

# **LA CRESCENT TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN A STATEMENT OF GOALS AND POLICIES**

## **SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **0101 PURPOSE OF PLANNING**

In order to update and revise the existing zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations, it is necessary at the same time to develop some basic goals and growth policies for future development in the township. These goals and policies can then serve as a basis for the generalized comprehensive plan and ordinances including the zoning districts and the performance standards in the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations.

### **0102 MAJOR LAND USES**

Basically, La Crescent Township is an urban township with a majority of the land consisting of agriculture, forest land and numerous residential development. In fact, the township is somewhat unique among townships within the county because of its diverse land area and development.

### **0103 DISTINGUISHING NATURAL FEATURES**

Perhaps the most distinguishing natural features in the township are the steep bluffs covered with hardwood forests and a number streams, and lowlands cutting through the bluffs. Some of the streams represent environmentally sensitive areas in that they are classified as trout streams. The Mississippi River including a number of major sloughs run along the eastern border of the township and serves as a source of recreation as well as river commerce.

### **0104 AGRICULTURAL LAND**

Much of the agricultural land is located in the lowlands or on top of the bluffs. The proportion of cultivated land in La Crescent Township is less than 25 percent.

### **0105 URBAN GROWTH AREAS**

Most of the urban growth in the township is currently taking place in or near the City of La Crescent. Growth continues to spill over from La Crosse, Wisconsin, into La Crescent and La Crescent Township. Due to the fact that this area does not contain prime agricultural land, the growth should be encouraged to take place in, or adjacent to the City of La Crescent rather than to scatter throughout the township.

**Parts 0106-0106**

**0106 SUMMARY**

In summary, most of the land in the township consists of either agricultural land or environmentally sensitive areas such as the bluffs with the hardwood forests, trout streams and wetland sloughs adjacent to the Mississippi River. Most of the growth is currently taking place in or near La Crescent.

Urban growth will be encouraged to continue within the township in areas where services can be easily provided and where growth will not result in the loss of prime agricultural land or environmentally sensitive areas.

**SECTION 2  
THE PROTECTION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND  
AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS**

**0201 LIMITING NON-FARM DEVELOPMENT**

The La Crescent Township Board of Supervisors has adopted land use regulations and ordinances which limit the density of development in the unincorporated areas of the township. This is accomplished by limiting the density of non-farm residential development to one residential unit per quarter-quarter section (approximately 40 acres) in the agricultural district. The minimum lot size is one acre to ensure that the private sewer systems will function properly.

**0202 PURPOSES FOR LIMITING NON-FARM DEVELOPMENT**

The following are the major reasons for adopting this system of regulating development.

- 1. Agriculture is a Vital Part of the Local Economy.** The township is essentially an urban township which has been and continues to be highly dependent upon a diverse economy. This is true both in relation to agricultural production in the township as well as agricultural related industries and businesses in the communities. It is of interest to both the township as well as the local communities to protect the existing agricultural land as a permanent and vital part of the local economy.
- 2. Prohibit Scattered Urban Development.** Another reason for adopting the density control system is to prohibit scattered urban development into the rural areas of the township with its consequent adverse effects on agriculture, rising service costs, etc. Urban development should be encouraged to take place where urban services can easily be provided or extended.
- 3. Minimize Urban/Rural Conflicts.** Scattered urban development in prime agricultural areas often results in conflicts between the urban land uses and agricultural production. Oftentimes, there are complaints from the occupants of non-farm residential units over the noise, smell and hours of operation from agricultural operations. In order to minimize this conflict, there is a need to carefully control the density of non-farm development.
- 4. Minimize Local Service Costs.** An increasingly important reason for regulating the density of urban development is to minimize public service costs such as road maintenance, etc. and the consequent increases in property taxes.
- 5. Protect Woodland Areas.** Woodlands serve a vital function in terms of minimizing soil erosion and energy demands (windbreaks), as a means of minimizing excessive storm water runoff by absorbing storm water and as a continuous source of lumber and firewood. Therefore it is important to protect the woodlands by regulating the density of development in these areas.

