

## **AFFIRMATION OF THE CONCEPTUAL LAND USE STRATEGY**

A Report from the Regional Planning Commission to the Kane County Board Concerning  
the Conceptual Land Use Strategy of the Adopted 2020 Land Resource Management Plan  
With Recommendations for the 2030 Planning Program

February 5, 2003

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## **PREFACE**

This report “Affirmation of the Conceptual Land Use Strategy” was prepared by the staff of the Kane County Development Department for review and approval by the Regional Planning Commission. The responsibilities of the Commission are contained in Figure 1, p. 2, of the adopted 2020 Land Resource Management Plan, Kane County, Illinois.

Those responsibilities are:

1. To cooperate in the preparation of a Comprehensive County Plan and make recommendations to the County Board with respect to the plan.
2. To cooperate in the preparation of plans for specific improvements in accordance with the official plan and make recommendations to the County Board with respect to the improvements.
3. To give aid to the municipal and county officials charged with the direction of projects for improvements embraced within the Comprehensive Plan, to further the development of these projects and generally to promote the realization of the Comprehensive Plan.
4. To report to the County Board on the status of the Comprehensive Plan and on the effectiveness of county ordinances and regulations as they relate to the Comprehensive Plan.
5. To transmit to the County Board reports on the important problems, conditions, and proposals pertinent to the future development of the county.

This report is responsive to the responsibilities assigned to the Commission by the Kane County Board. Commission submittal of this report to the County Board is intended to serve as the “kick-off” to the planning process for preparation of the 2030 Land Resource Management Plan. The Commission is proud of its previous role in preparing and recommending the 2020 Plan to the County Board and now accepts the challenge and responsibility of expanding the county planning horizon and completing the 2030 Plan.

## **Section I**

### **STRATEGY BACKGROUND**

In January of 1994 the Kane County Regional Planning Commission recommended to the Development Committee of the County Board a Conceptual Land Use Strategy to provide a foundation and a sense of policy direction for the 2020 Land Resource Management Planning Process. That Conceptual Land Use Strategy identified three distinct land use areas: the Urban Corridor Area, the Critical Growth Area, and the Agricultural / Village Area. On January 18, 1994, Regional Planning Commission Chairperson, Mary Ochenschlager, presented the Commission’s recommended

Conceptual Land Use Strategy to the Development Committee. In addition to the Strategy, the Commission recommended a land resource planning framework that emphasized a need for open space protection, water resource management, balanced community development, coordination of transportation improvements with land use management, protection of agriculture, and a cooperative planning process with the municipalities.

The Development Committee reviewed the Land Use Strategy and the planning program framework and unanimously adopted a motion to forward a resolution adopting the Land Use Strategy to the County Board for its deliberation and action. On February 8, 1994, the County Board adopted Ordinance #94-29, "Adopting A Conceptual Land Use Strategy for Kane County." (Please see attached copy) That Ordinance included a directive that the Regional Planning Commission proceed with completion of the draft 2020 Kane County Land Use Plan and preparation of a process for public review of the draft plan based on the Planning Partnership Areas (PPA) Map.

Based on that County Board support and directive, the Kane County Regional Planning Commission proceeded with completion of the draft 2020 Land Resource Management Plan and a public review process focusing on the eight Planning Partnership Areas. The final draft of the 2020 Land Resource Management Plan was adopted unanimously by the Kane County Board on June 11, 1996.

Since adoption, the 2020 Plan has proven to be an effective statement of public policy on issues relating to community development, water resource management, open space protection, and land use decisions. It has been well received by the public of Kane County, has had strong support from the County Board, has been used extensively by the Planning Commission to articulate the need for cooperative planning initiatives in the PPA's, and has been recognized at regional, state, and national levels as an award winning document addressing sensible, managed growth. These accomplishments and the effectiveness of the 2020 Land Resource Management Plan are to a great extent attributable to the "Conceptual Land Use Strategy" and the simple, clear, and concise way it has communicated the vision, goals and public policies of the adopted 2020 Plan.

## **Section II**

### **STRATEGY REVIEW**

The Regional Planning Commission has recently reviewed the Land Use Strategy contained in pages 74-85 of the adopted 2020 Land Resource Management Plan. This review process is a logical follow-up to the five year implementation program called for in the adopted 2020 Plan and represents the first major step in preparing and recommending a 2030 Land Resource Management Plan to the County Board for its review and adoption. The 2020 Plan is recognized as a dynamic statement of public policy that needs to be updated in light of changing demographics, changes in state and federal policies, major infrastructure improvements, major shifts in the regional employment base, local public policy and land use decisions, and economic and employment activities.

