

# INTRODUCTION

## LYON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

This document is the Comprehensive Plan for Lyon County, Minnesota. This Plan sets forth the basic guiding principals that have been embraced by Lyon County to shape its future. It evolved through the interchange of information, analysis and response between the citizens, community leaders, staff and public officials within the county through a planning process undertaken from 2001 to 2002.

A Land Use Policy Plan that was adopted in 1982 currently guides the county. It is now necessary to create a new Plan that assesses what changes must be made today to prepare for tomorrow. The County has prepared this Comprehensive Plan to guide the growth of cities and the development of rural areas in a logical and efficient manner and to protect growth areas and transportation corridors.

While the Table of Contents presents a clear listing of what is contained in this document, the reader will benefit from a brief overview of the organization of the Plan. This **Introduction** presents an abridged summary of the planning process and the framework within which the Plan was developed.

The **Demographic Characteristics** chapter provides an overview and assessment of demographic trends within the county. A region's overall population characteristics such as age, employment, household size, etc. are critical influences on its future. Population, household and other demographic information helps define existing conditions within the county. This information also provides a basis for future expectations with regard to growth, housing needs, economic development, land use needs and other important components of the Comprehensive Plan.

The subsequent several chapters focus on specific planning topics including:

- Demographic Characteristics
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Community Facilities
- Environmental Features
- Land Use, Growth and Zoning

Each of these chapters contains an **Inventory and Analysis** of existing conditions related to the respective topic within and affecting Lyon County. Existing conditions and patterns of development in the county and surrounding area have a great influence on the county's future. Thus, accurate, complete and up-to-date information on existing conditions is essential to a successful Comprehensive Plan.

Each of these chapters also contains an overview of the **Issues** identified by project participants relating to that chapter's specific topic. Following that is a **Policy Plan**, which includes a set of *Goals and Policies*. A *Goal* is a general statement of community aspirations indicating a broad social, economic, or physical state of conditions that the community officially agrees to strive to achieve in various ways, such as through the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. A *Policy* is an officially adopted course of action, position or strategy intended to be followed to implement the community Goals. The Goals and Policies express in detail the County's aspirations for the future. Experience has shown that no system of land use designation, economic development, transportation, etc. can survive strong economic pressures to change.

Therefore, it is appropriate that such systems be periodically reevaluated in light of changing social and economic conditions.

Consequently, it is from precisely this inevitability of changing conditions that a community's Goals and Policies derive their true value, because it is in the Goals and Policies that the County has the opportunity to communicate its aspirations regarding the type of living environment that its citizens strive to achieve. Therefore, while external factors influencing land use, economic development, housing, transportation, etc. will change, these goals and policies will continue to provide the best perspective from which to view proposed changes.

Some of the topic area chapters also contain a **Long Range Plan**. These outline more specific recommendations related to the future growth and development of the county.

This Plan also includes a **Growth Corridor Sub-Area Plan**. This plan focuses on three key highway corridors in the Marshall Area that are experiencing development activity:

- TH 23 – Extending from Green Valley on the north to County Road 68, and Camden State Park, on the south.
- U.S. 59 – Extending from County Road (CR) 8 on the north to County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 6 on the south.
- TH 19/68 – Extending from CSAH 9 on the east to CR 76 on the west.

The sub-area plan includes an inventory of existing land uses, transportation systems, sewer and water systems and a market study that assesses potential growth needs for housing, commercial and industrial development. It also includes a set of policies and recommendations for land use and access management.

Finally, the **Implementation** chapter describes how the County intends to execute this Plan. It includes a description of the tools available to the County to implement the Plan.

## PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

This project required the coordination of many participants. A group of citizens, staff, elected officials and other stakeholders whose members were appointed by the County Board made up the **Comprehensive Planning Task Force**. Members represented a broad cross section of interests and perspectives throughout the county, as shown below. This group reviewed and commented on all work products and focused on preparing and recommending a complete set of Goals, Policies and Long Range Plan recommendations for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan. The areas of interest represented on the Task Force included:

- Townships (3 representatives)
- Cities (5 representatives)
- Economic/Development Community (6 representatives)
- Large Business/Employer Representative (Schwan's)
- Environment (MPCA)

- Farmers (4 representatives)
- Agricultural Industry (Minnesota Corn Producers)
- Rural/Farm Community at Large
- County Planning Commission
- County Board of Commissioners

In addition, a **Technical Advisory Committee** made up of staff and officials within the county was established. This group participated in the Task Force meetings, reviewed work products and provided input and feedback. This group consisted of the following areas of representation:

- Townships (All 20 Township Clerks/Representatives)
- Transportation (MnDOT)
- Environment (4 representatives from DNR, SWCD, BWSR)
- Outdoors/Sporting Community
- Public Health
- Agriculture/Rural Development (Extension Service)
- Lyon County Public Works
- Lyon County Planning and Zoning
- Lyon County Planning Commission
- Utilities (5 Representatives including electric and rural water)

The County Board secured the services of a professional planning team to facilitate the development of this Plan. The **Consultant Team** consisted of three member firms. The Minneapolis-based firm of *Dahlgren, Shardlow and Uban, Inc.* served as the lead consultants. *Bonestroo, Rosene, Anderlik & Associates* provided transportation planning services and *Maxfield Research, Inc.* prepared a market study for the Growth Corridor Sub-Area.

## PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process began with a community and Task Force **Kickoff Meeting** on April 12, 2001. The purpose of this meeting was to inform the Comprehensive Planning Task Force and the public about the planning process and the timing and purpose of the Plan; introduce participants to the concept of comprehensive planning, zoning and other land use controls; provide an overview of existing economic and demographic conditions in Lyon County; and solicit views on issues, problems and opportunities facing Lyon County. The project consultants lead participants through several visioning and issue identification and prioritization exercises which were used in developing the Comprehensive Plan goals, policies and strategies. The results of this workshop can be found in Appendix A.

After the kickoff meeting, a series of **“Topic Area” Workshops** were held from May 2001 through April 2002, each focusing on one of the topics that make up the main chapters of this Plan. For some topics, such as land use and growth, more than one meeting was held. These meetings were open to the general public and Task Force and Technical Advisory Committee members attended. At each of these meetings, the planning consultants presented background research and analysis and elicited input in the development of goals and supporting policies and implementation strategies related to the topic.

Based on the input at the meeting, the Consultant Team developed draft goals and policies, which were then presented at the beginning of the subsequent topic area meeting for review and modification.

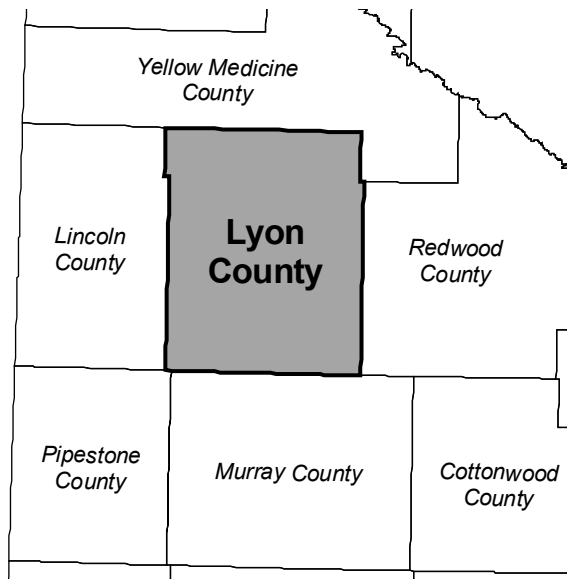
In spring of 2002, the draft Comprehensive Plan was prepared and two Task Force review meetings were held in April and May of 2002. In June the County held a public hearing on the Plan and it was adopted by the County Board on XX.

## **PLAN SETTING**

Lyon County is located in Southwestern Minnesota, in what used to be tallgrass prairie. It is located approximately 20 miles east of the South Dakota border and approximately 50 miles north of the Iowa border. The county is located approximately 156 miles west and somewhat south of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota is approximately 91 miles southwest.

To the immediate east of Lyon County is Redwood County, to the north is Yellow Medicine County, Murray and Pipestone Counties border on the South and Southwest, and to the west is Lincoln County as shown in Figure 1-2, *Surrounding Counties*.

**Figure 1-2  
Surrounding Counties**



**Figure 1-1  
Lyon County Setting**



Lyon County contains twenty townships ranging in population from 180 to 517 persons. Marshall is the county seat and largest of the county's eleven incorporated cities with a 2000 population of 12,735. The next largest city is Tracy with a 2000 population of 2,268. The other nine cities located within the county in order of largest to smallest population are: Minneota, Cottonwood, Balaton, Russell, Lynd, Ghent, Taunton, Garvin and Florence. These cities along with the county's townships and major roadways are shown on Figure 1-3, *Base Map*.

Lyon County was named in honor of General Nathaniel Lyon, a Union General, who was killed in the Civil War. Lyon County was created in 1868, ten years after Minnesota became a state in 1858.

## **INTRODUCTION: LYON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

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The moist, black, fertile soils, which were excellent for farming, attracted early settlers. One hundred thirty two years later Lyon County is still primarily an agricultural region with industries concentrated in some of the larger communities.

INSERT FIGURE 1-3 *BASE MAP, LYON COUNTY*