Wyoming Township
Comprehensive Planning Process

Final Comprehensive Plan Report
August 2004

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The Board of Supervisors of the Town of Wyoming
Prepared by:
Center for Rural Design, University of Minnesota
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The contents of Appendix A – Wyoming Township Profile are principally the product of a previous effort by Town of Wyoming staff.

We would also like to thank the staff of IMPACT Planning (www.impactplanning.com) for their review and editorial contributions to the final draft of this document.

The final Comprehensive Plan is also available as a PDF in CD format, and online at the Center for Rural Design website http://ruraldesign.coafes.umn.edu.

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Center for Rural Design
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College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences
University of Minnesota
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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is everyone’s responsibility to ensure that the resources of Wyoming Township are utilized in the most fiscally and socially responsible manner as possible. To that end it is imperative that community members have access to as much accurate information as possible when addressing preservation and development opportunities for the Township.

This Comprehensive Plan provides information and Guiding Principles necessary to make sound planning decisions when formulating future development requirements. For the Comprehensive Plan to be truly effective, it should be continually reviewed and updated as necessary to guarantee continued relevance and accuracy.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Wyoming Township is located in Chisago County, which is just north of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. As Figure 1 indicates, Wyoming Township is located in the southwest corner of Chisago County.

As part of the Comprehensive Planning process, Wyoming Township with the assistance of University of Minnesota’s Center for Rural Design (UM-CRD) held public meetings and surveyed community members for their opinions on a variety of planning issues. The goals, policies and Guiding Principles in this Plan were the result of these and other planning processes undertaken by the Township during the past several years.

The Phase One: Resource Assessment (October 2003) document done by the Township and UM-CRD brought current the values, needs, and wants of Township residents. A recurring theme of the respondents was to maintain the beauty and rural character of the Township. The citizens felt that preserving and enhancing the agricultural, natural, historical and cultural resources of the Town will provide a high quality of life for current and future residents.
3.0 BACKGROUND

During pre-settlement times prior to the middle 1800s, forest and wetlands dominated the landscape of Wyoming Township. As settlement progressed, upland forests were cleared and wetlands drained and converted to agricultural land uses. Today, many of the more marginal agricultural areas, including much of the Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area, are reverting back to forests and wetlands.

Wyoming Township remained predominately rural even as late as the 1980s providing support to the agricultural community. However, expansion of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area led to eventual conversion of farmland and forests to residential subdivisions and business parks. The land use section of this Plan estimates the changes in land uses in the Township from 1990 to 2004. The most dramatic changes in land use during this fifteen-year time period have been a reduction in agricultural land use with increases in Rural Residential I, Rural Residential II, Commercial, and Industrial land uses.

Most of the new residential development is located in the southern half of the Township and is adjacent to the City of Wyoming, Comfort Lake and Green Lake. Highway business and limited industrial are along Highways 8 and 61 in the southern part of the Township. Besides land zoned as agricultural, the other significant land uses of the Township include Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area in the northwest portion of the Township. In the north central portion of the Township, the City of Wyoming Wastewater Treatment Facility was annexed in 2003 from the Township for the purpose of attracting a new industry.

Wyoming Township can be described today as an evolving rural township, where vast areas of natural open space and productive agricultural lands are becoming bordered or inserted with new hobby farms, commercial nurseries, highway businesses, industry and residential developments. The opportunity exists through the Comprehensive Plan to create a framework for decision-making that protects valued natural resources and rural community character while encouraging development that nurtures this identity.

4.0 THE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

4.1 Planning Process

This Plan represents an update of Wyoming Township’s 1990 Comprehensive Plan. The first Plan was completed in 1990 by the Planning Commission, mainly in response to the significant residential growth occurring in the Township. That planning process established goals and policies to guide future growth and preserve the rural nature of the Township.

Since the adoption of the 1990 Plan and a companion Parks Comprehensive Plan in 1993, the Township’s continued rapid growth has warranted revision to the Comprehensive Plan. In 1998, the Town Board directed the Planning Commission to undertake a plan update, with the technical assistance of the Planning and Zoning Department. The findings of a resident survey and a series of public meetings conducted by the Planning Commission were also incorporated into a draft update of the Comprehensive Plan in 2003. That draft failed to receive requisite public support for Plan adoption.
The Town Board responded by contracting with the UM-CRD to work with a citizens’ advisory committee appointed by the Board to revise the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance so as to clearly represent shared community values related to growth and resource management.

The report on the initial phase of the UM-CRD project (October 2003) describes the critical features inventory and resident values analysis that helped shape the Comprehensive Plan’s Land Use Map and community design Guiding Principles outlined in this Plan. This process ultimately led to the issues that guided development of this revised Comprehensive Plan.

4.2 Community Issues

Wyoming Township residents highly value the natural beauty of the area, its open space and rural nature. Following are the key issues related to these community values:

1. Encouraging development that will build more places to live and work while conserving the quality of life associated with natural resources and rural scenery is a priority issue that becomes the main planning challenge for this dynamic area.

