

Planning Perspectives

This first comprehensive plan provided a historical perspective of the county's growth. The increase in population was largely attributed to the growth of Sioux Falls. Sioux Falls had developed as the central city and the outlying communities functioned as service centers for the surrounding farm area. The plan observed an emerging pattern of development characterized by a higher number of urban residents settling on the fringes of the city. It was noted that the rural area was no longer being used exclusively for farming.

The plan frequently mentioned that settlement patterns away from established communities would eventually necessitate utilities and urban level services. The following recommendations were made:

- In many cases, because of the scattered locations of land developments, extension of municipal utilities may not be a practical matter. It is, therefore, important that the various governing jurisdictions encourage development of land parcels contiguous to existing developments in order to prevent the creation of large areas of by passed land.
- , All extensive land development proposals should be guided by a plan for site development. Such plans would determine the optimum intensity of the use for land and identify corresponding densities of land occupancy so that proper precautions could be taken to assure adequate utilities.
- , If agricultural lands are not protected through land use controls their optimum utilization will diminish in disproportion to the amount of area reverting to urban use. Thus, much of the remaining economic potential of the land, in terms of agricultural production, is lost.
- , Proper use of land must be employed to protect valuable agricultural land as well as other amenities.

The plan also set forth objectives that provided direction to the Planning Commission and elected officials regarding future development. These objectives included the following:

- , Future community growth should occur in areas contiguous to existing development to allow economical expansion of municipal facilities and services.
- , New and more imaginative subdivision layout and site planning should be encouraged.
- , Central business districts should be protected and should not be diluted by a scattered pattern of commercial uses developed at random throughout the county. Scattered commercial development should furthermore be prevented to maintain land use integrity in other districts.
- , Commercial highway service uses should be generally confined to those areas where they presently exist rather than being allowed to expand in a strip configuration along the highway. Where significant additional uses of this nature are required by the motoring public, they should be located in a nucleated configuration.
- , Future industrial land use areas should generally be established with due consideration to adequate highway and rail service.
- , Natural drainage courses should be protected in their capacities to carry runoff water.

The land use pattern which began to emerge a few years later reflected concerns identified in the

plan. By the mid-1970's significant growth was occurring in the rural area as houses spilled outside the cities onto agricultural land. While the plan warned of this phenomenon more than half a decade before, the zoning regulations failed to keep pace with development pressure.

The zoning ordinance established standard zoning districts for agricultural, residential, commercial and industrial uses, but the regulations were incapable of preserving the county's rural character. The regulations could best be characterized as large lot zoning under which a residence was allowed in the agricultural district provided the lot was at least one acre in size.

The land use pattern was characterized by multi-lot housing subdivisions and ribbons of residential development along major highway routes. Residential development was allowed as a permitted use in the agricultural district. Without a rezoning there was no opportunity for a review of development projects to determine land use compatibility, the potential impact on natural features such as groundwater and drainage systems, and the adequacy of services.

The plan established sound goals and objectives but the zoning regulations provided inadequate controls to deal with development. This situation allowed the proliferation of rural subdivisions and scattered acreages during the 1970's.

By 1978, elected officials recognized the need for change in order to more effectively manage residential densities in the rural area. Unfortunately, the public lacked an understanding of the issues and a new zoning ordinance failed to be sustained by the electorate in a referendum election.

In 1980, the zoning regulations were amended to require property to be rezoned for residential subdivisions. Prospective homeowners were also required to obtain a conditional use before building permits could be issued on isolated nonfarm residential acreages. This was the first time that the county was actually in a position to review and evaluate development proposals before construction occurred.

Even though these changes had a positive impact on growth management, the process was not without flaws. The ultimate density of an area could not be anticipated as part of the conditional use process. Each time the Planning Commission considered a conditional use they became apprehensive, fearing that approval would lead to similar requests. There was virtually no way to implement the plan's recommendations to "determine optimum intensity of use or identify corresponding densities to insure the availability of adequate utilities".

In 1988, the county adopted zoning amendments which were directed at maintaining an acceptable density for residential uses in the rural area. This method is known as density zoning and is used to control the maximum number of dwellings in areas of the county zoned for agricultural use. This approach accommodates residential uses in predominately agricultural areas of the county but maintains control over the density in such a manner that urban development is less likely to occur.