

DRAFT Goals & Objectives

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Land Use

Goal LU-1: The Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Future Land Use Map are accessible, living documents.

Objective LU-1.1: Update the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and the Future Land Use Map as growth and technological conditions change in St. Louis County.

Objective LU-1.2: The Future Land Use Map provides basic guidance on the predominant type of land use to be expected in areas of county zoning jurisdiction and all zoning map decisions.

Goal LU-2: The Comprehensive Land Use Plan supports a flexible regulatory framework that serves local and countywide interests.

Objective LU-2.1: County zoning districts will be amended, removed, and/or created to establish consistency with the Future Land Use Map.

Objective LU-2.2: Allow for the use of zoning overlay districts tailored to local community and development needs.

Goal LU-3: Continue to improve the usability, clarity, and adherence to all planning-related regulations.

Objective LU-3.1: Clearly communicate planning application requirements and procedures to landowners and developers.

Objective LU-3.2: Work to improve the usability and clarity of planning-related regulatory documents.

Goal LU-4: Improve the integrity of the county's planning-related regulations by minimizing and improving management of nonconformities.

Objective LU-4.1: Base variance decisions on uniform approval criterion to ensure all applicants are treated equitably, that community health and safety is protected, and that the overall character of a given area is preserved.

Objective LU-4.2: County staff and decision-makers will work together to decrease the amount of zoning ordinance nonconformities throughout the county.

Objective LU-4.3: Acknowledge why nonconformities are a concern and that variances should be rare and for reasons of exceptional circumstance.

Objective LU-4.4: Where regular application of zoning regulations is not reasonable or practical, provide equitable solutions to be applied to variance applications on a consistent basis.

Goal LU-5: Development shall proceed in an orderly, efficient, and fiscally responsible manner.

Objective LU-5.1: When possible, direct new development toward areas already supported with improved infrastructure, public facilities, and areas in reasonable proximity to basic services.

Objective LU-5.2: When development opportunities do arise in isolated areas, ensure such development is self-supporting and is otherwise consistent with the comprehensive plan.

Objective LU-5.3: Encourage infill, redevelopment, or reuse of vacant commercial or industrial properties.

Objective LU-5.4: New development is expected to support all needed infrastructure improvements to be connected to existing transportation systems and other available infrastructure.

Objective LU-5.5: Direct the development of new commercial/general purpose sand and gravel pits to areas designated as Forest and Agriculture on the Future Land Use Map.

Objective LU-5.6: Where possible, work to facilitate the merging or reversion to acreage of undeveloped substandard lots in “paper subdivisions” that are designated on the Future Land Use Map as Forestry and Agriculture (FA).

Objective LU-5.7: “Paper subdivisions” in areas designated for residential, commercial, or industrial development will be evaluated to understand challenges in improving such areas to allow for development.

Goal LU-6: County residential areas are accessible, affordable, and livable for a broad spectrum of age and income groups.

Objective LU-6.1: The supply, type, and price of new housing should accurately reflect the needs of the St. Louis County population.

Objective LU-6.2: Where needed, promote inclusive communities with affordable housing options.

Objective LU-6.3: Protect established residences from encroachment and the unintended impacts of incompatible uses.

Objective LU-6.4: Encourage an equitable distribution of schools, health care services, grocers, and other resources that are necessary to sustain personal well-being and enhance the quality of county communities.

Objective LU-6.5: Work with state and other regional government, nonprofit, and development groups to identify opportunities for independent living developments in all areas of the county, such as in or adjacent to lakeshore communities.

Goal LU-7: Follow best practices for rural wastewater management.

Objective LU-7.1: Direct residential development toward areas with soils which are suitable for septic installation. Ensure that development density is appropriate given the soil characteristics of each site.

Objective LU-7.2: Coordinate with local units of government to maintain corridors for extension of community sewer facilities in fringe growth areas.

Goal LU-8: Provide sufficient opportunities for commercial development to serve local and regional markets throughout the County.