2. Protecting surface water and groundwater from pollution and improving water quality of the area’s lakes, rivers, ditches and wetlands are equally important priorities to Township residents.

3. Preserving open space for its scenic, recreational and agricultural value as well as the connections it provides to protect the ecological value of the region.

4. Protecting transportation corridors to ensure incremental development projects do not compromise the safety of citizens or adversely impact the scenic resources of the Township.

5. Finding new sources of tax and other funding to support essential public services (police, fire, emergency management services, etc.) is recognized as critical to the Township’s economic health.

6. Working with municipalities and other governmental agencies to ensure that the Township’s Guiding Principles are used to support decisions that impact the Township.

4.3 Guiding Principles

In response to the issues and to accomplish the comprehensive planning goals for the Township, a set of seven (7) Guiding Principles were established to guide decision-making so as to create the sustainable Township region described by the Plan Goals. The Principles provide support to the Town Board in achieving a level of environmental stewardship that exceeds regulatory requirements.

The Principles are grounded in current land planning and rural design research, including: Minnesota Round Table on Sustainable Development, 1998, Principles of Sustainable Development for Minnesota; D.G. Pitt et al., University of Minnesota Landscape Architecture Department, 2002, Environmentally-based Regional Smart Growth Planning and Design; and they carry forward the priority community values reported in Phase One, Resource Assessment of Wyoming Township (University of Minnesota Center for Rural Design, 2003).
The underlying Guiding Principles are:

**Principle 1:** *Instill a genuine sense of rural community.*
- A sustainable Township accommodates a mix of land uses organized into patterns that recognize the natural and agricultural landscapes as valued components of the Township’s cultural heritage that contribute to a sense of rural community.

**Principle 2:** *Enhance biological diversity.*
- Protect large areas of relatively undisturbed landscapes, or “roadless areas”, and, where possible, provide connections between these areas to improve ecological and scenic values.
- “Soften the edges” between different types of land uses with transition vegetation to increase the habitat value.

**Principle 3:** *Improve water quality and manage water levels.*
- Prevent contaminant leaks in the upland zone from industry, agriculture, roads and residential development.
- Protect low-lying surface water ‘sinks’ and ground water ‘sinks’, based on surface water and ground water data analysis.
- Monitor water quality and water levels through existing programs and new initiatives.

**Principle 4:** *Avoid environmental hazards.*
- Prevent shoreline hazards, flood hazards and hazards from landslide or subsidence due to development.
- Minimize human health hazards from pollutions associated with air emissions, soil and water contamination, noise, and light.

**Principle 5:** *Protect socially significant resources.*
- Allow an array of environmental resource benefits to be reaped from any development, so that public view or direct access to scenic features and rural landscapes is made possible.
- Reserve future options for land use, based in physical resource data, to ensure that long-term environmental and community values are not compromised by short-term economic benefits, and conversely, to ensure the full economic value of a resource is realized over time.

**Principle 6:** *Take advantage of development suitability.*
- Determine physical suitability for development, based on the proximity of existing infrastructure, and use soils data to direct development toward those areas containing the greatest soil suitability to ensure compatibility.
• Ensure compatibility between development activity and adjacent land uses.

**Principle 7: Achieve a diversified transportation system.**

• Allow for a range of travel types to accommodate recreational and commuter bicyclists and pedestrians as well as vehicular high-speed traffic in areas where alternative modes of travel can be allowed safely and quality of travel improved as a result.

• Ensure a safe and efficient local road network that addresses the travel needs of local resident traffic.

**4.4 Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies**

The comprehensive planning goals created for the Township in early phases of the Township’s planning process remain as the policy framework within which the principled plan can be implemented. The goals discussed below relate to the physical, economic and social dimensions of the Township. The Township Profile contained in Appendix A supports these goals and sets the framework for creating a living document, which can be implemented and managed by the Township.

**4.5 Overall Land Use Goals**

1. Encourage land use diversification within appropriate areas of the community in such a manner that will promote a “balanced” community.

2. Establish land use patterns that are compatible with each other and with the surrounding environment. See Appendix B, Proposed Comprehensive Plan Land Use District Map.

3. Promote compatibility and coordinated land use policies and decisions with other government agencies.

**4.6 Physical Character**

Rural towns such as Wyoming are challenged to remain economically viable while retaining characteristics desired by long-time residents and new landowners. The goals and policies listed below highlight the Township’s commitment to preserving its physical character.

**Goals:**

1. To protect the scenic resources of Wyoming Township.

2. To foster and nurture the rural character and physical identity of Wyoming Township while maximizing the efficiency of public facilities and investments.

3. To preserve the area’s rural character while accommodating the orderly growth and development of the Township.

4. To provide a Land Use Plan, which specifies appropriate land utilization and intensity of use, which is consistent, orderly and complementary with the natural features, adjacent land uses and public facilities of Wyoming Township.
5. To promote planned development of residential, commercial and industrial growth within designated areas of Wyoming Township which provides a unified and controlled relationship to traffic movement, adjoining uses and services, and the provision of transitional intensity of usage and buffering.

