



City of Lake Mills, Wisconsin Comprehensive Plan

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INTRODUCTION

Located in northwestern Jefferson County on the eastern shore of Rock Lake, the City of Lake Mills is a community that was founded on and grew from the area's abundant natural and agricultural resources. While these remain important defining characteristics of the community, the City's residents have also benefited from an economy with regional access to major economic centers such as Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago.

Over the last fifteen years, the City's population has been increasing steadily - presenting both opportunities and challenges. Economic growth has provided local employment opportunities, urban amenities, and a larger, diversified, and more robust tax base. However, as population increases, so does the need for municipal services to keep pace with growth and changing demands. In addition, growth brings with it additional pressure on the existing resource base that is necessary to sustain and improve the quality of life for future residents. In this context, it is essential to plan for development in a controlled, orderly, and predictable manner that will enhance the City's ability to retain its small-town character, avoid land use conflicts, provide housing and appropriate employment opportunities, and protect its natural, cultural, and agricultural resources both within its limits and within the surrounding area.

A. Purpose of this Plan

This *Comprehensive Plan* is being prepared under the State of Wisconsin's "Smart Growth" legislation contained in §66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes. The *Plan* is organized into chapters that specifically address each of the nine elements required by the "Smart Growth" law. Each chapter presents background information on the respective element (e.g. *Transportation, Land Use, Economic Development*) and then presents an outline of the City's goals, objectives, and policies for that element. These documented policies are the basis for the recommendations that are presented at the end of each chapter.

The final chapter (*Implementation*) of the document indicates proposed strategies and implementation timelines to ensure that the recommendations presented in this *Plan* become a reality.

B. Planning Process

The State of Wisconsin's Smart Growth legislation describes how a comprehensive plan must be developed and adopted (see sidebar on previous page). After 2010, only those plans that contain the nine required elements and were adopted under the prescribed procedures will have legal standing. Any program or action undertaken by the City after 2010 that affects land use will have to be consistent with this *Plan*. These programs or actions include zoning and subdivision ordinances and official mapping.

PLAN ADOPTION PROCESS

Preparation of a comprehensive plan is authorized under §66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes. Before adoption, a Plan must go through a formal public hearing and review process. The Plan Commission adopts by resolution a public hearing draft of the Plan and recommends that the City Council enact an ordinance adopting the Plan as the City's official *Comprehensive Plan*.

Following Plan Commission approval, the City Council holds a public hearing to discuss the proposed ordinance adopting the *Plan*. Copies of the public hearing draft of the *Plan* are forwarded to a list of local and state governments for review. A Class 1 notice must precede the public hearing at least 30 days before the hearing. The notice must include a summary of the Plan and information concerning where the entire document may be inspected or obtained. The Council may then adopt the ordinance approving the Plan as the City's official *Comprehensive Plan*.

This formal, well-publicized process facilitates broad support of plan goals and recommendations. Consideration by both the Plan Commission and City Council assures that both bodies understand and endorse the *Plan's* recommendations.

In addition to providing sound public policy guidance, a comprehensive plan should also incorporate an inclusive public participation process to ensure that its recommendations reflect a broadly supported future vision. An extensive process of citizen review and approval was critical to the planning process. This includes not only formal requirements outlined in §66.1001, but also more informal mechanisms such as public workshops and meetings.

At the outset of this planning process in February 2007, the City Council adopted by resolution its Public Participation Plan to ensure that this Plan accurately reflects the vision, goals, and values of its residents. The Public Participation Plan reflects the dedicated commitment of Lake Mills' City Council, Plan Commission, and City staff, to get on-going input from local citizens, community and special interest groups, and representatives from neighboring jurisdictions. Due to this extensive public participation process, the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan are generally consistent with other adopted local and regional plans, long-standing state and regional policies, and sound planning practices.

C. General Regional Context

Map 1 shows the relationship of the City to neighboring communities in the region. The City is located roughly 25 miles east of Madison and 50 miles west of Milwaukee. The City is bordered on the west, north, and south by the Town of Lake Mills and borders the Town of Milford to the northeast and the Town of Aztalan to the east. The nearest incorporated municipalities include the City of Waterloo to the northwest, the Village of Johnson Creek to the east, and the City of Jefferson to the southeast. As of December, 2006 the City encompassed approximately 3.44 square miles.

