

BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

June 12, 2007

Introduction and Purpose



The purpose of this Comprehensive Plan for Bridgewater Township is to inform and provide guidance to the Township's officials, residents and other stakeholders as to the long-range objectives of the Township. The plan defines long-range objectives related to protecting and enhancing the health, safety and welfare of the Township's residents. Over time, short-term goals and action plans will also be defined and incorporated.

This Comprehensive Plan serves as a guiding framework for, and is realized through conformance with, the Bridgewater Township Planning and Zoning ordinance. That ordinance establishes allowed and prohibited uses, as well as applicable standards, for land use within the Township.

It is important to recognize that the Township does not exist in isolation from surrounding communities. As such the Township is subject to, and must operate within parameters established by, applicable county, state and federal regulations.

Specifically, any Township Planning and Zoning Regulations must be consistent with, or more restrictive than, the Rice County Planning & Zoning ordinance. The Township cannot allow a land use that the county prohibits.

462.353 AUTHORITY TO PLAN.

Subdivision 1. **General authority.** A municipality may carry on comprehensive municipal planning activities for guiding the future development and improvement of the municipality and may prepare, adopt and amend a comprehensive municipal plan and implement such plan by ordinance and other official actions in accordance with the provisions of sections 462.351 to 462.364. "Municipality" means any City . . . and any town. (M. S. 462.352, Subd. 2.)

Vision

- *Bridgewater Township is a highly desirable rural community in which to live and work.*
- *Through compatible and sustainable agricultural, residential and business development, we honor the Township's heritage and maintain its rural character and small community values while preserving and enhancing its natural beauty and resources.*
- *We practice responsible stewardship so the Township continues to provide a superior quality of life for current and future residents.*

Governance

Objective: Establish the necessary regulatory controls and standards to realize the vision and objectives.

- The Township will establish and maintain an open process to validate and keep the comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance current.
- The Township will balance the needs of the community with the interests of individual property owners.

Agriculture

Objective: Support viable and sustainable agriculture.

- The Township recognizes agriculture's valuable role in the local economy and will work to assist in preserving existing, and encouraging new forms of, agricultural operations.
- The Township recognizes the benefit to the Township of developments/operations that provide a local market for agricultural products.

- The Township will identify and implement zoning, programs and standards to enable businesses that enhance and support local farming operations.

- The Township will work to develop a transfer of development rights program that supports the ability to retain land for agricultural or natural/open space purposes.



- To promote harmony between agricultural and residential land uses, the Township will develop a good-neighbor policy.

Residential

Objective: Manage the pace and quality of future residential development within the Township.

- The majority of residential growth should be located in areas adjacent to the cities of Dundas and Northfield, as provided for in orderly annexation agreements or within designated rural residential zones, or in clustered developments.
- Residential dwellings should be placed on the parcel in a manner that respects the natural features of the property and allows for other potential uses of the parcel in the future. The Township has a keen interest in appropriate placement of development on parcels and will establish and maintain standards to guide such development.
- Residential development should be located on land that is least suitable for agricultural use and that minimizes depletion of scenic, natural and open spaces. It should also be placed in a fashion that is consistent with policies on public infrastructure
- The Township will work with the neighboring cities and the County to restrict residential development in areas that may be targeted for future nonresidential development.

Business

Objective: Support businesses that are consistent with the rural character of the township.

- Job growth in small, privately owned businesses is encouraged. Township job growth will be focused on farm operations, businesses that support local farm operations, and on activities supporting generation of renewable energy. Additionally, craftsman and artisan businesses will be encouraged.
- The economic costs and benefits to the county, school district, township and adjacent municipalities should be considered in any new development proposal.
- Commercial development is provided for per annexation agreements with municipalities that have established commercial zones and urban infrastructure.

Natural Resources and Open Space

Objective: Preserve and protect natural resources and open space.

- Preservation of open space should be encouraged in all new development, with a special emphasis on creating a network of interconnected greenways and/or natural features that support positive ecosystem functions.
- Permanent preservation of environmentally-significant areas should be encouraged or required where possible.
- The Township will encourage a variety of natural recreational areas and facilities that are well-distributed throughout the Township.
- The Township strongly supports preservation and restoration of creeks, streams, soils, aquifers and air quality and will develop standards that better protect these resources from contamination, run-off and erosion.
- The Township will encourage opportunities to plant woodlands, wetlands, restore prairies, or improve other natural habitat and will seek grant funding, when available, to implement such projects.
- The Township will develop standards that promote reclamation of existing gravel mine sites and that govern development and reclamation of any new sites.



- Interconnected bicycle/pedestrian trails with opportunities for camping would support area tourism. Efforts to improve recreation and scenic areas, such as prairie and woodland restoration and areas of safety improvements, should be identified.

Infrastructure

Objective: Provide criteria and guidance for future infrastructure development.



- Development projects should fund necessary expansions or upgrades to all health, safety and welfare related infrastructures (i.e. transportation, energy, sanitation, fire and ambulance, etc).

- New development should not occur until and unless there is sufficient road capacity and other utilities that are planned or in place to provide safe and efficient systems that are closely coordinated with the Township land use plan and the plans of surrounding areas.
- Rural non-residential development should be located where there is suitable road access and other supportive utilities.
- The Township will encourage modes of transportation, site design and other actions that conserve energy and promote energy generation at appropriate scales.
- The Township will work to develop regulations that require developments bringing heavy traffic (in volume, congestion, and/or weight) to be located along ten-ton road corridors and other primary corridors, such as State Highways #3, #246, #19 and planned CSAH 1.
- The Township will incorporate the Township Road policy as the guiding document for transportation improvements in the Township. To assure consistency and coordination with others, the Township will review the goals of the plan with neighboring cities and governmental agencies.
- The Township will establish setback standards to allow future road corridor upgrades.

Community Engagement

Objective: Develop and maintain productive alliances for Bridgewater Township.

- The Township will continue to stress coordination, communications and close cooperation with neighboring communities and with County and State agencies.
- The Township will honor and work within the existing annexation agreements with Northfield and Dundas and will consider improvements to the agreements as needed.
- The Township will actively engage and inform Bridgewater Township residents about on-going planning and zoning activities.
- The Township will reach out to local agriculturally-related organizations and associations to help recognize and support the rural and farming backbone of the Township.

The Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map is the same as that shown on the 2002 Rice County Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map.