Policies:

1. Retain the concept of land use districts of clearly distinct purposes and densities to meet diverse housing and employment needs.

2. Consider mutual planning boundaries between neighboring municipalities.

3. Adopt natural resource protection standards that are consistent between jurisdictions within the county.

4. The primary land use in the Agricultural District should be agriculture and growth should be directed to all other land use districts. Innovative, alternative, and value-added forms of agriculture that are consistent with other activities within the land use districts will be encouraged.

5. Establish and maintain professional working relationships with other municipalities.

6. Establish a regular mechanism for review of major community development proposals that could significantly affect the Township or adjacent lands.

7. Manage and protect natural resources, including open space and natural recreation areas.

8. Promote energy efficiency through appropriate facility sitings and layout of infrastructure.

4.7 Housing

The goals and policies identified in the Comprehensive Plan are intended to provide an adequate housing supply to meet existing and forecasted housing demands for the Township as discussed in Appendix A. The use of Rural Residential I (RR-I) and Rural Residential II (RR-II) Land Use Districts and the Zoning Ordinance provides the Township with mechanisms to maintain its rural character.

Goals:

1. To provide for the orderly development of safe and efficient housing opportunities in Wyoming Township.

2. To increase the ability of the private sector to provide housing to meet Wyoming Township's anticipated population growth.
3. To provide the preponderance of housing in areas served by public infrastructure.

4. To ensure the compatibility of housing development proposals with existing adjacent land uses and the underlying goals of specific land use districts.

5. Maintain the existing quality of life and unique rural character of Wyoming Township

Policies:

1. The Town of Wyoming will not allow development proposals promoting residential densities and design inconsistent with the Land Use Plan.

2. Establish zoning districts to provide for adequate and affordable housing near transportation areas and where soils are suitable for individual sewage treatment systems, community systems or where municipal sewer can be made available.

3. The Town of Wyoming will encourage the use of the planned unit development technique in appropriate areas of the community in order to provide for efficient use of the land and to protect natural resource areas.

4. New development should not adversely affect the value of property or livability of neighboring properties.

4.8 Water Quality

Wyoming Township has extensive water resources to include wetlands, rivers, and lakes. Throughout the planning process, residents have placed a high value in protecting and preserving its water resources. The goals and policies discussed below are intended to assist future development activities to preserve these water resources. In addition, the Township completed a Surface Water Management Plan in 1997. That Plan lists additional goals, policies, and Ordinances to preserve the waters of Wyoming Township.

During the Phase One process, the UM-CRD created both surface and groundwater information maps for the Township. (See Appendix B.) Integrating the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, along with the Surface Water Plan and the attached maps should provide the Township with a mechanism to preserve and protect the water quality resources for current and future residents.

Goals:
1. To reduce to the greatest practical extent the public capital expenditures necessary to control excessive volumes and rates of stormwater runoff.

2. Use open space to prevent flooding and to improve and preserve surface water quality.

3. Use open space to preserve wetlands, lakes and streams.

4. Use open space to promote groundwater recharge.

5. Use open space to reduce erosion and sedimentation from surface flows.

6. Use open space to protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat.

7. To provide water recreational opportunities.

8. Use open space to enhance the natural beauty of the landscape.

9. To secure the other benefits associated with the proper management of surface water in order to provide a sustainable environment for both the natural and built environment.

10. Establish and maintain professional working relationships with other municipalities within the affected environment and coordinate efforts with the Comfort Lake- Forest Lake Watershed District and other agencies involved in environmental stewardship program(s).

**Policies:**

1. Promote and participate in intergovernmental efforts with local, regional watershed districts, state, and federal agencies to better plan, implement, and finance stormwater management activities.

2. Promote the maintenance and improvement of the stormwater management system as an important and integrated component of the Town’s overall infrastructure.

3. Design upgrades to the stormwater infrastructure to incorporate modern technologies in water quality conditioning to enhance the water quality of the Town’s lakes, rivers, and streams.

4. Use existing open space as an infrastructure tool to control stormwater runoff, facilitate the recharging of groundwater, and enhance habitat for fish and wildlife.

The design data and assumptions in the Surface Water Plan completed in 1997 focused on current development trends in the Township. The Plan states that, “the majority of surface water runoff will be conveyed in roadway ditches to the judicial ditches and the Sunrise River.” Therefore, it is imperative that the Township maintains its open spaces to control both the quantity and quality of stormwater runoff.
4.9 The Environment

An overwhelming majority of respondents favor preserving and protecting the unique natural resources and high quality of life in the Township. This can be achieved by ensuring compliance with all applicable environmental laws and regulations and the Town’s Zoning Ordinance. The goals and policies below were created to facilitate environmental stewardship in the Township.

**Goals:**

1. To preserve and improve ecological function(s) within all land use districts in the Township.

2. To preserve and improve the quality of the Township’s water resources.

3. Preserve Carlos Avery ecological function and biological diversity.

4. Restore and preserve natural ecosystems around lakes and streams.

**Policies:**

1. Protect large tracts of relatively undisturbed landscapes by encouraging development patterns and types that preserve large, contiguous parcels of land currently in natural cover types.

