue areas with additional background studies, including transportation, water issues, and housing.

### Itasca County Background Studies

Demographics: Who We Are  
Natural Resources: Our Environment  
Transportation: How we Get There  
Housing: Where We Live  
Our Economy

Two counties chose to redefine the issue areas into new categories (land, labor, capital, and entrepreneurship). The four redefined issue areas covered much of the same background material, but presented it in a way that better addressed the particular concerns of the two counties.

### Pennington County Background Profiles

Land Inventory  
Capital Inventory  
Labor  
Entrepreneurship

## Sources of Information and Data

The NCLUCB Framework Plan process identifies three general sources of information that should direct background studies:

Data compiled by CSE for the multi-county area;

### Other Data Sources

- ? State agencies , including the Pollution Control Agency, Department of Natural Resources, Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board, Land Management Information Center with Minnesota Planning, Department of Economic Security;
- ? Regional Development Corporations that are funded to collect and analyze planning information and data within state sub-regions, and public research institutions. NCLUCB area RDCs include the Arrowhead RDC, Headwaters RDC, and the Northwest RDC. Public research institutions include the University of Minnesota Extension Service and Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI);
- ? Economic Development Authorities, Housing Redevelopment Authorities, and Joint Powers Boards;
- ? Private non-profit organizations including colleges and universities, the Farm Bureau, the Minnesota Farmers Union, industry associations, environmental organizations, ;
- ? Private for-profit corporations, such as the forest-products companies (Boise-Cascade, Blandin, Potlatch), agricultural products companies, and mining companies;

### Existing Plans by Other Entities

- ? City or township comprehensive plans and land use regulations;
- ? State, federal and tribal agency comprehensive, natural resource, or strategic plans;
- ? other county plans, such as water plans.

Additional information sources are discussed below in the section on incorporating Geographic Information Systems (GIS) into the Framework Plan process.

## Working with a Technical Advisory Committee

As part of the planning process, the community should consider setting up a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC' s role is to ensure the use of legitimate background information for setting a baseline, identifying the range of goals, and in testing strategies for achieving goals.

Federal, State, County, and other local government staff are invaluable in providing background information and existing analyses, thereby preventing the consultants or staff for the Framework planning process from duplicating existing work. Creating a TAC allows these staff and technical experts to serve as an asset to the planning process, without overburdening the decision-making body (the Steering Committee) with too many voices.

Several NCLUCB counties used TACs in their Framework planning process. The survey and interview responses from counties that used TACs indicated strong support for creating separate bodies to manage scientific and value-based information.

*Text box -* The TAC reacted to and critiqued the information. They also were helpful in gathering data - but not analyzing data. They were used as a 'sounding board' for some of the consultant's results.

County Staff

When asked if the separate entities contributed or detracted from the planning process, NCLUCB planning process participants that used TACs recommended that other communities set up a TAC. Two reasons for a separate TAC are noted below:

In this process it's important to keep the two disciplines separate. It keeps it a little faster moving; otherwise the technical people can slow it down to count every hair on the horse.

Steering Committee Member

Should the TAC and the Steering Committee have been combined? The reason not to combine is that the Board doesn't want to think of this plan as directed by the agencies. If agencies are involved, they tend to be looked to for expertise. The TAC and the Steering Committee don't quite mix, especially in goal setting.

County Staff

The interaction between the TAC and the Steering Committee also contributed to a better plan. One participant noted the following:

They reviewed what the Steering Committee was creating. They gave reactions to the Steering Committee, what might work, what wouldn't work so well. They provided the oversight, the nuts and bolts of planning. The Steering Committee tended to be somewhat 'pie in the sky' and the TAC brought them back to earth.

While counties that used TACs recommended TACs in the Framework planning model, TACs are not an essential part of the Framework planning process. NCLUCB counties that relied solely on a Steering Committee, or that relied on County staff or consultants for technical expertise, expressed few reservations about their process. Only one such County reported

specific difficulty in relying on its consultant for technical expertise.



## Use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Information presented in the form of a map is one of the most important tools applied in the land use planning process. By identifying existing use patterns combined with natural landscape features citizens and planners can find ways to address issues collaboratively.

Illustrating land use patterns through maps can point the way in determining what land areas are best suited for specific purposes. This helps in the decision making process to ensure sound environmental practices and spur economic development in appropriate locations.

Current and accurate geographic data is the key to the production of reliable and credible maps that clearly illustrate an issue.

*We live not only within political boundaries but also within the provinces of nature. Good citizenship requires that we should be familiar with both kinds of maps.*

Author Paul Gruchow

### What is GIS And Why It Matters

A Geographic Information System (GIS) consists of the computer hardware, software, data, procedures, and staff required to capture, store, update, manipulate, analyze, and display geographically referenced information. In simple terms, it is a database with spatial information.

GIS portrays how development, consumption, and conservation affect the communities various landscapes. Information about the land and about people on the land can be used to visualize relationships and patterns, find explanations, and ultimately determine solutions to conflicts.

### Presenting and Interpreting Land Use Issues Using GIS

#### *Acquiring Data*

As noted earlier, gathering background information must occur early in the planning process in order to shape the goal creation and strategy prioritization. The consultants and staff must first determine the types of geographic data that are available. Second, under the direction of the Steering Committee and TAC, the consultants and staff must identify which of the data are most valuable to the planning process. Because there is so much digital data available, but time and money are limited, the individuals responsible for technical and scientific data must carefully select data sets and initial analyses for background study. The initial background work may need

to be very focused in order to not use resources in the beginning that will be needed for interpreting and analyzing issues later in the process.

The first place to look for GIS data sets is public agencies that create and provide geographic data. Many actions of regional, state, or federal agencies require accurate, complete and current information about the land. For this reason, a wide variety of public data has been developed and maintained by federal, state, and local government agencies. The existing data sets will likely be sufficient for the initial stages of a Framework Plan process; communities are unlikely to need to create new or additional data sets. Later in the planning process, setting goals or management priorities for specific resources or areas may require investigating new data sets to replace out-of-date data, data that is not detailed enough, or inaccurate data sets. The Steering Committee must, in these instances, explore the time and cost necessary to develop new data sets.

#### *Available GIS Data*

The ongoing 'Information Revolution' is producing amazing amounts of new data. Government agencies, the private sector, and non-profit organizations are constantly putting out geographically referenced information that is readily available. Some data is available by downloading from an agencies web site. Other data can be ordered and received from the county that has contracted the Plan. Some data is available for free on CD by order from public agencies. Certain data sets have a nominal fee from the agency they are ordered from. (See References at the end of this chapter for Internet Sites that may be useful.)

The following table summarizes the main distributors of digital geographic data in Minnesota. There are also regional (e.g. Regional Development Commissions, universities and colleges, tribal agencies) county (e.g. Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Watershed Districts), and city entities that have additional electronic geographic data. Another source of data may be the regional or local utility company.

**Table X.XX Sources and Types of Digital Geographic Data**

| Source Agency  | Type of Data Set   |
|--|--|
| <i>Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR)</i> | Forest Inventory<br>Land Ownership<br>Aerial photography<br>Watersheds<br>Landform<br>Minerals<br>Hydrography<br>Recreation: boat accesses, forest trails, campgrounds, snowmobile trails, canoe routes, hunting areas, non-motorized areas, parks   |
| <i>County</i>  | Forest Inventory<br>Recreation: boat accesses, forest trails, campgrounds, snowmobile trails, canoe routes, hunting areas, non-motorized areas, parks<br>Local highway systems<br>Wildlife Management<br>Soils<br>Parcels<br>Public Land Survey<br>Zoning<br>Endangered Species<br>Elevation<br>Public facilities: gravel pits, dumps, sewage facilities<br>Political and administrative boundaries: commissioner districts, school districts, watershed districts, etc. |
| <i>Land Management Information Center (LMIC)</i>         | Land Cover<br>Geology  |
| <i>Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)</i>    | Transportation routes; highways, airports, and railroads<br>Political and administrative boundaries  |
| <i>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)</i>            | National Wetlands Inventory  |
| <i>U.S. Census Bureau</i>                                | Demographic Data   |
| <i>U.S. Geologic Service (USGS)</i>                      | Digital Elevation Models (DEM's or elevation)<br>Digital Orthogonal Quarter Quadrangles (DOQQ's)   |

| Source Agency  | Type of Data Set                   |
|--|------------------------------------|
|  | 7.5 minute topographic quadrangles |
| <b><i>Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)</i></b> | Soils                              |

There are additional data available that can be considered in unique planning instances:

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplains

Cultural or historic preservation sites

Farmland preservation zones

Wellhead protection zones

Landfills

Contaminated lands and groundwater

Aquifer recharge zones

Endangered resources

#### Data Structure

Developing a comprehensive land use plan requires designing and assembling GIS databases, extracting the most useful information from the data at hand, analyzing relationships between these data, then mapping the results of the analyses. Consequently, identifying and acquiring the best available data to meet the project's needs is a critical task.