D. Selection of the Planning Area

The Planning area includes the City and an area slightly beyond its 1.5 mile extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), as illustrated in Map 1: Jurisdictional Boundaries. Within the ETJ, state statutes enable the City to plan for those areas that bear relation to the City's development, review and regulate land divisions, enact extraterritorial zoning, and establish and implement an Official Map. The City currently exercises all of these functions in all or parts of its 1.5 mile radius. The City has an interest in identifying areas of possible future growth, areas for preservation, and areas in which conflicts over land use decisions within and between communities may occur. The City also has an interest in ensuring that the types of development allowed to take place in its ETJ areas prior to annexation are compatible with the City's long term goals and anticipated pattern of development. Because the 1.5 mile ETJ radius automatically expands as the City annexes land, this *Plan* considers the future and makes recommendations for the area within and slightly beyond the City's current 1.5 mile ETJ.

E. Regional Planning Effort

This *Comprehensive Plan* was prepared concurrently with five other communities in Jefferson County as part of a state-funded, multi-jurisdictional planning process. These communities included the Cities of Waterloo, Jefferson, and Fort Atkinson; the Village of Johnson Creek; and the Town of Aztalan. The same consulting firm worked with all six communities in preparing their plans. The City of Lake Mills took part in intergovernmental meetings involving all of these communities throughout the process.

F. Regional Influences

The City of Lake Mills has been and will continue to be influenced by the natural, cultural, and economic conditions of Jefferson County and the larger surrounding region. Understanding these influences is an important part of identifying the opportunities and challenges that the City will face over the next 20 years. Map 2 illustrates some of these regional influences on Jefferson County and the City of Lake Mills.

Natural and Recreational Assets

The City of Lake Mills is situated in the northwest portion of Jefferson County. Although located at the center of the rapidly growing Southern Wisconsin region, Jefferson County's natural landscape has remained relatively undisrupted by development when compared with the rapidly urbanizing areas of southeastern Wisconsin and Dane County to the west. The County's roadways offer some of the most spectacular views of glacial drumlins in the world. Other nearby natural areas include nine State Natural Areas and State Parks, six Land Legacy Places, access to two State Trails, and an abundance of water resources, including wetlands, lakes, and rivers. Several of these are located in and near the City of Lake Mills. As Jefferson County communities have faced increasing growth pressures, residents and property owners have begun taking measures to preserve rural character and the highly productive farmland that still blankets the towns and surrounds the villages and cities.

Access and Transportation Networks

Lake Mills' location along Interstate 94 and the access it provides to growing metro areas provides economic, social, and cultural benefits as well as challenges. The combination of local natural amenities, small town character, and access to urban employment and conveniences make the City an increasingly attractive location for residents who are employed in other communities. An analysis of commuting patterns indicates that every day over 23,000 people commute between Jefferson County and the five immediately adjacent counties of Waukesha, Dodge, Dane, Rock, and Walworth. Running east and west through the City, I-94 provides direct or nearly direct access to Madison, Milwaukee, Janesville, Beloit, the Fox Valley, and Green Bay as well as many of the Midwest's other major economic centers, including Chicago, Minneapolis, and Detroit. Jefferson County is also traversed by US Highways 12 and 18 and State Highways 19 and 89, and has a direct connection with I-39/90, located west of Jefferson County. While not serving Lake Mills directly, three major railroads (the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad Co., Canadian Pacific Railway, and the Union Pacific Railroad) maintain track and provide freight services elsewhere in the County. For more distant travel, Lake Mills is also within an hour's drive from both the Dane County Regional Airport in Madison and General Mitchell International Airport in Milwaukee. Map 2: Jefferson County Regional Influences illustrates some of the impact that this regional context has and will continue to have on the City of Lake Mills.

These same regional attributes also make the City of Lake Mills an attractive place to locate a business as well as live. The City is home to several large employers, and its diversified economic base makes it possible for many residents to work in the community where they live. As energy and transportation infrastructure costs rise, and environmental issues come to the fore, transportation efficiency and alternatives are becoming increasingly important issues.