Objective LU-8.1: Encourage expansion of regional commercial opportunities in existing commercial corridors along collector or arterial routes and at nodes where infrastructure and traffic volumes can support economic growth.

Objective LU-8.2: Develop opportunities for neighborhood commercial sites that are compatible in scale and operation with surrounding residential development.

Goal LU-9: Provide sufficient opportunities for industrial development within the County.

Objective LU-9.1: Retain large-acre sites that are located adjacent to existing industry and/or freight corridors to enable facility expansion or attract compatible industries.

Goal LU-10: Balance open space conservation and environmental preservation with the county's economic development needs.

Objective LU-10.1: Proposed ferrous and non-ferrous mining areas should be preserved for possible resource extraction.

Objective LU-10.2: Carefully manage platting and development activity in close proximity to areas improved and dedicated to outdoor recreation.

Goal LU-11: Ensure that new development is located, designed, and built to avoid environmental and other hazards.

Objective LU-11.1: Preserve environmentally sensitive areas (e.g., 100-year floodplain, wetlands, bluffs) and other important natural features (e.g., high quality native plant communities, rare species habitat) and protect these areas as open space.

Objective LU-11.2: Avoid areas with high water tables unless community sewer connection is available.

Objective LU-11.3: Utilize vegetative screening and buffers to separate residential subdivisions from county collectors, arterials, and areas established or planned for commercial or industrial use.

Objective LU-11.4: Work to preserve vegetation in shore impact zones as defined by county Ordinance 62.

Objective LU-11.5: Use the subdivision process to limit building sites and access points to appropriate areas that avoid adverse impacts to sensitive or hazardous natural features.

Objective LU-11.6: Manage development to avoid and protect environmentally-sensitive or hazardous features.

Objective LU-11.7: Coordinate with local airport authorities as needed to protect local airports from encroachment by incompatible land uses by limiting development within protective airport zones.

Goal LU-12: Encourage new residential subdivisions to provide recreational opportunities for future residents.

Objective LU-12.1: Encourage pathway connections between interrelated residential neighborhoods, including paved multi-use trails, ATV trails, ski trails, etc.

Objective LU-12.2: Encourage outdoor recreational amenities to be incorporated into the design of new subdivisions, such as nature/interpretive trails, lake access points, or unique viewpoints where allowed.

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Natural Environment

Goal NE-1: Strive for local decision-making that balances social, economic, and environmental concerns.

Objective NE-1.1: County policies and approvals related to land use, development, and management will be made to address current needs without compromising the ability to meet future needs.

Objective NE-1.2: County operations and county land use and management will be refined to be more efficient and environmentally-responsible.

Goal NE-2: Water resources in the county (surface and ground waters) will be protected, while allowing for development and use of natural resources that properly mitigate for impacts to water resources.

Objective NE-2.1: County policies will protect surface waters and groundwater resources.

Goal NE-3: St. Louis County will promote the responsible stewardship and efficient use of natural resources.

Objective NE-3.1: The county, working with partners, will increase public education and engagement regarding the stewardship, conservation, and efficient use of natural resources.

Objective NE-3.2: Expand targeted partnerships to effectively advance county natural resources goals and to better manage sensitive natural areas.

Goal NE-4: St. Louis County will work with natural resource-based industries, such as mining and logging, to practice environmentally-responsible extraction and forestry management and to better anticipate impacts on other land uses.

Objective NE-4.1: The County Planning and Community Development Department will increase its engagement with mining operators in areas of exploration and siting, expansion proposals, closures, and mitigation.

Objective NE-4.2: The County Planning and Community Development Department will increase its engagement with logging operators in areas of proposed timber sales and reforestation.

Economic Development

Goal ED-1: Leverage locational advantages to develop economic strengths.

Objective ED-1.1: Scale existing industries by coordinating and developing relationships with regional suppliers, intermediaries, and end-users of County products.

Objective ED-1.2: Develop new industries or clusters of related industries which support and strengthen local assets. Broaden the industrial base by supporting marketing efforts for value-added industries that “spin-off” from existing industries.