GIS data come in two general data structures, vector and raster. Vector data represent geographic features as points (i.e. well site centroids), lines (i.e. streams), and polygons (i.e. lakes). Vector layers are commonly referred to as "coverages." This data structure is best suited for display of features that are discrete, with well-defined edges. Each individual feature may be considered a separate object. Vector data cannot be used to accurately represent features that change continuously across space, such as elevation or probabilities of finding archaeological sites. They do not lend themselves easily to statistical analysis, as features are usually not of a uniform size. Finally, vector layers require a lot of storage space (relative to the same information stored in raster structure) and place complex processing demands on the system.

Raster data structure represents geographic as values in a matrix of cells. Each cell in the matrix is the same size and shape and can contain only one numeric value per layer. Raster layers are commonly referred to as "grids". They excel at representing data that change continuously across a surface (i.e. elevation, distance to water). Because cells are of uniform size, contain numeric values, and each cell is treated as a separate object for analysis, mathematical equations are readily applied to one or more grids at a time for analysis and modeling. Because of their much simpler data structure, raster layers take up less storage space and process more quickly than vector data. Converting data from vector to raster results in a loss of locational precision and generalization of the shapes of discrete objects. It distorts the measurements of areas and perimeters, and it loses information about connectivity.

#### *Retrieving Data from the World Wide Web*

ESRI ArcData Online page offers a useful search engine called "Data Selection Shortcuts."

Information can be accessed by geographic area, type of data, or provider.

<http://www.esri.com/data/online/index.html>

The Land Management Information Center homepage on the World Wide Web is: <http://www.lmic.state.mn.us> or <http://mgdc.lmic.state.mn.us/servlet/minnesota3>. The site links to a data catalog, as well as to available data set documentation and status maps. The Arrowhead Regional Development Commission has done data development for the northeastern counties and also links to other data sites. It is available at: <http://www.ardc.org>.

*Available Tabular Data (Non-GIS format)*

There are also databases that have pertinent information for the planning process but are not necessarily in a geographic, or spatial, format. These data include tax assessor information such as land and building valuations, seasonal versus permanent resident status. There are demographic data collected by the U.S. Census containing important information regarding number of households, age of households, and wages. There is water quality data available from such sources as the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), lake associations, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). There is well information from the U.S. Geologic Survey and the Minnesota Geologic Survey. There is hazardous material information available from Center for Emergency Response (CERCLA). In other words, depending on the particular issues within a county, there is information available which has the potential of being converted into maps.

**Table X.XX Examples of Sources and Types of Non-geographic Data**

| <b>Source</b>                               | <b>Data Type</b>                                 |
|---|--|
| <i>County Assessor</i>                      | Taxes, property values, property classifications |
| <i>U.S. Census</i>                          | Population,                                      |
| <i>Soil and Water Conservation District</i> | Lake and river water quality                     |
| <i>Minnesota Geologic Survey/<br/>MPCA</i>  | Wells: status and location                       |
| <i>County sheriff</i>                       | Emergency response, addresses                    |
| <i>CERCLA</i>                               | Hazardous material                               |
|   |  |

*Data Limitations*

The data sets are models of the real world and have had to be transferred or converted from their original format; an aerial photograph, a paper map, or geographic coordinates (such as GPS points) to an electronic format. Some level of errors and omissions are inevitable. Data sets can miss large municipal boundaries, or omit or assign incorrect road numbers. Depending on the

source of the original data and the methods with which it was converted to digital format, the accuracy at a detailed level sometimes varies widely. The NCLUCB Framework Plans generally did not require detailed mapping at small scales, and consequently the actual on-the-ground precision is only occasionally of concern. The priority in the initial planning process, creating background information, is to get a comprehensive view of the social, economic, and natural resource patterns.

Part of the planning process is to identify flaws in the maps and correct them. The consultants, staff, or TAC can use plat books and local county maps to check the accuracy of the digital data. Asking for input from the county staff and steering committee members are also important components of developing maps that have an acceptable level of accuracy and reflect current and known conditions within the county.

A major data set that is commonly missing from many of the northern tier of counties in Minnesota is a parcel database. This database would provide a wide range of operations for county staff and the planning process. For example, queries can be made by owner name, parcel address, property number and could be used to track tax assessment parity. Parcel mapping is, however, an expensive initial investment for rural counties.

### ***Data Assembly***

Following the initial reconnaissance of available data sets, technical staff must evaluate which data sets are needed. There are basically three stages in the development of a Framework Plan where GIS information is required, with additional activities for plan variations, and complete comprehensive plans. The basic phases are noted below:

- ? Initial meetings and presentations,
- ? Background studies,
- ? Identification of issues and goals.

### ***Initial introductory meetings***

Initial discussions with county staff can reveal some of the most important issues relevant within a county. Generally, themes such as how natural resources are used, road maintenance, amount and location of development, and economic development are common. With this in mind, it is desirable to attempt to locate data sets that can illustrate the current situation with regard to these concerns and to provide a common structure of information upon which to base the initial discussions.

Three possible map themes that serve this purpose are:

- ? Base map of the county with roads, city boundaries, township borders, lakes, rivers, significant political boundaries (reservations, national forests, state parks)
- ? Current land cover
- ? Current land ownership.

#### Base Map

A base map forms the first part of the initial meeting map set. This map is particularly useful for identifying and then locating issues and their extent around the county.

#### *Map Example*

#### Current Land Cover

One of the most descriptive data sets for review by the Steering Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee is land cover. The land cover map shows patterns of cover type across the landscape of the county while quantifying the amount of acreage each land cover class contains. What makes this geographic data set so effective is the currentness of the data (1995)\* and the relatively detailed resolution (approximately 2 ½ acres). The land cover map was produced by processing and interpreting satellite imagery. The land cover map contains these categories:

- Deciduous Forest
- Mixed Forest
- Coniferous Forest
- Regeneration / young Forest
- Water
- Wetlands: marsh and fens
- Wetlands: bogs
- Grassland
- Shrubby grassland
- Farmsteads and rural residences
- Cultivated land
- Other rural development
- Urban/ industrial
- Roads, Improved Trails Rail
- Gravel pits and open mines
- Bare rock

\*The land cover data for Beltrami and Clearwater Counties contain a slightly different organization of categories and the data is less current than 1995.

### *Map Example*

#### Land Ownership

The other important data set for the planning process is land ownership. Particularly in northern Minnesota where public agencies own and manage a substantial portion of the counties' land base: pattern, location, and amount of land ownership will have an influence on policies developed throughout the county. Since parcel maps are not available for most northern counties, the land ownership data is the best proxy. The ownership data set was assembled from 1997 data, is in 40 acre mapping units, and includes the following categories:

- Federal
- Tribal
- State
- County
- Private Conservancy
- Private Industrial, > 1,000 acres
- Private Industrial, < 1,000 acres
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- Not assigned (private)

### *Map example*

With these three basic map layers we can meet a number of planning process goals:

- ? Gain a better and more comprehensive understanding of what the county consists of, not only as a list of concerns, but where these concerns are located within the county (perhaps they are concentrated more in one part and less in another), and to be able to understand the relationships of the land cover patterns across the landscape
- ? Provide a common base of understanding for all the members of the committees and those in attendance at the planning sessions.
- ? Elicit participation and feedback from the participants on how the residents feel about what is happening in the county, and if Steering Committee perceptions match the



residents' concerns. Do residents' attitudes about what is happening in the county correspond to what the map shows.

- ? Solicit corrections to data that is wrong, and solicit additions of towns, roads, etc. that the local community feels are important but were unknown to the original map creators.

