

# Planning Focus

Linking You to Richland County Comprehensive Planning

## Fact Sheet 11

### Addressing Land Use in the Comprehensive Plan

Land Use is one of the nine elements that a community's comprehensive plan is required to address under Wisconsin Law. The land use element is defined in Wisconsin Statute § 66.1001(2)(h) as:

“A compilation of objectives, policies, goals, maps and programs to guide the future development and redevelopment of public and private property. The element shall contain a listing of the amount, type, intensity and net density of existing uses of land...analyze trends in the supply, demand, and price of land, opportunities for redevelopment and existing and potential land-use conflicts. The element shall contain projections...of future residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial land uses. The element shall also include a series of maps that shows current land uses and future land uses that indicate productive agricultural soils, natural limitations for building site development, floodplains, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive lands, the boundaries of areas to which services of public utilities and community facilities...will be provided in the future.”



There are many potential uses for a community's land base, including:

- Homes
- Industry
- Retail and Service Businesses
- Food Production
- Recreation
- Schools
- Government Services
- Transportation
- Festivals and Community Celebrations
- Historical Preservation

Each community is unique and the exact mix of land uses should depend on the demand for each, considered in light of the community's vision for the future. If your community has seen extensive growth in housing it may be that the demand for housing will continue. However, if your community states in its vision that it wants to balance new residential growth with protection of natural areas, your land use strategy may be to limit new homes to specific areas of the community.

In this regard, the community's vision serves as a guide to locating specific types of land uses. Other factors to consider when determining where different types of development should occur include:

- Proximity to related land uses (ex. Do you want to link your parks to other natural areas in order to create corridors for wildlife and recreational activities?)
- Proximity to supportive land uses. (ex. What type of transportation should be provided next to an industrial facility?)
- Proximity to conflicting land uses. (ex. How close do you want your school to a major highway?)
- Appropriateness of location for land use. (ex. Do you want to put homes on “prime” soils?)
- Natural features that may restrict land uses. (ex. Is the slope of the site or the depth to bedrock a concern for the activities that are associated with a particular land use?)

Land use decisions are important because they impact, among other things, the appearance, economic value, and physical quality of your community's land. And they involve rights of ownership and human needs. These factors make land use decisions complex. People value land in different ways; therefore, within the land use element, it is the task of a community to strike a balance that is sensitive to both individual needs/desires and community needs/desires.

# Integrating Land Use with Other Plan Elements

When planning for land use, communities need to take all of the other elements of their comprehensive plan into consideration. Land use is the element where you begin to determine how everything you have already done in your plan pieces together on your community's physical landscape.

**Housing:** Communities should consider location of housing in relation to other land uses. What locations will minimize conflicts between homeowners and users of neighboring areas of land?

**Transportation:** Communities should consider the impacts of transportation systems on where businesses and homes will locate. They should discuss how specific land uses may require road improvements.

**Utilities and Community Facilities:** Communities should discuss if the placement of homes, businesses or other land uses will be limited by access and proximity to utilities and community facilities (schools, libraries) of the quality expected by users.

**Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources:** Communities should discuss if certain

agricultural, natural and cultural resources should be preserved or protected, as this will limit the location of other land uses.

It is important to remember when planning for land use that each time you designate a particular land use for an area you may limit future potential uses of that land and the land adjacent to it. It is also important to consider strategies for minimizing conflicts between land uses. And lastly, remember that land uses your community selects need to be discussed with neighboring communities. You want to make sure that you are not, for example, planning a recreational area on your side of the jurisdictional boundary, while the community next door has planned an industrial park that will impact the scenic view you were hoping would attract recreational users.

## Some Tools for Land Use

Your community should first determine its land use goals. Then when you are working on the implementation element of your comprehensive plan you can consider a variety of tools to help you achieve your desired mix, density and location of land uses. Each tool has strengths and weaknesses that should be weighed.

- Agricultural Preservation Plan
- Lot Sizes
- Housing Densities
- Purchase of Development Rights
- Transfer of Development Rights
- Conservation Easements
- Cluster Development
- Conservation Subdivisions
- Overlay Zones
- Extraterritorial Zoning
- Buffer Zones Between Conflicting Land Uses

Sources: author unknown. (Accessed October, 2004). *An Introduction to Land Use Issues*. [Available Online at <http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/landcenter/>]. Center for Land Use Education. College of Natural Resources/UW Extension, University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point.

**Editor:** Sarah Burgert, Community Resource Development Educator  
**Design & Layout:** Mandy Jordan, Activity Assistant

### Richland County UW-Extension

1100 Highway 14 West  
Richland Center, WI 53581

Phone: 608-647-6148  
Fax: 608-647-9116

Email: [steven.kohlstedt@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:steven.kohlstedt@ces.uwex.edu)

For permission to use this and other Planning Focus Fact Sheets for your newsletter or organization contact Sarah Burgert at the Green County UW-Extension office .

An EEO/Affirmative Action employer, UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements. This document can be provided in an alternative format by calling Mandy Jordan at (608) 328-9440 (voice) (711 for Wisconsin Relay)



**UW**  
**Extension**

**We're on the Web!**  
[www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/richland](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/richland)

July 2005