**6. Protect Wetlands, Sloughs and Streams.** The sloughs and streams in the township serve an important function in terms of absorbing storm water runoff and snow melt. They also act as a natural filter for the storm water and to serve as wildlife habitat. It is important to regulate development in these areas in order to minimize storm water runoff, soil erosion and loss of wild life habitat.

**7. Minimize Pollution Problems.** The density control system adopted by the township is also designed to minimize pollution problems from private sewer systems. This is the reason for a minimum lot size of one acre for residential dwellings.

**8. The Density Control System is the Best Approach Available.** The density control system of one non-farm dwelling per quarter-quarter section with a minimum lot size of one acre in the agricultural district is the best system for protecting agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas from scattered residential development.

The reason for this is that by controlling the density of development (one dwelling unit per quarter-quarter section) and at the same time requiring a minimum lot size of only one acre, there is a minimum amount of land removed from agricultural production.

In comparison, a minimum lot size system of 5-10 acres often results in removal of substantial amount of agricultural land. In addition, this land often is poorly maintained with substantial amount of weeds growing on the land.

## SECTION 3 DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND POLICIES

### 0301 OVERALL GROWTH

The overall growth of La Crescent Township shall be guided by the following goals and policies:

#### Overall Growth Goals

1. Preservation of commercial agriculture as a viable, permanent land use and an essential long-term permanent activity in the township.
2. Protection of major natural resource areas in the township including the floodplains, trout streams, steep bluffs and hardwood forests to serve as a basis for recreation and logging in the township.
3. Location of urban density development near the City of La Crescent where urban services can easily be provided and extended.

#### Overall Growth Policies

1. Enact programs to protect and preserve prime agricultural land which has been historically tilled.
2. Locate rural housing development away from recognized commercial agricultural areas and into areas with marginal agricultural soil, and areas adjacent to the city of La Crescent where urban services can easily be extended.
3. Allow rural housing, which is not scheduled to receive central sewage disposal service only in areas where the soils, topography and water table are such that the individual, or community sewage disposal systems can properly function.
4. Enact programs to protect and preserve shorelands, floodplains, trout streams and steep bluffs from urban density development which may be detrimental to the general public health and welfare.
5. Adopt State of Minnesota standards as minimum requirements for the protection of floodplains, solid waste disposal, feedlots, sanitary waste disposal, water quality standards, and other necessary pollution control measures.
6. Coordinate township policies with the policies of the City of La Crescent whenever possible for extension of its development into the rural areas.
7. Enact programs to protect the natural resources in the township. Use natural resource information as a basis for determining future areas for urban expansion.

**Parts 0301-0302**

- 8.** Locate transportation facilities in such a manner as to minimize environmental damage, and reinforce township growth policies and plans for the area. These uses include highways, airports, railroads and other modes of moving people and goods.
- 9.** Adopt utility standards and programs (sewer and water) that will minimize pollution problems and reinforce the township development policies.
- 10.** Prohibit extensions of public services into areas where development should not occur due to natural and man-made constraints. Such areas include floodplains, steep bluffs, major forest and parks and wildlife areas.
- 11.** Enact programs to preserve and protect historically significant areas throughout the township.

**0302 AGRICULTURAL AREAS**

The preservation of the agricultural areas of La Crescent Township shall be guided by the following goals and policies:

**Agricultural Goals**

- 1.** Preservation of commercial agriculture as a viable, permanent land use and as a significant economic activity in the township.

**Agricultural Policies**

- 1.** Protect and preserve agricultural land throughout the township by strictly limiting development in agricultural areas.
- 2.** Promote legislation which will retain and promote agriculture as significant economic activity and land use in the township.
- 3.** Encourage governmental units to avoid locating major public facilities, roads, and developments in good agricultural land areas.
- 4.** Encourage farmers to adopt and maintain sound soil erosion control practices such as contour plowing, strip cropping, minimum tillage, shelter belts, etc.
- 5.** Carefully control the location of feed lots and other animal confinement areas in the township to minimize pollution and nuisance problems.
- 6.** Require lot sizes of sufficient size to meet the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and township standards for private sewer systems.

