



WILL COUNTY, ILLINOIS
LAND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN



Policy Gateway

LRMP ELEMENTS

Policy Gateway

Forms & Concepts Handbook

Open Space Element

Airport Environs Element

Approved: April 18, 2002
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To the citizens of the Will County, for all their support and hard work during this update process. – April 18, 2002

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The Future of Regional Planning in Will County

Will County is in the midst of a great transition, perhaps the greatest in its modern history. After many decades of modest change, its growth has accelerated sharply. The County increased in population from just over 350,000 in 1990 to over 500,000 in the year 2000, an increase of more than 40%. Homes and businesses seem to pop up everywhere. Impacts of this growth are felt in many ways, both good and bad. Traffic increases, but so do opportunities. Infrastructure is strained as new growth requires additional road, sewer, water, and school capacity, but new tax revenues are enhanced. Farms are lost, but permanent open space funded by existing and new residents is being preserved (but that is not a guarantee). New development is criticized as being without character, but new housing options are created and new commercial services are offered.



Public input workshop.

This growth is welcomed by many residents as a sign of healthy progress, and yet it is also feared by others as a major change to the quality of life. In any case, change is occurring, and how the County and its communities respond to this change will set the tone of community quality and livability for generations to come. Over the next 20 to 30 years the pattern of development in the County will be set. The manner in which land is used, open space and farmland is preserved, public infrastructure is provided, and growth management will all be determined by the current set of community leaders.



Land plan game. (Public input workshop).

The legal and political environment in which these decisions will be made is exceedingly complex. There are

more than 30 different jurisdictions that exercise independent planning and land use regulation authority. Most public infrastructure services, particularly those that support urban and suburban growth are provided at the municipal level or through private enterprise with little regional coordination. Likewise, decisions about municipal boundary changes are made at the local level with little regard to regional impact. While some responsibilities for regional growth rest with the County, such as transportation planning and storm water management, there has historically been little in the way of regional planning and coordination. The system of managing growth in Will County is fragmented.



Preservation of environmental resources is an effort that must be undertaken by the whole region in a comprehensive manner.

Why engage in countywide planning in this environment? Why is it important to coordinate planning between the many communities? Why not just let each community look after its own interests? It is true that local autonomy and leadership at the local community level is greatly valued, and for good reason. Community character, identity, and pride are better achieved at the local city or village level. Community distinction and a sense of neighborhood are better achieved at a smaller scale than the County level. Citizens value the ability to have access to elected leadership that occurs at the smaller units of government.

At the same time, however, there are many issues affecting quality of life that transcend municipal, township, and village boundaries. Environmental quality knows no artificial boundaries, nor does the need for people to move around the region recognize government borders. Likewise, the desire to develop regional systems and networks, such as connected open spaces, cannot be accomplished without some sense of regional cooperation.

Indeed, throughout the various grass roots public involvement efforts that occurred during the process of preparing this plan, the need for regional cooperation was established as the dominant priority for managing land resources in Will County. There is a clear recognition by the County's citizens that regional coordination is a critical issue for the future.

How then can we achieve the kinds of regional coordination that are needed while still recognizing the need

and the right for local autonomy? The answer to this question lies in recognizing that there are certain land use decisions that are best handled at the local level, and other actions that the County is uniquely able to take that cannot be accomplished locally. The key is to identify these respective roles and responsibilities and proceed with this clear understanding in a cooperative way. This Land Resource Management Plan establishes the framework for this new approach. Specifically:

- This Plan presents a regional vision for the general form and shape of future growth.
- This Plan identifies guidelines for various development “Forms and Use Concepts” to be used by the County in its development review process, and which can be incorporated into local community plans and regulations, as those communities see fit.
- This Plan identifies the County as a leader on countywide issues such as regional open space planning, transportation planning, storm water management, and regional geographic information systems.
- This Plan recognizes that site-specific land use decisions are the responsibility of the individual jurisdictions in which the land is located.
- This Plan encourages new non-rural growth and development to occur in and around existing service areas, which by definition means that most new urban or suburban development is encouraged to occur in municipalities.
- This Plan positions the County as a regional forum, facilitator, and as a problem solving mechanism.

In short, this Plan creates a framework for managing growth. It rests on the premise that growth in Will County will be accommodated, but that negative impacts of growth should be minimized and mitigated.

The Planning Process

Key Steps in the Planning Process

- A kick-off meeting and initial issue identification sessions with various Will County boards and commissions.
- Six public community issue workshops held throughout the County.
- Special purpose public meetings for issues such as open space preservation and rural protection.
- Special citizen committees organized by geographic area for the purpose of identifying issues and opportunities unique to particular parts of the County.
- Involvement of local municipalities through the network of professional municipal planners and the Will County Government League.
- Communications with numerous “special interest” groups involved in various aspects of County growth and development.
- An extensive analysis of land resource needs and capacities.
- Analyses of open space issues.
- Introduction seminars on the Conservation Designed subdivisions.
- Analyses of other special issues such as the South Suburban Airport proposal.
- The crafting of “goals and strategies” that serve as the guiding direction for the Plan, and which were formally approved by the Will County Board.

This Plan is prepared pursuant to Section 50 ILCS 805 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes entitled the “Local Land Resource Management Planning Act”. It is the result of an 18-month planning process that involved hundreds of participants, including elected leaders, grassroots citizen assistance, professional planning support, and special interest group participation. It attempts to interweave an understanding of the forces and trends shaping the community, community values, and the unique constraints and opportunities of the Illinois system of land planning.

This Plan literally grew from the community. It recognizes the unique needs and circumstances of Will County.

Public participation in planning workshops.



Understanding the Forces and Trends Shaping the Community's Supply & Demand of Land

Forecasting what is likely to happen in the future is a risky business. No one can predict with certainty what will happen, particularly when it involves growth and development, which is dependent on many social and economic forces. Nonetheless, a fundamental question in any future land planning effort is “what are we planning for?” More specifically, how much new growth can we reasonably foresee, and how much new growth can we reasonably absorb? These are the central elements of a land “demand and capacity” analysis.

A land demand and capacity analysis was prepared as part of this planning effort. Its importance lies not in its “predictive” nature, since no one can expect to accurately predict the future. Rather, its value lies in establishing a point of reference for planning purposes. Forecasts of future growth establish a benchmark for the future – one that should be regularly revisited and updated.

Population & employment forecasts lie at the core of the land demand forecasts. These forecasts are translated into land demand using certain assumptions for household size, density of development, and floor and land space per employee.