## ***Background studies***

The background profiles establish a common base of data, a county profile, and a basic understanding of county demographics, natural resources, and economic issues. The NCLUCB Framework identified three categories of background studies: demographics, natural resources, and economic development. Additional background studies commonly completed for a detailed comprehensive plan include: transportation system, housing, and more detailed land use information.

Knowing the geography and numbers behind land and resource allocation is a logical first step in any land use planning methodology - how much land is being used for what purposes, and where. The level of detail that can be represented in maps in the background information for each county varied according to the data available.

### Demographic Profile

Producing meaningful demographic maps can be difficult. Data such as population, changes in population over time, median household income are available but have a number of limitations. One issue is the age of the existing census data (1990). New data from the 2000 Census will be available soon, but the NCLUCB planning process relied on 1990 data and estimates based on 1990 data.

Another limitation is the manner in which the population data is broken down. The Census gathers data by census block group or census tract. Since virtually no political or natural resource boundaries have anything to do with block group or census tract boundaries in rural northern Minnesota, the census divisions are sometimes pointless.

Consultants and staff can work around the boundary difficulty. Staff must convert the discrete data as organized by block group and “rasterize” it into continuous grid cells that can then be measured by township. Such a conversion is not as precise as a direct measure by parcel per township, but it provides a more comprehensible / meaningful representation of the population across the county.

Census data can be compared with other, more recent, data sets. Tax assessor data may be helpful in determining settlement patterns because of the break-down used between farm, permanent, and seasonal residences. One way of applying this data is to compare the categories over time to assess the changes in percent of seasonal vs. permanent.

### *Map example*



## Economic Profile

Mapping historic and future economic growth poses challenges for GIS. Representing the pattern of industries (manufacturing, tourism, agriculture) can be difficult because of the lack of data. Information exists in the tax assessor database, but because of the lack of parcel-based GIS maps, representing this information on a map is a time-consuming task. There are economic issues that can be illustrated through interpretation of the tax assessor data. Comparison studies of building and land values can be broken down on a township basis. Assessor data is valuable in that comparisons over time can be made also, for example 1990 data can be compared to 1999 data. An effective example of applying tax assessor data is determining the number and average value of properties per township (which can be broken down further into categories such as agriculture, seasonal or permanent). Types and amounts of taxes may be another effective means of evaluating patterns of development across the county.

Wages and employment data are available (similar to population) through the Census Bureau and the Minnesota Department of Economic Security. These are apportioned in various spatial categories: block group, census tract, geographic region. For more effective illustrative purposes, the same methodology described in the Demographic section can be applied to this data so that it can be viewed by township units.

### *Map example*

## Natural Resource Profile

The physical environment of the counties is a data arena supplied with extensive geographic coverages. The land cover data set provides a basic but comprehensive overview of the counties' landscape features ranging from undeveloped forest and wetlands to urban and rural development.

Data sets are detailed and specialized. All counties have wetlands, and forest cover type, elevation, and watersheds, and digital ortho quads (corrected black and white aerial photography from 1995). Some counties have current digital soils data. Most have access to current infrared aerial photography, although this data set often needs to be corrected.

Natural resource and land feature data sets help identify and prioritize areas in the county that are best suited for development and exploitation, and those that are most suited to minimal disturbance (conservation or preservation). For example, by combining the layers of public ownership, wetlands, steep slopes, land farther than 1 mile from a public road, and high quality agricultural soils the community can identify those areas of the county with the lowest priority

for growth and development.

*Map example*

### Additional Themes for Background Studies

Transportation data is available from the Minnesota Department of Transportation. These data sets are crucial to mapping efforts in that they provide orientation for people viewing the maps. In addition to enhancing illustration, MnDOT has data sets that accompany the road designations. Traffic volume data, for instance, can be attached to road sections to evaluate locations of highest use.

Recreation data are available through both the MnDNR and in county databases. Understanding patterns of where the recreation opportunities are and access to them will be important to sustaining their quality.

*Map example*

### ***Issues and Goals***

During and following the meetings reviewing the background information, the Steering Committee and public identify land use conflicts and other concerns. In response to these issues and concern, technical staff and consultants can provide additional analyses on priority topics. In this stage of the planning process, data sets are valuable to interpret the Steering Committee or TAC' s findings.

Some examples of data interpretation include the following:

- ? Using maps to regionalize the county based on specific characteristics such as land use: lake shore recreation vs. agriculture, or political characteristics such as commissioner district boundaries;
- ? Using charts and graphs with the maps to illustrate proportions more clearly. For example, a map with roads classified by maintenance entity (township, county, state) with graphs that clearly summarize the relative proportions. Steering Committee members and the public can then easily see that the county maintains, for example, 25% of all roads;
- ? Using maps to collect and organize comments from the meeting attendees;
- ? Connecting abstract issues like lake quality with photos of specific examples of poor

- shoreline management practices at a specific location;
- ? Integrating multiple data layers to assess patterns of development that have occurred in the county; such as comparing industrial development with locations of existing water and sewer utilities, and types of roads;
- ? Examining changes in land use over time;
- ? Integrating data layers to increase awareness of the carrying capacity in areas of the county with significant or priority natural or community resources.

### **Presentation of Maps**

The style and format of map presentations is important to consider. Options include poster size maps mounted on poster board, these can be placed around the meeting room and used for discussion in small groups among the attendees. Letter sized maps can be handed out to each committee member. Transparencies can be used on an overhead projector and discussed with the entire group. Digital data can be displayed with a computer and endless layers can be flopped on top of one another (sometimes until the audience is unable to make out a single helpful thing).

**How maps work to get people involved:**

- ? Attendees can take the hand-outs home, review alone or with an organization or neighbors and send comments back
- ? Posters let people gather around an issue for discussion
- ? Digital maps can be combined with photo images to present a more actual view of specific activities that are happening in the county
- ? Maps show events people don't expect or anticipate, this stimulates discussion about how it got that way and possible solutions

#### *Public access to the maps*

Web sites can be accessed by hundreds of people and can be the source of maps, regulation information, educational information, and links to other resources.

The advances in computer software, hardware, and graphic presentation have made it possible to readdress these issues and questions and provide a means to better understand and manage the growth, environmental quality and economic vitality of the communities. The Internet makes it possible for residents and seasonal home owners, contractors and policy makers to gain information from remote locations and without taking up county staff time on the comprehensive plan, on ordinances, on upcoming hearings and meetings (dependent, of course, on the availability of phone and cable networks).

### ***Measuring Success: Indicators***

The maps created in the planning process also provide a way to measure the success of the community's implementation of the Framework Plan. Provided that local government staff has adequate training and computer hardware, the data sets and GIS formats created in the Framework Plan process provide a baseline from which to measure success. Land use changes can be overlaid on the Framework Plan to identify if changes are progressing toward the vision and goals set by the Steering Committee. Economic and demographic changes can be monitored on a geographic basis, and specific indicators can be included on a base map to easily portray progress or difficulties.

In order for communities to use the maps and data sets effectively, the community must consider two prerequisites. First, the data sets created in the planning process must be compatible with the hardware and software used by staff. Second, the community must be willing to commit staff and other resources to maintaining the data sets. Measuring progress is vital to giving long-term value to the Framework Plan process, as discussed later in the section titled Measuring Success. But measuring progress requires an ongoing commitment to use the Framework Plan or comprehensive plan as a foundation policy document: updating policies as necessary; making regulation and administration consistent with the plan; and, making sure the adequate resources are in place to monitor success.

### **Potential Stumbling Blocks**

NCLUCB counties noted several potential stumbling blocks in the compilation and presentation of background information and scientific fact. Several examples are described below.

#### Methodology and Definitional Differences

Differences between data sources leads to confusion if the differences are not adequately explained to the Steering Committee. Several NCLUCB counties used demographic forecasts from both the Minnesota State Demographer and private forecasting companies. While both sources used acceptable forecasting methods, the forecasts portrayed two distinct futures. Rather than choose between the forecasting methods, the Steering Committee determined why the forecasts were different (differences in assumptions and base data). The Steering Committees then used both forecasts to depict a range of futures rather than a single likely forecast.