### **0303 URBAN EXPANSION AREAS**

Areas adjacent to incorporated communities are most susceptible to urban growth pressures; therefore, distinct policies should be adopted to assure orderly and timely growth, and to retain the land for agriculture purposes until such time as conversion to another use is appropriate.

#### **Urban Expansion Area Goals**

1. Orderly urban growth and expansion in the areas around the City of La Crescent.

#### **Urban Expansion Area Policies**

1. Carefully regulate urban expansion in the areas around La Crescent to minimize leap-frog development.
2. Develop a review procedure between the City of La Crescent and the township for all development proposed in this area.
3. Base any additional future urban expansion area around the City of La Crescent on projected land use needs as determined by population projections and urban growth trends.

### **0304 UNINCORPORATED URBAN COMMUNITIES**

Unincorporated urban communities in township are unique in their development having residential and commercial areas. However, these areas have no identifiable boundaries and are governed by the township.

Because of their unique situation, a series of policies for land use within these areas are needed and the zoning of each of the major land use categories must fall under specific districts.

#### **Unincorporated Urban Community Goals**

1. Orderly urban development and redevelopment to minimize pollution problems and conflicts with agricultural uses.

#### **Unincorporated Urban Community Policies**

1. Recognize unincorporated communities as urban type densities and require all land use controls to apply accordingly.
2. Require all new urban density development in the unincorporated communities to install a Community Sewer System that meets the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency requirements, and the Township Sanitation Ordinance requirements. Urban densities are those identified in the Township Zoning Ordinance.

**Parts 0304-0305**

3. Require all new development to conform to the land use classification zoning district as established by the township.
4. Allow existing parcels of land not meeting minimum lot standards or density requirements to be developed providing they meet minimum standards for disposal of onsite sewage disposal.

**0305 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Economic Development Goals**

1. Promotion of diversified economic development in the township which will provide for continued employment opportunities for citizens.
2. Continued expansion of trade and service industries in the township.
3. Location of commercial facilities so as to provide reasonable access for the citizens to adequate supply of goods and services.
4. Continued expansion of industrial development in the township to provide employment opportunities for the citizens.
5. Location of commercial and industrial development to minimize conflict with surrounding land uses.

**Economic Development Policies**

1. Encourage programs that will promote diversified economic development in the township, including industrial, retail, trade, and service industries.
2. Encourage industrial development in such a way as to enhance the tax base and increase employment opportunities while at the same time place minimal demands on the environment.
3. Encourage major commercial developments (shopping centers) to locate in or near existing cities where public services (sewer and water) can easily be extended and near places of good accessibility.
4. Discourage unplanned, scattered, and strip commercial development that will have an adverse effect on existing commercial centers..



## **0306 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Residential Development Goals**

1. A broad choice of housing types for all income groups.
2. A convenient access for housing to public and private facilities and activities.
3. Safe, healthful and blight-free residences and residential developments.
4. Encourage residential development that is energy efficient and which does not degrade the environment.

### **Residential Development Policies**

1. Encourage the location of residential subdivisions and major developments near existing cities where urban services can easily be provided.
2. Discourage scattered and "leap-frog" residential development in commercial agricultural areas.
3. Encourage the use of natural resource information such as soils, topography, groundwater, etc., in residential site designs.
4. Prohibit the location of rural housing with septic tanks and drain-fields in areas of steep slopes, high bedrock or water table to minimize pollution problems.
5. Use soils and other-natural resource information as a basis for establishing minimum lot sizes for rural housing with septic tanks and drain-fields.
6. Encourage the location of mobile homes within mobile home parks where adequate services can be provided.
7. Encourage the location of mobile home parks in urban residential or mobile home residential districts which are served by central sewer and water services.
8. Only allow the location of multi-family residential development in areas where community sewer and water facilities are available.
9. Develop and adopt provisions in development ordinances which encourage innovative site and housing unit designs.
10. Enact programs to encourage the rehabilitation of existing older homes.