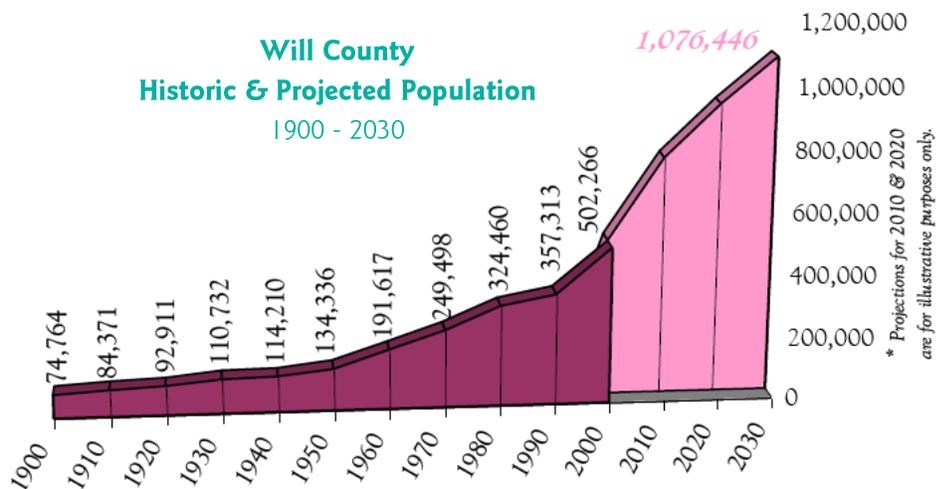


Figure 1: Will County Population

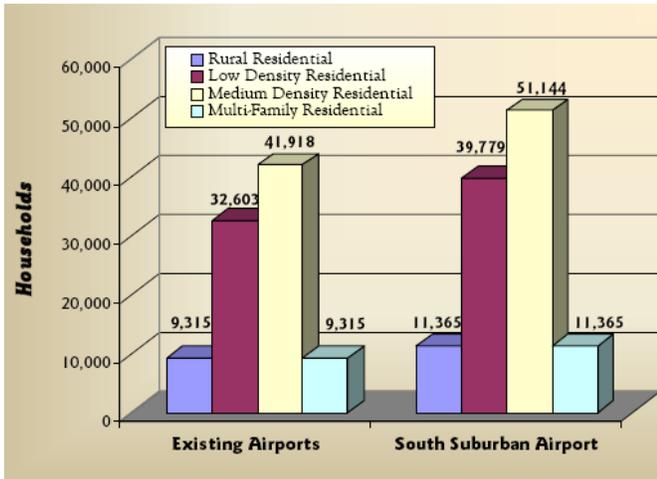


Figure 2: 20 Year Household Forecasts: 2000-2020

Like the other “collar” counties in the Chicago metropolitan region, Will County is experiencing substantial growth as part of the continued outward expansion of the region. Will County is forecasted to be the fastest growing of all those counties. It is expected to grow by 60% over the next 20 years - from just over 500,000 to over 800,000. By contrast, the region as a whole is forecasted to grow by only 25%.

This growth translates into a dramatic amount of new land likely to be absorbed. There is the potential for the development of almost 180 square miles of land in Will County over the next twenty years. This amounts to the equivalent of five townships. The vast majority of this land would be absorbed in residential uses, but over nine square miles would be devoted to business and industrial uses.

This growth translates into a dramatic amount of new land likely to be absorbed.

The converse of the land demand issue is the question of how the County is equipped to accommodate this growth, or what the “capacity” of new development is. Understanding how much land might be absorbed by new growth is only helpful if we also understand what the County’s capacity for new growth is. This is accomplished by estimating the amount of growth that can be accommodated by all agricultural and undeveloped land in the County.

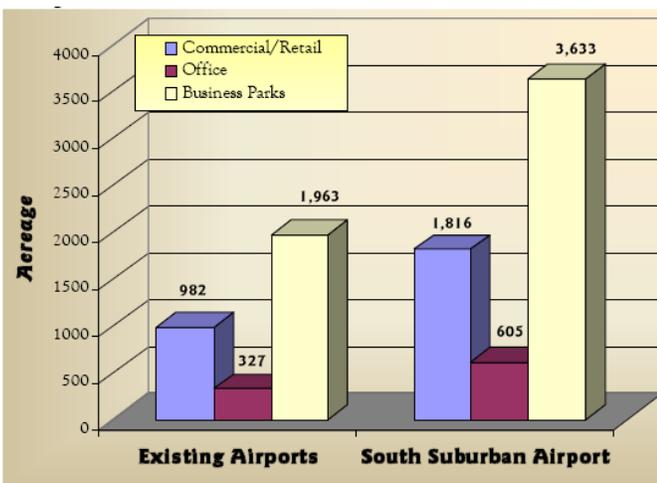


Figure 3: 20 Year non-residential Land Demand Acreage 2000-2020

There are over 500,000 acres of land in Will County, of which 20 % is “developed”, not including agricultural uses. Over 400,000 acres is either vacant or agricultural, over 300,000 of which is agricultural. Overall, agricultural uses comprise over half of the total County land area. It is important to recognize that agricultural land is “developed” land and that farming represents a desirable and viable land use. However, for the purposes of this analysis, we also recognize that farmland is subject to pressure to conversion to other uses, and must therefore be considered to have “capacity” for new growth and development.

Determining the capacity for new growth can be done in many ways. First, all land in Will County is zoned for particular uses. This zoning establishes certain constraints on how land can be used. On the other hand, each community in the County also has future land use plans, which often differ from their zoning maps. Various areas are either within urban service areas, or are within planned service areas, further complicating the picture. Ultimately it was concluded that the best way to estimate land capacity is to apply each community plan to undeveloped or agricultural land. After all, these plans represent the official policies of the communities, and were prepared with existing and future service areas in mind. By assembling the various local community plans, and forecasting growth under those plans, we arrive at a reasonable estimate of future land capacity.

The results are striking. First, even under the most aggressive growth forecasts (assuming the South Suburban Airport is built), there is substantially more capacity for growth than there is demand. For residential uses, the capacity exceeds the demand by a factor of two, even assuming that a substantial number of homes are built on large lots in rural areas. For business uses, the capacity under the collective local plans exceeds the forecasted demand by five times.

What does this mean for the County? On the one hand, having capacity far in excess of demand can be a concern in that it may foster a more “sprawled”, less efficient land use pattern. It can also lead to unproductive competition between communities for economic development where there is an excess of planned industrial areas. On the other hand, if managed properly, there is an opportunity for the County to “have its cake and eat it too”: There is ample land to support a generation worth of growth, while at the same time preserving open space, farms, and environmentally sensitive land.

The following section frames the issues that are of most importance to the residents of the County as a starting point for pursuing such a strategy.

	Demand Existing Airports	South Suburban Airport	Capacity
	Acres	Acres	Acres
Residential			
Total	91,796	112,001	263,141
Non-Residential			
Total	3,272	6,054	31,074
TOTAL	95,068	118,055	294,215

Figure 4: Comparison of 20 year land demand and capacity for development within Will County

Community Values

The six community workshops that were held around the County provided a true grassroots picture of the community values as they relate to growth and development. Those results were reviewed by numerous other groups and appear to represent an accurate depiction of what is most important to the community.

These prioritized issues were then grouped into five community planning themes, which serve as the organizing force behind this Plan.

GROWTH AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Local attitudes about growth are understandably mixed. Some view growth as a blessing that brings prosperity. Others view growth as eroding the community's quality of life. This Plan is based on a desire to accommodate healthy growth and development, but to manage that growth in such a way as to improve its quality and mitigate negative impacts of growth.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

This Plan embodies the recognition that local plan and site specific land use decisions will continue to be made by local communities. With over 30 different jurisdictions possessing individual planning and zoning authority, there is a tendency for fragmentation; however, when citizens identify regional coordination as the top priority, local leaders should recognize the importance of this issue.

