

The Challenge

Minnehaha County faces the challenge of managing its land resources in light of unprecedented population and economic growth. As nonfarm housing units increase in number across the countryside, impacts on the agricultural sector are being felt. Normal farming activities no longer go unnoticed by nonfarm residents. Farm consolidation and changes in agricultural operations and practices will undoubtedly lead to more intolerance by those not associated with farming. Similarly, new construction within the region is rapidly exhausting existing supplies of aggregate needed to support the building industry. Producers are finding that houses now occupy areas near potential new extraction sites and residents openly oppose the intrusion.

An explosion of residential development has occurred in the rural area over the last quarter century, ranging from scattered acreages to large subdivisions. Since 1990, over 900 housing units have been built outside municipal boundaries and a large supply of vacant parcels still exist for future residences. Yet the county has the opportunity to avoid sprawl development and the problems that plague other metropolitan areas.

Growth management efforts in the county were strengthened by the adoption of major zoning amendments in 1988. This plan seeks to build on the accomplishments of the past several years in accommodating the expected population and economic growth while maintaining the quality of life which residents presently enjoy.

The comprehensive plan establishes a broad framework for growth management by identifying goals and policies to assist in decisions on future development, striving to balance competing interests in the county's rural land base, and seeking to minimize conflicts between land uses. The policy statements will provide direction to the decision makers for dealing with future development issues. These policies form a common thread throughout the plan, stressing the critical importance of compact and contiguous growth, factors equally important to municipalities as they plan for the orderly and economical extension of public infrastructure. The plan emphasizes the importance of long term agricultural use by seeking to minimize interference with farming activities and discouraging premature development which leads to costly and inefficient public expenditures.

Fred Blair, nationally recognized in the planning profession, once said, *"If we bear firmly in mind that the end objective of planning is not the production of plans, but the production of informed, intelligent, well-organized action, we won't go far wrong."*