

DOC. NO. 29741  
OFFICE OF REGISTRAR OF TITLES  
STATE OF MINNESOTA, }  
County of Lake } ss.

I hereby certify that the within instrument was filed in this office the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of October, 2001 at 1:20 P.M. and was duly registered in Book \_\_\_\_\_ of Registrar of Titles page \_\_\_\_\_

Erica Koski  
Registrar of Titles

By \_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy

DOC. NO. 144926  
OFFICE OF COUNTY RECORDER

State of Minnesota, }  
COUNTY OF LAKE } ss.

I hereby certify that the within instrument was filed for record in this office on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of October, 2001 at 1:20 o'clock P.M., and was duly recorded in book 39 of Misc records page 612

Erica Koski  
County Recorder

By \_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy

## LAKE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

AMENDED OCTOBER 1, 2001

## Introduction

Lake County is located in Northeastern Minnesota's Arrowhead Region, with Canada forming the northern border, Lake Superior comprising the southern border, with Cook County to the east and St. Louis County to the west. The total area of the County is approximately 2,137 square miles. Much of Lake County's inland area is sparsely populated, and approximately 82 percent is publicly owned. The three incorporated cities within Lake County are Two Harbors, Beaver Bay and Silver Bay, with the Cities of Silver Bay and Two Harbors comprising over half of the County's population. The majority of Lake County's population lives within six miles of Lake Superior.

The scenic beauty of Lake County, its abundance of natural resources, and its proximity to the mining, forestry, and tourism industries make it an attractive place to live and work. While a vast majority of Lake County is in public ownership, areas around the Cities of Two Harbors and Silver Bay and along Highway 61 have a full range of urban land uses. As vacant land in these areas develops, urban land uses could extend into adjacent forested and open areas, increasing development pressure. Coordination with local, state, and federal jurisdictions is imperative in coping with existing and future pressures.

The Lake County Comprehensive Plan plays three important roles for County elected and appointed officials and staff, as well as for residents and landowners. First and foremost, it is a vision statement of Lake County's goals and aspirations. Lake County's vision, as stated in this document, was identified through a public planning process that took several years to complete. Secondly, it is a guide for achieving that vision. The goals, strategies and action steps identified in the Plan help to set the initial course in seeing that vision realized. Thirdly, it is an educational tool. The Plan's appendices provide considerable background information and insight into the conditions that exist in Lake County. This information and subsequent updates will help to facilitate a better understanding of Lake County's issues, opportunities, and constraints. This document represents the current manifestation of an ongoing comprehensive planning process that has been taking place in Lake County since the mid-1960's. Furthermore, it represents a substantial revision of the Lake County Comprehensive Plan that was adopted in 1974.

## Purpose and Organization

The ultimate purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the Lake County community. The Plan is intended to provide a *flexible* guide that reflects Lake County's traditions, values and customs. This document is the result of a planning process based upon the premise that planning provides an

objective basis for ongoing governmental decisions by coordinating and balancing considerations of economic, social, and environmental factors. The comprehensive planning process represents an opportunity to bring citizens into contact with the County government (henceforth the *County*) on issues that affect them, to recognize the public and private investments in Lake County, and to assess the direction the *County* wishes to pursue.

A separate supporting document that includes background information, maps, and a survey of community attitudes was developed during the comprehensive planning process. This document is available for purchase at the Lake County Land Department.

**Authority**

The Lake County Comprehensive Plan is the legal basis for its official controls. The 1974 Comprehensive Plan was developed in accordance with Minnesota Chapter 394, the County Planning Enabling Act, as is this current revision. Minnesota Chapter 394 provides counties with the regulatory authority to promote the "health, safety, moral and general welfare of the community" through the development and implementation of a comprehensive plan.