Priority Issues

1. Regional coordination among the various Will County government entities.
 2. The need for regional open spaces and agricultural preservation.
 3. Environmental protection.
 4. The quality and timing of new development.
 5. Automotive transportation needs.
 6. Promoting a compact (non-sprawled) form of development.
 7. Housing density and variety.
 8. Non-automotive transportation needs.
-

OPEN SPACE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

Local communities engage in a variety of open space planning and related efforts at the local level. The missing link in the process is a vision and a plan for a countywide system of linked open spaces. This Plan promotes a continuation of the Forest Preserve District's efforts supplemented by a variety of related efforts at the County and local levels.

FARMING AND AGRICULTURE

The Will County community recognizes farming as a valuable industry, and would like to see farming remain viable far into the future. However, the community also recognizes that farmers need to have the ability to sell or reuse their property if farming becomes unfeasible in the future. This Plan is based on the desire to lengthen the life of agricultural viability as long as practical, and to make tools available to protect farming and farm support industries, but to balance these goals with sensitivity towards the economic needs of the land owners.

INFRASTRUCTURE

In order for new suburban or urban development to occur, adequate public infrastructure is needed. The provision of that infrastructure, however, has implications for the taxpayer. It also helps shape the form of growth. Decisions about the location, type, and density of growth and development should be made in concert with decisions about infrastructure.

The following goals and strategies were adopted by the County Board in June, 2001. They represent the will of the County in addressing these issues. They act as the compass for preparing this Plan and serve as the core planning policies of the County. They are the foundation on which this plan rests.



The Plan was developed from the community values expressed in various workshops and public meetings.

Goals and Strategies

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Will County will continue to grow, probably at a rapid pace. The challenge for the County is to lead a regional planning effort to manage that growth in such a way that its benefits of growth are maximized and its negative impacts are minimized.
2. No single jurisdiction can effectively manage Will County's land resources at the exclusion of other entities. This means that the hallmarks of County planning must be cooperation, collaboration, coordination, and communication.
3. The County should articulate a regional land resource planning and management vision emphasizing a desired urban and rural form, including the pattern of land uses, land use intensity, and character of development.
4. The most desirable form of County development is a compact one that directs development into and around existing communities and service areas, with substantial open space permanently preserved throughout the County.
5. Quality growth should be the universal goal for all of Will County. The County and its family of communities have every right and reason to demand the highest quality in new development. Quality of life, which is a key issue in economic development efforts, is partially a product of high standards for development activities, and this needs to be realized in all planning efforts undertaken within Will County.

6. The County recognizes and respects the autonomy of municipalities to make site-specific decisions and encourages urban development to occur within municipal boundaries.

7. The County should focus its planning on regional needs, including overall land use patterns, open space preservation, transportation, storm water management, and other planning issues that transcend local jurisdiction boundaries.

8. The County should become a national leader in fostering development that conserves open space, preserves environmentally sensitive areas, and preserves rural character.

9. The County should serve as a coordinating, problem-solving and facilitation forum for inter-jurisdictional planning problems.

10. The County should also serve as a clearinghouse of information and technical resources for Will County communities.

GROWTH AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Goals

1. Will County will have sufficient land planned to accommodate over 20 years of likely future urban and rural development.
2. Future growth will occur in a geographic pattern that allows for public services and infrastructure to be provided in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner.
3. Land will be recognized as a valuable resource to be used wisely and efficiently for the benefit of both private property owners and the Will County community at large.
4. Growth will be managed in such a way that the environmental integrity of Will County will be respected and preserved.
5. New development and construction will occur in a high quality manner, according to improved development standards in the County and in various municipalities.
6. Will County will have a series of distinct communities, each with its unique character and “sense of place”. Urban areas will be well defined and distinct from rural areas, with clearly established and well planned boundaries.
7. Will County will have an economically healthy mix of residential and business uses, such that ample employment opportunities are available within Will County, avoiding a large outward daily commute.

Strategies

1. Will County will work with its municipalities to plan to accommodate an estimated 1,075,000 people projected for the year 2030 by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.
2. Urban growth and development will be directed into areas within or in proximity to existing infrastructure-serviced areas. Urban growth and

development is defined as development with less than 2.5 acres of land per dwelling unit in the overall development.

- 3. New development should be encouraged to be contiguous to existing development to the maximum extent feasible. The County will work with the municipalities to encourage land within and contiguous to the municipalities to develop at densities that maximizes the efficient utilization of land while remaining compatible with surrounding neighborhoods. The County will encourage municipalities to develop land use standards that encourage alternative and compatible high quality residential development options with open space preservation and a pedestrian orientation.*
- 4. The County will encourage a diverse economic base, with environmentally responsible office and industrial growth directed onto land that is suitable for such uses. The County will also encourage mixed use development and transit oriented development.*
- 5. Land that is within or contiguous to existing urban service areas (i.e., sanitary sewer and water service areas) should be discouraged from developing at rural densities, reserving those areas for more intense uses to better utilize land resources.*
- 6. The County will continue to develop plans and regulations for the protection of environmental resources that transcend political boundaries.*
- 7. The County will collaborate with municipalities and other agencies to develop “best development practices” for environmental protection that can be incorporated into local land use regulations.*
- 8. The County will revise its land use regulations to require higher quality commercial and residential standards related to site design, landscaping, signage, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, storm water management, open space preservation, lighting, and historic preservation, and other issues associated with development quality. The County will also encourage municipalities to establish high quality development standards. The U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Neighborhood Development and the Sustainable Sites Initiative by the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and the United States Botanic Garden are examples to draw from.*
- 9. Will County will encourage development and preservation of those aspects that make Will County and its communities unique and provide “community pride” opportunities. Regional examples would include the I & M Canal, Old Plank Road Trail, and the Historic Route 66. Will County will also encourage appreciation of locally designated landmarks, as they are recognized to hold significant community value.*

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

Goals

1. Will County and its cities and townships will work together in a collaborative manner to insure coordinated regional planning, while respecting the autonomy of individual jurisdictions to make site-specific land use decisions.
2. Will County and its cities and townships will collectively plan for, and address matters of regional concern that transcend political boundaries, including those related to regional land use patterns, infrastructure, open space, and environmental issues.

Strategies

1. Will County will generally encourage urban development to occur within current or future municipal boundaries, and will encourage municipal boundaries to grow in an efficient way based on available public services and environmental suitability of land for development while respecting the existing, neighboring land uses.
2. Will County will focus its long range planning on regional issues that are countywide in nature, including transportation planning, overall “facility planning area” planning and coordination, open space planning, environmental protection, and storm water management.
3. Will County will focus efforts on insuring the highest quality rural development as is possible, including the use of conservation subdivisions (see Open Space Goals).
4. Will County will work cooperatively with the cities, townships and other local agencies to serve as a single “voice” of the region on State and Federal lobbying issues.
5. Will County will establish itself as a regional repository of information including a geographic information system integrated with land capacity, growth forecasting, transportation, and air quality modeling.
6. The County should develop a mechanism whereby the role of the County in land resource management, relative to other jurisdictions, is articulated and agreed to.

