



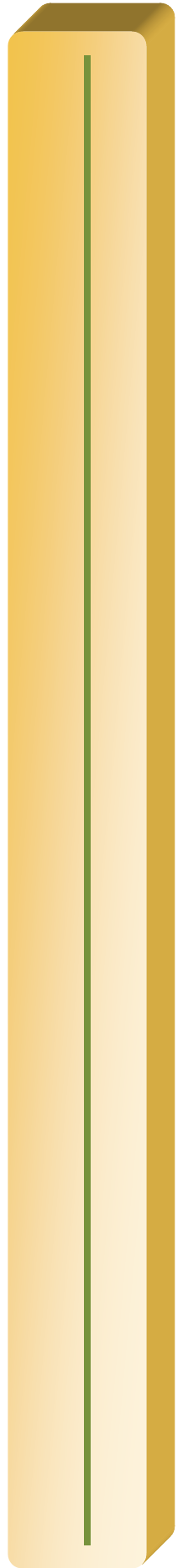
Washington County

2030 Comprehensive Plan A Policy Guide to 2030

Executive Summary

**Approved by Board of Commissioners
May 26, 2009**

**Adopted by Board of Commissioners
September 7, 2010**





Washington County Mission

To provide quality public services in a cost-effective manner through innovation, leadership, and the cooperation of dedicated people.

Washington County Values

Fiscal Responsibility - to provide good stewardship of public funds

Ethics and Integrity - to maintain the public trust

Openness of the Process - to promote citizen participation

Our Heritage and Natural Resources - to conserve and preserve them

The Individual - to promote dignity and respect

Washington County Goals

- To promote the health, safety, and quality of life of citizens
- To provide accessible, high-quality services in a timely and respectful manner
- To address today's needs while proactively planning for the future
- To maintain public trust through responsible use of public resources, accountability, and openness of government

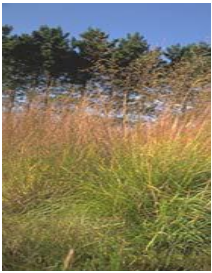
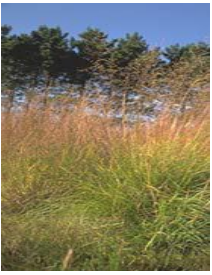


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Setting

Washington County is an area of abundant beauty, historical character, and agricultural heritage located on the eastern edge of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. The county has historically played a diverse role in the region, serving the Twin Cities with its commercial, industrial, community, natural, and agricultural resources. Today the county is no less diverse. From the corn fields of Denmark Township to the residential community of Woodbury; from the office and retail complexes along I-94 to the cooling waters of the St. Croix River; from the lake communities around White Bear Lake and Forest Lake to the pastoral wooded settings of New Scandia and May townships, each area plays a unique role in the county and region.

Washington County covers 423 square miles, measuring 38 miles from north to south and 14 miles from east to west. The county contains 27 cities and 6 townships. The western boundary of the county is within 5 miles of the Minnesota state capital. The eastern boundary shares the beautiful St. Croix River as a border with the State of Wisconsin. The county is bounded on the south and southwest by 16 miles of the commercially navigable Mississippi River.

Purpose and Scope

The 2030 Comprehensive Plan describes the choices that Washington County has made for how it will develop through 2030. The 2030 Comprehensive Plan is an official document adopted by the County Board as a policy guide for decisions about the physical development of the county. The plan sets broad policies and strategies to direct the future growth and development in the areas of land use, transportation, parks, housing, natural resources, historic resources, and public facilities. For each topic the plan identifies issues, sets goals, establishes policies to achieve the goals, and identifies strategies and actions needed to implement the policies. The plan is the legal basis for adoption of land use controls.



Metropolitan Development Framework and Policy Plans

The Metropolitan Council was created in 1967 to help ensure the coordinated, orderly and economical development of the seven-county Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (1967 Minnesota Laws, chapter 896). State law requires the Metropolitan Council to adopt a comprehensive Metropolitan Development Guide that establishes parameters for regional infrastructure and local planning. This guide is comprised of a Regional Development Framework and policy plans for water resource management; parks and open space; transportation, including transit and aviation. Minnesota Statutes section 473.864 requires local governmental units to develop a comprehensive plan, fiscal devices and official controls that conform to the metropolitan policy plans.