Another example is the delineation of wetlands and other land cover in the county. Land cover based on satellite data or aerial photography have limitations on the proper identification of land cover. Counties also may include different kinds of cover under a definition of "wetland" than

do some state agency or environmental groups. Local residents and others with on-the-ground knowledge of local conditions and land covers can help the Steering Committee make informed judgements for land use planning purposes. The disputed land cover may have little effect on the ultimate land use (agricultural pasture land may be treated similarly in the plan to grass and shrub cover), or may need careful designation (valuable timber resources may need to be distinguished from shrubby bog).



### Misleading Data

Data can also reflect anomalies such as brief economic busts or booms at a crucial historic point. Most demographic data is based on the Decennial Census, either using the census year figures as the basis for mid-decade population estimates, or as a truthing point for estimates based on non-census data. If the County experienced a brief population boom due to a large influx of construction workers for a large facility, the forecasts and estimates may be less reliable.

### Presentation of Data and Analyses

Consultants and staff must appropriately present information to decision-makers in order to allow information to shape goal creation and strategy selection. Merely providing maps does not ensure that Steering Committee members adequately address natural resource or land use limitations or take advantage of opportunities suggested by scientific data. Steering Committee members must recognize the difference between “what is” (the background) and “what can be” (the vision or the goal).

Particularly when data contradicts popular opinion the consultants or staff must present analysis results clearly and respectfully answer questions and challenges. Both development and preservation goals are sometimes not supported by unbiased scientific analysis, and proper presentation of analysis is crucial to creating sustainable policies and plans.

## Involving the Public in the Planning Process

A primary goal of the framework planning process is to have the framework plan reflect the priorities and address the concerns of local residents. A local government's actions cannot be sustainable unless the actions are consistent with local priorities and have the general support of residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. To create a plan that reflects the priorities of residents, the process must engage them and build on their contributions. Meaningful public involvement can be effective to identify a range of opinions, generate creative ideas, and build consensus for the plan.

The first of the eleven elements of community based planning, as defined in Minnesota statutes, is citizen participation. The description of citizen participation is:

**Citizen participation.** To develop a community-based planning process with broad citizen participation in order to build local capacity to plan for sustainable development and to benefit from the insights, knowledge and support of local residents.

Minnesota's Sustainable Development Initiative similarly identifies ten characteristics of sustainable development policies. Two of the characteristics, noted below, emphasize the role of the local community and of building consensus (*Investing in Minnesota's Future: An Agenda for Sustaining Our Quality of Life*, Minnesota Roundtable on Sustainable Development, 1998):

(Sustainable development policies) encourage **cooperation** among diverse interests, rather than relying on regulatory mandates, in situations where cooperation can achieve the same or better outcomes than mandates.

(Sustainable development policies) allow **regulatory flexibility** based on public-private consensus and commitment to long-term goals that emphasize sustainable outcomes rather than prescribing "do's" and "don'ts."

Local plans should reflect the values and priorities of those people most affected by the plan. Comprehensive land use planning requires identifying and prioritizing the community's long range goals. To ensure the plan will reflect community values in its goals, the planning process must explicitly identify how the public will be involved.

## **Benefits of Public Involvement**

The benefits of public involvement are tangible. When the public is significantly involved in the planning process they eventually take ownership of the content of the plan. The plan is not viewed as “the consultants plan” or “the County Board’s plan”, it becomes “our plan.” While the consultants may be experts on planning or be knowledgeable about methods of addressing various issues, community members are experts on what will or will not work in their community. The consultant may propose a solution that worked in another community, however, local residents need to tell the consultant whether that particular solution will work in their community given local history, culture, and priorities.

Public officials and government staff benefit from listening to local citizens’ needs, experiences and priorities. Members of the public can also benefit from listening to one another. A variety of views exist in every community. By listening to each other in a defined forum individuals can learn about their competing views and why people hold these views. They also learn about what the views they have in common. Involving the public in a planning process creates an environment where people are encouraged to listen to each other and cooperatively develop policies that meet their group needs. In many ways this is similar to how a family, church or other organization defines problems and develops expectations for behavior within the group.

One benefit of including the public in the planning process is avoiding what happens if you do not involve them. If the public is not empowered to make decisions about future land use during the development of the plan, they will make themselves heard after the process if they do not like the product. Many public hearings result in people assailing a plan merely because their opinions were not solicited until a “draft” final plan is published.

The people who work to create the plan also become the implementors of the plan and hold public officials accountable for implementation. They know what is in the plan and they will know if the plan is not followed. Public involvement should not end when the plan is printed. The plan will evolve as it is implemented, and the public should continue to be involved. Community members and steering committee members should be formally involved in the implementation of the plan. For example, the Itasca County includes specific steps for continuing public involvement during implementation, including “the establishment of an ad hoc citizens committee, with some members from the original Steering Committee, that will be convened by the Planning Commission during the first week of April each year to assess plan progress and ensure accountability.”

## Methods For Public Involvement

The word “community” incorporates a wide range of stakeholders that may include local and non-local interests. Local residents, however, are the foundation of the community, and should be the decision making element of stakeholder involvement in the planning process. Planning goals are best defined by those whom the final plan affects. The planning process must not only include local residents, but must engage those residents actively in the planning process. Within the constraints of scientific, economic, and social contexts, decisions made by community members should substantially inform the results of the planning process.

A variety of public involvement methods were used by the ten counties conducting framework planning processes. The diagram below illustrates the general steps in a framework planning process as developed and implemented by NCLUCB. Public participation options are highlighted.

(Insert process diagram of NCLUCB county process)

To be most effective, a facilitator is used for public participation methods that include meetings or discussion. A facilitator is a person trained in techniques for developing meeting structure, ensuring equitable participation, and conflict resolution. The facilitator should not be a stakeholder. The role of the facilitator is to create a meeting structure that encourages all views to be expressed and discussed in a productive environment.

Cost and time are primary barriers to effective public involvement. Notifying and recruiting residents to attend meetings, facilitating multiple meetings, and informing residents of meeting results all add up. Local governments may want to produce a plan quickly and feel they cannot take the time needed for public involvement. These costs should be weighed against the benefits of producing a plan that reflects local views and has broad support.

Another barrier is being uncomfortable with not knowing what the public will say and choose. The results of the planning process are not completely predictable at the start, particularly if the public will be asked to help make decisions along the way. To overcome this barrier, local officials should establish a clear process with intermediate decision points and products. Moving forward through the process provides some sense of predictability.

The planning process can use one or more methods of public participation, including; large or small public meetings, surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder representation on a steering committee. Each of these methods was used by at least one County in the framework planning

process, and are discussed in more detail below. The framework plan should document the public involvement process, and demonstrate that local priorities shaped the plan.

## **Steering Committee/Task Force**

The framework planning process can meet the goal of local control over land use planning by creating a Steering Committee with representation of all stakeholders. Stakeholders are people with a direct interest in the outcome of the planning process; people who are affected by the policies or goals of the plan. The community can supplement the Steering Committee process with other means of public participation depending on the resources the community is willing to invest in the public process. The immediate process may also build on previous planning initiatives have already gathered public input. For example, one county spent eighteen months meeting with established organizations and small groups to introduce the concept of comprehensive planning, ask citizens if they felt a plan was needed, and what issues should be addressed. The issues that were identified directed the framework planning effort.

### Role and responsibilities

**The Steering Committee was the only means we had to complete the plan.  
They determined the goals, word for word.**

#### County Board Member

The Steering Committee is the decision-making body in the planning process. To ensure that the community's priorities direct the framework planning process, the Steering Committee must have final say (other than the formal approval by the County Board) on goals and priorities in the Framework Plan. Involving County Board members in the Steering Committee can benefit the process. County Board members hear what a variety of citizens think about land use issues, and they can express their views in a collaborative setting to help shape the plan. Generally, the roles and responsibilities of Steering Committee members are:

- o Steering Committee members approve the following elements of the framework plan:
  - ? Background studies (topics and content);
  - ? Vision statement or description of the community;
  - ? Specific language stating goals and objectives;
  - ? Implementation or action priorities;
  - ? Monitoring actions or indicators.
- o Steering Committee members must be committed to attending all or nearly all of the Committee meetings, and should participate in any other public forums as well. Consistent participation is important so that all views are heard throughout the process.