**Plan  
Implementation**

This section of the plan provides a general overview of the opportunities for implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and recommendations for updating it. Plan implementation is firmly tied to the ability of the *County* to promote the plan over the long term. Key partners in the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan include the decision-makers, staff, and residents of Lake County. The County Board, Planning Commission, and County staff will study and understand the plan and serve as its implementers. The support of County residents and landowners is essential to the successful implementation of the plan.

**Implementation Tools**

*Official Controls*

*Tools that the County uses to regulate land use and establish standards for development.*

Official controls include the zoning and subdivision regulations that the *County* uses to establish standards for development and regulate land use. The *County's* land use ordinance utilizes zoning districts as its principal tool to implement the *County's* land use policies. The land use ordinance consists of two essential elements, the ordinance text and the official zoning map. The ordinance text sets forth the specific guidelines for the development of land within Lake County and the official map delineates zoning district boundaries. The *County* will

review its land use ordinance and zoning map and compare them with the adopted goals and strategies included in this plan in order to identify and reconcile areas of discrepancy.

The subdivision ordinance regulates the subdivision of parcels and coordinates private investment with public infrastructure. Subdivision regulations ensure that appropriate physical development and the provision of adequate public infrastructure are available to areas of growth. The subdivision ordinance ensures that the costs of public improvements associated with new development are assessed to the developer and new residents rather than to the established community.

***Intergovernmental Cooperation***

*Working with other entities to address mutual needs or issues.*

Intergovernmental cooperation will help the County build and sustain relationships with all units of government in order to encourage planned growth and development, promote economic vitality, enhance the quality of life for its residents, and promote its interests. Because the majority of Lake County's land area is managed by County, State and Federal governments, as well as by public and private nonprofit agencies, it is important to continue coordination among these entities to ensure that local interests regarding the management of these lands are clearly represented. A variety of State and Federal agencies provide financial and technical assistance through various programs. Coordination of initiatives to utilize these resources is necessary to work towards a common goal. The County has found it is beneficial to set up forums that are outside traditional lines of communication for ongoing discussion of land management issues.

***Additional Studies and Planning Activity***

*Additional planning or research that must occur before a specific course of action may be recommended.*

This Comprehensive Plan provides a broad guide and vision for future development in Lake County. However, it is important to recognize that some issues may require additional studies or planning efforts before specific courses of action can be recommended. For example, the ability to address housing needs within Lake County may require that a comprehensive analysis be made. Information collected during the course of such studies will be used in amending the comprehensive plan in order to address any pressing needs.

***Capital Improvement Programs***

*Publicly owned physical improvements*

A Capital Improvement Program (CIP) establishes schedules and priorities for capital improvements and usually identifies projects five years out. Projects typically included in a CIP are of three types, (i) the reconstruction, major maintenance, or upgrading of existing facilities; (ii) new projects in developed areas where the need or demand already

to the County's infrastructure.

(ii) new projects in developed areas where the need or demand already exists; and (iii) the expansion of projects in partially developed or developing areas where demand is anticipated as a result of, or in preparation for, future growth. The County will develop a CIP framework that identifies, estimates the costs of, and prioritizes needed public improvements over a given period. Recognizing that the County's financial resources are limited, a CIP framework integrated into the decision-making process will allow it to provide the most critical of public improvements while staying within budgetary constraints.

**Other strategies**

*Actions to be carried out through other policies, programs, or initiatives of the County.*

Unforeseen circumstances may arise that require the County's attention but for which the Comprehensive Plan provides no direction. When confronted with a particular issue or request, the County Board may employ such strategies as policy directives or statements of position that allow for satisfactory resolution. When such strategies have been employed by the County, and are determined to have future value, they may be included as part of the Plan during the next scheduled Plan review and update.

**Implementation Roles and Responsibilities**

The Comprehensive Plan touches on a broad list of topics intended to direct future growth and development in Lake County until 2013. These topics include land use, housing, transportation, public facilities and infrastructure, recreation, commercial and industrial development, and the natural environment. The background studies and recommendations contained in Appendix A identify other organizations and individuals that have an impact on these issues and that will need to be considered as the County begins to implement the plan.

