

Comprehensive Plan Bureau County, Illinois

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Table of Contents

Introduction	vi
Chapter 1	Issues and Opportunities for Planning
Section 1.1	Brief History of the Planning Area. 1.1
Section 1.2	Regional Setting. 1.2
Section 1.3	Past Planning in Bureau County. 1.5
Section 1.4	The Comprehensive Planning Process 1.5
Section 1.5	Demographic Trends 1.5
Section 1.6	Population Projections.. 1.16
Section 1.7	Community Goals, Objectives and Policies.. 1.18
Chapter 2	Housing in Bureau County
Section 2.1	Housing Inventory 2.1
Section 2.2	Housing Demand 2.6
Section 2.3	Summary/Conclusions - Housing Analysis 2.7
Section 2.4	Housing and Residential Development Goals, Objectives, Policies. 2.7
Chapter 3	Transportation Facilities
Section 3.1	Transportation Facilities Inventory 3.1
Section 3.2	Transportation Issues Identified by the Planning Commission 3.10
Section 3.3	Goals, Objectives, Policies 3.10
Chapter 4	Utilities and Community Facilities
Section 4.1	Public Utilities Inventory 4.1
Section 4.2	Public Utilities Needs/Issues 4.3
Section 4.3	Community Facilities Inventory 4.4
Section 4.4	Community Facilities Needs/Issues 4.23
Section 4.5	Utilities and Community Facilities Goals, Objectives, Policies 4.23
Chapter 5	Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resources
Section 5.1	Climate 5.1
Section 5.2	Land Cover 5.1
Section 5.3	Agricultural Resources 5.3
Section 5.4	Natural Resources. 5.4
Section 5.5	Cultural Resources 5.20
Section 5.6	Issues Identified by the Planning Commission. 5.23
Section 5.7	Agricultural Resources Goals, Objectives and Policies 5.23
Section 5.8	Natural Resources Goals, Objectives and Policies 5.24
Section 5.9	Cultural Resources Goals, Objectives and Policies 5.25

Chapter 6	Economic Development	
Section 6.1	Introduction	6.1
Section 6.2	Economic Base Characteristics	6.1
Section 6.3	Community Assessment: Strengths and Weaknesses Analysis	6.10
Section 6.4	Economic Development Programs	6.11
Section 6.5	Economic Development Issues/Conclusions	6.15
Section 6.6	Economic Development Goals, Objectives, Policies	6.15
Chapter 7	Intergovernmental Cooperation	
Section 7.1	Inventory of Intergovernmental Agreements.	7.1
Section 7.2	Issues/Conclusions Regarding Intergovernmental Relations	7.1
Section 7.3	Additional Opportunities for Intergovernmental Cooperation and Beneficial Agreements	7.1
Section 7.4	Goals/Objectives/Policies	7.1
Chapter 8	Land Use	
Section 8.1	Existing Land Use Within Bureau County	8.1
Section 8.2	Land Development and Market Trends	8.3
Section 8.3	Land Use Conflicts	8.5
Section 8.4	Projected Land Demand	8.5
Section 8.5	Goals, Objectives, and Policies	8.5
Section 8.6	Future Land Use Recommendations	8.7
Section 8.7	Relationship Between Planned Land Use Designations and Future Zoning.	8.11
Chapter 9	Implementation	
Section 9.1	Introduction	9.1
Section 9.2	Comprehensive Plan Adoption Procedures	9.1
Section 9.3	Comprehensive Plan Implementation	9.1
Section 9.4	Integration, Amendment, and Update of Comprehensive Plan Elements	9.2
Section 9.5	Monitoring/Formal Review of the Comprehensive Plan and Continuation of the Planning Process.	9.2

List of Tables:

Table 1.1	1900 - 2010 Population, Population Change and Population % Change Bureau County and State of Illinois.....	1.6
Table 1.2	1990 - 2010 Population, Population Change and Population % Change - Bureau County, LaSalle County, Putnam County and Ottawa-Streator Micropolitan Statistical Area.	1.7
Table 1.3	1970 - 2010 Population, Population Change and Population % Change - Bureau County Unincorporated Area Population and Bureau County Population Within Municipalities ...	1.7
Table 1.4	1970 - 2010 Population, Population Change and Population % Change of Bureau County Municipalities.....	1.8
Table 1.5	Distribution of Population by Ten-Year Age Groups	1.10
Table 1.6	Educational Attainment of Persons 25 Years and Over	1.11
Table 1.7	Households, Average Household Size and Household Type.....	1.12
Table 1.8	Household Income 1999 - 2011.....	1.13
Table 1.9	Weighted Average Poverty Thresholds - 1999 and 2011	1.14
Table 1.10	Poverty Status 1999 and 2011	1.15
Table 1.11	Summary of Employment by Industry	1.16
Table 1.12A	Methodology A Projected Population	1.17
Table 1.12B	Methodology B Projected Population	1.17
Table 1.12C	Methodology C Projected Population	1.18
Table 1.12D	Projected Population by IL Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau County, IL	1.18
Table 2.1	Comparison of Housing Occupancy	2.1
Table 2.2	Comparison of Total Housing Units and Structure Type	2.2
Table 2.3	Comparison of Housing Age	2.3
Table 2.4	Comparison of Owner-Occupied Housing Values	2.4
Table 2.5	Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income.....	2.5
Table 2.6	Monthly Renter Costs as a Percentage of Household Income	2.5
Table 3.1	Planned IDOT Highway Improvement Projects 2013 - 2018	3.2
Table 3.2	Designated (Class III) Truck Routs on Non-State Streets, Roads and Highways.	3.6
Table 4.1	School Districts in Bureau County, IL.....	4.8
Table 5.1	Land Cover of Bureau County, Illinois	5.2
Table 5.2	Stream Quality Data for IEPA Assessed Streams within Bureau County.....	5.13
Table 5.3	Wetland Type and Acreage	5.16
Table 5.4	Chance of Flooding Over a Period of Years	5.17
Table 5.5	Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) Sites	5.19
Table 5.6	Sites Listed on the National Register of Historic Places	5.21
Table 6.1	Comparison of Household and Per Capita Income	6.2
Table 6.2	Employment Status of Population 16 Years and Above (2011).	6.3
Table 6.3	Labor Force Participation Characteristics 2000 and 2011.....	6.5
Table 6.4	Bureau County Resident Employment by Occupation	6.6
Table 6.5	Mean Travel Time to Work 2000 and 2011.	6.6
Table 6.6	Place of Work for Workers 16 Years and Over.....	6.7
Table 6.7	Major Employers in Bureau County, Illinois	6.8
Table 6.8	2011 Average Quarterly Employment and Average Monthly Earnings per NAICS Sector..	6.9
Table 8.1	Existing Land Use Within Bureau County	8.2
Table 8.2	Comparison of Equalized Assessed Valuations by Class of Property in Assessment Years 2007 - 2011	8.4