The 2030 Regional Development Framework (Development Framework) adopted by the Metropolitan Council on January 14, 2004, sets out four broad goals to guide the region's development:

- 1. Efficient Growth.** Work with local communities to accommodate growth in a flexible, connected, and efficient manner.
- 2. Multi-Modal Transportation:** Plan and invest in multi-modal transportation choices, based on a full range of costs and benefits, to slow the growth of congestion and serve the region's economic needs.
- 3. Housing Choices:** Encourage expanded choices in housing locations and types, and improved access to jobs and opportunities.
- 4. Natural Resource Protection:** Work with local and regional partners to conserve, protect and enhance the region's vital natural resources.

The Development Framework contains the following specific benchmarks to measure progress toward achieving these goals.

Working collaboratively with regional partners to accommodate growth within the metropolitan area. The Development Framework recognizes that “one size does not fit all;” that different communities have different opportunities, needs, and aspirations. But it also is grounded in the belief that all communities have a shared responsibility to help accommodate the region’s growth, use market forces to help expand housing choices, and ensure connected, efficient land-use patterns.

Maximizing the effectiveness and value of regional services, infrastructure investments, and incentives. The Metropolitan Council feels that it must take full advantage of the enormous investment that has been made in regional systems – transportation, airports, wastewater treatment, and regional parks – as well as ensure that future resources are used in a cost-effective manner.

Enhancing transportation choices and improving the ability of Minnesotans to travel safely and efficiently throughout the region. Traffic congestion is worsening at a disturbing rate, affecting all modes of travel, and making it more difficult and costly for workers to get to their jobs and goods to get to market. Meanwhile, highway and transit funding are falling far short of the needs. The Metropolitan Council needs to make the most of available resources to improve mobility and avoid gridlock.

Preserving vital natural areas and resources for future generations. This metropolitan area boasts a unique combination of assets that are essential to the region’s quality of life and continued economic well-being: three majestic rivers, lakes, rolling hills, extensive wetlands, native prairies and woodlands, aggregate and a multi-layered aquifer system. Maintaining compliance with federal air quality standards will ensure that citizens benefit from cleaner air and avoid costly federal pollution control requirements.



The Metropolitan Council has adopted policy plans to implement the Development Framework and to guide the expansion of the four regional systems: transportation, aviation, water resources (including wastewater collection and treatment), and regional parks and open space.

The 2030 Transportation Policy Plan addresses the need to prepare for expected growth in the region. The transportation policy gives priority to maintaining the existing metro highway system, reducing bottlenecks that impede travel, implementing new strategies to improve the system's efficiency, and adding capacity where possible. It also supports the expansion of the transit system. Aviation is included in the transportation policy plan.

The 2030 Water Resources Management Policy Plan establishes policies to ensure the protection of water resources as the region continues to grow. It focuses on assessing the region's water supply, protecting surface water from pollution and ensuring that wastewater flowing into sewer systems is treated efficiently.

The 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan recognizes the need to maintain and expand the open spaces that promote the quality of life in the region.

2030 Comprehensive Plan Overview

2030 Forecasts

The Metropolitan Council projects the following forecasted growth between 2008 and 2030:

- 128,842 more people (55 percent increase)
- 57,638 more households (66 percent increase)

The Metropolitan Council projects the following forecasted growth between 2000 and 2030.

- 62,971 more jobs (93 percent increase)

2030 Plan Vision

Washington County's guiding vision as it plans for the 2030 growth is:

To accommodate the county's projected population growth of 128,842 people between 2008 and 2030 while incorporating sustainable growth and preserving the natural, cultural, and historic characteristics of the county.

Priority Planning Principles

The proposed 2030 plan supports a development pattern that, as much as practicable, meets current needs without environmental, economic, and social burdens on future generations. The county is committed to maintaining or enhancing economic opportunity and community well-being while protecting and restoring the natural environment upon which people and economies depend.

Customer service is an important part of county business. Maintaining a high level of satisfaction from citizens about quality of service, knowledge, courteousness, and responsiveness while experiencing an increased demand for services is important to the county. The county uses a



performance measurement program to maintain and improve upon its commitment to high-quality service that meets and exceeds the needs and expectations of county residents.

Washington County's core functions foster an environment where commerce can develop and thrive. The county contributes to a robust business climate by: providing well-planned, essential infrastructure; maintaining a low tax rate; and assisting in creating an ample pool of skilled employees. The county strives to maintain the right blend of county services to support a vibrant business sector, be it transportation and transit services, public safety, health and human services, corrections services, workforce housing, or other public services. The county is committed to stewardship of cultural and natural amenities such as land and water resources, parks and opens spaces, and libraries which contribute to a high quality of life for business owners and their employees and families. The county's efforts in workforce development provide skilled employees that enable companies to be competitive and successful in the local, regional, and global economies.