Adopted in 1994, the Conceptual Land Use Strategy serves as the foundation for the 2020 Plan and calls for proper balance between natural resource protection and community development. The conceptual strategy remains valid but needs to be re-examined and fine-tuned to reflect the changes that have occurred in Kane County since the strategy was adopted by the County Board nine years ago. This is an opportunity to improve the effectiveness of the conceptual land use strategy, expand the horizon another decade into the future, and focus on the following themes for each of the strategy areas.

RENAISSANCE – Urban Corridor  
REFINEMENT – Critical Growth  
RECOMMITMENT – Agricultural / Rural

### Urban Corridor

The Urban Corridor, the municipalities along the Fox River from Algonquin on the north to Montgomery on the south, is experiencing what best can be described as a “renaissance”, a new urban focus for a new century. The historic development patterns along the Fox River continue to expand with the growing population of the cities and villages. Today these municipalities are home to about 80 percent of the county’s population. As stated in the 2020 Plan “The development strategy for the corridor includes downtown revitalization, neighborhood preservation, redevelopment, and infill development.” Since 1994 the municipalities in the Urban Corridor have engaged in planning and community development efforts that have been remarkable in advancing the land use strategy.

In addition, the cities and villages have annexed extensive areas along Randall Road and expanded the Urban Corridor to the west. New commercial areas, residential neighborhoods, employment centers, expanded open space and recreational areas are all part of the expanding corridor. The elements of the Land Use Strategy, Fig. 43, p. 75, of the 2020 Plan, as they relate to the Urban Corridor, are being implemented by the Fox River communities. The strategy is working and the “renaissance” needs to be fostered and encouraged as we expand our planning to 2030 so that the Urban Corridor continues to serve as home to the majority of the County’s citizens.

### Critical Growth Area

The theme of “refinement” is applied to the Critical Growth Area both in terms of refining the geographic area and the diversity and extent of development activities. The geography of the Critical Growth Area is changing because of several factors: the westward expansion of the Urban Corridor; approval of Facility Planning Area boundaries by IEPA; the recognition of the growth of Hampshire, Sugar Grove and Elburn; unincorporated land use changes approved by the county; major open space acquisitions; and the 2030 population projections.

The Critical Growth Area continues to face the greatest challenges to sensible managed growth. It will be where we have the greatest opportunity to incorporate smart growth principles into community development decisions. It will also be where we are put to the test regarding cooperative planning, intergovernmental land use agreements and jurisdictional boundary agreements.

Significant progress has been made in achieving many of the elements of the land use strategy for the Critical Growth Area. The greenway system along the tributaries of the Fox River is being implemented; the Rustic Roads Program has been adopted; new neighborhoods are under development; Aurora has completed the “Countryside Vision Plan” for its western transition; and Geneva and the County are finalizing the Prairie Green Project west of Peck Road. The strategy for the Critical Growth Area needs refinement, but it is working.

### Agricultural / Rural Area

Finding #5 submitted by the Regional Planning Commission to the County Board in January, 1994 stated:

“In designated areas, agriculture must continue to be a desired land use. Premature conversion of farmland to other land uses disrupts land use balance and should be discouraged. If the plan now being prepared is implemented, by the year 2020 at least 50% of the land in the County will still be farmland and small villages.”

As the Commission reviewed the Conceptual Land Use Strategy, no theme was more appropriate for the Agricultural / Rural Area than “recommitment”. As our population grows and the Urban Corridor and Critical Growth Areas expand, we need to re-double our efforts to prevent premature conversion of farmland to other uses and recommit to preserving agricultural areas and open space.

Farming as a way of life and important economic activity can be preserved in western Kane County, but as the planning horizon and population forecasts are extended to 2030 there will be some encroachment of the Critical Growth Area into the Agricultural Area. Examples include Montgomery’s growth along Rte. 30 west of Blackberry Creek; North Aurora’s annexation of farmland North of I-88 and west of Deerpath; and Carpentersville and Gilberts agreeing to develop along Galligan Road. And, as Elburn, Sugar Grove and Hampshire continue to grow and evolve from rural agricultural service communities into more suburban-like municipalities, some additional acres of cropland will succumb to rooftops. In addition, Maple Park is planning for more growth, Burlington is looking at expanding, Big Rock has incorporated, and Lily Lake is considering new developments. The potential growth of all of these municipalities requires that the County recommit to preserving farmland.

Part of this recommitment is evidenced by County Board approval of the purchase in 2002 of agricultural easements on almost 700 acres of farmland in 2002, Federal

Farmland Protection Program grant submission for 698 acres, and applications submitted by landowners for preservation of over 4,000 acres of additional land. Easement acquisition, policies discouraging the extension of road and sewer improvements and good planning and zoning will also require a recommitment. The strategy for the Agricultural / Rural Area is working, but the County and municipalities need to recommit to protecting and preserving farmland in the western area of Kane County.