## 0307 NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

### Natural Resources Protection Goals

1. Protection and enhancement of the air, water, and land resources in the township as a vital ingredient of the living environment.

### Natural Resources Protection Policies

1. Promote land management practices that protect the natural resources in the township including wetlands and sloughs, bluffs, woodlands, and prime agricultural areas.
2. Protect the woodlands and hardwood forests in the township by carefully regulating the location and density of development and by prohibiting the clear-cutting of the woodlands. Woodlands need to be protected for the following reasons:
  - (a) To absorb stormwater in order to minimize stormwater runoff and the consequent soil erosion;
  - (b) to serve as a continuous source of lumber and firewood; and
  - (c) to serve as vegetation in order to retain a proper balance of nature.
3. Protect existing wetlands and sloughs in the township by prohibiting development and draining of these areas. These areas need to be protected for the following reasons:
  - (a) To absorb stormwater and snow melt and thereby minimizing rapid stormwater runoff or consequent soil erosions.
  - (b) To act as a natural filter for stormwater runoff.
  - (c) To serve as a wildlife habitat.
4. Promote the preservation and improvement of all trout streams in an unpolluted state by enacting floodplain and shoreland ordinances.
5. Promote soils conservation and erosion control practices in the township.
6. Encourage subdivisions and urban development to conform to the natural limitations presented by topography and soils so as to create the least potential for soil erosion.
7. Control the location of feedlots and other animal confinement areas in the township to minimize pollution and nuisance problems.

8. Regulate the location of solid waste disposal sites to minimize pollution and nuisance problems.

## **0308 OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION**

### **Open Space and Recreation Goals**

1. Sufficient parks and open space to meet the recreation needs of the citizens in the township.
2. Recreation facilities and programs in the existing parks to meet the needs of all income and age groups.

### **Open Space and Recreation Policies**

1. Establish sufficient township parks to compliment the state parks to meet the demands of citizens in the township.
2. Provide sufficient recreation facilities in the existing parks to maximize the use of the parks.
3. Encourage the protection of natural resource areas (wetlands, floodplains, forests, steep slopes) through public acquisition for both active and passive recreation uses.

## **0309 PUBLIC FACILITY DEVELOPMENT**

### **Public Facility Development Goals**

1. Provision of public facilities in a manner that maximizes public health, safety and welfare.

### **Public Facility Development Policies**

1. Discourage development in areas where on-site sewer systems are likely to malfunction due to poor soil characteristics.
2. Enforce the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's standards concerning on-site sewer systems.
3. Discourage extension of public utilities over large undeveloped parcels to serve small pockets of scattered development.
4. Concentrate major residential, commercial and industrial land uses where adequate water supply and sewage treatment systems can be provided for the proposed use.

**Parts 0309-0311**

5. Carefully regulate the location of pipelines and high voltage transmission lines in the township to minimize pollution problems and the impact on prime agricultural and urban areas.

**0310 TRANSPORTATION**

**Transportation Goals**

1. A transportation system which compliments land use development and land use policies through the township.

**Transportation Policies**

1. Develop a transportation system which reinforces the township's growth policies.
2. Integrate land use and transportation plans to minimize the adverse effects of transportation systems (noise, air pollution) on the adjacent development.
3. To the extent possible, avoid locating transportation facilities so as to adversely affect the natural resources and prime agricultural areas of the township.
4. Encourage the development of a transportation system which properly balances considerations of safety, accessibility, environmental protection and cost.
5. Carefully control land use development at the major transportation intersections and interchanges to avoid compromising safety, accessibility and functions of the highways.
6. Encourages the development of a transportation system which properly integrates the various types and levels of highways (state, county, and local) to maximize safety and accessibility.