2. Promote the development of connective corridors between large tracts of natural cover types by encouraging the use of federal conservation programs for agricultural lands (CRP, CREP, EQIP), conserving agricultural preservation district easements, and the acquisition, where feasible, of park, trail, and other lands for public recreation.

3. Direct higher density development to areas within the Township that can be serviced by community or municipal wastewater treatment systems.

4. Fully integrate the management of recreational lands with the above goals and policies.

4.10 The Economy

Rural towns such as Wyoming are challenged to remain economically viable while retaining its character. Agricultural activities such as traditional family farming, orchard and fruit farming, organic farming, and hobby farming, were favored as businesses that would fit with the vision residents have for the Town.
Goals:

1. To promote economic diversification in Wyoming Township, which will provide for continued employment opportunities and reasonable access to a broad range of goods and services for community residents.

2. To promote a healthy economy, enhance the natural and built environments, and provide opportunities to area residents.

3. To assess the costs of new development and maintenance of Township infrastructure fairly and equitably.

4. To have professionally assessed the various impacts associated with development, including intrusion on existing natural resources and the enhanced burden on the Township’s infrastructure. Create a system of equitably allocating those costs among existing and new users.

5. Focus commercial and industrial development along highway corridors that best fit the Township’s Guiding Principles discussed in Part One.

Policies:

1. The Town of Wyoming will encourage non-residential development in the appropriate areas of the Town and define the function and limits of each.

2. The Town of Wyoming will encourage commercial facilities that will promote a wide range of goods and services.

3. The Town of Wyoming will discourage commercial development in areas of the community where transportation or other support services are currently inadequate or will become so when development occurs.

4. The Town of Wyoming will discourage unplanned and “strip” commercial development that will have an adverse affect on existing transportation systems, nearby residential areas and/or the Town’s image.

5. The Town of Wyoming will encourage planned industrial development in such a way as to enhance the tax base, increase employment opportunities, and place minimal demand on the environment setting.

6. The Town of Wyoming will promote industrial development in areas of the Town where adequate access, major transportation routes and necessary community facilities are or can be made available.
7. The Town of Wyoming will assess the costs of new infrastructure, or the upgrading of existing infrastructure, necessary to accommodate new development in a manner that is equitable to both the new development and the existing residents of the Township.

4.11 Parks, Trails and Open Space

In 1993, the Township adopted a Comprehensive Park Plan. The Plan was the result of the Town’s leadership in providing a variety of recreational opportunities for its residents. In that spirit, the following goals and policies complement that and other efforts by the Park Board.

Goals:

1. To provide for the development of park and recreational facilities on a neighborhood and community level to serve the needs of present and future residents.

2. To integrate the development and management of park and recreational facilities with the preservation and enhancement of ecological function in the Township.

Policies:

1. Provide parks, trails, open space and recreational opportunities needed to sufficiently care for the needs of the community.

2. Distribute the parks and other public facilities in a safe, efficient and timely manner to meet the needs of the community.

3. Acquire and fund the parks and other public facilities in a manner, which will be equitable to both the citizens of the community who need them and the landowners, developers and taxpayers who will provide them.

4. Protect, preserve, and enhance natural resources and amenities of the community.

5. Develop parks that are handicap accessible.

6. Public use of public and/or private land areas as parks or trails, may occur as direct purchase or acquisition of conservation easements.

7. The principle tool for protecting privately-owned open space areas delineated in the Parks, Trails and Open Space Overlay District Map (See Appendix B) are through conservation easement or direct purchase.

8. New commercial and residential subdivisions provide a specific amount of open space or pay a fee in lieu thereof for other open space acquisition.
9. The dedication of land or contribution of cash for park, playground, trail and public open spaces in the subdividing and developing of land within the Township shall be relative to the density of development, as determined by the Town’s Park Board.

10. Open space within a subdivision that is not scheduled for public park improvements will be maintained as required to preserve independent ecosystems, natural environment, protect historical sites and neighborhood character, as appropriate. The Park Board should assess and make recommendations for “best use” to the Town Board in the event of land use conflict(s).

4.12 Community Design and Character

The overwhelmingly united vision of the respondents to the Town of Wyoming’s community workshops was to maintain the beauty and rural character of the Township. Preserving and enhancing the agricultural, natural, historical and cultural resources of the Town will maintain the quality of life for current and future residents.

Goals:

1. To promote public and private sector development or redevelopment which utilizes best building practices and creative site design.

2. To encourage well-planned development and redevelopment which will foster an attractive and visually pleasing Town image using the Guiding Principles discussed in Part One.

3. To encourage development patterns that are consistent with the preservation and protection of the Township’s natural resources.