## **SECTION III**

### **STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Illinois State Statutes empower county boards to establish regional planning commissions to "...have a plan made for the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of said region..."

In accordance with this statute and the responsibilities assigned by the Kane County Board, the Kane County Regional Planning Commission over the past 18 months has been reviewing the 2020 Plan and preparing updates for 2030. An important element of this effort was the review of the 1994 Conceptual Land Use Strategy in light of land use changes, municipal plans, FPA expansions, intergovernmental agreements, population projections and other changes and trends.

This review, research and analysis has led to the following recommendations for a 2030 Conceptual Land Use Strategy and the preparation of a 2030 Land Resource Management Plan.

1. For the purpose of county comprehensive planning the conceptual strategy is affirmed as fundamentally sound. Kane County is comprised of three distinct land use strategy areas: the Urban Corridor Area, the Critical Growth Area, and the Agricultural / Rural Area. These areas are indicated on the proposed 2030 Conceptual Land Use Strategy Map (see attached)

2. Each Area is assigned a specific theme:

Urban Corridor - Renaissance  
Critical Growth - Refinement  
Agricultural / Rural - Recommitment

These three themes will be used in preparing the text of the 2030 Land Resource Management Plan. "Renaissance" emphasizes the importance of the historic urban corridor and the opportunities for redevelopment, infill, adaptive reuse, Fox River improvements, new job creation, and revitalized neighborhoods. "Refinement" indicates the need to re-evaluate the perimeters of the critical growth area, how it relates to the urban corridor and the agricultural area, the types and intensities of developments that should be encouraged, and fine-tuning the growth management efforts of

the county and the municipalities. “Recommitment” reflects a desire, a dedication to aggressively pursue farmland preservation and protection through land planning and zoning initiatives, the Kane County Farmland Preservation Program, the Illinois Farmland Preservation Act, and policy decisions regarding public infrastructure investments.

3. A foundation of the land use strategy reflected on the attached map, is open space protection and water resource management, especially along the Fox River and the County’s major developing watersheds: Kishwaukee River (Eakin and Hampshire Creek), Tyler, Ferson/Otter, Mill, Blackberry and Big Rock Creeks. Open space protection, greenway implementation, and water resource management should continue to serve as three primary, basic goals in the development of the land use, transportation, municipal development, and public facility elements of the 2030 Plan and is why the open space armature has been added to the 2030 Conceptual Land Use Strategy map.
4. Kane County should encourage balanced, municipal development patterns that are: concentrated within or adjacent to existing municipalities in the urban corridor; carefully designed, mixed use development respectful of water resource management and open space goals in the critical growth area; or planned expansions of the rural villages which minimize disruption of agricultural uses and farmland loss.
5. In designated areas agriculture must continue to be a desired and preferred land use. Premature conversion of farmland to other land uses should be discouraged. A general goal of the plan now being prepared should be that by 2030 at least 50% of the land in Kane County should still be in farmland and open space uses.
6. As less land is used for agriculture and more land becomes urbanized, water use will increase and aquifer withdrawals may exceed sustainable rates. The County has taken the lead in the region in assessing groundwater resources and withdrawal rates. The 2030 Land Resource Management Plan should address water conservation practices, groundwater protection strategies, meeting long-term demands, and the enactment of new state and/or countywide regulatory measures to ensure a long-term, sustainable supply.
7. The relationship between land use and transportation planning is of fundamental importance to the 2030 Conceptual Land Use Strategy as well as the County’s on-going transportation and land use planning programs. Two specific examples of this relationship between land development and transportation improvements are the location and timing of new Fox River bridge crossings and planning for the Prairie Parkway if determined to be necessary. The preparation of the 2030 Land Resource

Management Plan should include a section on transportation issues, goals and policies and should be followed by the preparation of a County Transportation Plan to meet the 2030 travel demand projections for Kane County.