OPEN SPACE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

Goals

1. Will County will have a countywide, integrated network of public and private open spaces, linked to parks and open spaces in municipalities.
2. Environmentally sensitive areas will be preserved, either through public ownership, or through sensitive incorporation and permanent protection of sensitive areas in private development.
3. The preservation of open space will be coordinated with environmental preservation; environmentally sensitive features, such as stream corridors, will also serve as part of the open space network.
4. The preservation of open space and stream corridors will be coordinated with countywide storm water management plans.

Strategies

1. *Will County will develop and implement a long range plan for a countywide system of linked open spaces and conservation, building on the preservation efforts of the Forest Preserve District of Will County and other regional open space planning efforts, such as the Northeastern Illinois Greenways Plan and the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.*
2. *The County will develop regulations and procedures to encourage the use of conservation subdivisions in rural areas of the County as a mechanism to supplement publicly owned open space in the County. The County will encourage open spaces in individual developments to be coordinated with, and link to, adjacent developments and other existing or planned open spaces.*
3. *The County will develop improved stream protection and setback standards, and will encourage the preservation of stream corridors as part of a countywide open space network and storm water management system. The County will work with developers to insure public access along open space corridors and to incorporate best development practices to manage storm water runoff.*

4. *The County recognizes that much of the local parks and open space planning will occur at the municipal level, and respects the importance of local governments to plan parks and open space systems that meet their community's needs. The County will collaborate with the municipalities to link local parks and open space systems to existing and planned countywide systems.*
5. *The County will explore a mix of tools and mechanisms to finance and preserve open space, including outright land acquisition, acquisition of development rights, transfer of development rights, open space dedication as part of the development review process, and conservation subdivisions, all according to an overall open space and conservation plan.*
6. *Land planning efforts along the I-355 Veterans Memorial Tollway should incorporate a "scenic corridor" theme, encouraging open space preservation, with high quality development encouraged in carefully planned nodes.*

FARMING AND AGRICULTURE

Goals

1. Farmland in Will County will be respected as a viable and desirable land use and as an important component of the local economy.
2. The County will be sensitive to the long term threat to the economic viability of agriculture due to increasing land values, and will respect the need for land owners to use their land for non-agricultural uses when farming ceases to become viable.
3. The viability of large-scale agriculture in Will County will be extended as long as is feasible through sound land use planning and through making tools available that provide farmers an alternative to conversion to non-agricultural uses.
4. As farmland is converted to non-agricultural uses, rural character will be preserved as much as possible.

Strategies

1. *The County will encourage development to occur in a higher density, more compact form adjacent to existing developed areas, as discussed in the “Growth and Community Character” Goals. This will discourage an inefficient sprawling of land uses, extending the viable life of farming.*
2. *The County will identify and implement techniques to support agricultural uses, such as “right-to farm” provisions in adjacent subdivision covenants that minimize conflicts between farmers and new residents.*
3. *The County will explore tools that allow farmers who so desire to make it possible to permanently preserve farmland, such as purchase of development rights and transfer of development rights.*
4. *The County should recognize the distinction between farmland preservation and the preservation of rural character and open spaces. When farms are converted to residential uses, the County should encourage the use of conservation subdivisions, as discussed in the “Open Space” Goals. As part of this process, standards should be incorporated to preserve rural character. Examples of such standards include the incorporation of the farmstead into the development, the preservation of fence lines and hedge rows, homes set back with minimal visibility from County roads, and the preservation and continued agricultural use of key fields.*

INFRASTRUCTURE

Goals

1. New urban development in Will County will be served with adequate, sustainable infrastructure, including sanitary sewer, potable water, storm water control and management systems, roads, and other utilities.
2. Decisions about the location of new development will be made in part based upon the ability to efficiently provide infrastructure.
3. The County will be served by a coordinated and multimodal transportation system that is designed to efficiently serve growth of both residents and businesses, including roads, public transportation, railroads, bikeways and pedestrian facilities, and a new third regional airport.
4. The County will be served by an integrated storm water management system that is coordinated with various municipal storm water systems. This system will also serve as a part of a regional open space system (see Open Space Goals).
5. Will County communities will provide state-of-the-art telecommunications infrastructure necessary to attract and serve high-tech, environmentally sensitive business and industry.

Strategies

1. *Will County should play a major role in the process of delineating and amending Facility Planning Areas, and should collaborate with Will County municipalities in regional coordination of FPA boundaries by providing information, mediation and facilitation.*
2. *Will County will encourage new urban density development to generally occur in existing or planned infrastructure service areas.*
3. *The County will continue to pursue implementation of the recently adopted 2030 Transportation Plan.*
4. *The County will continue efforts to implement the countywide storm water management ordinance.*
5. *The County will work with utilities and the business community to identify, plan for, and implement telecommunication infrastructure improvements needed for Will County to compete in the regional economy (see Economic Goals).*
6. *The County will recognize the critical importance of the South Suburban Airport as a County transportation asset, as well as a regional facility, and will strive to insure a strong County voice in the management and operation of the facility (see also the Economy Goals).*
7. *The County will work with energy and resource service providers and the business community to identify, plan for, and implement sustainable infrastructure network needed for Will County to compete and continually grow in the regional economy. The U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Neighborhood Development and the Sustainable Sites Initiative by the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and the United States Botanic Garden are examples to draw from.*
8. *Will County will advocate for appropriate mitigation measures when there is a significant increase in railroad freight traffic. The mitigation measures may include, but not limited to, public health and safety, environmental preservation, noise reduction, and traffic safety.*

ECONOMY

Goals

1. Will County will have a strong and diverse economy, capturing at least its proportional share of regional economic growth.
2. Will County will have a healthy balance of jobs and housing, such that ample employment opportunities are available to Will County residents without having to commute out of the County.

Strategies

1. *The County will continue to support aggressive efforts by organizations such as the Will County Center for Economic Development, the Joliet Arsenal Development Authority, the Three Rivers Manufacturing Association, and others to retain and attract employment-generating businesses.*
2. *The County should work with municipalities to identify and protect suitable business and industrial land from residential encroachment through land use planning and zoning approaches.*
3. *The County will continue to promote the Illiana Expressway connecting Interstate 65 in Indiana with Interstate 55, which will provide economic development opportunities within Will County as well as needed transportation relief locally and regionally.*
4. *The County will support efforts to construct the South Suburban Airport. The County will work cooperatively with nearby local governments to carefully plan for and promote the most economically productive use of land on, and adjacent to the airport property developed wholly within Will County, Illinois. As such, the County will encourage, strive and support the creation of a governing body that can effectively pursue the financing, building, owning and operation of the airport through the Illinois General Assembly. This newly formed body should be formed as an independent airport authority whose board consists of a majority of appointments from Will County.*

5. *The County will emphasize the importance of “quality of life” issues such as open space and environmental preservation, development quality, historic preservation and interpretation, pedestrian orientation and livability of communities, and quality infrastructure in attracting and retaining businesses to the County.*

6. *In conjunction with the acquisition of public open space, key commercial sites which are not essential to open space acquisition, shall remain poised for development. Concurrently, any commercial property adjacent to dedicated public open space shall be developed in a coherent manner that limits adverse impacts to the public open space.*

7. *Off-premise signage (billboards) serve little purpose and detract from the character of the immediate area. Efforts to prohibit additional off-premise signs and reduce existing signs should be explored.*

Land Resource Management: Development Forms & Use Concepts

The Goals and Strategies serve as the foundation of the plan. This Plan must also identify a vision for the physical development of the County. However, it must do so in recognition that specific land use decisions will continue to be made by many different local jurisdictions. It would be fruitless for the County to attempt to identify specific land uses for vacant land that is, or will be under the jurisdiction of others. How then can the County meet its responsibilities to manage land resources within these constraints? The County can do so by crafting a regional vision of how various land Forms - urban, suburban, rural and others - can best fit together, and to provide principles that can be applied to particular land uses. These “Forms” and “Concepts” are a framework within which the County’s communities can plan with complete local autonomy.