4. To protect the citizens’ rights and access to socially significant resources such as parks, trails, libraries, etc.

5. To preserve historic places.

6. To preserve scenic resources.

Policies:

1. Use the rural design Guiding Principles to preserve and/or enhance the existing character of the Township.

2. Illustrate how a conscious effort to improve the physical conditions of a community may contribute to economic development efforts.

3. Protect important natural areas through direct purchase or through conservation easements.

4. To manage and control future development in Wyoming Township in such a way as to protect the natural resources and enhance the environmental features of the Town.

5. Encourage the linkage of greenways, bike paths and other community amenities across subdivision and municipal boundaries.
6. Provide public access to significant social resources by encouraging private sector set-asides and public sector acquisitions of strategic park, recreational, and open-space lands.

7. Use Geographical Information System(s) (GIS) to identify and document the long-term consequences of changes in land use.

8. Use Township Ordinances, historic preservation values and building design review(s) as a tool to protect both the cultural and natural resources of the Township.

4.13 Transportation

The transportation infrastructure in Wyoming Township is the system of roads, rail, water resources, hiking and bike trails that transport people and goods within, to and through the community.

The state, Chisago County, surrounding cities and the Township administer transportation infrastructures that could influence the Township. Interacting with these agencies was identified as a critical element in the planning process.

Goals:

1. To provide a roadway system that safely serves the future access and mobility needs of the Town.

2. To provide a roadway system that promotes safe and efficient movement of goods and services.

3. To provide a diversified transportation system.

4. Establish and maintain professional working relationships with other government agencies planning for the transportation systems that may influence the Township.

Policies:

1. Through revisions to the development approval process, provide more street interconnections to adjacent neighborhoods.

2. Encourage new development to provide for pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access (as appropriate), both internal to the project area and connecting adjacent development.

3. Actively pursue all necessary safety improvements to any roadway serving the community.

4.14 Intergovernmental Cooperation

Several elements in the Comprehensive Plan encourage the Township to coordinate their planning activities with other governmental organizations. Sometimes participation with other units of government can be more formal. In those cases, suitable arrangements should be pursued to expedite intergovernmental cooperation.
Goals:

1. To encourage open communication with the county and adjacent communities in dealing with growth boundaries, common development or redevelopment proposal(s), and public improvements.

2. To continue to work with regional agencies and multi-community groups in developing solutions for regional system improvements or problems.

3. To inform local school districts of growth policies, development proposals, and public improvements in order to provide a broad base of information for the decision making process.

4. To actively participate in seeking legislation with other public agencies to implement the goals and policies of this plan.

Policies:

1. Prior to entering into any intergovernmental agreement, the Town Board shall be briefed by staff or appropriate Commission. Only the Town Board may appropriate and allocate funds for intergovernmental agreements.

5.0 THE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The Comprehensive Planning Goals and Guiding Principles that provide the framework for decision-making about land use are carried to the land use district level in this section describing the purpose and intent for each land use district. The Proposed Comprehensive Plan Land Use District Map is shown in Appendix B of this document.

The Comprehensive Plan also establishes an Open Space, Parks and Trails Overlay District that builds on the existing parks and trails system (Comprehensive Park Plan, 1993) and connects priority areas for wildlife habitat and water quality protection identified in the Phase One resource analysis (October 2003). Besides its ecological recreational and transportation functions, the open space system becomes a significant land use planning tool as it maps the Township’s valued “green infrastructure” that can frame locations for new development. Application of such a conservation, or open space, design approach is described for each of the land use districts, with particular focus on new residential patterns.

The proposed Comprehensive Plan Map presents a pattern of growth that situates commercial and industrial land uses along main highways and at key intersections. It encourages higher residential densities near existing cities. The Plan protects working agricultural land by locating higher density residential housing outside areas that are considered prime farmland. Site design in these areas should assess the visual impacts to the open space resources of the Township. The resulting
pattern creates clear ‘urban/rural’ edges throughout the Township and, by design, celebrates the open space and rural character that define its quality of life.

The proposed Comprehensive Plan Map presents the land use district designations that will guide development and resource protection for the current planning period extending to 2025, with reviews recommended at a minimum of five-year intervals. The Town’s Zoning Ordinance, with Zoning Map, is the primary means of implementing the Town’s revised Comprehensive Plan. The transfer of development rights and discretionary density bonus discussed below can be effective tools in meeting the goals and policies of this Plan.

5.1 Transfer of Development Rights

This tool refers to the right to build to higher density than is zoned on a parcel so designated by zoning ordinance as a “receiving site”, usually of lesser environmental value and more suitable for development. By purchasing the development right from the property owner of another parcel, usually less suitable for development or of higher environmental value, designated as a “sending” site by zoning ordinance, the result is higher density development on the “receiving” site, less impact on the more environmentally-sensitive “sending” site and fair development value to both parties in the transaction. It is a land use tool often used in conjunction with cluster development.

