

PLANNING FRAMEWORK—PLANNING IN KANE COUNTY

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Comprehensive planning has been a continuous function of Kane County government for almost 50 years. Planning-related activities began when Kane County adopted a zoning ordinance in 1937 and a building ordinance in 1954. Formal county planning began in 1958 when the County Board of Supervisors created a planning section in the Building and Zoning Department.

Today, planning, building, zoning, and subdivision review remain important functions of the County Development Department. The department's planning responsibilities are primarily two fold: (1) preparing and maintaining a long-range county land resource management plan; and (2) providing planning and resource management assistance to communities and individuals. In addition, the department provides staff services to the Kane County Regional Planning Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Historic Preservation Commission, the CDBG Commission, the Economic Development Advisory Board and the Farmland Protection Commission.

The Kane County Regional Planning Commission was organized by the County Board in 1962 to guide and coordinate development. The commission's responsibilities are defined in Figure 1. In April 1967, the Regional Planning Commission recommended a five-point general development policy, which was adopted by the County Board. This five-point general development policy statement indicated development goals to be used as a basis for countywide planning. The five development goals addressed employment, people, housing, the environment, and natural resources.

Figure 1

Regional Planning Commission Responsibilities

1. To cooperate in the preparation of a 2030 Plan and to 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 2030 Plan and to 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 2030 Plan, to further the development of these projects, and generally to promote the realization of the 2030 Plan.
4. To report to the County Board on the status of the 2030 Plan and on the effectiveness of county ordinances and regulations as they relate to the 2030 Plan.
5. To transmit to the County Board reports on the important problems, conditions, and proposals pertinent to the future development of the county.

In 1970 a five-year work program was developed to provide direction to county planning efforts. These efforts resulted in the 1976 adoption of the *Generalized Land Use Plan and Planning and Development Policies*. The 1976 Comprehensive Plan spelled out goals and policies for future development within the Urban Corridor along the Fox River and adjacent to the outlying municipalities. It also called for a countywide open space system to protect natural areas and connect existing public land with future acquisitions.

During the next few years, the Planning Commission and County Board determined that two additional issues—the protection of farmland and guidelines for managing

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rural development—needed to be addressed by the county plan. In 1980 the County Board amended the 1976 Plan, stating as a matter of public policy that the best farmland should be conserved and protected from premature development. The amendment also recognized that the development of rural land could no longer be ignored and deemed that unguided rural development:

- Propagates the irreversible loss of prime farmland;
- Creates conflicts between agricultural and residential land uses; and
- Impacts the cost of providing educational, public safety, and road maintenance services.

The 1980 plan amendment encouraged new rural subdivisions on vacant parcels near existing residential developments and discouraged new subdivisions where they would be detrimental to the goal of preserving prime agricultural land. It noted that Kane County's challenge was to balance additional rural residential development with environmental, conservation, and energy goals, as well as to guide new subdivisions into areas consistent with the county's adopted development goals.

In 1982 these amendments were reinforced when the *Kane County Board adopted the Kane County Comprehensive Land Use Plan 1982-2000*. The major purpose of the 1982 plan was to provide comprehensive planning and development policies with a detailed plan map to guide balanced growth in the county. The 1982 plan recognized that development pressures would intensify and, if uncontrolled, would be detrimental to Kane County.

Two of the greatest accomplishments of the 1982 Land Use Plan were the preservation of agriculture and the management of conventional suburban sprawl in the western and central parts of Kane County. Prime agricultural lands outside of the Urban Corridor were identified and development was discouraged in those areas. Medium and high density land uses were concentrated in the eastern portion of the county while some low density residential was placed in portions of central Kane County. The plan stressed the need to preserve remaining natural areas, to provide connections between open spaces, and to ensure a full range of recreational opportunities in a countywide open space system.

In 1988 the Kane County Board unanimously adopted the Historic Preservation Ordinance as an amendment to the 1982 Land Use Plan. It was the state's first county preservation ordinance and was soon followed by the adoption of the Kane County Historic Preservation Plan adoption in 1989. The Plan is a statement of historic preservation goals, objectives, and strategies and serves as a guide to public improvement and land use decisions as they relate to historic preservation.

Between 1982 and 1994 the county initiated a substantial number of land use planning and resource management related documents listed in Figure 2. At least half of these documents address resource and environmental topics such as watersheds, wildlife, and natural areas. Other publications include village land use plans and historic preservation reports.

On September 23, 1985, Illinois adopted the Local Land Resource Management Planning Act, Illinois State Statutes, Chapter 50 ILCS 805. This important legislative initiative added strength to the ability of counties and municipalities to engage in intergovernmental planning activities and to develop joint land resource management plans that address critical land and water resource issues. The Land Resource Management Planning Act states: "It is the purpose of this Act to encourage

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municipalities and counties to protect the land, air, water, natural resources and environment of the State and to encourage the use of such resources in a manner which is socially and economically desirable through the adoption of joint or compatible Local Land Resource Management Plans.”

