

SECTION 3.0 GOALS AND POLICIES

The goals and policies of this Plan represent a commitment to the future of agriculture in Portage County. The goals are generalized expressions of the long-term values and needs of residents and landowners. These statements are intended to reflect not only the values of the local agricultural community, but the needs of the County as a whole. Each goal statement is followed by a set of policies, which identify specific means of accomplishing the particular goal.

The goals and policies presented in this section were developed through a local citizen participation process. First, a preliminary list of goals was prepared by the County Planning Department, with the assistance of a Technical Advisory Committee made up of various County resource specialists. Secondly, this list of goals was reviewed and refined by a 20 member Citizen Advisory Committee representing a broad cross-section of the agricultural sector, including agri-business and industry. Finally, a specific set of policies was developed for each goal.

The nine final goal statements and the associated policies listed below form the basic framework upon which this Plan was developed:

A. GOAL: Preserve productive agricultural land in Portage County and avoid the unnecessary conversion of valuable farmland.

POLICIES:

1. Identify existing productive farmland and potentially productive farmland and encourage agricultural and related uses on these lands.
2. Utilize land use controls to ensure preservation of valuable farmland.
3. Discourage the division or conversion of valuable farmland for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes.
4. Consider alternative sites in the location of institutional, governmental, and utility uses.
5. Support large, contiguous blocks of farmland as a desirable land use pattern.
6. Recognize for preservation, farmlands which have previously been identified for exclusive agricultural use through land use planning programs at the Town, Village, and County levels.

B. GOAL: Maintain a viable agricultural economy in the County.

POLICIES:

1. Support the continuation of a diversified agricultural base throughout the County.
2. Encourage agri-business and agri-industry which support area farming and provide local jobs.
3. Allow for the expansion of the agricultural sector and related growth of agri-business and agri-industry.

C. GOAL: Avoid conflicts between agricultural land uses and nonagricultural uses such as nonfarm housing.

POLICIES:

1. Discourage the location of urban land uses directly adjacent to agricultural lands.
2. Protect farm operations from the encroachment of incompatible land uses such as housing, which may hamper agricultural production due to nuisance and health related problems, or resulting legal actions.

D. GOAL: Encourage sound soil conservation practices.

POLICIES:

1. Support the Resources Conservation Program recommended in the "Long Range Plan" of the Portage County Land Conservation Department.
2. Encourage conservation practices in agriculture and forestry which minimize soil loss and help assure the long term productivity of those soils.
3. Encourage the retention and development of windbreaks in the sand plain.

E. GOAL: Protect the quality and quantity of the surface and groundwater resources of Portage County.

POLICIES:

1. Support efforts to identify point and nonpoint source pollution of surface and groundwater associated with agricultural activities.
2. Recognize the potential for groundwater contamination due to agricultural practices, particularly irrigated agriculture, as well as nonfarm activities, and stress the need for continuing education and study of this problem.

3. Maintain the County's natural surface and groundwater supplies at levels consistent with agricultural needs.

F. GOAL: Conserve significant environmental, cultural, and historic areas and resources, consistent with agricultural needs.

POLICIES:

1. Identify unique or valuable environmental areas for preservation, including wildlife habitat, wetlands, and shoreland areas.
2. Favor the preservation of adequate open spaces for recreational purposes.

G. GOAL: Encourage orderly, planned urban growth which is consistent with the efficient use of tax dollars.

POLICIES:

1. Encourage infill and expansion of existing urban population centers and lands identified as "transition areas" in this Plan, to avoid "leapfrog" type development into surrounding agricultural areas.
2. Allow for public facilities and services in a cost and energy efficient manner, consistent with federal, State, and local public facility plans.
3. Maintain an adequate supply of land for residential, commercial, industrial, and infrastructural needs.

H. GOAL: Encourage public participation and citizen input in the development of this Plan.

POLICIES:

1. Initiate public participation in the planning process amongst farmers, local officials, and other citizens.
2. Utilize public input in the development of this Plan.
3. Inform and educate the public throughout the planning process using available resources including the news media, local committees, and interest groups.

I. GOAL: Avoid extraordinary increases in property valuation associated with lands identified as "valuable or productive farmland" that may make the continuation of agricultural use undesirable or unfeasible.

POLICIES:

1. The identification of "farmland preservation" and "transition" areas in this Plan should not increase the market value of these lands, which would be in direct conflict with the intent of this Plan to protect and preserve valuable farmland.