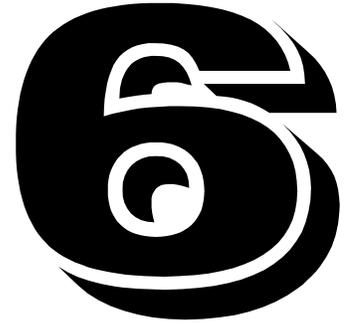


SECTION



**PLANNING AREA
RECOMMENDATIONS**

PLANNING AREA RECOMMENDATIONS

As stated earlier, the purpose of the land use plan is to provide general guidelines to achieve the desired future development of the county. It is intended to provide guidance and direction for development decisions and implementation of the goals and objectives identified in the plan. To achieve the goals and objectives, the plan describes eight planning areas that identify the general preferred development pattern in areas of the county and make recommendations for density and design of desired development activities.

As expected, based on the identified community values and identified desired future, the planning areas are closely related to the primary natural (agricultural lands, forested lands and water resources) and political features within the county. In addition, the Land Use Plan does not intend to directly limit or reduce growth, but to accommodate growth within a policy framework that:

- ✓ protects the desired natural resources of the county;
- ✓ maintains rural character by establishing appropriate rural uses and densities and encouraging conservation site design;
- ✓ preserves productive agricultural land by identifying potentially productive agricultural areas and limiting the

amount of non-farm development in those areas;

- ✓ directs more intensive land uses (i.e. commercial, industrial, and residential subdivisions) to incorporated communities or areas being served by public services (water, sewer, etc...);
- ✓ provides an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels;
- ✓ provides an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future demand for commercial, industrial, and residential uses; and
- ✓ develop and maintain a sound and diverse economy.

It is important to note that it is not the intent of Polk County to unilaterally impose or designate these areas within the county. Designation of the planning areas will be achieved through a collaborative planning effort conducted with each of the affected towns. Through this process, towns will be able to evaluate the growth and development issues unique to their area and apply appropriate management option(s).

The following section provides a description of each of the planning areas including the purpose and recommended policies to achieve the desired results.

RINGED DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

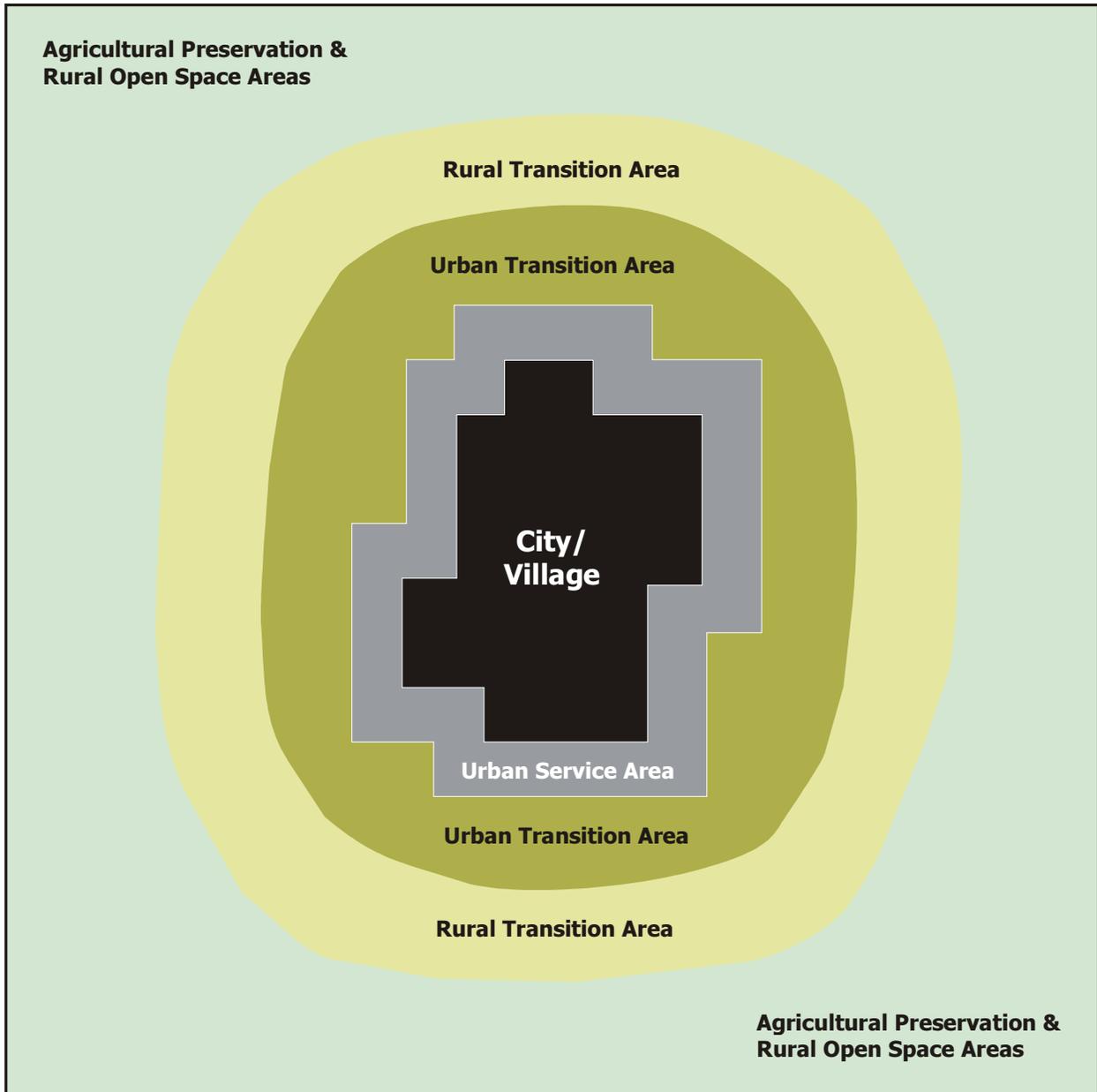
The basis for the planning area recommendations was the adoption of a development concept referred to as the ringed development pattern. This general pattern of development provides an overall characteristic of how development in the county should occur by managing the general density of land uses, particularly residential.