**0311 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

**Implementation Strategy Goals**

1. Implementation of the township goals and policies.

**Implementation Strategy Policies**

1. Develop and adopt methods that will effectively implement the township's policies.
2. Encourage effective and coordinated implementation methods that properly balance private incentives and the protection of the public interest.

- 3.** Effectively coordinate the various public implementation tools such as regulatory devices (zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, etc.) public acquisition, utility extensions (sewer, water, highways) and property tax policies.
  
- 4.** Update the township ordinances (zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations) on a periodic basis.

**SECTION 4  
GENERALIZED TOWNSHIP LAND USE PLAN**

**0401 OVER-ALL LAND USE PLAN**

As was indicated previously, La Crescent Township is essentially an urban township with most of the existing land uses consisting either of agricultural land or natural resource areas such as woodlands, steep bluffs, sloughs, rivers and trout streams. Agricultural production is an essential part of the local economy, both to the township as a whole as well as the urban areas. Thus, the township officials have determined to strictly regulate any non-farm development in the agricultural areas. The township officials have also determined that it is important to protect the environmentally sensitive areas such as the bluffs, woodlands and water resources from scattered urban growth to minimize pollution to the ground water supply, to minimize soil erosion and to preserve the wildlife habitat.

For these reasons, the township officials have designated most of the land in the township for agricultural and natural resource protection in the land use plan. In order to effectively protect these areas, the zoning ordinance has designated most of the township for Agricultural Protection District, where a density control system (one non-farm dwelling unit per quarter quarter section) will be adopted. In addition, the floodplains and shorelands of the streams will be protected through adoption of state-mandated standards for these areas.

Most of the urban development will be encouraged to take place in or near the City of La Crescent to reinforce existing trends of growth moving into this area from La Crosse, Wisconsin. In addition, this general area does not contain much prime agricultural land.

It should also be noted that existing subdivisions in various parts of the township have been incorporated in both the land use plan and zoning ordinance. However, future proposed subdivisions on prime agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas will be discouraged.

**0402 LAND USE PLAN FOR AREAS ADJACENT TO THE CITY OF LA CRESCENT**

Several urban development projects either exist or have been proposed adjacent to the City of La Crescent in the township. While urban development will be encouraged to take place within the city, in some cases this type of development will be encouraged in certain rural areas such as adjacent to La Crescent provided that adequate sanitary sewer service either is available or can safely be provided.

As was indicated previously, much of the urban growth in the township has taken place adjacent to La Crescent as an extension of growth from La Crosse, Wisconsin. La Crescent Township Board of Supervisors have determined as part of the land use plan to encourage further growth in this area since growth in this area will not have an adverse effect on agriculture. Much of the area north and west of the City has been designated for future urban residential development. In addition, some areas have been designated for highway commercial and industrial development.

**SECTION 5 ~ ADOPTION AND EFFECTIVE DATE**

**0501 PUBLIC HEARING AND PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION.**

The La Crescent Township Planning Commission, after proper notice and publication, held a public hearing at the La Crescent Community Building, 336 South 1<sup>st</sup> Street, La Crescent, Minnesota on the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan on July 29, 2002. After hearing public testimony and with due deliberation, the planning commission voted \_\_ Ayes and \_\_ Nays to recommend adoption of this Comprehensive Plan to the La Crescent Township Board of Supervisors.

**0502 ADOPTION**

The La Crescent Township Board of Supervisors, after proper notice and publication, met on July 29, 2002, at the said La Crescent Community Building, and after considering the recommendation of the Planning Commission, the Board of Supervisors voted \_\_ Ayes and \_\_ Nay to adopt this Comprehensive Plan.

**0503 EFFECTIVE DATE**

This Comprehensive Plan shall be in full force and effect from and after publication.

Adopted July 29, 2002.

Published: \_\_\_\_\_, 2002.

Chairperson, La Crescent Township  
Board of Supervisors

Attest:  
Township Clerk