Proximity to Major Employment, Shopping, and Cultural Centers

The City of Lake Mills is located within a short driving distance of several major regional employment centers, shopping, and entertainment destinations. Roughly 25 minutes west of Lake Mills, the City of Madison is a major employment center featuring the seat of state government and many state agencies, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, several regional medical centers, and a regional bio-agriculture research center, to name a few. Shopping in the Madison area includes several regional shopping malls and districts, and other unique shopping opportunities such as State Street and the Farmer's Market on the Capitol Square. The many cultural and entertainment venues include the Overture Center, Union Terrace, the Alliant Energy Center, various University sports venues and numerous restaurants and bars. To the east, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Area is within an hour's drive of the City of Lake Mills and likewise offers diverse employment, numerous cultural and entertainment venues, and shopping destinations. The cities of Janesville and Beloit to the southwest are also relatively accessible, as is the Fox Valley to the northeast. For weekend excursions, Rockford, Illinois and Downtown Chicago are less than 2 ½ hours from the City. Lake Mills has long been a weekend and seasonal resort and tourist destination for people from these areas.

How to best capture and balance the benefits presented by these local, regional and national influences is a key reason for developing the *Comprehensive Plan*.

Map 1: Jurisdictional Boundaries

Map 2: Jefferson County Regional Influences

CHAPTER ONE: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This chapter of the Plan contains pertinent demographic trends and background information for the City. This information provides a comprehensive understanding of the changes taking place in the City of Lake Mills. As required under §66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes, this chapter includes population, household, employment, age distribution, education and income characteristics and forecasts. It also includes a section on overall goals, objectives, policies and programs to guide the future preservation and development in the City over the 20-year planning period.

A. Population Trends and Forecasts

Over the last ten years, the City of Lake Mills has experienced substantial population growth. Table 1 compares the City of Lake Mills' population trends over the past thirty years with several neighboring communities and the County. Between 1990 and 2000, the City experienced a 16.9 percent increase in population. Similarly, the municipalities that surround Lake Mills experienced considerable increase in population during this same time period, except the Town of Aztalan which experienced a two percent decrease. The City of Lake Mills' estimated 2005 population was 5,067 residents according to the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA).

Table 1: Population Trends

	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Population Change 1990-2000
City of Lake Mills	3,556	3,670	4,143	4,843	16.9
Town of Lake Mills	1,472	1,515	1,584	1,936	22.2
Town of Aztalan	1,306	1,752	1,476	1,447	-2.0
Village of Johnson Creek	790	1,136	1,259	1,581	25.6
City of Jefferson	5,429	5,687	6,078	7,338	20.7
City of Fort Atkinson	9,164	9,785	10,213	11,621	13.8
City of Whitewater*	1,909	2,422	2,466	2,611	5.9
City of Waterloo	2,253	2,393	2,712	3,259	20.2
City of Watertown	15,683	18,113	19,142	21,598	11.4
Jefferson County	60,060	66,152	67,783	75,767	11.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1970-2000

*For portion in Jefferson County only

Projecting future population is an important element of the Comprehensive Plan because it is a key tool in predicting demand for community services and the amount of land likely to be needed for development over the next 20 years. The more realistic the assumptions that inform the projection are, the more accurate (and therefore useful) a given projection is likely to be.

Table 2 shows three population projections for the City in five-year increments through the year 2030. The first of the three population projections in Table 2 has been generated by the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA). The second projection is a 25-Year Straight Line Projection that was calculated by determining the City's average annual population change for the last 25 years and projecting that forward for the next 25 years. The third population projection is one based on the same 25 year period, but compounds the average annual *rate* of growth for the last 25 years.

Population projections based on data from a longer time period are less likely to be skewed by recent short term trends in residential and economic development. Using the average annual rate of growth

expressed as a percentage of the population rather than the average increase in numbers is generally considered to be a more robust measure because it captures rates of natural increase in net immigration regardless of the absolute number of people in the community. Historically, DOA population projections have under-predicted population growth for such rapidly growing areas Southeastern Wisconsin and Dane County. While the City of Lake Mills and Jefferson County as a whole have not grown as fast as these areas in recent years, an comparison of DOA projections from 1993 for the years 2000 and 2005 reveal a similar pattern of under prediction in Jefferson County. The City's 2000 population of 4,843 exceeded the DOA's 1993 prediction for 2000 by 200 people or 4.3 %. Similarly, the estimated 2005 population of 5,067 exceeded DOA's 1993 projection for 2005 by 242 people or 5%. By comparison, the 25-year Compounded Growth projection in Table 2 over a similar time period (in this case out to 2010 and 2015) exceeds DOA estimates for those years by 2.3% and 5% respectively. Therefore, the 25-year Compounded Growth Projection appears to predict rates of growth more consistent with the City's actual growth, at least over the last two decades.