This concept promotes a pattern of development in which higher densities of residential development and urban land uses (i.e. industrial, commercial, and institutional) are located within and adjacent to incorporated areas having appropriate public services (i.e. public water and sewer services). As you move

further away from the incorporated area, the residential density (concentration of development) decreases with the more appropriate open space uses becoming

more dominant. The following figure illustrates the concept of the ringed development pattern.

**RINGED DEVELOPMENT PATTERN
POLK COUNTY LAND USE PLAN**



PLANNING AREAS

The Land Use Plan includes eight planning areas: Incorporated Communities/Urban Service, Rural Communities, Urban Transition, Rural Transition, Agricultural Production, Rural Open Space, Shoreland, and Highway Corridor. Each planning area has a purpose to achieve a certain type, intensity and pattern of development.

The number and type of planning areas evolved from the identified desired characteristics of the county and future growth and development that were identified through the public involvement process.

It is important to remember that the identified planning areas are general in nature. They are intended to delineate the preferred type of land use or character that should be preserved/encouraged within that specific area. It is expected that specific planning areas may contain instances of other, less dominant (secondary) land uses. For example, there may be areas having prime agricultural soils within the rural open space planning

area. This does not mean that that property can not be used for farming. But, that farming may be a suitable land use in certain parts of the planning area, however, efforts should be taken to minimize the impacts of the land use and that conflicts between land uses may occur.

In all of the planning areas, certain community values and characteristics of desired future development were identified and incorporated in to each of the planning areas. These include:

- ✓ the protection of the water resources;
- ✓ the protection of valued natural resources including forested lands and wetlands;
- ✓ the preservation of productive agricultural lands;
- ✓ the preservation of rural and natural character; and
- ✓ the need for managed growth.

The following is a summary of the planning areas.

