

Introduction - Definitions

A major purpose of this Land Use Plan is to provide a guide for future decision-making by County Officials. Most land use decisions deal with incremental changes in zoning and land uses proposed by individual property owners. Often, such decisions seem not to be crucial, nor overly important when viewed in isolation. However, the precedents set, policies established and accumulated effect over time of many such decisions can lead to unexpected and undesirable results. Most, if not all of the land use and environmental problems in Wright County have resulted from decisions, or the absence of decisions made during times past, when little or no effort was made to regulate land use and development.

It is often too easy to become overly involved with the details and emotions of individual land use cases, and to lose sight of the overall goals and purposes of regulating land use. The Land Use Plan is meant to serve as the primary framework within which land use decisions should be made. Zoning proposals will be evaluated primarily by their conformance to the Land Use Plan. It is not meant to be totally inflexible, as rare and unusual circumstances may justify occasional departures from the plan maps. However, consistent or simply convenient departures from the plan without adequate justification will eventually defeat the purpose and goals of the Plan. Deviations from the plan should only be made in the public interest, and not to benefit an individual or small group.

The following definitions of the districts on the maps shall be used in making future decisions to carry out the Land Use Plan, and to review specific proposals. (Incorporated Cities, Public Lands and Lakes are self-explanatory).

Agricultural - Designates those areas appropriate to remain in agricultural use over the long-term. Purpose is to both preserve productive farmland for the future and to protect agricultural activity from encroachment by other activities. Existing land types may include productive farmland, pasture, farm woodlots, wetlands and other agricultural or open lands. Appropriate zoning will generally include only the agricultural district. Rezoning to other districts considered only in rare and unique circumstances, or for riparian lots on shorelands especially suited to residential development.

Rural/Residential - Designates those areas where a combination of agriculture, hobby farms and very large-lot residential areas is deemed appropriate. Purpose is to provide a buffer between agricultural and other uses, and also to provide housing opportunities in a rural environment where large lot sizes and the rural atmosphere will be maintained. Existing land types may include large wooded areas, non-prime farmland, pasture and other lands in areas not well suited to long term agricultural uses. Appropriate zoning may include Agricultural, Agricultural/Residential, or, in unique circumstances, R-2(a). Rezoning from agricultural to Agricultural/Residential will be considered on a case by case basis, and not considered to be automatic, with the need for residential land, effect on nearby agricultural operations, the timing of the proposal in light of land uses in the area and plan policies being prime considerations. Rezoning to R-1 or R-2 will only be considered for riparian lots on shorelands especially suited to residential development. Rezoning to R-2a may be appropriate in unique circumstances such as: infill for areas

which are already developed in a similar manner; adjacent to developed areas with smaller lot sizes to serve as a transition; and other unique situations which do not establish R- 2a as a new zoning district in a previously "undeveloped" area.

Residential Large Lot – Primarily designates those areas that have already been converted to a rural/suburban, residential environment with lot sizes ranging from 2 to 10 acres due to past decisions. Undeveloped lands that are surrounded or nearly surrounded by such patterns may also be included in this district. Existing land types may include large wooded areas, non-productive farmland near existing developed areas, infill on lands near highly developed lakeshore areas and other areas where large-lot development may occur without posing a threat to the environment or long-term agricultural uses. Appropriate zoning may include Agricultural, Agricultural/Residential, R-2(a) and, in special cases, R-2. Rezoning from agricultural to residential districts will generally be considered appropriate for large-lot (R-2a) proposals and for smaller sizes (R-2) in cases where existing development trends or environmental factors are appropriate. Rezoning to R-1 will only be considered for riparian lots on shorelands especially suited to that type of residential development, or for small areas of "infill" which are predominately R-1 already.

Residential - Designates existing residential areas that are already characterized by relatively small lots (for an unsewered area) and those limited undeveloped areas deemed appropriate for conversion to similar use. Most such areas occur as a result of lakeshore development prior to any zoning or environmental regulation, and other isolated areas which developed with small lots historically. In general, due to the environmental and health impacts of developing areas with small lots and on-site sewage treatment, such development will be discouraged. However, in certain limited cases, such as riparian lots on general development and recreation development lakes, or "infill" in areas which are surrounded by similar development, some expansion of residential areas can be allowed. Rezoning from agricultural to residential districts will generally be considered appropriate in this district, depending on environmental factors. Rezoning to R-1 will only be considered for riparian lakeshore lots, or as "infill" where most surrounding land is already zoned R-1. Multi-family structures are not allowed in areas without municipal sewer and water services.

Commercial - Designates existing commercial areas and undeveloped land well suited to commercial development that does not require a significant level of urban services. Purpose is to provide for limited commercial development in areas that are especially well- suited to such use. Existing land types may include areas near major highway interchanges, existing service centers (unincorporated communities) or adjacent to urban commercial areas. Appropriate zoning may include the B-1 or B-2 district.

Limited Industrial - Designates existing industrial areas as well as undeveloped land considered especially well suited to industrial uses which do not require urban services. Purpose is to provide for certain industrial uses which may not be appropriate in urban areas, or are near urban industrial areas or on land especially well suited to industrial use. Existing land types may include areas near major highway interchanges, land with

access to rail lines and are otherwise appropriate and land near urban areas with a high suitability to industrial use. Appropriate zoning includes the I-I district.

Transition Areas - The Northeast Quadrant of Wright County is expecting significant growth over the next 15-20 years. The county has a policy that most growth be directed toward the cities. In order to accommodate this continued growth pressure, cities will need to annex land and provide municipal services to this land. The county is not advocating more annexation than is needed to accommodate a reasonable amount of growth. The purpose in establishing the transition area is to properly manage the land at the urban/rural fringe. Management of these areas consists of identifying and designating areas to economically and efficiently accommodate growth pressures. The proper management of these areas will avoid premature annexation, prohibit large lot residential development that would make provision of municipal services unnecessarily expensive, and limit the possibility of incompatible future land uses. In an ideal situation, orderly annexation agreements would be developed that would provide more detailed plans for the transition areas.

Flood Prone Areas - Designates areas subject to flooding. Existing land types are generally undeveloped, and vary from agricultural fields to permanent wetlands. In most cases, Flood Plain overlay zoning exists and will not change. Rezoning to residential districts will only be considered in those areas which can be shown to be not subject to flooding, have public road access routes which do not flood and are adjacent to or surrounded by residential designation in the Land Use Plan map for the area.

Resource Land – This land use classification identifies land that has unique environmental or natural resources. The intent of this district is to protect these resource lands as being special and unique. The housing density allowed would be one unit per 40 acres just as it is in the agricultural district. Agriculture is an appropriate zoning district for this land use category. Any uses in this district may be subject to special review because of the natural resources in these areas.

Aggregate Resources – This area is designated for areas that have high concentrations of aggregate resources. Housing would be allowed in this area at agricultural densities (1 per 40 acres) but subject to review of home placement to ensure that the placement does not interfere with potential future mining activities. and after an investigation is done to determine if useable aggregate resources are located on the property where the home or development is proposed. If there is a significant amount of aggregate resources on the property a plan may need to be submitted that shows how the aggregate resources can be mined in the future. Agricultural zoning would continue to be appropriate for this district. A more detailed study, such as an AUAR is recommended for the aggregate area that would include the County, applicable cities and townships in the area. Any uses in this district may be subject to special review because of the aggregate resources in the area.