5.2 Discretionary Density Bonus

This tool provides a means of encouraging additional density when a specific public benefit is proposed. As a way for the Town Board to encourage sustainable development, the Township may want to consider a 10%-20% density bonus for development that exemplifies utilization of the Guiding Principles and land use district goals. For example if a property owner has 40 acres zoned agricultural, s/he can sell it off in five acre lots for a total of eight homes, however, by clustering development into one acre lots and clustered septic treatment, s/he could sell nine or ten homes on about ten acres of land (including roads) leaving the remain thirty acres as permanent open space for alternative urban agriculture or other open space uses.

5.3 Land Use Districts

The Comprehensive Plan’s Land Use District Map describes the existing land use in the Township. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan, developed as a result of the planning processes, uses established goals and policies to redefine some of the Districts.

The Land Use District Map reflects the breadth of ideas and depth of effort that citizens have contributed to the Comprehensive Planning update. Each Land Use District expresses the overall land use goals for its District with an understanding on the interactiveness and interconnectedness of each Land Use District. Change should be managed so as to nurture the rural character of the Township by maximizing public investment and encouraging appropriate and orderly private investment in the Township. Table 1 below provides an estimated number of acres of land use changes during the past fifteen years in the Township.
Table 1
Estimated Number of Acres Changed in Land Use Districts
Wyoming Township (1990 – 2025)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>14,290</td>
<td>11,642</td>
<td>5953</td>
<td>(8,337)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Residential I</td>
<td>5,523</td>
<td>5,961</td>
<td>8,989</td>
<td>3,471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Residential II</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>1,992</td>
<td>4,001</td>
<td>3,358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Business Center</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highway Business</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Industrial</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipalities</td>
<td>2,053</td>
<td>2,811</td>
<td>2,811</td>
<td>758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,680</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,672</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,672</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The six-acre discrepancy between 1990 and 2004 is a rounding error.

The most significant change in land use has been the transformation of agricultural land use into rural residential land use. This trend in land use during the past fifteen years, if left unchecked in future land use decisions, could threaten the rural character of the Township.

5.3.1 Agricultural District

Besides the principle of agricultural and low density residential uses, this district also accommodates those types of commercial and industrial uses which are directly dependent upon agriculture, such as nurseries, green houses, feed and grain sales, implement dealers, and farm machinery repair. In addition, those uses, which, by their very nature, require large amounts of land or are incompatible with more intensively developed areas, may also be permitted, e.g. personal air strips, minerals extraction, and commercial recreational facilities.

The Township’s goal of retaining a rural character and protecting open space can be managed within this zoning district. Residential development occurs over time and, by incorporating residential cluster development rules into zoning ordinance language that encourages open space development design, new development maximizes open space conservation without changing the overall building density of one house lot per five acres. In the process, the Township’s goal for an open space system of interconnected open space, parks and trails is created that eventually becomes a regional amenity with ecological value.

Alternative urban agricultural uses such as small crops, tree farms, vegetable farms, small organic dairy, horse farms, and community-supported agriculture is encouraged in open spaces that might remain when housing is clustered. Buildings in agricultural areas should relate to the landscape and reflect historical values when possible.

When using open space and other natural amenities to meet infrastructure requirements of current and/or new clustered development(s), the builder(s) and homeowners must design septic systems and other water treatment requirements in a manner that will not cause harm to the Township’s existing natural drainage systems.
The Town will consider establishing an agricultural preservation district at a maximum development density of one unit per forty acres (1/40) for parcels that have a total contiguous acreage as has been adopted by Chisago County. The minimum contiguous acreage can be achieved through either a single landowner or a joint effort of multiple landowners.

5.3.2 Rural Residential I District

Rural Residential I District is established to provide for single-family residences at 1:1 house lot density. Other types of uses in this District include: religious, educational, and recreational facilities. Municipal services are not required, however, this zone should be used to direct densities that support the provision of centralized services, in particular, a community wastewater treatment system. This density goal can be accomplished with ‘open space’ development design that builds on Ordinance rules related to Planned Unit Developments in the District.

5.3.3 Rural Residential II District

The Rural Residential II District allows for low-density residential housing at 1:2 house lot density, mixed with appropriate religious, educational, recreational or institutional residential. Individual septic systems are allowed, as in RRI areas, however community wastewater treatment facilities are encouraged. Use of open space development design or clustering, as a means of accomplishing the Township’s goal for an open space, parks and trails system is strongly encouraged.

5.3.4 Highway Business District

Limited commercial business is appropriate, confined to areas along I-35 and STH 61 and at key intersections along US 8, including Greenway. The Highway Business District promotes a pattern of development that clusters commercial businesses, which minimizes the amount of impervious surface area, requires less infrastructure and provides safer vehicle access. Planned Unit Developments are allowed where their design complements the Township’s Guiding Principles as discussed in Part One and works efficiently with surrounding land uses.

5.3.5 Rural Business Center District

The new Rural Business Center District has been established to provide for a limited mixture of commercial uses to accommodate the local community and the traveling public with retail and service businesses on a rural neighborhood basis. This district is confined to the intersections of US 8 and CSAH 23 / Pioneer Road; and US 8, CSAH 22 and CSAH 36. The district is meant to provide a "gateway" to the Township and the Chisago Lakes area. Buildings and developments will have high quality design standards. As such, pre-engineered post-frame structures commonly called "pole barns" will not be allowed in this District. Planned Unit Developments are allowed where their design complements the Township’s Guiding Principles as discussed in Part One and works efficiently with surrounding land uses.