INCORPORATED COMMUNITY/URBAN SERVICE AREAS

The Incorporated Community/Urban Service Areas include the incorporated cities and villages of Frederick, Luck, Milltown, Centuria, Balsam Lake, St. Croix Falls, Dresser, Osceola, Amery, Clayton, Turtle Lake, Star Prairie and Clear Lake. These communities have a higher concentration and variety of land uses, and are generally served by public water and sewer services. The county recognizes these communities are central to the growth and development of the county, while instrumental in protecting the character and function of rural areas that border them. These communities contain

the majority of urban uses in the county, such as governmental, institutional, commercial, residential, and industrial. The county land use plan recommends these uses, in general, continue to be directed to the urban areas of the county, which have the infrastructure to support them. An overall recommendation is to support urban communities that are relatively compact and have a full range of urban services.

Incorporated Community Area Policies:

- Locate new urban type development in communities having appropriate urban services.

Polk County is experiencing significant development pressure that include demands for higher density residential development as well as additional commercial and industrial development. Although demand to site this development, particularly residential, in unincorporated areas is high due to the expected increase in economic benefits, there is also a potential cost associated with the development that should be considered. Costs such as those related to providing additional or a higher level of public services, and the potential cost associated with the loss of valued resources.

- Promote policies that create compact communities.

The cities and villages conduct their own planning and zoning, so the county has limited influence on the development that occurs within their boundaries. Nonetheless, the county and towns adjoining these communities are impacted by the decisions of the communities concerning land use on their borders. Inappropriate land use decisions on the borders could result in an undesirable development pattern continuing in the towns. Similarly, poor town land use decisions can have the same affect on the cities and villages.

In the interest of promoting compact and contiguous development around the cities and villages, the county should adhere to a set of principals that promote compact development. These policies include:

- Maintain a distinct community edge.

- Encourage infill and redevelopment.
- Foster the revitalization of traditional commercial districts.
- Discourage leapfrog development.

- Encourage a higher residential density around urban areas that is compact enough to be serviced with municipal utilities when available.

The county should encourage all incorporated communities to prepare comprehensive plans that identify urban service areas. Urban service areas are areas in and around existing communities that have been identified as most suitable for future urban expansion and capable of being provided with urban services. These urban service areas should be cooperatively determined between the city/village and affected towns.

An example of achieving this type of development pattern could include allowing urban style residential development (e.g. 20,000 square foot parcels) in subdivisions that have an agreement with the incorporated community to be connected to the water and sewer service systems within a predetermined period of time.

- Identify and protect environmental corridors and other important natural resources from development.
- Avoid premature zoning of lands for urban uses.

The county should work with the cities, villages, and towns to review and adjust zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure the proper staging of anticipated development over time. The application of urban zoning districts should proceed incrementally over time.

URBAN AND RURAL TRANSITION AREAS

Urban and Rural Transition Areas are the parts of the county that are outside of the urban service areas of the incorporated communities. These are areas that are experiencing development pressure to convert rural open space and agricultural lands to other uses, predominately residential. The areas are, as their names imply, in transition from a rural character to more of a suburban character. These areas are where much of the pressure to convert agricultural land to residential uses will occur. Unfortunately, non-farm development in these transitional areas can lead to lifestyle conflicts with farm operations, increased traffic on local roads, increased public service demands, and potential loss of valued natural areas. Nonetheless, due to the desires of residents for a “country lifestyle” and the need to allow farmers some non-farm economic return on their land, agricultural land in these areas will be converted to non-farm uses. Such development, however, should be directed to areas where it does not conflict with intensive agricultural uses, and located and designed to minimize environmental impacts and avoid detracting from the rural character of the landscape.

The following statements were developed to summarize the purpose of what the urban and rural transition areas recommendations are intended to accomplish.

- ✓ Allow for more dense development than in the rural open space and agricultural areas, while still maintaining an appropriate separation between the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the county.
- ✓ Maintain some housing affordability within the unincorporated areas of the county.
- ✓ Preserve the rural character of Polk County.

Urban Transition Area Policies:

- Identify urban transitional areas at the fringes of urban areas that are changing from a rural to “suburban” character.

The county should work with the towns adjacent to incorporated communities to determine the lands which are/will be experiencing pressure to convert agricultural lands to residential or other non-farm uses.

- Establish a 1-acre minimum lot size for residential development in the Urban Transition Area.
- Where appropriate, minimize the number of single-service access points along major transportation facilities in order to maintain and enhance highway safety.
- Allow low concentrations of commercial development, providing minimum convenience trade area related products and services, and light industrial uses. Prohibit commercial and industrial uses that require large volume of water or produce excessive wastewater, unless they are or have contractually agreed to be serviced by public water and sewer services.