In 1996, the Minnesota Legislature defined sustainable development as development that maintains or enhances economic opportunity and community well-being while protecting and restoring the natural environment upon which people and economies depend. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Washington County aims to meet current needs without placing environmental, economic, and social burdens on future generations to meet their own needs.

Mission, Values, Goals

The Washington County Comprehensive Plan reflects Washington County's mission, values, and goals.

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Plan Elements

Each chapter of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan contains goals, policies, strategies, and actions that are guided by the county's mission, values, goals, vision, and priority planning principles. While the plan does not propose any basic changes from past policies, it does incorporate strategies and actions from a decade of planning and projects since adoption of the last comprehensive plan. It also includes new policies and strategies to address contemporary issues such as sustainability, healthy communities, transit, and transit-oriented development. Below is a summary of each chapter of the plan and its goals.

County Context – Chapter 2

This chapter takes a close look at Washington County's people, economy, and important themes that face the county in upcoming years. It contains key data that lays the framework for the plan.



Land Use Plan – Chapter 3

The Land Use Plan describes how the county will guide the projected growth in unincorporated areas of the county. It delineates the land use areas by type, and sets the general guidelines and policies for developing the zoning map and ordinance, and for guiding the review of development proposals. The Land Use Plan provides for logical development patterns that preserve the existing natural resources, retain the existing character of the county, and provide a high quality of life.

Goals

- 3-1 Utilize land and related natural resource so they are conserved for future generations.
- 3-2 Support the growth of attractive urban communities while preserving rural functions and appearances.
- 3-3 Design the land use plan to support economic development.

Priority Actions

- 1. Amend the county zoning ordinances to implement the 2030 Land Use Plan, including the zoning district maps, floodplain maps and Floodplain Ordinance, the Shoreland Ordinance, and Lower St. Croix River Bluffland and Shoreland Ordinance.
- 2. Continue working with townships to revise their land use plan to conform to the overall county plan and policies.
- 3. Encourage cities to revise their land use plans to be compatible with the county's policies and plans.
- 4. Monitor the pace of land development through subdivision platting and variance and land use development applications.
- 5. The Planning Advisory Commission and the Board of Commissioners will continue to monitor land use policies throughout the county as they relate to the environment, transportation, transit, and parks, and open space.

Transportation Plan – Chapter 4

A key function of Washington County is to provide a robust transportation system. The transportation system supports the county land use and development plans, while minimizing the impact on the county's historic and natural resources. The Transportation Plan provides policies and strategies that keep the transportation system functioning safely and efficiently. The plan's overall goal is to increase capacity, improve safety, and reduce congestion within the constraints of the existing infrastructure and to avoid premature roadway widening.

Goals

- 4-1 Develop and maintain a roadway system that accommodates the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.
- 4-2 Promote the development and utilization of a transit system that meets the existing and future travel needs of the public.
- 4-3 Use effective transportation planning to accommodate existing and planned land uses, while preserving natural, cultural, and historic resources.
- 4-4 Develop a non-motorized transportation system to provide mobility and recreational options to the public.

Priority Actions

- 1. Design and construct projects included in the Capital Improvement Program.
- 2. Develop a formalized process for jurisdictional transfers.
- 3. Coordinate with communities on development proposals adjacent to county roadways.
- 4. Coordinate with communities to develop an access management plan for specific county roadways.



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5. Revise the Intersection Control Ranking System (ICRS) to better prioritize intersections in need of increased traffic control.
 6. Participate in the Washington County Safe Community Coalition.
 7. Complete the bus feasibility study for the Red Rock Corridor.
 8. Conduct station area planning and design for the Red Rock Corridor.
 9. Coordinate with the Metropolitan Council, MNDOT, and local communities on the development of the alternatives analysis for the I-94 Corridor.
 10. Participate in the transitway corridor coalitions.
 11. Update the county's Cost Participation Policy for highway improvement projects.

Park and Open Space Plan – Chapter 5

The Washington County park system provides large open space that preserves the county's unique and sensitive natural resources, and provides recreational experiences not provided by local, state, or federal parks. The Park and Open Space Plan sets the overall goals and policies that guide development of county-controlled sites and facilities. It establishes a direction for land preservation, development, and use of various resources of the county park system.