For each topic area, the Comprehensive Plan presents goals that reflect the desired conditions to be achieved during the time span of the Plan. Implementation strategies are identified for each goal and, where appropriate, action steps have been identified as part of those strategies. The goals can be characterized as policy statements describing long-term outcomes. The strategies are more concrete and action-oriented. While the goals provide long-range vision and are less likely to change over time, the strategies and associated action steps may change over time as needs change and new opportunities arise.

The County Board of Commissioners, Planning Commission, and staff should familiarize themselves with the Plan and should follow its guidance in making decisions. New members of the County Board and

Planning Commission, and new department heads should be given copies of the Plan as part of their orientation process. The Plan should be cited or referenced in support of land use decisions made by County officials and staff. The Plan is intended to be the foundation upon which subsequent land use decisions and regulation rest.

**Plan Review and Updating**

Recognizing the dynamic nature of society, the County should periodically review the Comprehensive Plan to ensure that it appropriately reflects the current conditions and views that exist within the County and update it as appropriate.

**Guiding Principles**

*Principle 1*

Establish a land use program based upon public involvement that takes into consideration the values, traditions, customs, and well-being of County residents, using locally accepted principles of land management. Definitive values, traditions, and customs include the following:

- Constitutional Rights and Responsibilities
- Diversity
- Independence
- Hunting, Fishing, and Trapping
- Logging and Mining
- Cooperation; Neighbor-Helping-Neighbor
- Outdoor Recreation
- Portages, Trails, and Waterways
- Private Space
- Responsibility for the Natural Environment
- Tolerance; Live and Let Live Attitude
- Commercial Fishing
- Forest Management

*Principle 2*

Recognize and respect the rights of property owners.

*Principle 3*

Base resource management strategies on sound scientific data using the best available techniques.

*Principle 4*

Demand equal footing with all levels of government in all matters

affecting Lake County.

**Principle 5**

Accept this Comprehensive Plan with its goals and strategies as intended to accommodate and address future growth and service demands until 2013.

**Goals & Strategies**

**General Goal 1**

*Continue to develop a Comprehensive Plan to guide decision-makers that considers the values, traditions, and customs of County residents, utilizing locally accepted comprehensive planning principles*

- A. Coordinate plans for economic development, environmental protection, infrastructure, land use, and recreation utilizing public participation throughout the process.
- B. Review annually, and amend the Plan as necessary, to ensure the Plan's usefulness as a guide for development. The County's official controls shall be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- C. Collaborate with applicable government entities and agencies in the implementation of comprehensive planning goals and strategies.
  - Work cooperatively with the cities, townships, school districts, and other entities on applicable planning and land use issues.
  - Work with the State of Minnesota, the Federal Government, and other applicable entities to provide input on the management of publicly owned lands within the County.
  - Participate in regional, state, and federal legislative, rule making, and policy setting processes.
  - Work with federal officials to provide input on the management of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW).
  - Work with federal and state officials to retain resident hunting, trapping, and fishing rights on publicly owned lands and waters.
  - Work with applicable entities to maintain public access to all public land and waters in Lake County.
  - Work with applicable entities to provide input on the formation and implementation of environmental regulations.
  - Work with applicable entities to provide input on the management of endangered, threatened, and sensitive species.
  - Work to consolidate public land holdings (i.e. land exchanges are encouraged).
  - Address payment in lieu of taxes issues to sustain local government. Act to ensure that tax-exempt facilities are acting within the letter of the law.

- Work with applicable entities to ensure quality of life.
- Work with applicable entities to ensure the landholder's ability to practice forest management on their holdings.

D. Work with applicable federal and state agencies to ensure that any land taken out of private ownership is matched by the release of (an equal value of) similar public land to the County's tax rolls.