Another reason to give more weight to higher rather than lower populations in Table 2 has to do with the City's location in relation to the region. Given the continued rapid growth of Madison and other Dane County communities within convenient commuting range, the City is likely to continue to experience higher rather than lower rates of growth over the next 10 and 20 years.

The 25-year Compounded Growth Projection is therefore the population projection for this *Plan*. Using this approach, the City's projected population increase through 2030 is substantially higher than that projected by the Wisconsin DOA estimates. As with any population projection based on past trends, it assumes that various factors influencing population growth will remain fundamentally the same.

Table 2: Population Projections

	2000*	2005**	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Wisconsin DOA ¹	4,843	5,067	5,282	5,490	5,704	5,921	
25-year Straight Line Projection ²	4,843	5,067	5,346	5,626	5,905	6,185	6,464
25-year Compounded Growth Projection ³	4,843	5,067	5,405	5,765	6,149	6,559	6,996

Source: * U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

** Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2005 population estimate

¹ Wisconsin Department of Administration population projections through 2025

² Extrapolated based on annual average population growth 1980-2005

³ Extrapolated based on the compounded average annual rate of growth (1980-2005)

B. Demographic Trends

Age and Gender

The City of Lake Mills' demographic data from the year 2000 is presented in Table 3. These data suggest that the City of Lake Mills' overall population is slightly younger than the surrounding communities but fairly representative of the County as a whole. Furthermore, demographic trends indicate that the City's median age has increased from 34.5 in 1990 to 36.0 in 2000. However, the proportion of residents over the age of 65 has decreased from 16.6 percent in 1990 to 14.5 percent in 2000, indicating that number of new working age families with children is outpacing any increase in the number of retirement-age individuals remaining in or moving to the City. The current proportion of school-age children residing in the City is the second highest among the surrounding communities and the County. Another significant demographic trend is the aging baby boom generation, who will begin retiring in 2010. This change will influence many aspects of the community including housing, employment and services.

Table 3: Age and Gender Distribution, 2000

	Median Age	% under 18	% over 65	% Female
City of Lake Mills	36.0	27.2	14.5	51.8
Town of Lake Mills	40.2	26.1	13.1	49.1
Town of Aztalan	38.5	25.7	12.0	49.8
Village of Johnson Creek	31.9	26.6	9.5	50.5
City of Jefferson	36.2	22.8	16.1	50.4
City of Fort Atkinson	36.5	24.2	14.5	51.7
City of Whitewater	21.9	12.3	8.9	51.1
City of Waterloo	34.5	27.3	11.4	50.3
City of Watertown	34.7	26.0	14.7	51.6
Jefferson County	36.6	25.2	12.8	50.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

*Only includes portion of community in Jefferson County

Household Trends and Forecasts

Tables 4 and 5 present household characteristics for the City of Lake Mills as compared with several surrounding communities and Jefferson County. The City's average household size has decreased slightly from 2.51 persons in 1990 to 2.49 in 2000. In 2000, Lake Mills' household size was smaller than the Towns of Lake Mills and Aztalan, the Village of Johnson Creek, the City of Waterloo, and Jefferson County. This may be attributable to the fact that the City had a higher percentage of single-occupant households than the Cities of Jefferson and Fort Atkinson and Jefferson County.

Table 4: Household Characteristics Comparison

	Total Housing Units	Total Households	Average Household Size	Average Assessed Value*	Median Rent
City of Lake Mills	2,065	1,924	2.49	\$176,834	588
Town of Lake Mills	812	720	2.66	\$252,386	628
Town of Aztalan	553	530	2.73	\$179,953	588
Village of Johnson Creek	659	624	2.53	\$160,170	683
City of Jefferson	2,934	2,816	2.41	\$146,523	554
City of Fort Atkinson	4,983	4,760	2.40	\$139,360	549
City of Whitewater	4,340	4,132	2.38	\$152,497	504
City of Waterloo	1,293	1,242	2.56	\$141,994	581
City of Watertown	8325	8022	2.55	\$186,892	563
Jefferson County	30,109	28,205	2.55	\$163,097	564

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

*2006 assessed values provided by local assessors except where noted

** Department of Revenue, 2005

Table 5 compares various characteristics associated with housing. The percentage of single person households, owner occupied homes, and single family structures are all comparable to other cities and villages in Jefferson County. Characteristically, the percentage of single family homes and owner occupied homes in the City is lower and the number of single person households is higher than in towns with few if any multi-family or specialized housing options.