Goals

- 5-1 Showcase the county's heritage through conservation, restoration, and interpretation of cultural and natural resources.
- 5-2 Improve personal and community health by providing natural resource-based park features that encourage structured and unstructured active outdoor recreation opportunities for youth, adults and families.

Priority Actions

1. Establish prioritized areas to be acquired, developed, or designated.

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2. Apply for funding assistance from appropriate agencies to supplement county funding.
 3. Acquire areas designated in the master plans.
 4. Prioritize development projects, prepare contracts, and award construction contracts for priority projects.
 5. Maintain staff and equipment as needed to ensure a high level of maintenance and control of parks.
 6. Review and update the Park and Open Space Plan at regular five-year intervals.
 7. Update Big Marine Park Reserve master plan.

Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Plan – Chapter 6

Washington County’s physical environment is very diverse. The county aims to continue economic growth while protecting natural resource systems and providing a high quality of life. The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Plan sets the framework to continue economic growth while protecting natural resources and supporting a high quality of life.

Goals

- 6-1 Utilize land in a manner that minimizes the impact on the county’s natural resources.
- 6-2 Protect groundwater and surface water resources through coordination and collaboration with state and local water resource organizations.
- 6-3 Preserve, manage, and utilize resources to promote a healthy environment for present and future generations.

Priority Actions

1. Implement the Groundwater Plan through annual work plans.



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2. Review and update Groundwater Management Plan.
 3. Review and update the Solid Waste Master Plan.
 4. Convene representatives from each county department to develop a sustainable implementation plan that incorporates sustainability principles into county plans and programs.
 5. Participate in the Lake St. Croix Total Maximum Daily Load study.
 6. Participate in the update of county zoning ordinances.

Housing Plan – Chapter 7

Washington County directly supports a variety of interrelated resources and service, including first-time homebuyer assistance, financial and budget counseling, transportation assistance, employment services, social services, and housing maintenance. The Housing Plan presents the county's goals and policies that guide provision of these services.

Goals

- 7-1 Maintain a choice of housing type and encourage the development of mixed-income residential environments.
- 7-2 Maintain and improve the current housing stock.

Priority Actions

1. Complete the 2010 to 2014 Consolidated Plan for Community Development Block Grant and Home Investment Partnerships programs.
2. Continue the partnership between Washington County and the Washington County HRA to address issues related to foreclosed upon homes in the county.
3. Apply for federal, state, and regional funds for developing affordable life cycle housing including senior and special needs populations.

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4. Work with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to acquire additional Housing Choice Vouchers for Washington County households.
 5. Continue funding the county's Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program.

County Facilities Plan – Chapter 8

The Facilities Plan describes current Washington County facilities and the plans for future facilities to support the projected service needs through 2030.

Goal

- 8-1 Provide the necessary facility infrastructure to provide efficient, effective, and high quality public services in order to meet the needs of the current and future population of the county.

Priority Actions

1. Update the Strategic Facility Plan to 2030.
2. Develop a “green” operating policy for all county facilities.
3. Consider establishing a “green team,” made up of county employees, to make suggestions and help implement sustainable practices in all areas of facility construction and operations.
4. Identify opportunities to use more sustainable materials, techniques, and systems when remodeling and retrofitting structurally sound buildings.



Historic Resources Plan – Chapter 9

Although Washington County does not have a formal historic preservation commission or historic preservation ordinance, it strives to preserve and enhance the character of historical villages and rural areas through its land development processes in unincorporated areas. The Historic Resources Plan establishes the county's policies and strategies that guide its historic preservation activities.

Goals

- 9-1 Maintain the historical integrity of the Washington County Historic Courthouse and use it as a venue to interpret the history of Washington County and Washington County government.
- 9-2 Work to retain important historic contexts and features, including structures, landscapes, archaeological sites, and pedestrian-oriented village development patterns.

Priority Actions

- 1. Evaluate the current uses of the Historic Courthouse and develop strategies to increase public spaces and uses of the facility.
- 2. Increase the number of public events and opportunities for the public to experience the Historic Courthouse.
- 3. Explore the possible funding opportunities provided by the 2009 sales tax increase dedicated for arts, cultural, and historical resources.
- 4. Develop stronger coordinated marketing activities and program partnerships with local historical organizations.
- 5. Establish a permanent exhibit at the Historic Courthouse and enhance the diversity of seasonal exhibits.