**General Goal 2**

*Assure a balance between development and quality of life considerations.*

**Land Use Goal**

*Support growth that is orderly and planned.*

A. Support the development of industry within established communities with adequate infrastructure (with the exception of natural resource based industries).

B. Support the development of non-recreationally based commercial enterprises within communities with established infrastructure and clustered in areas with adequate infrastructure.

C. Minimize the impacts of land disturbing activities, on natural features, relative to erosion, storm water runoff, wetlands, and scenic views.

- Develop tools to preserve green space in an effort to prevent sprawl.

D. Encourage development that protects the integrity of ridgelines.

- Inventory and identify ridges holding visual and environmental importance to Lake County.
- Develop standards for vegetative clearing, building height, screening, and building color for development on ridges holding visual and environmental importance to Lake County.
- Encourage densities to remain low on ridges holding visual and environmental importance to Lake County.

E. Minimize land use conflicts between industrial, commercial, and residential areas.

- Consider establishing buffer zones between conflicting uses.



**Housing Goal**

*Encourage the development of housing within the County that meets a variety of needs.*

- F. Evaluate and strengthen the land use education and enforcement processes.
  - Secure adequate legal counsel.
  - Consider licensing/bonding any earth-moving contractors operating in Lake County.
  
- A. Work with private developers, applicable State and Federal agencies, local organizations, and institutions to assess and address housing needs.
- B. Encourage the development of housing in areas of the County that can be economically served with adequate transportation and utility infrastructure.
  - Encourage the location of multi-family and high-density small lot residential development adjacent to cities or other areas with adequate infrastructure.

**Transportation Goal 1**

*Provide and facilitate the development of a transportation system that safely and efficiently meets and supports the County's physical, social, economic, and environmental needs.*

- A. Work with applicable State and Federal agencies and Townships to establish, construct, and improve all modes of the transportation system.
- B. Work to upgrade Lake County's arterial and collector system.
  - Assess the potential for the design and construction of a system of minor arterial roadways and major collectors, providing strategic links.
  - Assess the potential for the design and construction of a coordinated system of routes parallel to Highway 61.
- C. Prepare a Highway Improvement Plan that provides for the systematic upgrading of the County's State Aid Highways to nine or ten-ton capacity.
- D. Work to improve the visual quality of roadways.
  - Improve directional signage, identification signage, and landscaping along roadways.
  - Support the development of entrance features for urbanized areas.
- E. Encourage the continued utilization and maintenance of harbor, rail, and air facilities.
- F. Add and maintain consistent directional and community

identification signage on roads and streets within the County.

- G. Make access management an integral consideration in the transportation system.
- H. Ensure commercial vehicle access throughout the County.
- I. Ensure public and private signage is consistent with the County sign ordinance.
- J. Utilize highway shoulders for interest groups promoting recreational activities such as hiking and biking, among others.

**Transportation Goal 2**

*Protect the integrity of potential future road expansion projects.*

- A. Formally adopt a transportation map that does the following:
  - Identifies future rights-of-way.
  - Identifies utility corridors.
  - Utilizes Geographic Information Systems to inventory rights-of-way, corridors, and resources.
- B. Consider access management issues when making land use decisions.

**Public Facilities and Infrastructure Goal**

*Provide and facilitate infrastructure and facilities that safely and efficiently meet and support the County's physical, social, and economic needs.*

- A. Continue to maintain existing public facilities.
  - Identify and schedule needed improvements of Lake County facilities through Capital Improvements Programs.
- B. Cooperate with applicable organizations to plan for future educational needs.
- C. Cooperate and partner with other units of government in developing and utilizing public facilities in order to provide the highest levels of service and to avoid duplication.
- D. Monitor areas with on-site sewer systems and support the creation of wastewater management districts.
  - Work with property owners along the North Shore to address wastewater treatment problems.
- E. Ensure maximum utilization of natural materials and resources, generated through construction projects. Assure that they are reserved and made available for subsequent projects, benefiting the public.