Table 5: Housing Occupancy Characteristics Comparison, 2000

	Single Person Household %	Vacant %	Owner Occupied %	Single Family Units %
City of Lake Mills	26.8	6.8	68.9	66.4
Town of Lake Mills	17.5	11.3	88.5	88.1
Town of Aztalan	14.7	4.2	88.5	92.7
Village of Johnson Creek	23.7	5.3	66.7	45.0
City of Jefferson	28.3	4.0	60.8	60.8
City of Fort Atkinson	29.4	4.5	64.0	66.5
City of Whitewater	32.7	4.8	36.2	40.1
City of Waterloo	25.0	3.9	71.7	66.5
City of Watertown	25.5	3.7	63.5	64.6
Jefferson County	23.6	6.3	71.7	71.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

Table 6 shows a dwelling unit projection for the City through the year 2030, which was calculated using the 25-year compounded growth population projection selected as the basis for this plan from Table 2. The projection for number of household assumes a modest decrease in household size from 2.49 to 2.41 persons per household. This assumption is based on the continued societal trends toward an aging population and smaller households will be partially offset by local trends for local increases in the number of working families with children, and a possible increase in unrelated elderly living together or with adult children. Based on these assumptions, the City will have 2,810 households in 2030, or 788 more households than in 2000.

For planning purposes, the number of households is used to estimate demand of additional household units. As household size decreases, the number of households can be expected to increase for a given population. Changes in household composition will also influence housing demand. Trends indicate that there will be a continued need for a range of household types for various age, income, and lifestyles.

Table 6: Household (Dwelling Unit) Projections, 2005 - 2030

	Number of Households							% Change 2000-2030
	2000	2005*	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	
City of Lake Mills	1,924	2,040	2,171	2,315	2,467	2,634	2,810	46.0

*Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2005

Education and Employment Trends

Detailed information on education and employment trends can be found in the Economic Development chapter of this *Plan*.

C. Issues Raised Through Public Participation

The City's comprehensive planning process was guided by input that was collected from a variety of sources including three 2-hour Visioning Workshops, meetings with focus groups, and regular meetings with the City Plan Commission which is acting as the steering committee for development of the plan. The following is a summary of the issues identified by this process.

Vision Workshops

Three 2-hour Visioning Workshops were held; one each on March 31, April 4th, and April 12th. The workshops had identical formats and were designed to gain input from City residents on all aspects of the Comprehensive Plan through three exercises. Residents from adjacent Towns within the City's Planning Area were also invited to participate in the exercises. The exercises include an exercise to identify top values, threats, and positive assets in the City, a mapping exercise in which participants identified specific areas of concerns in the City's Planning Area, and a "top priorities" exercise to find out which concerns were most pressing. The results from all three exercises are summarized below. The summary results for the three separate workshops have been consolidated except as noted. A more detailed summary for each workshop and each exercise is located in Appendix A.



Top Values, Challenges, and Assets Exercise

When asked "What do you most value about the City of Lake Mills?", both City residents and participants from neighboring communities emphasized similar themes, including the small town character of the community and the sense of neighborliness, the downtown area and historic neighborhoods, surrounding agricultural and natural areas -- particularly Rock Lake, the public parks and trails that allow access to these undeveloped areas, and the City's location near larger metro areas.

When asked "What are some of the threats or challenges facing the City of Lake Mills both today and in the future?" participants from both the City and other communities noted a concern over pollution -- particularly water quality of Rock Lake -- shoreline development; survival of small businesses, particularly in the downtown; survival of small farms and worries over "mega farms"; concern over too much growth particularly "sprawl" and too many apartments; but also concerns about not attracting and retaining enough retail and employment; and improving and maintaining schools.

When asked "What potential positive trends, opportunities, and assets for Lake Mills both today and in the future?", top responses included the City's Main Street Program, the Arts Alliance of Greater Lake Mills, preservation of natural areas and parks including participation in regional and state preservation initiatives such as the Land Legacy Program, active economic development measures such as creation and development of the Business Park and the use of TIF financing, tourism, and opportunities for more traditional style neighborhoods with mixed housing and small scale commercial activities.