As Kane County entered the 1990’s, growth pressures increased and agricultural preservation, open space acquisition, growth management, environmental protection, and intergovernmental cooperation continued to emerge as critical issues. As a result, the County Board recognized the need to review the 1982 Plan and to address challenges by utilizing the Land Resource Management Planning Act authority.

In February of 1994 the County Board adopted by unanimous vote a Conceptual Land Use Strategy for Kane County recommended by the Planning Commission. With the adoption of the 2020 Strategy, the County Board wanted to address growth challenges by utilizing the Land Resource Management Planning Act authority. The strategy served as a basic policy guide to the Regional Planning Commission and Development Department staff in working towards the completion of the 2020 Land Resource Management Plan. The strategy findings were as follows:

1. For the purpose of comprehensive planning, Kane County is comprised of three distinct land use strategy areas: the Urban Corridor, the Critical Growth Area, and the Agricultural/Rural Village Area.
2. Different intensities and types of development are appropriate for each area.
3. Open space protection and water resource management must be the foundation of land use planning.
4. Balanced development should be encouraged.
5. Agriculture must continue to be a desired land use.
6. A strong relationship must exist between land use and transportation planning.
7. Eight Partnership Planning Areas (PPAs) should be established to facilitate cooperative planning and project review with the municipalities.

On June 11, 1996, the Kane County Board unanimously adopted the Kane County 2020 Land Resource Management Plan (2020 Plan). The 2020 Plan went beyond conventional land use planning by aggressively addressing the issues of quality of life, water resource management, open space preservation, and environmental protection. Based on the adopted 2020 Strategy, the 2020 Land Resource Management Plan established a strong link between county and municipal land use planning. Subsequent planning successes stemming from the 2020 Plan include the Stormwater Management Plan, the Agricultural Conservation Easement and Farmland Protection Program, the Rustic Roads Program, and the Economic Development program.

A major implementation component of the 2020 Plan was the establishment of eight Planning Partnership Areas (PPAs). Recognizing that the majority of land use decisions were made by the municipalities, the PPAs were used to develop a more effective working relationship between the county and the municipalities. Over the years the county’s Regional Planning Commission has hosted several joint planning commission meetings in each PPA. The purpose of the meetings was to share information, to identify common goals, and to develop a shared vision for cooperatively managing land resources in Kane County. The PPA meetings have been very successful and continue today.

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As part of the 2020 Planning Program, the county developed a five year series of “Making It Work” workshops. The purpose of each workshop was to provide the municipalities with detailed planning related material, as well as tools for managing growth and protecting natural resources. Including local and national speakers, the workshops addressed the topics of conservation design (1999), land use and transportation (2000), greenways and stormwater (2001), water supply (2002), and smart growth (2003).

In recognition of its merit and success, the 2020 Plan has received a number of awards from a variety of groups including The Landmark Preservation Council of Illinois, the Illinois Chapter of the American Planning Association and the American Institute of Architects. More importantly, the 2020 Plan has served as an effective statement of County Board policy and demonstrates how the county and municipalities can work together to achieve common goals.

Between 1996 and 2004 the county continued initiating land resource planning and growth management programs stemming from the 2020 Plan (Figure 2). Activities included developing village comprehensive plans, purchasing 1,400 acres in agricultural development rights, creating a new Land Evaluation and Site Assessment for Kane County, establishing a county CDBG program, initiating a new series of “Priority Places” workshops (2004), and designating the county’s first Rustic Road.

As Kane County entered a new century, growth pressures increased and agricultural preservation, open space protection, growth management, traffic congestion, water resource planning and intergovernmental cooperation continued to emerge as critical issues. Appropriately, the County Board recognized the need to review the 2020 Plan and initiate preparation of this 2030 Plan to address the challenges facing the county and municipalities.

On February 11, 2003, the Kane County Board unanimously approved the 2030 Conceptual Land Use Strategy as presented by the Regional Planning Commission. Building upon the principles of the 2020 Plan, land use policies were re-examined and fine-tuned in light of changing demographics, changes in state and federal policies, major infrastructure improvements, major shifts in the regional employment base, and local public policy and land use decisions. The 2030 Conceptual Land Use Strategy affirmed that for the purpose of comprehensive planning the county is comprised of three distinct land use strategy areas: the Urban Corridor Area, the Critical Growth Area, and the Agricultural/Rural Village Area. In addition, each land use strategy area was assigned a specific theme:

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

The 2030 Conceptual Land Use Strategy further directed the Regional Planning Commission to: (1) complete a draft 2030 Land Resource Management Plan, and (2) prepare a process for public review of the draft plan. In May 2003 the Planning Commission released the report, “Kane County Land Resource Management Plan, 2030, *Planning for Safe, Healthy and Livable Communities*”. That report identified the need for a 2030 Plan, reviewed the plan strategy, identified the 10 recommendations for the 2030 Plan, and outlined a proposed public review process.