Objective ED-1.3: Encourage expansion of sustainable timber production.

Goal ED-2: Improve the economic resilience of regional industries.

Objective ED-2.1: Recognize and ensure regulatory fairness across a thriving lodging industry that includes hotels, bed and breakfasts, and vacation rentals.

Objective ED-2.2: Align hazard mitigation planning with comprehensive planning efforts and economic development strategies.

Goal ED-3: Monitor economic trends and overall economic health.

Objective ED-3.1: Monitor business turnover, vacancies, distribution of industry, and other trends.

Objective ED-3.2: Identify early warning signs of economic downturns.

Goal ED-4: Improve high-speed network service, access to the latest related technologies, and associated economic development opportunities.

Objective ED-4.1: Promote high-speed telecommunications network expansion in the locations where the service is needed. Work with local stakeholders to prioritize areas for service expansion.

Objective ED-4.2: Work with utility providers and local, regional, and state government agencies to promote the availability of high-speed network access and the corresponding opportunity to work remotely in unincorporated areas.

Objective ED-4.3: Develop county policies and partnerships to creatively include high-speed network infrastructure in plans for economically-efficient road and other utility and infrastructure system projects.

Goal ED-5: Develop skills of local workforce.

Objective ED-5.1: Encourage local workforce training programs and continuing education to match local workforce with workforce demand.

Goal ED-6: Ensure that the county’s land use regulation system serves to enhance county economic development strategies.

Objective ED-6.1: The Comprehensive Land Use Plan, zoning ordinance, and subdivision ordinance are easy to locate and navigate.

Objective ED-6.2: The county will coordinate with state and regional development groups to leverage the Future Land Use Map as an economic development tool.

Goal ED-7: Leverage the availability of county tax forfeit lands to the county's advantage.

Objective ED-7.1: Take advantage of opportunities to preserve tax forfeit land under county control for future regional trail connections.

Objective ED-7.2: Review tax forfeit land adjacent to developed areas to assess the potential to market such property for its highest and best use.

Objective ED-7.3: Review tax forfeit land within highly sensitive environmental areas, and work to market such property to federal, state, and nonprofit entities for long-term protection.

Objective ED-7.4: Improve collaboration between county departments and necessary local, regional, and state agencies to manage and market tax forfeit properties in line with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Goal ED-8: Take advantage of opportunities to expand renewable energy resources.

Objective ED-8.1: Encourage utilities to develop utility-scale solar, wind, and biomass facilities in Forest and Agricultural areas designated on the future land use map, as long as facilities are carefully sited to avoid impacts to future mining opportunities, sensitive habitats, and other environmentally-constrained areas.

Objective ED-8.2: Encourage onsite (placed on buildings or free-standing) solar and wind power use on residential, commercial, and industrial properties.

Cultural and Historic

Goal CH-1: Development respects the cultural and historic character of place.

Objective CH-1.1: Neighborhood development and redevelopment is compatible with existing structures in scale and style.

Goal CH-2: Cultural and historic resources are protected from development.

Objective CH-2.1: Coordinate with regional tribes to inventory culturally significant sites.

Objective CH-2.2: Continue to collaborate with the county's tribal governments to monitor development-related activities for the documentation of cultural resources.

Goal CH-3: Develop a deeper appreciation for cultural and historic sites.

Objective CH-3.1: Encourage historical preservation and outreach efforts in the county.

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Intergovernmental Cooperation

Goal IC-1: Coordinate land use and transportation planning with the State, regional agencies, and local governments.

Objective IC-1.1: Continue to support long-range transportation planning performed by County Public Works, the State Department of Transportation, the Arrowhead Regional Development Corporation, and the Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council.

Goal IC-2: Strengthen relationships with regional tribes.

Objective IC-2.1: Work to increase understanding of regional tribes' cultural practices and preferred methods of handling culturally-sensitive sites.

Goal IC-3: Support the growth and revitalization of the county's communities.

Objective IC-3.1: Coordinate with cities that have the "Community Growth" designation on the fringes of their corporate limits to ensure the orderly extension of city services over time.