Individual participants were also asked "What is the current image of Lake Mills?" Many respondents used words like "Norman Rockwell" and "Mayberry"; a small, quaint community with beautiful natural areas and historic buildings, and a great place to raise a family, but noting concerns over some deteriorating older properties, quality of some "outer-ring" development, growth pressures, and local resistance to improving schools.

Individuals were also asked “What are some of the favorite places to take visitors?” and “What places do participants avoid taking visitors?” Among the favorite places to take visitors were the City Square, downtown shops and restaurants, various parks on Rock Lake and other natural areas, the Glacier Drumlin Trail, and walking through older neighborhoods. Places that participants avoided taking visitors included some newer subdivisions, older industrial properties, and various particular businesses and deteriorating properties.

Mapping Exercise

For this exercise, participants were asked to work in groups of six to eight people to express areas of concern and preferences for future uses using a detailed map of existing conditions in and around the City of Lake Mills. Participants were asked to show natural areas to be preserved, new recreation and pedestrian trails, transportation facilities or routes that require attention, community gathering areas of various types, areas to be redeveloped, and areas for new residential, commercial, and industrial development.

- Preservation Areas included the north and north east shore of Rock Lake, Tyrana Park, and an area north of Interstate 94, the Lake Mills Wildlife Area and other wetlands south of Rock Lake, farmland around the City, particularly to the south of the City, and the historic downtown.
- Areas for infill and redevelopment included intersection of Lake Street and Main Street, vacant downtown stores, the southern entrance to the City along STH 89, and various other specific properties.
- Gathering Places included possible campground north of Rock Lake, the downtown, a Fremont Street activity center, the schools, and some existing (such as Tyrana Park) and new public parks.
- Transportation issues included identification of several dangerous intersections, concerns over too much traffic on Highway 89, a possible alternative north-south route to relieve Highway 89, concerns over various existing streets in the downtown area, and concerns over a possible new interchange on I-94 at Wollins Road. Extensions of a bike trail network were identified for various areas.
- New recreation areas were identified in west and north end of the City.
- New residential areas included areas to the north, east, and south of the City. Many groups did not indicate areas for new residential development.
- New commercial areas included areas north and/or south of the I-94/STH 89 interchange, and various locations at the eastern edge of the City.
- New industrial areas included areas to the north of I-94 and build out of existing industrial park. Others included an area south of the City near the Lake Mills Wildlife Area.

Top Priorities

The third exercise involved identification the major issues concerning the future of the City and an opportunity for each participant to choose which of these issues was most important by assigning a point value. Each participant was allowed to assign a total of 5 points which could be divided as the participant saw fit (i.e. by assigning 1 point to five different issues, or assigning all 5 points to a single issue, or any combination in between).

The results from each of the three workshops are summarized below. Each topic or area of concern is followed by the cumulative number of points each issue received from participants of that workshop.

Top Priorities (March 31, 2007)

1. Focus on Infill/Redevelopment instead of growing outward (3)
2. Pedestrian and Bike friendliness (3)
3. Healthy Downtown (3)

4. Neighborhood connectivity (2)
5. Balance growth with preservation of existing community character (2)
6. Protect Rock Lake water quality, shoreland through Rock Lake Preservation Plan (Lake Management Plan) (2)

Top Priorities (April 4, 2007)

1. Protect lake shore development, wetlands (11)
2. Historic preservation of downtown (10)
3. Promote local small businesses (7)
4. Pedestrian safety; expand trail (6)
5. Ordinance enforcement (5)
6. Focus commercial development on downtown (4)
7. Public schools (3)
8. Pursue alternative energy sources (3)
9. Quality of life – small town character (2)
10. Continue planning efforts in the City (2)
11. Parks and recreation; community center (2)
12. Beautification of community entrances (2)
13. Affordable housing (1)
14. Protect farmland (1)
15. Purchase of development rights (1)
16. Economic development (1)

Top Priorities (April 12, 2007)

1. Keep/maintain schools (8)
2. Maintain quality of life (6)
3. Maintain natural area (6)
4. Revitalize downtown (5)
5. “Green” Building (5)
6. Preserve water supply (4)
7. Increase industrial business (4)
8. Improve bike/ped (3)
9. Slow growth (2)
10. Modernize city ordinances (2)
11. Better transportation access (2)
12. Increase access to community building (1)
13. Affordable housing (1)
14. Low density residential (1)
15. Decrease/update regulation (1)
16. Restore rail connection to metropolitan areas (1)
17. Improve traffic circulation East of the City
18. Maintain infrastructure

Focus Groups

On May 22nd 2007, the planning consultant conducted interviews with various representatives from the City of Lake Mills and surrounding communities. Interviewees were selected by City Staff at direction of the City's Plan Commission, which is serving as the steering committee for this Comprehensive Plan. Each participant was a member of one of the following four focus groups: the Land Development Focus Group, the Economic Development Focus Group, the Environmental Focus Group, and Intergovernmental Focus Group. The outcomes of the groups are summarized below.

1. The City had many positive attributes including:
 - Location in the region and next to Interstate 94;
 - Relatively healthy natural and agricultural resource base;
 - Provision of public facilities, services, and policies such as park and recreational facilities (including public access to Rock Lake), the City's bike trails and sidewalks, management of the dam, the publicly owned utility, emergency services, public schools, and allowance of a wide range of housing choices appropriate to the needs of City residents;
 - The layout and "small town feel" of existing neighborhoods, particularly in older areas of the community;
 - The City has fewer unsold homes on the market, indicating that the rate of housing construction has been roughly in line with actual demand;
 - Good industries and proactive policies for economic development through creation of the industrial park and use of TIF;
 - The downtown, with its mix of commercial and civic activities and assets;
 - Organizations such as the Main Street Program and Lake Mills Area Community Foundation; and
 - A boundary agreement between the City and Town of Lake Mills and a potential agreement between the City of Lake Mills and the Town of Milford.
2. Concerns about present and future conditions for the City and its planning area include:
 - The run down conditions of some older commercial, industrial, and residential property, particularly in the downtown and nearby areas;
 - The City is or may grow or add territory faster than actual demand for development and before build- out or redevelopment of previously annexed territory;
 - Some aspects of transportation planning such as upgrading of existing roads and planning for new roads is not keeping up with increased traffic and roads added to the City through annexation;
 - More effort is required by individual businesses, the business community collectively, the City government, and other agencies and programs to revitalize, manage, and market redevelopment in older parts of the community, particularly the downtown;
 - Provision of appropriate sites for future industrial and commercial development;
 - Potential disagreement over the desire to encourage use of the downtown and concerns the impact of increasing amounts of motor vehicle traffic, particularly along Main Street;
 - Under developed potential to capture the economic benefit of existing and potential regional tourism in the form of temporary and seasonal commercial lodging and commercial vendors that provide products geared toward visitors;

- Over use of Rock Lake by boaters and how best to method to manage it;
 - Lack of consistency between City and County shoreland regulations and other environmental standards;
 - Provision of affordable housing seen as a continual challenge;
 - City ordinances, regulations, and procedures and development review seem intentionally or unintentionally hostile to economic development;
 - Some concerns about the City growing north of Interstate 94 as it affects farmland, transportation, the City's sense community, the central role of the downtown; and
 - Some County, State, and Federal Programs for economic and housing needs are either underused through lack of local administration and outreach to individuals or are not tailored to local conditions and need.
3. Some ideas for future directions for the City include:
- City should continue to emphasize making the most use of currently annexed land through redevelopment and efficiently laid out new development;
 - City should grow in an efficient manner by limiting annexation of new areas until approved developments are substantially built out;
 - City should reserve enough land through planning and zoning for economic development, particularly industry at appropriate locations;
 - City should be broadly inclusive of different types of residential and non-residential provided that adequate planning, zoning, and design regulations exist to minimize conflicts, ensure high quality development, and maintenance of existing development;
 - The City should retain Tyrana Park as a public park;
 - The City should add new public open spaces as the City grows, particularly for passive, nature based uses;
 - The City should continue to extend its bike trail and sidewalk network;
 - The City should balance need for high development standards for residential development with the continued need for affordable housing;
 - The City should balance the desire for some individuals to tear down and construct new homes on older lots with respect for the scale and character of existing neighborhoods and environmental concerns;
 - City should encourage the maintenance and refurbishment of existing homes, particularly in the older neighborhoods;
 - The City should allow a mix of housing types but should also address how the pattern and arrangement of such housing at the neighborhood and community scale to prevent both over concentration and random combinations;
 - City government and downtown businesses should explore various ways of financing or attracting reinvestment to the downtown such as the creation of a BID district, public improvements, and working cooperatively to improve County, State, and Federal programs to attract reinvestment to older buildings;