**Recreational/  
Cultural Goal**

*Support the  
establishment and  
maintenance of  
recreational facilities  
and systems.*

**Commercial/Industrial  
Development Goal 1**

*Maintain a favorable*

- F. Maintain search and rescue, fire, and law enforcement services.
  - G. Support a high level of training and readiness within emergency services, including cross training.
  - H. Work with public and private entities to encourage state-of-the-art communication systems throughout Lake County.
  - I. Promote antennae co-location on shared communication towers.
  - J. Give priority to infrastructure improvements that strengthen the County's tax base.
  - K. Work with all entities to share infrastructure services and facilities.
- 
- A. Support the County Recreation Board.
  - B. Coordinate the County's recreation program with other entities (state, federal, private, etc.) to ensure maximum public benefit.
  - C. Encourage cultural partnerships.
  - D. Encourage preservation of historic sites.
  - E. Work with State and Federal agencies to ensure residents' continued rights to hunt, fish, trap, and manage forestlands within the County.
  - F. Work with applicable state, federal, and local agencies to establish, construct, maintain, and improve all modes of the recreational trail system.
    - Continue to encourage the coordination of trail and transportation systems as opportunities present themselves.
  - G. Encourage the utilization of the recreational trail system.
  - H. Support the multiple-use of public lands and recognize the importance of all recreational activities.
- 
- A. Support existing Lake County businesses.
  - B. Encourage commercial and industrial development and redevelopment.

*climate for business activity and support the development of a strong and balanced economic base.*

**Commercial/Industrial Development Goal 2**

*Reduce the likelihood of conflicts arising between industrial operations and County residents.*

**Environmental Goal**

*Promote stewardship by residents, visitors, and elected officials to ensure long-term environmental health.*

redevelopment.

- Participate in State and Federal legislative processes related to economic development issues.
- C. Support the multiple-use of public lands and recognize the importance of resource based industry.
  - Actively participate in resource management in the Lake County planning processes.
  - Work with the State to emphasize the income producing requirements of school trust lands in its control.
  
- A. Identify commercially viable gravel resources within the County.
  - In conjunction with other resource management agencies, conduct a gravel resources evaluation study.
- B. Establish gravel extraction districts that identify the location of possible future gravel mining operations based upon a gravel resource evaluation study.
- C. Establish protocols to inform developers and residents interested in developing land near gravel extraction districts of the potential for noise, dust, traffic, and visual impacts associated with gravel mining operations.
- D. Act to reduce conflict in non-gravel industrial operations.
  
- A. Educate residents, visitors and elected officials of the importance of stewardship.
- B. Recognize, promote, and implement management practices to foster stewardship of the County's environmental resources.
- C. Continue to manage the County's resources in accordance with Official Controls and County Plans, including but not limited to the following:
  - Comprehensive Water Management Plan
  - Five-year Road Plan
  - North Shore Management Plan
  - Tax Forfeit Management Plan
  - Wetland Plan
  - Airport Ordinances
  - Environmental Review Ordinance
  - Land Use Ordinance
  - Sewage Treatment Ordinance
  - Solid Waste Ordinance

- Subdivision Ordinance
- Scenic Byway/All American Road Plan

D. Work with State and Federal resource management agencies to achieve consistency.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

EFFECTUATION

Adopted January 6, 1976.  
Amended June 22, 1983.  
Amended March 6, 1986.  
Amended August 22, 1989.  
Amended January 1, 1993.  
Amended June 1, 1995  
Amended April 7, 1999  
Amended April 4, 2000

This Amendment shall take effect and be in full force on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2001.

Unanimously passed this 24<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2001 by the Lake County Board of Commissioners.

Oct 1, 01  
Date

Clair Nelson  
Clair Nelson, Chairman  
Lake County Board of Commissioners

Oct 3, 2001  
Date

Wilma Clark  
Wilma Clark, Clerk of the Board