During the summer of 2003, the Planning Commission used that report as a handout, along with a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation, in a series of public meetings in the Planning Partnership Areas (PPAs). The purpose of those meetings was to

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communicate to citizens and public officials the direction Kane County was taking towards preparation of a 2030 Plan. These public meetings were attended by hundreds of concerned citizens and officials, many voicing questions and concerns about the challenges and issues facing Kane County, for example:

- Traffic is already terrible, how can we handle more cars?
- How will new development impact my water well?
- Our schools are already overcrowded; we need more impact fees.
- There's not enough open space; we need more soccer fields.
- The flooding in my backyard keeps getting worse.
- What can be done to preserve the character of our community?
- We need housing for our retired parents so they can live closer to their grandchildren.

These public meetings confirmed the need for Kane County to proceed from the Conceptual Strategy to a more detailed Land Resource Management Plan replacing the highly effective, but out of date 2020 Plan.

The next step in the planning program was the completion of “Renaissance of the Urban Corridor”, a report highlighting the importance of the historic Urban Corridor along the Fox River and the opportunities for downtown revitalization, neighborhood preservation, redevelopment and infill development. The publication spotlighted exemplary plans, projects and policies in the Urban Corridor that are at the forefront of the “renaissance”, and how those plans and projects demonstrate the 10 Smart Growth Principles. The response to the report from the cities and villages affirmed the Renaissance theme and substantiated the infill, redevelopment and revitalization opportunities in the greenfields, greyfields, and brownfields along the Fox River and Randall Road.

After that, the planning process produced “Recommitment, Preserving Farmland and Agriculture in Kane County,” a report completed early in 2004 and focusing on preserving farmland from premature conversion to other land uses. The theme “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 and the Illinois Farmland Preservation Act, and policy decisions regarding public infrastructure investments.

The “Recommitment” report introduced the slogan 50-50-50 for the conceptual land use strategy map, i.e., 50% or more of the **total area** of Kane County can still be in farmland and open space, but only if 50% of the **population increase** occurs in the Urban Corridor and the other 50% in the Critical Growth Area. Also reported was the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) system for determining the quality and suitability of land for agricultural uses and for assessing sites or land areas for their agricultural economic viability. In addition the report presented the status of another important “recommitment”, the Kane County Agricultural Conservation Easement Program and the Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program.

The Renaissance and Recombitment Reports served as bookends for the final report in the planning series, “Refinement, Challenges for the Critical Growth Area”. The “Refinement” report contained: a review of the primary issues and challenges for the Critical Growth Area; the 50-50-50 Land Use Strategy endorsed by the Commission; a recap of the opportunities for implementing the 10 Smart Growth Principles in the “Priority Places” of the Critical Growth Area; and the revised schedule for reviewing

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the draft 2030 Plan and soliciting public comments. With the completion of that report the County Planning Commission had prepared what would serve as a solid foundation for proceeding to finalize the 2030 Land Resource Management Plan.

The 2030 Plan is a product of all of these preceding plans and efforts. It builds on the 2020 Plan and is a powerful public statement of planning for safe, healthy, and livable communities in Kane County while facing a period of unprecedented population growth.

The 2030 Plan bolsters the county's commitment to water resource management, open space preservation, environmental protection, and municipal partnerships. The Plan has three major elements: (1) a comprehensive planning framework component; (2) a planning issues component; and (3) a land resource management and implementation component.

The planning framework component includes the history of planning in Kane County, presents a 2030 perspective with challenges for managing new growth, and states Kane County's planning goals. This framework leads to the second component, the identification and examination of distinct planning issues facing Kane County. For each planning issue, there are objectives and policies for Kane County as it works toward achieving stated goals, making decisions, and directing growth.

The land resource management component of the plan states how the county and municipalities can work together to achieve common goals. The section presents strategies and direction for implementing intergovernmental land resource management plans. The 2030 Plan incorporates the principles of Smart Growth in guiding future development and details a strong intergovernmental implementation program calling for cooperative planning between the county and municipalities.

The 2030 Land Resource Management Plan is the product of an extensive public review process, which specifically sought input from individual citizens and the various municipalities, taxing bodies, and other organizations within Kane County over the past year (Refer to Figure 3). The review process during the summer of 2004 included a series of public forums throughout the county for citizen participation and input by local government bodies. The adopted 2030 Plan reflects the revisions and changes made by the Regional Planning Commission in response to comments and suggestions received during this review process and adopted by the County Board. This process has resulted in a 2030 Land Resource Management Plan that ensures Kane County's quality of life will be sustained, that provides a proper balance between natural resource protection and community and economic development, and that gives elected officials direction to successfully guide Kane County's growth in the 21st century.

Figure 2

Activities and Reports

Initiated by the Development Department

- 1982** *An Assessment of the Wildlife and Wildlife Habitats of Kane County, Illinois.* Byers, S.M., Montgomery, R.A., and Burger, G.V. Kane County Development Department.
- 1982** *Village of Pingree Grove 1981 Land Use Plan.* Adopted by local ordinance on August 3, 1982. Kane County Development Department.
- 1984** *Kane County Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Systems.* