

TOWNSHIP OF MINERAL POINT

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Developed by the Township of Mineral Point
Planning Commission

Mineral Point Town Board

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A) Statement of Purpose

In 1999, the State of Wisconsin passed legislation requiring that each governmental unit in the state develop a comprehensive land use plan by 2010. Each plan must contain the following elements:

- Issues & Opportunities
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities & Community Facilities
- Resources (Agricultural, Natural, Cultural)
- Economic Development
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Land Use
- Implementation

In 2000, the Township of Mineral Point formed a **planning commission**. The commission worked with officials from Iowa County and the Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SWWRPC) to solicit public input and develop the township's comprehensive land use plan. Meetings of the planning commission were listed in the newspaper and were **open to the public**.

Two public opinion surveys were conducted and multiple town and county-wide meetings were held to collect the opinions and recommendations of township residents and to use the collected information to guide the future growth and development of the town. This document is a plan to achieve the township's land use goals.

B) Goals of Land Use Planning

Planning will allow the township to **preserve the quality of life** for its residents and protect public health and safety. It also seeks to **strike a balance** between the rights of individual landowners while preserving and enhancing the qualities that make the township an attractive place to live and work.

Township residents supported two basic goals for the township:

- Preserving its rural character
- Preserving agricultural opportunities

92% of respondents said that it was important to protect farmland. (4% said it was not important; 4% had no opinion or did not answer the question) ("Smart Growth Public Opinion Survey - Question #4)

77% of respondents to the township public opinion survey agreed that visual impacts of development (views of the landscape) are an important consideration when evaluating

proposed development. (11% disagreed; 12% had no opinion or did not answer the question) (“Smart Growth Public Opinion Survey - Question #14)

When developing this plan, the commission sought to **strike a balance between individual landowner rights and the right of the community** to plan the growth of the town. By establishing a plan, landowners, farmers, builders and township officials all have access to the same information regarding township goals and objectives. As a result, it is hoped that land use decisions will be **fair** because they will be based on written criteria.

Additionally, landowners should know how their land and neighboring lands fit into the plan. It should be a tool that prospective land buyers consult **BEFORE** they buy so that the land they purchase meets their needs.

The key to success includes working together and establishing early and frequent communications between the landowner and township officials. **Communication and respect** between parties can often result in a common sense solution that attains the goals of both parties.

C) Vision Statement for the Township of Mineral Point

The vision for the Township of Mineral Point is to preserve its rural character – including protecting scenic views, farms & farmland – while accommodating flexible growth that, in a tangible way, adds to the quality of life of its residents.

D) Achieving the Vision

As the population of southwestern Wisconsin continues to grow, development pressures will increase as well. One of the goals of this plan is to prevent haphazard commercial and residential development. This objective results from the desire to have the community develop logically and attractively by directing growth to the most suited areas. Township residents have strongly stated that they want to **preserve rural character**. Major components of rural character include retaining scenic views, open areas, crop fields, pastures, wetlands, streams, rock outcroppings, and the preservation of agricultural opportunities and wildlife habitat. Preserving rural character requires planning. Unplanned residential development in rural areas breaks up prime farm land, reducing agricultural opportunities, and often destroys the very qualities that make the township attractive. Yet some landowners wish to have the option of selling small parcels for housing. A **balance** must be struck between the right of the community to plan its growth and the rights of individual landowners. The commission determined that this balance can be achieved through the implementation of **land use tools**, specifically residential density and siting criteria. (For details, see *Rural Residential Siting Criteria: Implementation Element I-4*)

Note: The density limitation and siting criteria established by this plan shall be applied until future township-wide reviews of the comprehensive plan indicate that residents no longer favor having agriculture as the defining feature of the township.

Landowners and township officials will **work together** to choose appropriate building sites. Site selection will also be influenced by the suitability of the soil for a septic system (as determined by Iowa County). The township will consider many factors when working with a landowner to choose a building site, including:

- **Plan Compliance:** The construction project will not interfere with or fail to comply with the goals, standards, and policies set forth in the Township of Mineral Point Comprehensive Plan.
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- **Farmland Impact:** The project will have minimum adverse impact on farmland.
- **Visual Impact:** The project will have minimum adverse impact on the viewscape, especially as seen from public roadways.

The commission also evaluated another potential land use tool: Transfer of Development Rights or TDRs. In the future, the township may develop a TDR system that would allow development rights to transfer from one landowner to another.

E) Good Neighbor Policy

The preservation of agricultural opportunities is a strong component of life in the township. Sometimes, conflicts arise between farm and non-farm neighbors. Farming practices, such as tractor road traffic, manure spreading, weed control and field work must be considered as a part of living in the country. A “Good Neighbor Policy” has been written and is available to all current and new township residents. The policy strives to minimize conflicts by increasing understanding between farm and non-farm neighbors.

(For details, see *Township of Mineral Point- Good Neighbor Policy Appendix I-3*)

F) Mineral Point Extra-Territorial Zone (ET Zone)

In 2003, the City of Mineral Point exercised their state-given right to create an Extra-Territorial Zoning Commission. The commission consists of three residents of the city and three from the township. Their jurisdiction includes an area one-half mile on both sides of US Highway 151 and an area one-half mile surrounding the city limits. (As of October 2004, the exact border has not been determined) The township has chosen to work cooperatively with the city and will work to make land use decisions within the zone that benefit both the city and the township. Public opinion indicated a strong interest in preserving the viewscape from Hwy. 151 as it is important to the identity of the city and the township and is the first impression visitors have of the area. However, city

services (sewer, water, etc.) are vital components to commercial development and higher density residential areas. Again, the commission feels that a balance must be struck between preserving scenic views of the landscape and allowing for commercial and residential development.