Development Forms

- Rural Area
 - Kankakee River Corridor
 - Hamlet
 - Town
 - Urban Community
 - Suburban Community
 - Interstate Access Location
 - Former Joliet Army Ammunition Plant Properties (JOAAP)
 - South Suburban Airport (SSA)
-

Development Forms refer to the general character of large areas of the County. As contrasted with specific land uses, the identification of Forms is a way to identify distinguishable development patterns, or “Forms,” at a countywide level, and to use these Forms as a way to manage the County’s land resources. There are eight different Forms identified in this plan, illustrated on the map on page 23.

A description of each of these Form Areas is presented in a different section. A series of “keystones” are then presented for each area. These keystones are statements of desired characteristics of each Form, and are intended to serve as a guide to the County and its various communities in assessing development proposals, and in particular helping to ensure that new growth occurs as part of a countywide vision.

Following the Development Forms, a series of “Use Concepts” are then introduced. These Use Concepts focus on more specific land use categories. While not going to the level of traditional site-specific land uses (i.e. single-family, multi-family, office, retail, etc.) The Use Concepts are intended to provide additional guidance to the County and its communities in assessing specific development proposals. It is recognized that individual communities in the County will continue to develop and enforce land use regulations that fit their particular needs, and this plan makes no effort to interfere with those efforts. The Use Concepts are intended to offer guidance that can help bridge the gap between “Forms” on a countywide scale, and specific land use regulations on a local community scale. There are eleven development Use Concepts presented in the handbook.

Development Use Concepts

- Agricultural
 - Conservation Design
 - Conventional Residential Suburban
 - Traditional Residential
 - Multi-family Complex
 - Institutional
 - Employment Campus
 - Regional Commercial
 - Mid-Scale Commercial
 - Neighborhood Commercial
 - Freestanding Industry & Office
 - Projects of Regional Impact
-

For each of the Use Concepts, principles are presented that should serve as guidelines in reviewing development proposals. These include both general principles as well as principles that are uniquely related to particular Development Forms, as applicable.

Finally, the way in which the Use Concepts fit with the Forms is presented. Specifically, a matrix is presented that summarizes which Use Concepts are encouraged in which Forms.

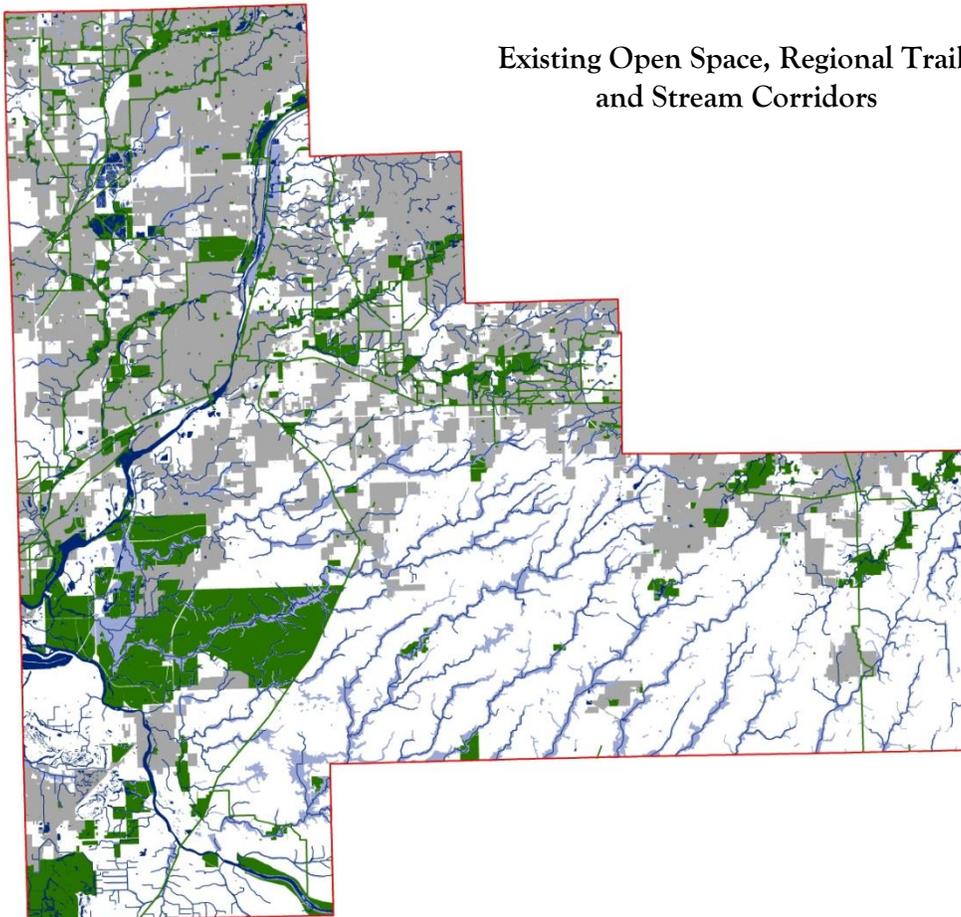
The intent and the desire behind the Forms and Use Concepts is to establish a long range vision that can serve as a coordinating mechanism to allow regional coordination at the same time that individual community planning efforts continue at the local level.

Open Space Plan

Agricultural land, rivers and stream corridors, natural habitat areas, parks, and other open space resources are key to Will County's character and quality of life. Open space also provides economic benefits by enhancing the value of individual properties, developments, and communities as a whole. Consistently throughout the planning process, residents identified open space and environmental preservation as a critical issue to be addressed by the Plan. The concern for Will County's open spaces is linked not only to the importance that residents place on these resources, but also to the perception that they are being rapidly consumed by development. This perception is supported by the land demand and capacity analysis prepared for the Plan, which shows the potential for the development of almost 180 square miles of land (the equivalent of five townships) over the next 20 years.