Also, meetings build on one another. A member who misses meetings may not understand why decisions were made and may delay progress by asking to review previous actions.

- o Steering Committee members must review background materials, to ensure both accuracy and a basic understanding of demographic, natural resource, and economic background in the community.
- o Steering Committee members must adopt and practice a decision-making standard, such as absolute consensus, general consensus or super-majority vote, or simple majority vote.
- o Steering Committee members must be respectful of opposing viewpoints.

**The Steering Committee made decisions, for the most part, using consensus. If there were areas of disagreement, we took the time to clarify, drug around the room enough so that there was better understanding. There was a lot of wordsmithing done to achieve consensus among the Steering Committee members.**

#### County Staff

While some communities may chose to supplement the stakeholder participation on the Steering Committee with surveys, focus groups, or other public meetings, the Steering Committee is the primary means to ensure that the plan reflects local priorities. Decision making on the specific language of goals and objectives, or balancing between community priorities, cannot easily be accommodated in a public forum. Neither should such decisions be made solely by county staff or consultants. The framework planning process, therefore, relies on the active participation of the entire Steering Committee to ensure that such decisions reflect community priorities.

#### Who should be on the Steering Committee

A wide variety of stakeholders should be recruited to the Steering Committee. Several examples of NCLUCB county Steering Committees are listed below:

##### Pennington County Land Use Committee

County Commissioners (5)

Residents and Business Owners (10)

##### Beltrami County Framework Plan Steering Committee

Residents (2)

Beltrami County Commissioners (5)

##### *Interest Groups*

Bemidji City Councilperson

Blackduck City Council

City of Kelliher  
 Beltrami County Housing & Redevelopment Authority  
 Beltrami Association of Townships (2)  
 Joint Economic Development Corporation  
 Beltrami County Council on Aging  
 Beltrami County Planning Commission  
 Rural Fire Fighters Association  
 Bemidji State University  
 Bemidji Schools  
 Blackduck Schools  
 Kelliher Schools  
 Red Lake Schools  
 MN Dept. of Natural Resources  
 North Country Regional Hospital  
 Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe  
 Red Lake Chippewa Tribe  
 Lakeshore Association  
 Audubon Society  
 Bemidji Resort Association  
 Agriculture & Livestock  
 Chamber of Commerce  
 Realtors Association

Minnesota Planning's Comprehensive Planning Guidebook (preliminary draft) recommends that communities consider the following categories of local stakeholders for inclusive on the steering committee and in other public processes:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Government officials                    | Teachers and researchers in academia            |
| Civil service experts in various fields | Religious leaders                               |
| Business owners                         | Health and social service professionals         |
| Realtors and real-estate developers     | Loggers, fisherman and miners                   |
| Bankers                                 | Farmers and ranchers                            |
| Chamber of Commerce members             | Environmental groups and other nonprofit groups |
| Farmer's organization members           | Neighborhood activists                          |
| Newspaper editors and publishers        | Athletic association members                    |
| Political party representatives         | Artists and craftspeople                        |
| Service group leaders                   | Long-time residents                             |
| Retirees                                | New residents                                   |
| Young people                            |   |

**Clearwater County**

**The County Board made offers to as broad a group of representatives as possible. All the major constituencies were represented through elected officials (school board, City Council, and through the Township Association, which appointed a member to the Steering Committee - we didn't have room for each township to appoint a member so we worked through the township association.) Major industries were also represented.**

**Itasca County**

**We made a list of who's who's in this county, which amounted to about 30 organizations. The County Board came up with another 20 individuals. We then created a list and selected 25 people for the SC. This was good representation, as one person often serves in many capacities. They might be in the Township Association and on the Lakes Association Board.**

**Beltrami County**

**Put a notice in the paper, asking people to apply to the County Board; asked for representatives from other community agencies and organizations, such as the North Country Regional Hospital, City of Bemidji, the school district; there were also at-large members and representatives of various stakeholder groups.**

Involving townships and cities

Counties have a responsibility to consider not only residents and non-governmental stakeholders, but representatives from other governmental jurisdictions. Counties must consider smaller units of local government (cities and townships), larger units of local government (state and federal agencies with land management responsibility) and other entities with land management responsibility (joint powers boards, Native American Tribes.)

Townships and cities are always important stakeholders in a county planning process. Townships and cities have land use planning authority independent of the county and are the most immediate form of community and governance for county residents. Townships and cities often independently express land use goals and planning priorities that will inevitably shape the county. Counties have an opportunity, as part of their planning efforts, to coordinate city and township goals, and broker solutions to conflicts stemming from differing city or township goals and policies.

Most of the NCLUCB counties invited a variety of governmental entities to help shape their



Framework Plan. All counties included state and federal agencies from the start of the planning process, and all but one county included local government representatives on the Steering Committee.

## Public meetings

### Types of Public Meetings

Public meetings offer residents, businesses, and other interested parties that are not members of the Steering Committee to offer comments, priorities, and issues for consideration in the planning process. Minnesota Planning's comprehensive planning guidebook (*Under Construction: A Smart Growth Guide for Local Government*) notes a wide variety of public meeting types that communities can use in the planning process, including the following:

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <i>Public Hearings -</i>      | Required by law for adoption of Comprehensive Plans;   |
| <i>Planning Events -</i>      | One time events to solicit opinions or prioritize planning issues;   |
| <i>Open Houses -</i>          | Presentation of background information and opportunity for informal discussion ;   |
| <i>Community Meetings -</i>   | Small meetings targeted at particular niches of the community;   |
| <i>Small Working Groups -</i> | Steering Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, and sub-groups of these bodies;  |
| <i>Planning Charrettes -</i>  | Intense day or two-day planning and design sessions open to the public or a representative group of the public;  |
| <i>Citizen Jury -</i>         | A jury of citizens distinct from the county board convened to hear "testimony," review evidence, and make decisions about specific and usually controversial topics. |

Several of these meeting types, or variations of them, were used by NCLUCB member counties during their framework planning processes, including the following:

- ? Open public comment periods, such as public meetings sponsored by the Steering Committee or County Board where public comment is taken under consideration by the Committee or Board;
- ? Facilitated public meetings to present background research or to educate the public on the planning process;
- ? Focus groups made up of volunteers from the community;
- ? Presentations and discussions in open meetings with interest groups (Business organizations, lake associations, public meetings before city or township boards).

Each type of public meeting has particular benefits and drawbacks. For instance, those meeting types that allow for presentation of background information and have facilitated comment sessions are most likely to result in meaningful input to the planning process. Examples of these include community meetings or focus groups, steering committees or other small working groups, and charrettes or juries. The drawbacks of such meeting types are substantial staff and consultant resources, long lead times to ensure adequate turnout, and the significant commitment of citizen participants' time.

Would you recommend that other counties conduct public meetings in their planning process?

**If a county has the money they should try to do it. We intend to do it in the next phase and we will want to use a facilitator. That is where many of the costs enter in, but I believe it's necessary.**

**County Staff**

**Our county is oriented to public meetings but given the product we had (just the first phase of a complete comprehensive plan), it was not the right time. You have to do it (hold public meetings) at the right time-when you have a product, not when you are fishing for ideas. Board wants to rely on the SC and felt that they were 'the public.'**

**County Staff**

**It depends. In our case there were no . . .serious land use problems that need resolving.**

**County Board**

**Yes, unless they want to get shot when they release the plan. You have to sell it to the public.**

**County Staff**

#### Matching Meeting Strengths with the Planning Process

The community should choose the type of public meeting depending on the type of input needed. The framework planning process has four points at which general public participation should be considered:

- c. Creating and/or sharing the vision
- c. Identifying issues
- d. Relating background information
- e. Commenting on draft goals/plan

Most of the NCLUCB counties used a Steering Committee that reflected the myriad interests of residents and businesses in the community, and all of the NCLUCB counties used public comment periods throughout the planning process. Each of the public meeting types used by

NCLUCB counties is discussed below, including the strengths and weaknesses.

*Open ended public comment periods*, such as those during public hearing before the County Board, are the least likely to result in comments that target the specific issues of the planning process, but are the easiest to administer and allow the greatest latitude to the public. Open-ended public comment has an important role in the public involvement process. Public comment periods serve as an opportunity for citizens to choose what to focus on in response to draft documents.