- Downtown businesses should work together to coordinate business hours, share parking and trash collection facilities, identify and exploit local niche market opportunities (such as tourism), and cooperatively market the downtown as a whole;
- City could use short term or seasonal commercial lodging such as a hotel to provide options other than the City-owned seasonal mobile homes and trailers currently located on Rock Lake;
- The City should create the equivalent of an economic development coordinator that can assist local property owners', businesses, and industry with understanding the City's development review standards and processes, and with other programs, agencies, and regulations. The City should also coordinate with private interests to market the City to prospective employers;
- The private and public agencies should work with Jefferson County and other levels of government to ensure that programs designed to assist families, home-owners, and small businesses are accessible to City residents through promotion of existing programs and adjustments to existing programs such as WHEDA loans and Community Development Block Grants; and
- City should work with surrounding communities to establish formal understandings about growth and resource management;

Draft Plan Open House

TO BE COMPLETED AT A LATER DATE

D. Vision Statement

A Vision Statement is intended to broadly describe how a community would like to look, feel, and function in the future. All the goals, objectives, policies, programs, and actions outlined in this Plan should move the City towards achieving this vision.

CITY OF LAKE MILLS VISION STATEMENT

In 2030, the City of Lake Mills will be a multi-faceted City where residents live comfortably in close proximity to lively business centers, thriving industries, and unspoiled natural areas and waterways. The City will retain its historic connection to the area's natural surroundings through a network of parks, trails, protected natural areas, and surrounding agricultural and open space lands. New development will be planned so as not to diminish the quality of City's air, water, and land resources. The City's downtown will continue to be the civic and commercial heart of the City while newer business centers will serve other neighborhood and community needs. Residents of all ages live in attractive neighborhoods with safe, convenient access to the City's quality schools, parks, waterways, shopping, and employment centers.

E. Goals, Objectives, Policies, Programs, and Recommendations

Each subsequent chapter of this *Comprehensive Plan* includes goals, objectives, policies, programs, and recommendations that will provide direction and policy guidance to Plan Commission members, City Council members, residents, and other interested groups and individuals for the next 20+ years.

Goals, objectives, policies, programs, and recommendations are defined below:

- Goals are broad, advisory statements that express general public priorities about how the City should approach development issues. Goals are based on key issues and opportunities that are affecting the City.
- Objectives more specifically identify future direction. By accomplishing an objective, the City moves closer to achieving its goals.
- Policies are rules or courses of action implemented to achieve specific objectives. City staff and officials should use policies on a day-to-day basis when making decisions.
- Programs are specific projects or services that are intended to move the City toward achieving its goals, objectives, and policies.
- Recommendations provide detailed information regarding how to implement objectives, policies, and programs.

CITY OF LAKE MILLS SUMMARY OF GOALSAgricultural Resource Goal

Conserve farms and productive farmlands within the City's Planning Area.

Natural Resource Goal

Preserve the Natural Resources and Sensitive habitats within the City's Planning Area.

Cultural Resource Goal

Preserve the City's architectural and archaeological heritage and cultivate local civic and cultural life.

Land Use Goal

Provide for a broad range of land uses in a pattern that promotes efficient transportation and extension of municipal services and boundaries, minimizes conflicts between uses, harmonizes complementary land uses, and preserves property values.

Transportation Goal

Provide an efficient and safe transportation system for cars, trucks, transit, bicycles, and pedestrians.

Utilities and Community Facilities Goals

Provide high quality utilities, community facilities, and public services.

Coordinate utility, community facility, and emergency service planning with land use and transportation, natural resource, and economic development planning.

Ensure the provision of sufficient parks, recreational facilities, trails, and open spaces to provide for the health and recreation needs of all City residents

Housing and Neighborhood Development Goals

Provide for a range of housing types to meet the demands of existing and future residents of different ages, incomes, and preferences while preserving an emphasis on single family homes.

Create neighborhoods that provide residents with access to City amenities rather than isolated subdivisions.

Economic Development Goal

Strengthen and diversify the City's economic base to provide local employment, serve the needs of residents, and provide tax revenues to the City.

Attract and retain businesses that enhance the City's character, appearance, and image as a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Goal

Work cooperatively with surrounding communities and other governmental jurisdictions to achieve mutually beneficial ends and resolve differences constructively.