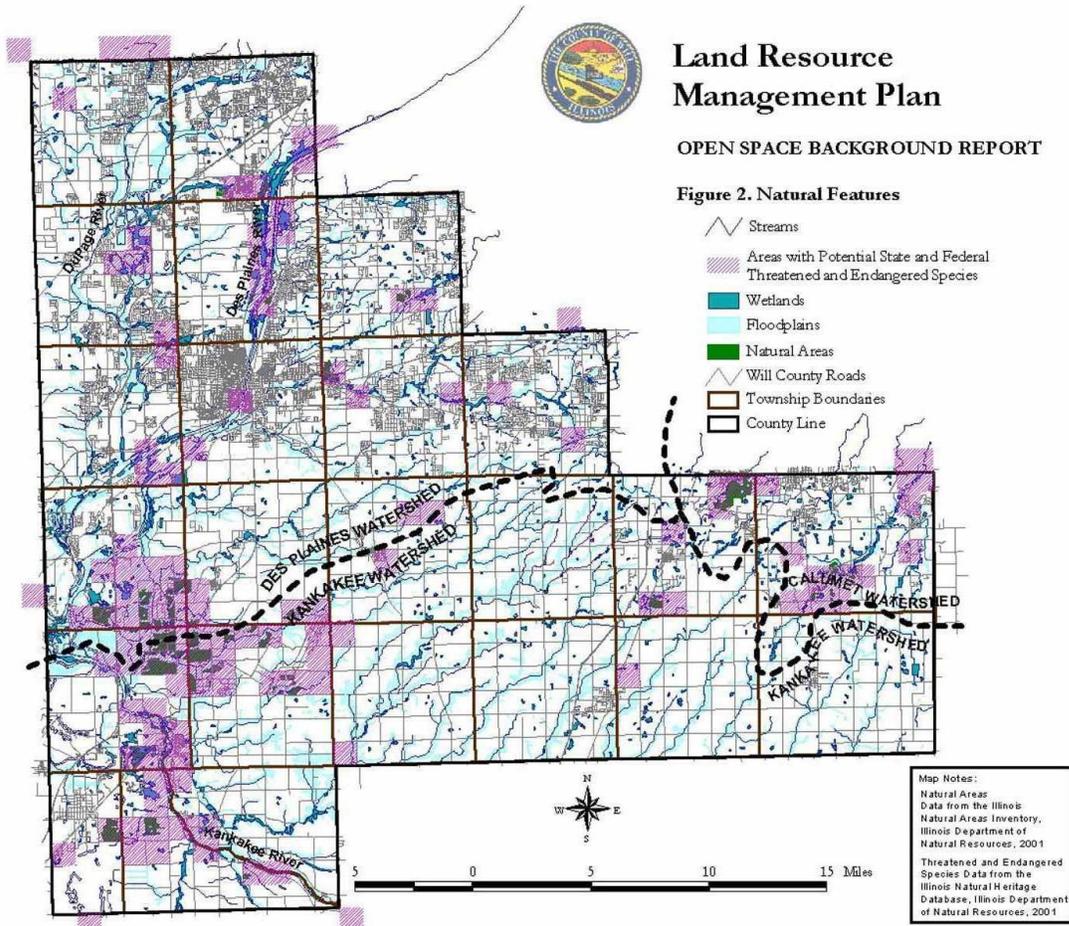


The preservation of river corridors is vital to the long-term success of the County.



Much has already been accomplished to preserve open space in Will County. Examples in recent years include passage of the Will County Forest Preserve District's \$95 million bond referendum in 2005 for improvements and land conservation and establishment of the Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie. However, given the magnitude of the challenge, much more needs to be done.

The vision for a successful open space system in Will County is an integrated network of public and private open spaces throughout the County. This network will be achieved by preserving open space in individual developments and providing connections among subdivisions and to other protected open spaces throughout the County, such as municipal parks and County-owned forest preserves. Additionally, the preservation of riparian corridors, environmentally sensitive resources, and areas of active agricultural use that contribute to overall rural character are important to the long-term success of Will County's open space network.



The Plan presents a multi-faceted approach to achieving this network, including expanded land acquisition programs, voluntary conservation by private landowners, and regulatory techniques such as conservation development. As part of this approach, the County will take on a new role as a prime advocate and central coordinator of the countywide open space system.

The Plan identifies several priority actions in order to focus implementation initiatives to protect open space in Will County. These actions include:

- Protect critical lands along the Des Plaines, DuPage, and Kankakee River systems and other priority riparian corridors in Will County.
- Establish riparian buffers along all stream corridors in Will County to protect water quality and prevent streambank erosion.
- Protect environmentally sensitive lands and ecosystems.
- Formally designate trail corridors and loops throughout the County to provide clear, safe connections among Will County's existing and future open spaces.
- Focus acquisition efforts in areas of the County currently underserved by County-owned open space lands to ensure the equitable distribution of open space across the County.
- Acquire a large area of land centrally located in the County for the possible future development of a regional County park.
- Identify lands along rail corridors and potential brownfield sites that could be converted to open space.

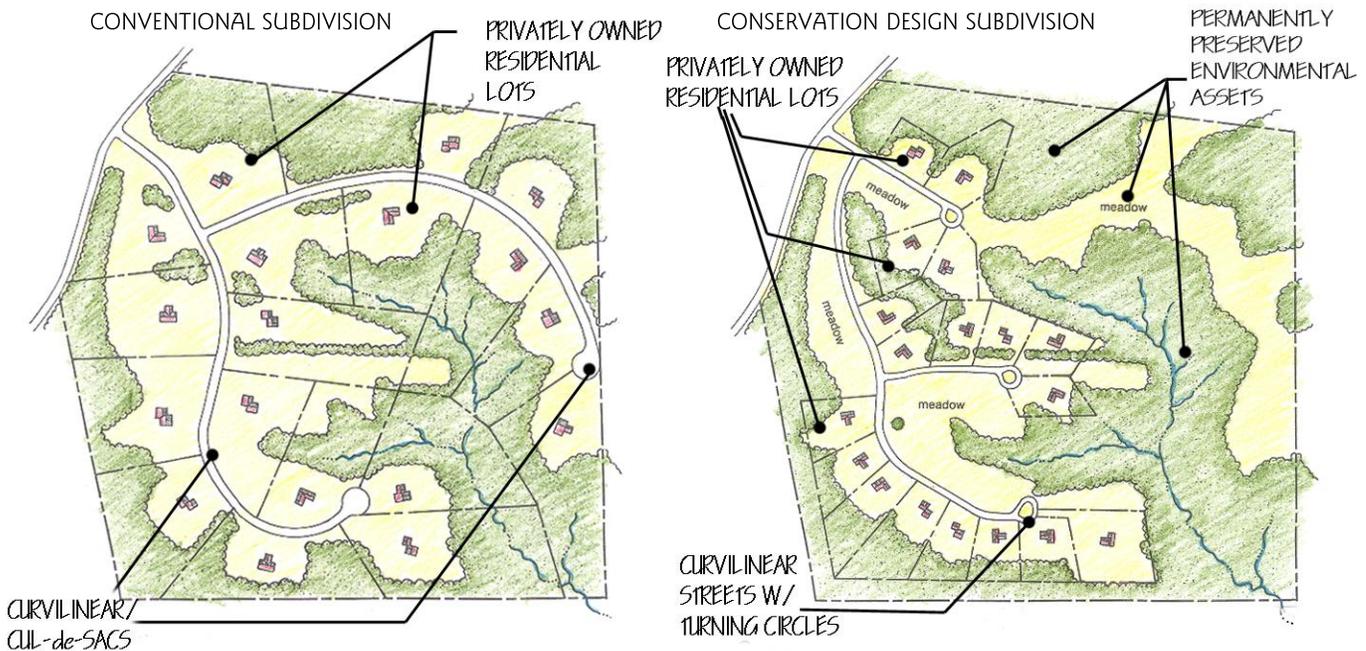


Raccoon Grove is but one of the open spaces being preserved in the County.