Objective IC-3.2: Continue to direct federal, state, and local grants funds best suited to assist with development and redevelopment in the local communities.

Objective IC-3.3: Work with county townships and cities to promote the productive use of tax forfeit lands.

Goal IC-4: Maintain a productive working relationship with all organized townships subject to county zoning.

Objective IC-4.1: Continue to encourage that planning-related applications be reviewed by the Township Board.

Objective IC-4.2: Ensure that the path for townships to gain or relinquish zoning authority from the county is clearly identified. Organized townships in the county may obtain their own zoning jurisdiction or relinquish zoning jurisdiction to the county.

Objective IC-4.3: Allow for township-specific zoning (such as overlay zoning) subject to consistency with the County Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Objective IC-4.4: Ensure land use compatibility along township boundaries.

Public Infrastructure and Services

Transportation

Goal TR-1: The level of investment in roadway construction, improvement, or maintenance should be aligned with system needs and changes in land use.

Objective TR-1.1: Continue to evaluate the costs and benefits of potentially returning some under-utilized paved surfaces to gravel.

Objective TR-1.2: Help the public understand that due to lack of funding, not all township and county right of way meets local standards, and in some cases may not be improved at all.

Goal TR-2: The transportation system promotes safety for all users.

Objective TR-2.1: Ensure that all land use and related decisions do not impair local efforts to implement the County Roadway Safety Plan.

Objective TR- 2.2: Align local and state highway system planning with goals for highway-adjacent land uses.

Goal TR-3: The transportation system serves the accessibility and mobility needs of all users.

Objective TR-3.1: Develop the capacity of the highway system in county communities to accommodate pedestrian, bicycle, and paratransit use. Promote transportation alternatives, including paratransit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities, for recreation and for those who are unable or choose not to operate a motor vehicle.

Objective TR-3.2: Work with local communities, advocacy groups, and others to expand the regional trail system and to maintain and expand opportunities for all possible user types. Prioritize links that are identified in county and regional trail plans.

Objective TR-3.3: Continue to support Safe Routes to School improvements for local cities, townships, and unincorporated county communities.

Goal TR-4: Minimize the negative impacts of infrastructure development on sensitive ecosystems, culturally significant sites, adjacent land uses, and socially disadvantaged populations.

Objective TR-4.1: Utilize benefit-cost analysis to select the best routes and realignments for new highway links and local roadways. Ensure that environmental factors are sufficiently weighted.

Objective TR-4.2: County departments will coordinate to ensure that land use regulatory impacts resulting from road realignments, right of way acquisition, and access modifications are properly addressed.

Goal TR-5: Maintain a safe, connected freight system that facilitates shipping and economic development.

Objective TR-5.1: Address freight needs when federal, state, and county highways are improved.

Objective TR-5.2: Promote the development and use of the county's freight system, including a road system that can accommodate heavy truck traffic, the rail system, and port system.

Wastewater Treatment

Goal WT-1: Encourage the improvement of wastewater treatment on an individual system and community-wide system basis.

Objective WT-1.1: Encourage the expansion of sanitary districts in populated areas where individual subsurface sewage treatment systems (SSTS) are failing or in areas not suitable for SSTS and the conversion to community sewer is reasonable.

Objective WT-1.2: Continue to work with appropriate local and state agencies and other entities to ensure timely repair or replacement of failing individual sewer systems.

Objective WT-1.3: Continue county internal cooperation and cooperation with sanitary districts in the planning of septic system sites in relation to development of property for residences and other structures, and during the subdivision process.

Public Safety

Goal PS-1: Land use, transportation, utilities, and emergency services planning promote the highest level of safety for St. Louis County residents.

Objective PS-1.1: Ensure that new development and redevelopment maintains or improves upon the planning area's emergency response capabilities.

Objective PS-1.2: Ensure that new subdivision development or large projects create and provide to the county an emergency response plan.

Objective PS-1.3: Ensure that county Hazard Mitigation Plan updates are consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and county ordinances.