

Summary Land Use Definitions and Plans

1988 Wright County Land Use Plan

Land Use Designations/Definitions

Agricultural

Designates those areas appropriate to remain in agricultural uses over the long-term. Purpose is to both preserve productive farmland for the future and to protect agricultural activity from encroachment by the 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 is considered only in rare and unique circumstances, or for riparian lots on shore lands especially suited to residential development.

Agricultural/Residential

Designates those areas where a combination of agricultural, 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.

Residential Large Lot

Designates those areas deemed appropriate for conversion to a rural/suburban, residential environment in the near future. Purpose is to provide for a rural living environment where hobby farms and large lot sizes will be maintained over the long term. 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.

Residential

Designates existing residential areas and those undeveloped areas deemed appropriate for conversion to residential use. Purpose is to provide for housing opportunities in the unincorporated areas where environmental and other factors are appropriate. Existing land types may be of any type, but this district is generally limited to existing developed areas, to riparian lakeshore, and adjacent to growing urban areas.

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.

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 lands with access to rail lines and are otherwise appropriate and land near urban areas with a high suitability to industrial use.

Major Growth Areas

Designates areas adjacent to cities where a combination of uses in an urban or near-urban environment is likely to develop over the long term. Purpose is to provide a buffer between urban and rural areas, and promote cooperation between affected cities and townships in making land use decisions. Existing land types may vary widely from active farms to industrial uses.

Flood Prone Areas

Designates areas subject to flooding. Existing land types are generally undeveloped, and vary from agricultural fields to permanent wetlands.

Individual Township Land Use Plans

Buffalo Township

According to the 1988 Land Use Plan, Buffalo Township contains the most heavily urbanized area of the County (the City of Buffalo) but also prime agricultural areas with little or no non-farm development. Major growth areas surround Lake Pulaski and the City of Buffalo, with an area of suburban and agricultural /residential growth extending north of the City approximately one mile on either side of the State Highway 25 corridor. Most commercial and industrial development is expected to occur within City limits, with some also along the State Highway 55 corridor. Gilchrist, Constance and Mary Lakes are characterized by suburban residential development, while the other lakes in the Township are primarily rural and undeveloped.

Buffalo Township has provided significant areas for growth of all types, but also provides a large area for agricultural protection. By concentrating growth in and around the City of Buffalo, it is hoped that suburban service demands can be limited to those areas, while the agricultural areas can be protected to those areas,

while the agricultural can be protected from suburban encroachment. Coordination of growth plans, development review and service delivery need to be better coordinated between the City and Township in the future. Better communication and coordination between local units could improve the nature and type of development taking place, lessen service delivery costs and prevent divisive annexation disputes.

Monticello Township

Monticello Township includes the largest land area of any township in Wright County, and exhibits a wide variety of land uses. Urban development has occurred near the City of Monticello, particularly to the southwest along the State Highway 25 corridor and to the east along the Mississippi River and Interstate 94. Zoning jurisdiction for a large area near the city lies with the Monticello Orderly Annexation Area Board. Some large lot development is scattered throughout the township, especially in the extreme western area where the countryside is more rolling and dotted with small lakes. Intensive lakeshore development occurs on Birch Lake and, to a lesser degree, on Cedar and Gilchrist Lakes. Pelican Lake, though one of the largest in the County, is mostly shallow and protected from suburban development by special shore land zoning standards.

Despite growth pressures resulting from Interstate 94 and the growth of the City of Monticello, Monticello Township has remained predominately rural and agricultural in nature. Efforts to concentrate development into or close to the City in recent years have been largely successful, and are expected to continue through the designation of the Monticello Orderly Annexation Area (MOAA) as the primary growth district. The MOAA board is currently pursuing a more detailed plan to guide the growth within this area. Some Agricultural/Residential districts are planned for the extreme west side of the Township, both as a continuation of existing trends and to coincide with similar development in neighboring townships.

Rockford Township

The following two policy recommendations are valid and considered important by the Town Board.

Lakeshore Development

There are several small, undeveloped lakes in Rockford Township, and most are located within the Agricultural District. These lakes are often surrounded by soils with poor agricultural productivity, but can provide excellent residential sites due to the scenic vistas, recreational opportunities and other amenities associated with lakeshore residences. The County Land Use Plan allows rezoning in the Agricultural district "only in rare and unique circumstances, or for riparian lots on shore lands especially suited to residential development." Due to the factors noted above, and subject to a review of the capacity of the existing and proposed road system and the potential effect on nearby farm operations, the Committee recommends that all lakes in Rockford Township should be considered suited to residential development for one tier of riparian lots. Lot sizes, and the appropriate residential zone, will depend on the type of lake and a thorough review of the nature of the area to be developed.

Agricultural/Residential Development

The use of clustering or Planned Unit Developments in the Agricultural/Residential district is strongly recommended, in order to promote the preservation of agricultural land, sensitive environmental areas, and the "open space" of the rural area. Rezoning to the Agricultural/Residential zone within the Agricultural/Residential plan district is generally recommended, but subdivision approval should be carefully reviewed to avoid proposals which unnecessarily divide good crop fields, disrupt natural drainage patterns or otherwise conflict with the goals and policies of the Wright County Land Use Plan. New roads should be required of developers if necessary, in order to provide access to the areas most suited to residential development, to neighboring lands, and to the Township's road system. Subdivision design should be contingent upon consistency with the surrounding area, respect for natural systems, the preservation of cropland and natural amenities and the concerns noted above and elsewhere in the plan. "Blocks" of ten-acre lots along existing roads should be avoided.