List of Figures:

Figure 1.1 Bureau County in Regional Context 1.3
Figure 1.2 Bureau County, Illinois 1.4

Figure 5.1 Physiographic Divisions 5.5

Figure 8.1 Township Dwelling Starts 2002 - 2012..... 8.3

Appendices:

Appendix I - Maps

- Map 3.1: Functional Classification of Highways, Bureau County, Illinois
- Map 3.2: Average Annual Daily Traffic (ADT) on U.S. and State Route, Bureau County, Illinois
- Map 3.3: Average Annual Daily Truck Traffic (ADTT) on U.S. and State Route, Bureau County, Illinois
- Map 5.1: Land Cover, Bureau County, Illinois
- Map 5.2: Shaded Relief, Bureau County, Illinois
- Map 5.3: Moraines, Bureau County, Illinois
- Map 5.4: Drift Thickness, Bedrock Topography and Bedrock Valleys, Bureau County, Illinois
- Map 5.5: Geologic Units, Bureau County, Illinois
- Map 5.6: Distribution of Surficial Eolian and Outwash Sand Deposits, Bureau County, Illinois
- Map 5.7: Farmland Classification of Soils, Bureau County, Illinois
- Map 5.8: Watershed Sub-basins, Bureau County, Illinois
- Map 5.9: Local Watersheds, Bureau County, Illinois
- Map 5.10: Archaeological Resource Potential, Bureau County, Illinois
- Map 8.1: Existing Land Use, Bureau County, Illinois
- Map 8.2: General Development Plan, Bureau County, Illinois

Appendix II - Public Participation / Public Planning Forums

Introduction

Welcome to the Bureau County, Illinois Comprehensive Plan. This Comprehensive Plan is the centerpiece of the community development planning process, stating our community's development goals and outlining public policies for guiding future growth. It establishes an identifiable destination that allows both the governing body and private interests to plan and budget with an idea as to the direction the County may move in the future, and helps to ensure that future growth is not only anticipated, but planned for. The Plan functions as a practical guide to coordinate day-to-day decisions so they make sense in the future.

Planning a community's future is a complex exercise. The process involves an existing community with a population of longtime residents, newcomers and business people; a government structure whose composition can change yearly; the regulations imposed by state and federal government agencies; the character of the community and the plan devised by numerous developers.

Planning for the future of a community can also be controversial. There are those who seek new development for the jobs and the revenue it will bring. Others oppose it, fearing traffic congestion, loss of natural resources, loss of community identity and related expenditures. The fact remains that change will occur, and the only question is how the public and private sector will shape that change.

The real challenge is assuring that change occurs in concert with the goals and objectives of the community. This can be accomplished by taking an active planning approach. Only in visualizing the future of the community the way you want it to be and sticking to that vision can the vision become a reality.

The Comprehensive Plan is a key element in formulating the approach that a community will take in addressing the issues of land use, public policies toward development, and infrastructure requirements. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide a framework for the County to ensure that a course, focused on a common goal, is maintained.

To achieve this, the Plan should be:

1. Comprehensive - The Plan must address all sections of the community as well as all activities associated with managing development;
2. Flexible - The Plan must be structured to summarize policies and proposals and allow for flexibility to facilitate the ever-changing needs of the community;
3. Provident - The initial requirements of the Plan are to achieve solutions to short term issues, whereas, the ultimate goal of the Plan is to provide a perspective of future development and predict possible problems as far as 20 or more years into the future.

With these general guidelines as a basis, specific issues may be addressed by analyzing the growth patterns and physical features of the County. While a variety of factors influence where and when development takes place, several basic elements can be analyzed to assess the impact of past or future growth. The elements that this plan addresses are: Issues and Opportunities (Chapter 1); Housing (Chapter 2); Transportation Facilities (Chapter 3); Utilities and Community Facilities (Chapter 4); Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resources (Chapter 5); Economic Development (Chapter 6); Intergovernmental Cooperation (Chapter 7); Land Use (Chapter 8); and, Implementation (Chapter 9).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau County's population peaked in 1910. Since that time, it has shown a general downward trend in population and is currently at its lowest population since 1910. Future growth should be anticipated, foresight provided to anticipate the challenges associated with growth and development, and appropriate policies and planning processes should be in place to address growth and development when and where it occurs. This Comprehensive Plan addresses these issues and provides a basis for the policies which will shape Bureau County in the future.

Citizen input/participation is an important component of the planning process. Numerous citizens have been involved in the development of this Comprehensive Plan, and their input is reflected in the goals and objectives formulated herein.