While a number of positive and successful open space conservation efforts are already underway in Will County and the region, many implementation techniques can be

applied by the County to continue efforts to protect lands and create an integrated open space network. Implementation measures identified by the Plan address public acquisition, landowner voluntary conservation, farming and agricultural preservation, strengthening of ordinances, and partnerships with other public and private entities interested in open space issues.

Implementing an incentive-based conservation development ordinance and actively promoting use of this option is a key to achieving the vision of a successful open space network. Endorsed both by environmental interests and development organizations such as the National Homebuilders Association, conservation development is a “win win” alternative to conventional “cookie-cutter” subdivisions that both accommodates development and preserves valuable open space. Under this technique, houses and roadways are grouped closer together to preserve nearby farmland, woodlands, and other open space. Through the use of conservation development practices, the open space that is protected in individual residential subdivisions or neighborhoods can be linked to a larger system through greenway corridors and trails, thus providing seamless recreational experiences for residents while preserving the ecological health of the County.



The conservation design subdivision offers viable alternatives to conventional residential subdivision, permanently protecting sensitive and valuable open space. Images reproduced with permission Randall Arendt. *Growing Greener*. Pg35-36.

Agricultural land preservation is another initiative that is critical to the creation of the open space network. Given the urbanizing nature of Will County, the Plan recognizes the need to balance farmland preservation with the expectations of landowners to achieve a reasonable return on their properties. Nevertheless, the Plan identifies a number of actions that can be taken at the local and state levels that are sensitive to this issue.

Together, the overall vision and supporting implementation measures presented in the Plan provide a “blueprint” to guide Will County and its partners in future open space preservation efforts. The result will be the establishment of an integrated open space network that enhances community character and quality of life, protects environmental resources, and contributes to the economic vitality of the County while development continues to take place.

2030 Transportation Plan

This Plan incorporates the 2030 Transportation Plan. of the Plan state that:

“The transportation system should support existing and future patterns of land development, as guided by the Will County Land Resources Management Plan.”



The 2030 TranPlan is designed to help alleviate traffic congestion.

To complete the circuit between transportation and land use, the 2030 Transportation Plan [2030 TranPlan] is incorporated as part of the Land Resource Management Plan [LRMP]. The 2030 TranPlan has many goals and considerations that are hereby incorporated into the comprehensive planning processes, including plan compliance for Special Use Permit, Map Amendment, and Subdivision requests. If the 2030 TranPlan is amended, it amends this section of the LRMP as well. Key considerations from the 2030 TranPlan that will be part of comprehensive plan reviews will include those listed below. The list is not prioritized and reviews will not be limited to this list. The considerations are:



The 2030 TranPlan recommends many major infrastructure improvements including to the Interstate Highway system

- Acquisition of key pieces of ROW from developments occurring along roadways scheduled for improvement.
- Improved safety and access to transportation and transit systems.
- Encourage and increase use of transit and alternative methods of transportation.
- The long term infrastructure costs of land use decisions as well as the effect of infrastructure choices on land uses.
- Strategic Regional Arterial improvements.
- Preparation for new major infrastructure investments such as the Illiana Expressway and the potential South Suburban Airport.
- Creating multi-modal and inter-modal opportunities and improvements.
- Minimal interruption of infrastructure improvements through premature development.
- Encourage Transit Oriented Development.

Historic Preservation Plan

Will County has a rich, rural heritage. This section of the Land Resource Management Plan [LRMP] was developed in an effort to address the impact the County's growth and development has upon its historic resources that includes not only its built environment, but also its cultural landscapes, specifically, its rural character. The adoption of this section of the LRMP recognizes the importance of Will County Cultural and Historic Preservation Plan (1976) and reiterates the County's historic preservation responsibilities in Section 55 ILCS 5/5-30002 of the Illinois Combined Statutes which states the following:

To identify, protect, preserve, and provide for the restoration, rehabilitation and continued use of buildings, structures, objects, areas, sites, and landscapes that are of historic, archaeological, architectural or scenic significance; to foster education, interest and pride in the beauty and accomplishments of the past; to promote economic development through protection and business; to conserve and improve the value of real property and the property tax base; to insure orderly, efficient and harmonious development; to encourage cooperation between municipalities and counties; and to promote the general welfare.

Throughout the past few decades, the County's implementation of the Preservation Plan (1976) has resulted in the adoption of its Historic Preservation Ordinance (1992) and subsequent establishment of the County's Historic Preservation Commission to oversee and maintain the County's preservation program. The Preservation Plan (1976) identified the following key issues that are still relevant today:

1. The promotion of an awareness of the need to maintain such intangible amenities as aesthetic quality, a sense of heritage, important cultural traditions and the like.
2. Outline of a proposed continuing preservation program appropriate for the needs of Will County.
3. Development of a "tool chest" of preservation techniques which may be utilized to implement established goals.



The William Gooding House is located in Lockport Township and is one of the County's designated landmarks. The house was deemed significant because of its Greek Revival architecture and association with William Gooding, Chief Engineer of the I & M Canal.



An example of Will County's rural landscape in Wheatland Township. The buildings, vegetation, and road contribute to the historic, rural character of the landscape. (Photo taken by Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.)



David and Gracie Aldrich constructed this octagon house in 1867. The unique architecture reflects Wilmington's growth and progress of the time. It is estimated only 36 octagon houses still exist in Illinois.



The existence of the historic rural buildings such as the Bank Barn and Gabled Ell House pictured here could be potentially threatened by new development. Developers and the County should work together to find ways to incorporate the old with the new. This preservation method will ensure the County does not lose its historic identity and sense of place. (Photos taken by Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.)

4. Where appropriate, the advancement of recommendations for specific sites or activities in order to demonstrate the potential use and impact of preservation.

Will County values its historic places, yet the County is sensitive to the fact that there is a need to find the balance between the necessity for preservation and the need for new development. When an historic site is evaluated, the County will assess the property based upon the goals and objectives of the LRMP and the 1976 Historic Preservation Plan. The following are General Principles when considering historic elements:

- The historic significance of the site or its contribution to the character of adjacent historic sites. The significance of the site will be determined based upon the criteria established by the Will County Historic Preservation Ordinance. If the application will affect locally or nationally designated landmarks or districts, the Will County Historic Preservation Commission will assist in the design and site plan review.
- The potential for the site to be listed on Will County's Register of Historic Places and/or the National Register of Historic Places. Also, the site will be assessed as to its significance based upon the findings of Will County's Rural Structures Survey (1988, 2000-present) for the site's local and National Register historic landmark or district eligibility.
- The impact new development will have upon the historic character of the property, such as the historic, architectural integrity of the buildings and/or the overall landscape.
- The potential for the new development to incorporate the existing historic buildings and its context into the design. Also, the developers should be encouraged to be creative not only in their design of the development but also in the use of the building. Adaptive reuse should always be a viable option.
- The appropriateness of the development to the historic context of its surrounding areas. Where the development poses a threat to integrity of the landscape, actions such as visual screening, should be taken to mitigate the negative effects of the new development to the historic context of the site and its surrounding areas.

Storm Water Management Plan

The Will County Comprehensive Storm Water Management Plan was developed under Section 55 ILCS 5/5-1062 of the Illinois Combined Statutes to provide “management and mitigation of the effects of urbanization on storm water drainage.”