5.3.6 Highway 8 Overlay District

The Highway 8 Overlay District was mandated by Chisago County in 1997. The purpose of the Highway 8 Overlay District is to preserve the natural, scenic and functional value of the US Highway 8 corridor through Chisago County. The Chisago County Comprehensive Plan’s policy for Highway 8 states the following: "Establish standards and guidelines for access spacing and frontage roads requirements on U.S. Highway 8."
The Trunk Highway (TH) 8 Scoping Study Document was completed in August, 2002 and provides the 20 year plan for the TH 8 corridor. The document can be found at http://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/th8/scopi.html. Generally in the area of Wyoming Township that is adjacent to TH 8, the 20 year plan for the highway is to extend the four-lane section from the current four-lane endpoint up to Chisago City.

5.3.7  Limited Industrial District

The Limited Industrial District is established to provide areas in which light industrial, office and administrative uses as well as manufacturing and related commercial uses are the principal land uses. Industrial uses should be located adjacent to major arterial streets with close access to I-35 or STH 61. Dependent on the industrial use allowable, community sewer systems, in general, should be required unless approved by the Town Board.

5.3.8  Special Management Overlay Districts

With Chisago County’s 1998 amendment to the County Zoning Ordinance certain overlay districts were established. The purpose of these districts is to identify extraordinary standards and requirements desirable for the protection of special or unique resources in Chisago County. In addition, there are two proposed new overlay districts that are not currently contained in the County’s Ordinance. Revisions to the Township’s Ordinance accommodate the proposed new Overlay Districts.

5.3.9  Carlos Avery Overlay District

The Carlos Avery Overlay District was established to protect and preserve the natural and scenic and recreational values of the Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area and to provide for development activities, which do not detract from these values. To help protect these values the minimum setback for structures and septic systems has been increased to fifty feet from the border of Carlos Avery.

A safety issue with the Carlos Avery District is that of fire. When planning in Wyoming Township, one has to be aware of the fire hazards posed by the type of vegetation at the Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area. Figure 2 below which shows the boundary of the Carlos Avery October 2000 fire.

![Potential Threat of Wildfire](image)
5.3.10 Shoreland Zoning District

The purpose of the Shoreland Districts is to control the density and location of developments in the shore lands adjacent to public waters in order to preserve water quality and the natural characteristics of the shore lands and public waters. This District Overlay is applied to all zoning districts where lands lie within a defined boundary, measured as a distance from the normal ordinary high water mark of the surface water of a water body and follows from the authorization and policies contained in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 105, Minnesota Regulations, parts 6120.2500-6120.3900 and the planning and zoning enabling legislation in Minnesota Statues, Chapter 462.

The Shoreland Districts are defined in the Overlay Management Areas section of the Zoning Ordinance as follows:

**Natural Environment Lake:** A lake having less than 150 total acres, less than 60 acres of water per mile of shoreline, less than three dwellings per mile of shoreline and less than fifteen feet of depth. Birch Lake, Higgins Lake, School Lake, Sam Lake and the Sunrise Pools are all Natural Environment Lakes.

**Recreational Development Lake:** A lake having between 60 and 225 acres of water per mile of shoreline, between three and twenty-five dwellings per mile of shoreline, and over 15 feet deep. Heims Lake and White Stone Lake are Recreational Development Lakes.

**General Development Lake:** A lake having greater than 225 acres of water per mile of shoreline, over twenty-five dwellings per mile of shoreline, and over fifteen feet of depth. Green Lake, Little Green Lake, Comfort Lake and Little Comfort Lake are General Development Lakes.

**Transition River:** A river in a mixture of cultivated, pasture and forested lands. The Sunrise River from Comfort Lake to the Sunrise Pools in Carlos Avery is a Transition River.

**Tributary River:** All other rivers protected in the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Protected Water Inventory. Sunrise River, from Comfort Lake South to School Lake and South from School Lake to Birch Lake, and the Sunrise River from Comfort Lake South to the Washington County line, are Tributary Rivers.

5.3.11 Open Space, Parks and Trails Overlay District

The Open Space District is established for public recreation and conservation lands or permanently deed-restricted conservation areas. In addition to the underlying zoned land uses, the Open Space Overlay District would permit other uses directly beneficial to public recreation. Where the open space design process identifies working agricultural land as the designated open space associated with a new subdivision, agriculture may continue on private land that is deed-restricted from development.

The physical character of the Open Space Overlay District includes the large undeveloped areas of natural landscape and agricultural land, parcels varying in size, which are improved with recreation facilities and trails. Cumulatively, when connected, these resources constitute the ‘green’ infrastructure that defines development patterns in the Township and assures protection of natural resources and rural character.
The proposed Overlay District is grounded in the open space, parks and trails system described in the Comprehensive Parks Plan adopted by the Town Board in 1993. While the goals and ordinances in the current Plan are firmly supported by this Comprehensive Plan, ordinances should be re-confirmed through a formal review process following adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. A new section in the Zoning Ordinance relates to the proposed Open Space Overlay District.