Open-ended public comment is not, however, a good means to identify the public's planning priorities, or to provide much direction in setting a vision or goals. The unfacilitated comments are often hit-or-miss in relevance to the planning process.

*Facilitated public meetings* include presentations directed to the general public followed by a structured public input processes that solicit input on issues or priorities relevant to the planning process. This meeting type is particularly suited for meetings early in the planning process, when issues are being prioritized and goals are being defined, or to gather input on specific issues for which sufficient background information has been compiled. Such a public meeting structure is useful for gathering public comment that can inform visioning or goal setting.

Large public meetings are not, however, suited for decision making on particular issues or language for the plan. The comments made during the meeting should significantly inform the decision, but the delicate tasks of word-smithing goals or balancing opposing viewpoints are best handled in smaller meetings. More in-depth facilitated public meetings are sometimes used to set a vision or identify urban design preferences.

*Focus groups* or small break out sessions of larger meetings, use structured processes that solicit input on select issues or priorities in the community. This meeting type is suited for reaching decisions or testing consensus about vision, plan language, or action priorities. It also allows attendees to participate on an equal basis. Individuals have more time to talk during small group sessions, and the facilitators can probe and encourage reluctant participants. A trained facilitator will also prevent domination by an individual or small group. The primary drawbacks are uncertainty about adequate representation from all community stakeholders, and the resources necessary to ensure adequate levels of participation.

*Presentations before interest groups* target existing public or stakeholder activity to educate and solicit comment on select issues from people that are knowledgeable or strongly opinionated on particular topics. Such presentations and discussions offer good opportunities for comment by informed and interested stakeholders, are relatively easy to staff, and help build interest in the planning process. Comments must, however, be interpreted carefully to balance alternative viewpoints, and care taken to recognize that comments cannot be assumed to be representative of

the larger community.

## Potential stumbling blocks

Four NCLUCB counties noted that getting and keeping public attention through the planning process was the most frustrating experience in their county's process. Two of these response dealt may be related to with the type of public meetings used in those counties' process. One respondent questioned whether the Steering Committee (the primary vehicle for public input in that county's process) was really representative of general public opinion. As noted above, small groups of citizens may not reflect the opinion of the larger population. When the Steering Committee decisions seem to be at odds with general public sentiment, the community may need to use another public opinion tool, such as surveys, to confirm the Steering Committee's interpretation of residents' and stakeholder's priorities.

**During the planning process, Steering Committee attendance declined, so there was not as broad input at the end of the process. . . it was a very general plan that would not directly impact anybody so people were not too concerned about what comes out of it. We were up front about this at the start of the process.**

Another respondent noted that politicians or other "type A" persons tended to dominate the public meetings. When the process does not allow larger meetings to break into smaller groups, or the meetings are not adequately facilitated, a few individuals can dictate the priorities and issues addressed in the meeting. Conducting focus groups, surveys, or simply breaking meetings into smaller groups can correct for the problem of domination by "type A" people.

**Were all stakeholder groups represented on the Steering Committee?**

**Not all - we tried to invite certain groups but a lot declined to participate.  
County Staff**

**Not adequately. Some members didn't show up (e.g. real estate sector) and if they didn't participate they couldn't be represented.**

County Staff

A common problem with public participation, as noted by two other NCLUCB survey respondents, is lack of interest or public apathy. Getting turnout at public meetings is frequently difficult, and can require significant expenditures of time and money. Even if turnout is high initially, keeping the interest level high can difficult for planning processes that take 6 months to 2 years to complete.

**I have never been through a comprehensive planning process so there were times when I wanted it to move faster. I wanted to keep the boat moving faster than it wanted to go, but you can only go one step at a time. You have to collect, analyze, digest before you can move one. The Steering Committee was anxious to get to the final product.**

*Northern Counties Land Use Coordinating Board  
First Draft - June 1, 2000*

*Framework Land Use Planning Guidebook*

*Biko Associates, Inc.*

County Staff

## Creating a Vision

*A vision without a task is but a dream, a task without a vision is drudgery, a vision and a task is the hope of the world.*

Inscription on a church in Sussex, England, circa 1730

The first step in a planning process is the creation of a vision, sometimes called a “desired future condition.” The NCLUCB planning process, outlined above, creates a community-based process that sets a vision, which then shapes the creation of goals, objectives, and selection of indicators.

### Use of Visioning in the NCLUCB Counties

All of the NCLUCB framework plans included the initial creation of a coherent and generally consensual vision of how the county should look, how it should function socially and economically, and how the county should relate to its residents, businesses, the rest of the state and region. The vision was usually descriptive, although at least one county’s vision was expressed as a set of principles. The explicit vision becomes the starting point for creating general goals or policies that ultimately form the county’s programs, educational efforts, and regulations.

**We went throughout the county and invited people to come and tell us what they do and don’t want their county to look like; we also explained what comprehensive planning is and is not. It created a good dialogue and allowed people get involved in the process, which was excellent. It was a fun process and it gave us our vision.**

County Staff

The NCLUCB plans used several different visioning exercises. This guidebook describes three types of visioning exercises, all of which were using in at least one NCLUCB framework plan: an exercise describing an imaginary future trip through the county; a brainstorming exercise identifying individual elements of a vision; and a visual preference survey.

#### Imaginary Future Trip

The imaginary future trip exercise asks participants to describe what they would see in the county if they took a trip through the county in twenty years. The participants are to assume that the results of the framework planning effort were successful, and to identify what the county would look like as a result of the success. Koochiching County used the imaginary trip visioning exercise in its framework plan, as described below.

## Koochiching County Framework Plan Visioning Exercise

It is 2025. You are taking a balloon ride over Koochiching County. The balloon will take you across the entire county, over any part of the county you wish to see. You need to describe what you are seeing on the ride, what is the land cover, where development has occurred or is taking place, what the transportation system looks like, where people are working, living, and recreating.

Participants in the visioning wrote down their route and what they saw looking down from the balloon. Members chose to write either what they wanted to see or what they would see if current trends and policies did not change. Members then read aloud what they wrote.

Coming west to east across the north end of the county I see less newly developed farmland – that being farmed more appropriate for farming. I see idle land either planted for timber production or maintained as meadowland. The riverbanks are not any more developed and are protected from livestock. Tourism is limited to protect the available development resources and solitude of the area. Not a large overall change in development that will have an adverse effect on the varied resources we now have. More job development in Timber Industry.

Highway west from I. Falls has good surface – sustaining the desired truck weight levels. Access to Rainier River would include adequate parking for trucks & trailers – satellite toilets – picnic areas – walking trails. All highways would be at least wide enough to pull over and change a tire – Highway 6 from Bigfalls to Deer River would be safe. Snowmobiling would be routed away from existing highways whenever possible. Active logging would still occur with the best methods being used. The Voyageurs Park would remain within its 1999 boundaries and the waters would be under the total control of the State of Minnesota.

The consultants identified common themes and priority issue areas from the visioning exercise, which Steering Committee members further prioritized. The consultants conducted a second type of visioning exercise to corroborate findings, and presented the vision summary to the Steering Committee for modification and endorsement.

### Brainstorming Visioning Exercise

The brainstorming exercise asks participants to identify those elements in the county that participants find valuable or that participants believe are top priorities in the development of the

county. After compiling a list of such elements, participants prioritize and select among all the elements those that they believe create the best vision of the future county.

## Visual Preference Survey

The visual preference survey asks participants to identify positive images from a series of photographs or pictures showing different land uses, building forms, or businesses. The pictures may be from the county or may be other locations, but are designed to portray a variety of possible development options for the county.

### Itasca County Visual Preference Survey

The consultant provided Steering Committee members with disposable cameras, and asked the members to take pictures of sites in the county that represented good or bad elements of the county. Members were also asked to find good and bad examples of different categories of land uses (roads, businesses, homes, natural areas, etc) in order to ensure that a full spectrum of land uses were represented in the picture. The consultant developed all the pictures and conducted a prioritization exercise where Steering Committee members selected those images that most appealed to them and that they most disliked. Based on the selections and on followup discussion, the consultant compiled a description of the vision that the members supported.