Rural Transition Area Policies:

- Identify rural transitional areas that are changing from a rural to “rural residential” character.
- Establish a 3-acre minimum lot size (13 housing units per 40 acres base density standard equivalent) for residential development in the Rural Transition Area, except where density-based development is used.
- In order to allow for some flexibility in the design of residential development

in the rural transition areas, a density-based development option will be available.

Use of the density-based development option would enable the use of flexible lot sizes (1-acre minimum) while maintaining the overall base density standard.

- Identify and preserve in agricultural or other open space uses those lands that can provide a visual and physical

separation between the “suburban”, “rural residential”, and rural areas.

- Allow sites of commercial development that provide services and convenience to area residents and the traveling public.
- Where appropriate, minimize the number of single-service access points along major transportation facilities in order to maintain and enhance highway safety.

RURAL OPEN SPACE AREAS

The Rural Open Space areas are those areas making up the remaining parts of Polk County outside of the production agricultural areas and growth areas around the communities (i.e. transition areas). These areas include private forested lands, wetlands, smaller tracts of agricultural lands, and offshore areas.

In general, agriculture remains as the predominant land use in these areas. However, the farmland tends to be more fragmented due to topography, soil characteristics (including smaller contiguous expanses of prime agricultural soils), remnants of prairies and grasslands, water resources (including lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands), and varying size tracts of forested lands.

The purpose of the rural open space area is to allow for some limited non-farm rural residential development on lands that are not as suited for production agricultural, or due to the proposed location, would have limited impact on agricultural production. Other uses include recreation, transportation and utilities, non-metallic mining, and limited commercial and industrial. Priorities in this area are the preservation of rural character, protection of productive agricultural lands, and

protection of other valued land-based resources.

The following statements were developed to summarize the purpose of what the rural open space area recommendations are intended to accomplish.

- ✓ Minimize development in areas that possess valuable natural resource characteristics.
- ✓ Minimize nonagricultural development on prime agricultural soils.
- ✓ Provide opportunity for landowners to receive some economic value for their property.
- ✓ Preserve the rural character Polk County.

Rural Open Space Area Policies:

- Establish a 10-acre minimum lot size (4 housing units per 40 acres base density standard equivalent) for residential development in the rural open space areas, except where conservation site design concepts are used.
- Promote conservation site design in the rural open space areas to:
 - Retain rural character.

- Maintain valued natural features such as wetlands, woodlands and other valued natural features.
- Minimize visual and environmental impacts.

Conservation site design is a method that requires that the dwelling units be clustered (grouped) on smaller lots on a select part of the parcel, thus, leaving a large portion of the parcel as dedicated open space. In order to encourage this style of development, the county should consider a 100 percent density bonus, allowing 8 dwellings per 40 acres, with an open space deed restriction of 50 percent over the entire project parcel. Lots developed using conservation site design would have a 1-acre minimum size.

Additionally, should a development choose to utilize an approved common private sewage treatment system (or multiple common systems) to service all homes in a development, the county

will consider an additional 25 percent density bonus, allowing 10 dwellings per 40 acres. The development project will maintain an open space deed restriction of 50 percent over the entire project parcel. Lots developed using conservation site design with private sewage treatment system(s) would have a 20,000 square foot minimum size.

- Encourage development to occur in a manner that maintains the environmental quality and rural appearance of the area.
- Encourage areas having productive agricultural soils to be used for farming in order to enhance the open space and rural character of the area.
- Allow sites of commercial development that are recreational related and that provide services and convenience to local residents and the traveling public.

AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION AREAS

The agricultural preservation areas consist of the areas of the county that have intensive agricultural operations and large, contiguous expanses of prime agricultural soils. This is where the vast majority of the agricultural land will be preserved for agriculture in the long term. The predominate land uses will be agriculture and agricultural support uses. Other uses may include parks and recreation, transportation and utilities, residential, non-metallic mining, and some limited commercial and industrial.

The following statements were developed to summarize the purpose of what the agricultural recommendations are intended to accomplish.