The regulatory authority for the Open Space, Parks, and Trails Overlay District is determined as follows:

- The Township Subdivision Ordinance section that relate to parks, trails and open space dedication (Ord. No. 93-2) shall be reconfirmed through a review process following adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.

- The Township Ordinances related to establishing a Park and Recreation Board (Ord. No. 94-1) and establishing a Joint Park Planning Board (Ord. No. 96-5) shall be reconfirmed through review process following adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.

6.0 THE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will occur over time as the Township uses the Plan to guide its future. Development opportunities, as well as preservation opportunities will arise from private developer(s) and others interested in investing in the Township’s physical and natural environment.

As the adopted public policy of the Town Board, the Comprehensive Plan establishes the community’s position on current and anticipated land use issues. The Plan’s primary purpose is to guide decision-making on land use, however it also serves as a key information source for developers interested in investing in the community. Along with Zoning Ordinance rules and the performance standards contained therein, the Plan sets the physical context for developer proposals and clearly defines community expectations regarding growth and its impact on quality of life.

The Comprehensive Plan’s goals are reflected in the Township’s Zoning Ordinance, revisions for which are recommended once approved. An updated Zoning Map should be prepared that brings the Plan map to parcel data level. The effect of the new zoning will be phased in across the Township, as parcels are sold and application is made for new development. The Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map will be revised and adopted as soon as possible, following adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. The Township’s current Zoning Map is illustrated in Appendix B.

6.1 Amending the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is structured to provide flexibility within the context and integrity of the Township’s vision. This Plan should meet the Town’s needs for up to five years, at which time amendments may be needed to adjust for unforeseen events or new opportunities to strengthen the tax base and in so doing, protect the quality of rural life. Individual property owners can request plan amendments or the Town may initiate an amendment, as deemed reasonable by the Town Board or the Town’s Planning Commission.
6.2 Comprehensiveness of the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan and associated maps represent the community’s preferred vision for Wyoming Township. The Plan addresses land use and growth management issues on a Township scale. However, there are many aspects of the Township’s future look and health that involve or are affected by the actions of other jurisdictions. When conflicting plans occur, the Township should use the Plan as a baseline for assessing the incremental and cumulative impacts which may occur as a result of a proposed action. If significant numbers of such actions occur it may suggest the need for the Township to participate in a regional scale-planning consortium.

Consideration of specific site development proposals that may bring controversy warrant a level of detail in drawings similar to those used in the Urban Planning Profession. Illustrative sketches and design drawings should be used during the planning process to help facilitate community dialogue and consensus on proposal(s). Using visualization and design throughout the development process can be an effective means of identifying shared community values and making land use decisions in the best public interest.

6.3 Role of Civic Leadership

The planning process that resulted in this Comprehensive Plan speaks to the ability of Wyoming Township citizens, the Planning Commission and Town Board to work together. The Plan represents community support and accordingly, promises to be an effective planning tool to serving as a forum for public debate on the future economic vitality, environmental health and community well being of the Township.

Out of this citizen-based planning process, a source of strong community leadership was cultivated among individuals with diverse backgrounds and points of view who are now ready to move forward with consensus based Guiding Principles to see the Plan implemented. Where possible, the Town should further collaborate with these and other citizen interests on public improvement initiatives, as a way of extending the sense of stewardship that was so powerful in this process, and will build and strengthen community in the doing.

6.4 Purpose and Intent of Zoning Ordinance

The Township’s Zoning Ordinance was adopted to protect and promote the public health, safety and welfare of its citizens, and to protect its natural resources. It can be used to implement this Comprehensive Plan and associated Guiding Principles.

6.5 Timing of the Implementation

The Township of Wyoming intends to amend its Zoning Ordinance after the Comprehensive Plan is implemented. Specific properties will be considered only upon the request of the owner of that property. Until such a request is made the property will remain zoned under its current district designation as outlined in the Wyoming Township Zoning Ordinance, Document Number A-348610 Adopted October 24, 2000; Effective November 2, 2000.

7.0 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Wyoming Township has a very strong and active citizenry. During the Phase One: Resource Assessment done as part of this Comprehensive Planning effort, nearly 200 public comments were
received. Throughout the development of this Comprehensive Plan those comments were used to provide the framework for study and analysis. As the Township continues to be challenged by planning decisions, this Comprehensive Plan, the Town’s Zoning Ordinance, and the comments from the Phase One should greatly assist the Town Board and the Planning Commission in prioritizing the communities needs, values and wants.
8.0 REFERENCES


Chisago County, Minnesota 2002 Land Atlas and Plat Book.


Town of Wyoming Comprehensive Development Plan. Adopted by the Board of Supervisors, April 1990.