*Photo Example from Visual Preference Survey*

## **Benefits of Visioning**

The survey of NCLUCB member counties revealed that the visioning process was uniformly regarded as an important part of the planning process. The vision helped direct the formation of goals and objectives and provided continuity to Steering Committee members and consultants in addressing the breadth of land use issues in each county. Nearly all survey respondents believed that the final plan reflected the vision, and that the vision greatly facilitated the creation of goals, objectives, or policies.

Text Box - Did the vision drive the planning process? You bet - that's evident  
with the way the plan is written.  
County Staff

The only reservation expressed in the survey was one respondent who noted the visioning



session only “marginally improved” the existing survey work already conducted by the county.

## **Potential Stumbling Blocks**

While the visioning process was valuable, some respondents noted some reservations regarding the visioning exercise. Some participants considered the imaginary future trip to be somewhat trite. One survey respondent noted that some participants believed “the visioning exercises were childish and that people didn't want to do what they were asked and they were uncomfortable trying to portray something they didn't feel.” Although some participants were uncomfortable with the exercise, the survey respondent also noted that “ in the end, the picture was so consistent that it helped to set tone and boundaries of plan development.”

The brainstorming technique proved, in at least one county, to elicit many negative comments about the county instead identifying positive aspects. As noted in the Marshall Framework Plan, the “lack of local control over factors such as commodity prices, weather patterns, or environmental policies, and discussions about the growing number of outside interests with a plan for the county, sometimes fostered a negative mood.” Ultimately, however, the visioning process identified both positive aspects of the county today, and described “a future that is different from the past.” The vision also resulted in the emergence of a new perspective by stakeholder on land use policy as “a growth tool, in contrast to the traditional vision of land-use controls as a means to prevent growth.”

## **Conclusions**

The experience of the NCLUCB counties validates the role of visioning to bring residents, businesses, and other interested parties toward a general consensus on a preferred future for the county, and to provide a foundation for creation of goals, objectives, or policies for the final plan. Conducting the visioning exercise requires careful preparation for both facilitator and participants, however, to profitably conclude the exercise and create ownership in the vision by participants.

## Issue Identification and Prioritization

An important step in the planning process is to identify priority issues that should be addressed in the framework plan. This step answers the question of which land use issues are most important to the community. The priority issues then guide the development of the goals and objectives. The priority issues also relate to the background studies and the visioning.

The background studies serve as a fact-based foundation for the policy making process. Ideally, after the background studies are compiled and understood, the community then identifies land use issues and prioritizes among the issues. The priority issues are then examined in relation to the background materials. Background information provides a context for the issues and sometimes indicates causes and trends related to the issues. New questions may arise about the issues that can direct additional background study. The goal of relating the priority issues to the background studies is to develop a basic understanding of the facts surrounding the issues.

The vision, as discussed in another section, describes how community residents want the community to look in the future. The priority issues are addressed through the goals to reach the vision. The issues direct the goal-setting discussions.

NCLUCB counties used several techniques to identify issues. The Lake of the Woods County Board identified four priority issues through a facilitated effort that included careful review of background information, current land use trends, and resident, business, and staff responses to a survey. The issues were:

- ? Timber harvesting rates and impacts
- ? Local involvement in State land management-related decisions that affect Lake of the Woods County
- ? Land acquisition, sale, and exchange of public agencies, and related impacts
- ? Shoreland development rate and impacts

Pennington County conducted a “visioning conference” to identify common visions and goals, priority issues, and priority strategies for the community. The conference included a wide range of stakeholders (citizens, businesses, public agencies and staff). The issue areas defined how the goals were to be implemented; the County identified a set of implementation steps for each issue area. Critical issues that came out of Pennington County’s process included the following:

- ? Land use priorities
- ? Agricultural and economic development
- ? Natural resource management

Itasca County used an extensive public participation process both before and during the planning process. The County conducted a series of small meetings before beginning its planning process. Participants in these meetings identified a wide range of issues and concerns. The issues and concerns were then incorporated into a visioning and issue identification session with the steering committee for the planning process. The issue areas framed the process of identifying goals; the plan identifies one goal for each issue area. The Steering Committee identified seven priority issue areas:

- ? Natural Resources
- ? Housing and Settlement Patterns
- ? Agriculture
- ? Commercial/Industrial Base

- ? Recreation
- ? Transportation
- ? Government Cooperation

Several counties used a nominal group method that combined brainstorming and voting. Steering committee members, technical advisory committee members, or the general public at large meetings were asked to each list two or three land use issues. Each participant read their issues and the issues were recorded on paper posted on the wall. After all issues were listed, participants were given an equal number of dots to place beside the issues that they felt were most important. In counties that used this method, ten to fifteen issues emerged as priority issues amongst forty to fifty issues listed initially. This technique allows all issues to be listed, however, marginal issues are not included in the list of priority issues. Under a slightly different format, a group could brainstorm the list of issues and then organize related issues under topic areas. For example, failing septic, lawn chemical use near lakeshores, boat-related trash, agricultural runoff, and too much lakeshore development could be grouped under water quality.

Alternative techniques used to prioritize issues includes public opinion surveys that ask respondents to choose the most important issues from a list of issues. Lake of the Woods County developed a survey to determine priority issues and serve as a basis for goal development. An effective attitude survey both gives and gathers information. The survey should inform citizens about the planning process, the need for information, and how the information will be used. A survey can also notify citizens about upcoming public meetings.

The identification of priority issues was an important step in the framework planning processes used by the NCLUCB counties. Looking at any of the framework plans, each goal can be connected back to a priority issue. Being able to make this clear connection is important to the citizens who helped develop the priority issues. It lets them know that their input directed the outcome of the plan.

# Creating Goals and Objectives

## Goals

We all have goals. As children approaching summer vacation, our simple goal was to finish a set number of days of school (that we are counting down one by one.) As adults we set goals for work and home. As a community we set goals for how our community will look and operate. Goals are the basic building block of a planning process. Goals relate to the vision and the priority issues. The vision is an idealistic expression of how we want our community to look and operate in the future. The tone and direction of the plan is set by the vision. Priority issues list the issues that need to be addressed to reach the vision. Goals are developed to address each issue and state how that issue will be resolved in reaching the vision.

The Draft Marshall County Comprehensive Land Use Plan defines goals as “statements of desired states or conditions that are descriptive of the county vision. They reflect the values and aspirations of a society or group” (p. 34). The Itasca County Comprehensive Land Use Plan similarly notes that “goals describe the County’s desired future. They are the long-term ends toward which programs, activities, and decisions are directed” (p. 4, Goals, Objectives, and Implementation Tools).

### Creating Goals in the Framework Planning Process

Crafting the specific language of Framework Plan goals is often a laborious process. The facilitator, consultant or staff usually creates draft goals to address each issue area and achieve the vision. Draft language could be developed in a small group, however, it is often easier for people to react to a draft rather than have a group come up with language from scratch. Often, several drafts of the goals will be reviewed and revised. Patience is a key element of goal setting. It is often difficult for people to understand why someone else reacts badly to one word in a draft goal, that is, until the word that they do not like is discussed. The facilitator’s role is to encourage people to explain why they do not like something, and to help them draft alternative language. Recording changes to the draft language and obtaining consensus on the changes is important to moving forward.

Do the goals reflect the vision created by the county residents and stakeholders?

**I think goals got watered down by the reluctance to put any restrictions on people’s rights and activities. . . for example, we don’t want a chemical plant but we also don’t want to deprive anyone of their opportunity to develop their property.**

## County Staff

Several examples of goals from NCLUCB county framework plans are included below. As you will note, the goals consistently begin with an action word: the County “will support” “must improve” “maintain” “protect”, etc. Goals state what a local government will do to move from the current situation to the future desired condition, the vision. The steering committee, or decision makers, must understand the effect of word choice. For example, the county is given more latitude if the word “should” is chosen over the word “will,” or if “encourage” is chosen over “require.”

In several of the following examples, the connection between the general issue and the goal is made clear in the introductory word or phrase. Even though multiple counties addressed similar issues, such as governmental cooperation, the details of the goals vary. These details reflect the choices made by community residents based on differences in history, culture, and resources.