- ✓ Retain the most agriculturally productive areas of the county for agricultural use.
- ✓ Limit nonagricultural development in the agricultural areas of Polk County, especially on prime agricultural soils.
- ✓ Preserve the rural character of Polk County.
- ✓ Provide equitable opportunity for landowners to receive some economic value for their property.
- ✓ Provide some protection for agricultural interests from nuisance complaints associated with routine agricultural operations.

Agricultural Preservation Area Policies:

- Continue to preserve the most productive agricultural land through the identification of agricultural production areas and exclusive agricultural zoning as defined in the Polk County Farmland Preservation Plan.
- Maintain a minimum parcel size of 35 acres for parcels identified as agricultural production areas.
- Direct any non-farm development to areas of the parcel that are least suited to agricultural production.
- Allow for a one-time land division of up to 2-acres (1-acre minimum) from a 40-acre parcel (including fractional 40-acre parcels).
- Support the right-to-farm by applying a deed restriction or other legal instrument to all new residential development in the agricultural area.
- Limit commercial development in the agricultural areas to agricultural-related uses or those designed to serve the traveling public.

SHORELAND AREAS

The Shoreland areas include those areas adjacent to the lakes, rivers and streams. In the last 20-30 years, the shoreland in the county has experienced considerable development, particularly year-round and seasonal residential development. This development has affected the shoreland aesthetics, wildlife habitat, water quality, and lake use. It is expected this pressure to develop shoreland will continue into the future, so it is incumbent upon the county to manage this extremely valuable resource in an environmentally sound manner. Uses in the shoreland area should be limited to residential, some commercial, recreational, and conservancy. Priority should be placed on maintaining the environmental quality, visual appearance, and natural character of the water resource and adjoining lands.

Shoreland Area Policies:

- Adoption of the 3-tier Water Classification System.

The county has completed and adopted a 3-tier Water Classification System

and corresponding Shoreland Ordinance revisions.

- Limit commercial development on the waterfront.
- Encourage development that preserves and protects the natural features of the site and water resource.
- Encourage larger lots and greater setbacks on less developed lakes.
- Encourage restoration and mitigation measures on developed lakes.
- Protect floodplains by severely limiting new development in the floodplain area.
- Consider incentives to encourage shoreland owners to protect the shoreland.
- Establish mitigation measures for existing properties that are permitted improvements.

- Limit non-point source pollution caused by improper shoreland development, forestry and agricultural practices.
- Encourage storm water management by limiting impervious surfaces and treating runoff that does occur.

RURAL COMMUNITY AREAS

The Rural Community areas are those unincorporated settlements that have historically developed to service the farm and/or recreation areas. These settlements are Atlas, Clam Falls, Cushing, Deronda, East Farmington, Eureka Center, Fox Creek, Horse Creek, Indian Creek, Joel, Lewis, Little Falls, McKinley, Nye, Range, Ubet, Wanderoos, West Sweden, and Wolf Creek.

The county recognizes the importance of these communities to the local areas they serve and encourages the continuation of that role. However, due to the general lack

of municipal services, these communities should not experience the growth of the primary communities.

Rural Community Area Policies:

- Encourage development that is compatible with the existing character of the community, as infrastructure would support.
- Direct limited commercial and retail development to the core areas of these communities.

HIGHWAY CORRIDOR AREAS

The Highway Corridor areas include those areas along major highway routes that are, or could be in the future, experiencing significant development pressure. These areas are typically located in proximity to incorporated areas and encourage the encroachment of urban uses and densities into rural areas. These areas can create serious transportation related service problems and effect the preservation of rural and natural character of rural areas.

Development in these areas should be encouraged to limit the number of highway access points and maintain the rural character of the community. Higher density uses should be encouraged to locate within the community.

Highway Corridor Area Policies:

- Limit access to highways for safety and traffic flow reasons.
- Encourage compact/centralized commercial areas with high quality design.
- Encourage signage compatible with rural character.
- Promote aesthetic improvements to the highway corridors, particularly the “county entrance corridors”.
- Promote the separation of communities by avoiding highway strip development.
- Encourage commercial development that provides a positive “sense of entry” into communities.