State statute allows the County to achieve this by:

- Consolidating the existing storm water management framework into a united, countywide structure.
- Setting minimum standards for floodplain and storm water management; and
- Preparing a countywide plan for the management of storm water runoff, including the management of natural and man-made drainage ways.

Will County was able to accomplish the last item by adopting the Will County Comprehensive Storm water Management Plan in September of 1998. To enhance the importance of this regional issue, the Will County Comprehensive Storm Water Management Plan [CSMP] is incorporated into the Land Resource Management Plan [LRMP]. To provide continuity between the two plans, if the CSMP is amended it amends the LRMP, as well.

The four main Goals of the CSMP are as follows and are endorsed by the LRMP, as well as their associated Objectives:

1. Consolidate and coordinate existing Storm water management programs and activities into an effective, unified countywide structure.
2. Prevent increases in storm water-related problems associated with development, redevelopment and other watershed activities.
3. Remediate existing problems related to improper management of storm water runoff and encroachment into flood prone areas.
4. Ensure maintenance, management, and sustainable operation of natural and man-made storm water drainage and storage features.

The Storm Water management section of the Illinois Combined Statutes allows for an LRMP to develop the first two goals listed. In keeping with this legislative provision, the County’s LRMP continues to support the development of these Goal and the activities of the Will County Stormwater Committee which was created as a means to implement all of the Goals found in the Comprehensive Storm Water Management Plan.

Implementation Summary

The Land Resource Management Plan sets forth a broad and exciting vision for shaping growth and development in Will County. To make this vision a reality will take an ambitious implementation strategy. Too often, land use plans are heavy on vision, goals, and objectives and pay little attention to implementation. Will County has identified a set of specific tools it intends to utilize to ensure that there is progress towards meeting its goals. These tools are summarized below.



Planners on a site visit in Will County.

Implementing a comprehensive land management plan is always a challenge, and it will be even more so in Will County because of some unique conditions. First, the County has what might be called a “split” personality from a land use and development perspective. Conditions range from intensely developed urban centers to suburban growth areas to small towns and rural areas, each with their own growth and development issues. Implementing the plan’s vision will require tools tailored to these varying conditions. Second, the County has over 30 independent municipalities; each with their own plans and land use regulatory powers, and 24 townships. Any realistic implementation plan must recognize this fact and reflect strategies that promote intergovernmental cooperation. Finally, under Illinois law, the County faces some limitations on its authority to regulate and guide land use, particularly when compared to municipalities, which generally have more power.

Nevertheless, there are enormous opportunities -indeed, need- for the County to shape growth and development in a very positive fashion. As the plan stresses, the County must identify what it can do well, for example, leading regional efforts on issues that cut across jurisdictional boundaries such as open space preservation. It must also take steps to limit its activities in areas where other jurisdictions are more suited to shape development. To illustrate, the plan generally calls for the County to direct urban level growth to municipalities that can provide needed services and

infrastructure. And the plan calls for the County to serve an important function as a problem solving forum and clearinghouse for information on key issues.

A hallmark of the recommended implementation strategy is that it calls for the use of a variety of tools to make the plan a reality. Many plans rely almost exclusively on regulations— zoning codes, design standards, environmental protection regulations—as the primary approach. While regulations and standards have an important role in implementation, experience across Illinois and the United States with other plans shows that they must be complemented by other approaches if the plan is to produce results over the long run. As described in the Implementation Strategy and Matrix located as an appendix, the basic tools suggested here fall into five broad categories:

- Regulations and Standards
- Planning
- Funding/Capital Investment/Incentives
- Land Acquisition
- Education/Information/Facilitation

And the implementation strategy stresses, as does the plan, that many of the tools will work only if there is cooperative action and effort with the County’s constituent municipalities.

As the implementation matrix makes clear, there are scores of tools available to the County and other local governments to accomplish the plan’s goals. Based on experience with these tools nationally and in consultation with County and municipal officials, the following approaches have been identified as priorities—ones that are most appropriate for Will County and provide a greater return on investment:

1. **Regional Cooperation:** Form a regional planning coalition comprised of elected officials to meet periodically to discuss land use and development issues. Steps have already been taken in this direction. Experience in other jurisdictions demonstrates that expanding cooperative efforts to include County/city administrators and managers and ultimately to elected officials can pay big

dividends. Successful efforts elsewhere have focused ultimately on specific issues (e.g., regional parks and open space initiatives) rather than these gatherings simply being for information sharing purposes.

- 2. Regional Open Space and Agricultural Land Preservation:** Offer conservation subdivision development regulations as an option to standard subdivision in rural areas. When residential development does occur in more rural areas of the County, the County will strongly encourage landowners to pursue the conservation subdivision option. The County will also explore the use of density bonuses for developers who provide open space above and beyond the minimums established in the conservation subdivision regulations. Additionally, the County will work with municipalities and developers to provide advice on laying out conservation subdivisions and examples of successful projects in other communities.



Preserving open space is a critical element to the Will County Land Resource Management Plan.

A second initiative regarding open space will be for the County to employ a variety of tools to reach the goal of providing at least 55 acres of open space per 1,000 people in Will County by the end of the planning period in 2020. As a first step, the County will refine its existing park donation ordinance that requires residential developers to dedicate land to the public for open space. The minimum acreage dedication requirements in the ordinance should be increased to be more in line with other communities and national standards. Additionally, the County will require private open space dedication in larger subdivisions and will pursue acquisition of key parcels throughout its jurisdiction in cooperation with the municipalities.

Finally, the County will also explore several other tools such as agricultural zoning and development contiguity/annexation requirements to encourage preservation of open space and agricultural lands. Other jurisdictions have used development contiguity/annexation requirements to encourage development in areas with existing services and

infrastructure, thereby helping to reduce sprawl into existing open space. Under these programs, a developer who seeks development approval in the County must first pursue annexation into a municipality that can provide adequate facilities and must demonstrate that the proposed project is at least partially contiguous with an existing development with urban services.

- 3. Quality Development Standards:** Adopt zoning and subdivision standards that will ensure that new development enhances the character of community in Will County and reflects a high quality of design and material. Most fast-growing jurisdictions across the United States are recognizing that to ensure sustainable economic development and maintain and enhance their quality of life, they need to adopt better development standards. These standards address aspects of development such as landscaping, protection of environmental resources, open space provision, and building design. Will County has some examples of good quality development that can serve as models for these standards that will establish a minimum code of conduct.



Growth in Will County is expected to continue and quality development standards must be adopted to maintain the desirable character driving the growth.

- 4. Expertise and Assistance:** Act as a countywide repository and resource for data on information on issues such as demographics, land demand and capacity, development trends and similar issues. Provide assistance on request from municipalities on implementation tools, including model open space dedication, sensitive land protection, and similar ordinances and regulations.
- 5. Economic Development:** Invest in targeted growth areas and protect prime business development sites around the proposed new airport and key interstate interchanges. These targeted implementation priorities set out an ambitious agenda for the County to follow over the next few years. Importantly, the County should revisit this implementation strategy periodically. State enabling legislation may be altered

either expanding or limiting County authority. Development trends and market demand can change quickly, necessitating considering other tools. But by focusing on a discrete number of implementation approaches at this point and pursuing them aggressively, the County can ensure that the plan has a real, positive impact on growth and development patterns.