1. **Agriculture** - Encourage agriculture (timber, small grains, beef, etc.) as a viable, important part of Clearwater County’s economy, and encourage farming as the primary land use in the historically agricultural areas of the County.
2. **Natural Resources** - Protect and enhance the water quality of lakes and rivers within Clearwater County to ensure the economic and non-economic enjoyment of lakes and rivers by residents and visitors.
3. **Natural Resources** - Encourage the sustainable use of natural resources such as timber, water and agricultural soils so that these resources remain available to future residents for continued economic and non-economic use.
4. **Economic Development** - Increase the diversity and number of employment opportunities in Clearwater County to make the County a more viable place for current residents, young people, and new residents.
5. **Private Property Rights** - Protect the rights of private property owners from undue governmental regulation.
6. **Transportation** - Provide a safe, convenient transportation system throughout Clearwater County, and provide adequate connections for the transportation of commercial and agricultural goods to regional and state-wide markets.
7. **Public Lands** - Allow multiple use (timber harvest, trails, hunting, fishing, etc.) of public land; and limit new public land acquisition and provide opportunities for local control to protect the tax base of Clearwater County.
8. **Housing** - Preserve the small town character of cities in Clearwater County, and the predominately rural character of the remainder of the County.
9. **Housing** - Increase the affordable housing opportunities within Clearwater County so that workers do not have to live outside the County.

10. **Commercial/Industrial** - Direct commercial and industrial development to areas in Clearwater County that are served by water and sewer utilities.
11. **Tourism** - Support the continuation and expansion of tourism and recreational opportunities within Clearwater County as part of a diverse local economy.
12. **Governmental Cooperation** - Develop formal mechanisms for cooperatively making land use, natural resource and economic development decisions among all interested governmental agencies and Indian tribes, including: Clearwater County, townships, cities, state agencies, federal agencies, White Earth tribe, and Red Lake tribe.

*Source: Clearwater County Framework Plan*

**Natural Resources Goal**- Itasca County will promote land and water uses that result in the sustainable use of natural resources, balancing development and environmental commitment to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and resources of the County for this and future generations.

**Housing and Settlement Patterns Goal** - Respect the unique settlement characteristics of each area of the County and encourage diversified housing development that maximizes the use of infrastructure including roads, sewer, water and other public services.

**Agriculture Goal** - Encourage agriculture as the primary use in historically farmed areas as part of a diverse economy and respect the settlement characteristics of agricultural areas.

**Commercial/Industrial Goal** - Encourage a sound and diverse economy that meets the needs of Itasca County residents and visitors for employment and services.

**Recreation Goal** - Develop an integrated green space and recreation system within Itasca County that provides diverse, developed and undeveloped, recreational opportunities for all residents and visitors while protecting unique scenic and natural areas.

**Governmental Cooperation Goal** - Encourage cooperation between governmental jurisdictions regarding efficient land use, economic development, and the management of natural resources.

*Source: Itasca County Comprehensive Land Use Plan*

1. Enhance the economic opportunities available for individuals and businesses in the county in ways that are compatible with long term environmental quality.
2. Maintain the tax base of the county so quality services can be provided.
3. Enhance the forest resources of the county in ways that promote economic and recreational use, wildlife diversity, and environmental quality.
4. Improve recreational opportunity for residents and visitors.

5. Maintain and, where necessary, improve water quality.

*Source: Lake of the Woods County Land Use Plan*

## **Grand Goals**

**Stability** - The county must maintain its economic and social viability, which is currently threatened by difficulties in the farm economy and the out-migration of rural residents.

**Growth** - The county must encourage new thinking which expands opportunities for the use of our human and natural resources.

**Efficiency** - The county must improve levels of public service efficiency to keep stride with fast paced change at local, state, and national levels.

**Sustainability** - The county can maintain, grow, and improve while sustaining its high quality of life and natural resources.

## **Development Policies and Implementation Steps**

**Policy 1. Land-use** - Marshall County supports the existing balance of land-use in the county and studying future land-use trends and needs.

**Policy 2. Agriculture** - Marshall County supports maintaining agricultural production, including a transition to the most economically viable forms of farming and processing.

**Policy 3. Population** - Marshall County supports retaining the current level of population and population growth within the capacity of public infrastructures.

**Policy 4. Natural Resource Management** - Marshall County supports a locally-based approach to protecting the quality of natural resources in the county and making economically responsible improvements.

*Source: Marshall County Comprehensive Land-Use Plan*

## **Objectives**

Creating objectives that follow the goals is the next step in creating a framework land use plan. Objectives are subsets of the community's goals, and describe more concrete strategic steps required to reach the goals. The development of objectives was not required under the NCLUCB framework planning process, however, some communities choose to go beyond the development of goals to objectives. This guidebook uses the term "objectives" to mean the policies or sub-



goals that are based upon the goals, and bring the community closer to its vision. Some of the framework planning processes used terms other than “objectives,” including “development policies” and “subject goals.”

Many of the NCLUCB counties set objectives or policies that flowed from the general goals. Following are several examples showing how the NCLUCB counties used the goals to address issues and concerns in their community.

Lake of the Woods County identified five goals in its Framework Plan (listed above). From those five goals, the county identified eleven policies that promote the goals. The county then applied these policies in to its priority issues in order to identify short-term strategies for action.

Maintain the county government’ s economic health through the maintenance of its tax base, and the promotion of compatible economic activity.

Support and promote agricultural activity within the county through the county’ s land use policies and regulations, and through efforts to work with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources on land exchange issues where appropriate.

Promote the long term health of the forest resource base within the county.

Work to enhance the tourism industry in Lake of the Woods County through recreational enhancement and promotion activities.

Undertake and/or support activities to protect environmentally sensitive areas within the county.

Actively manage growth to maintain the character of Lake of the Woods County, including the semi-wilderness character of the Northwest Angle and its islands.

Continue to effectively enforce existing ordinances; reassess the effectiveness of the county’ s regulatory tools on an ongoing basis.

Encourage future growth to occur in areas that are not environmentally sensitive, and that are already served by infrastructure; conversely, discourage growth in areas that would cause environmental problems or be expensive for the county to serve with roads and other facilities.

Clearwater County Steering Committee members were fairly unified in their support of the draft goal language, using only one meeting to work through the language. This allowed the group to move on to the creation of objectives. The consultants draft objectives received many more comments. Examples of two sets of objectives for Clearwater County are included below.

7. **Public Lands Goal** - Allow multiple use (timber harvest, trails, hunting, fishing, etc.) of public land; and limit new public land acquisition and provide opportunities for local control to protect the tax base of Clearwater County.

- S Work with public landowners and managers to ensure the continued and expanded multiple use of public lands.
  - b. Establish a dialogue with state and federal agencies about the local goal of limiting new land acquisition.
8. ***Community Development Goal*** - Encourage a small town character in the cities of Clearwater County, and the predominately rural character of the remainder of the County.
- a. Encourage new development in towns and already developed areas of the County.
  - b. Support town planning goals that support and do not conflict with County goals.

## Measuring Success: Creating and Using Indicators

### Characteristics of Good Indicators

**Relevance.** Indicators should be constructed so that they have a high degree of relevance to the issues of concerns, and the goals and objectives of the stakeholders who will use them.

**Sensitive to change over time.** Indicators should reflect meaningful variation in the issue of concern such that significant temporal trends can be established that show whether or not conditions are stable, improving or deteriorating.

**Comprehensible.** Target users should easily understand the indicators. Indicators should be capable of aggregation so that the information presented can be understood by lay people and interpreted to allow an assessment of its significance.

**Sensitive to change across space or within groups.** A major issue in social and development indicator research is the quest for measures that are sensitive to the distribution of conditions within a population or over a geographic region.

**Integrative.** Composite indicators, which integrate various measures into an index, can be useful tools for measuring sustainability. Great care needs to be taken, however, in the scaling and weighting of components in such indicators, especially in combining incommensurables. The composites also may be difficult to communicate and explain to the public and policy-makers.

**Validity.** Indicators should effectively measure progress toward a defined goal. Up and down movements of the indicator should correlate well with movement toward or away from the goal.

**Frequency.** As far as possible, indicators should be based on data that is collected regularly to enable user to follow trends without missing any important ups and downs resulting from data unavailability.

**Reliability.** An indicator must be reliable. Users must be able to trust what the indicator shows.

**Provide timely information.** Indicators must provide timely information to allow prompt rectification.