8. The preparation of the 2030 Resource Management Plan should be based on the 10 Smart Growth Principles recommended by the Smart Growth Network. These are:
  1. Mix land uses
  2. Take advantage of compact building design
  3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
  4. Create walkable neighborhoods
  5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
  6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas
  7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
  8. Provide a variety of transportation choices
  9. Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective
  10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions
9. A cornerstone of the 2020 Land Resource Management Plan was the establishment of eight Partnership Planning Areas (PPA's). The Partnership Planning Areas should be supported and re-energized for the 2030 Plan and the PPA boundaries should not be changed. As we proceed with the 2030 Plan there must be a renewed effort, spearheaded by the County Regional Planning Commission, to facilitate cooperation and adoption of land use agreements between the county and municipalities and the cities and villages.
10. The Kane County Regional Planning Commission hereby affirms and endorses the conceptual strategy as a means to ensure that Kane County's quality of life will be sustained and that there will be a proper balance between natural resource protection and community and economic development as we progress into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Further, the Commission requests approval by the Kane County Board of the proposed 2030 Conceptual Land Use Strategy Map and this report as a matter of policy direction in the preparation, review and adoption of the 2030 Land Use Management Plan to be presented to the County in 2004.

CONCEPTUAL LAND USE STRATEGY  
FOR KANE COUNTY

STATE OF ILLINOIS

COUNTY OF KANE

ORDINANCE NO. 98-29

ADOPTING A CONCEPTUAL LAND USE STRATEGY FOR KANE COUNTY

WHEREAS, 55 Illinois Compiled Statutes 5/5-14001 states that "whenever in the judgement of the county board of any county, a portion or all of said county as a region, should have a plan made for the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of said region, and of public improvements and utilities therein, and which plans will in the judgement of the county board, in accordance with the present and future needs of the region of the State, best promote health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, efficiency and economy in the process of development and the general welfare of said region, the county board is hereby empowered by resolution of record to define the boundaries of such region and to create a regional planning commission for the making of a regional plan for such region so defined"; and

WHEREAS, the Kane County Board established a Regional Planning Commission to guide development within the county, and in 1967 adopted a five-point general development policy recommended by the Regional Planning Commission, which lead to the adoption of a Generalized Land Use Plan for Kane County in 1976; and

WHEREAS, the Kane County Board, upon the recommendation of the Regional Planning Commission, amended this plan in 1982 with the adoption of the Kane County Comprehensive Land Use Plan, 1982/2000 and in 1989 with the adoption of the Kane County Historic Preservation Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Regional Planning Commission, working with the Kane County Development Staff, has continued to inventory the resources of the County and analyze problems and issues associated with land use management and community development with the goal of producing a 2020 Kane County Land Use Plan; and

WHEREAS, Kane County cooperated with the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and has supported their Strategic Plan for Land Resource Management and the Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways Plan which reinforces and supports many of the concepts which the Regional Planning Commission finds imperative for the future development of Kane County; and

WHEREAS, the Regional Planning Commission has developed a Conceptual Land Use Strategy which identifies three distinct land use areas and emphasizes a need for open space protection, water resource management, balanced community development, coordination of transportation improvements with land use management, protection of agriculture and a cooperative planning process with the municipalities; and

WHEREAS, the Regional Planning Commission has endorsed the attached Conceptual Land Use Strategy and has recommended adoption by the Kane County Board to be used as a basic guide in the completion of a draft 2020 Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Kane County;

APPENDIX D

5. In designated areas, agriculture must continue to be a desired land use. Premature conversion of farm land to other land uses disrupts land use balance and should be discouraged. If the plan now being prepared is implemented by the year 2020 at least 50% of the land in the County will still be farmland and small villages.
6. The relationship between land use and transportation planning is of fundamental importance to this conceptual strategy as well as the County's on-going planning program. Two specific examples of this relationship between land development and transportation facilities are the location and timing of new bridge crossings of the Fox River and planning for the Outer Belt Expressway in the vicinity of Illinois Route 47. This conceptual land use strategy provides a sound basis for completion of the detailed Land Use Plan in 1994. That Plan should include a section on transportation issues, goals, and policies and should be followed by the preparation of a County Transportation Plan to meet the 2020 travel demand projections for Kane County. Land resource and transportation issues underscore the need for inter-governmental planning between Kane County and its communities and the need to adopt a 2020 Transportation Plan.
7. State enabling legislation for county and regional planning calls for "cooperation of the political subdivisions within their respective territories in any matters whatsoever which may concern the County". Therefore, another cornerstone of the Comprehensive Plan should be the establishment of eight "Partnership Planning Areas"(PPA). In these Partnership Planning Areas there must be a renewed effort spearheaded by the County Planning

Commission to facilitate cooperation between County government and municipalities and among the cities and villages. As growth occurs, the county and municipalities need to be concerned more with the quality of development than with who has jurisdiction of said development.

In conclusion, the Kane County Regional Planning Commission endorses this conceptual land use strategy as a means to ensure that Kane County's quality of life will be sustained and that there will be a proper balance between natural resource protection and community and economic development as we progress into the 21st century. Further, the Commission requests approval of this conceptual strategy by the County Board as a matter of policy direction in the review and adoption of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan to be presented to the County in 1994.