

## PLANNING PROCESS AND INTERRELATIONSHIP AMONG PLAN ELEMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

### Framework for the Future

This *Comprehensive Plan* provides a framework for the future growth and development of the twelve municipalities in the Northern Tier Coalition. The four elements of the *Plan* include:

- *Land Use, Natural Resource Conservation and Environmental Protection*
- *Community Facilities and Services*
- *Transportation*
- *Economic development*
- *Housing*

Although the *Plan* is comprised of these separate elements, each element, and, in fact, each planning and development action taken by a public body or private individual, is inextricably interrelated with other plan elements and planning and development actions. For example, the development of housing implementation strategies cannot be accomplished without taking into account land use controls and economic development trends. Economic development strategies cannot be formulated without considering land use controls and transportation needs. Community facilities and services planning requires an assessment of future development, transportation needs, and housing affordability. These types of interrelationships and implementation strategies are discussed in the various comprehensive plan elements.

### Planning Process

A theme consistent throughout all elements of this *Comprehensive Plan* is the concept of *process*. The published comprehensive plan document represents only the first step of what should evolve into an ongoing planning process. If this *process* way of thinking is not firmly established, local officials, businessmen, land developers, and citizens, all players in the community growth and development arena, will have little chance of achieving the sustainable growth vital to the NTC's social, economic and environmental future. This process will also allow the recognition of the shifting interrelationships of community growth and development decisions vital to the success of long-term planning efforts.

### Conservation of Community Character

Another key theme of this *Plan* is the conservation of

the planning area's small town and rural working landscape character. All public and private actions must be assessed in terms of its effect on the community's character. For example, residential development standards in the normal pattern of large lots will fragment remaining agricultural lands and forest land. The alternative, conservation design or planned residential development, provides the opportunity to conserve open land. Allowing incompatible commercial uses in the NTC's villages could have severe effects on the small town and historic integrity.

The conundrum of central sewage disposal provides another good example of planning interrelationships. This community facility is often the only means of correcting sewage disposal problems yet can stimulate development of more land at higher population densities. Increases in population would trigger the need for improved or new community facilities and services such as schools and police protection. In short, without careful analysis, one *implementation action* taken by a municipality can have unexpected and often undesirable effects.

To achieve growth and development goals and to establish the community's planning process for the future, this *Plan* makes the following overall recommendations:

1. Evaluate all public and private actions with the goal of preserving agricultural and open land as a viable part of community character.
2. Direct development away from environmentally sensitive areas and conserve large blocks of open land.
3. Identify areas for growth within and adjacent to existing developed areas.
4. Require adequate community facilities for new development.
5. Carefully consider any sewer extensions to assess effects on stimulating development.
6. Promote the idea of growth management - an effort

to manage the location, type, and timing of future growth.

7. Encourage increased local, inter-municipal, and regional cooperation for comprehensive planning and land use control implementation; and overall local municipal administration and management.
8. Encourage a mix of business and commercial development in appropriate locations in the planning area.
9. Encourage a variety of housing types.

### **Community Vision**

This *Comprehensive Plan* outlines a vision for the future of the Boroughs and Townships in the NTC and recommends a course of action to achieve growth and development goals. However, the effective implementation of the *Plan* is necessary to make the planning program a success. Many of the resources, programs and techniques available for implementing the comprehensive plan are not within the direct control of local government. For example, although zoning and subdivision ordinances, the chief tools for land use control and land use plan implementation, are the purview of local governments, the funding, construction and maintenance of major roads and improvements have historically been the responsibility of the state and federal governments. Demand for housing in the planning area is generated in large part by external market forces, that is, residents of the larger region who choose to relocate to the NTC. The implementation of the *Plan* and the creation of an on-going planning process, must be a community-wide effort fostered by local municipal officials.

### **Community Involvement**

It is obvious that the implementation of the *Comprehensive Plan* will require broad-based community involvement and coordination and cooperation among various federal, state, and local agencies. Plan implementation will require both a commitment of financial resources and human resources. The human resources can include both volunteer and paid staff and professional assistance. A number of the recommendations identified in the *Plan* could require increased staff support and demand for volunteer services.

### **Implementation Strategies**

A variety of implementation strategies are recommended in this *Plan* and are oriented to developing long-term policies for growth management, strengthening land use management programs, anticipating capital improvement needs and facilitating inter-governmental cooperation to accomplish local and regional goals.

The key implementation strategies included in this *Plan* include:

1. Annual review of this *Plan* to evaluate new development and regional issues which warrant plan changes.
2. Development of short-term and long-term capital improvements program to prioritize needed improvements and allocate funds to those improvements; with annual progress evaluations and adjustments in capital project timing and capital equipment purchases.
3. Continuing education about land use management for local officials via seminars and workshops.
4. Diligent updating of land use management ordinances to effect the land use plan, provide environmental protection, preserve open land, maintain rural and historic character, and achieve community facilities and services and housing objectives.
5. Focusing limited municipal resources on those community facilities and services which are most critical to meet resident needs.
6. Monitoring community facilities and services provided by the county, state, and federal government to ensure such services are adequate and the planning area is obtaining its *fair share*.
7. Participating in all county, state and federal entitlement and grant funding programs, not solely for the sake of participation, but only if such programs can be sensibly used to achieve valid community development objectives.
8. Make a specific finding as to relationship to this *Plan* for all subdivisions and land development proposals and all zoning actions and changes.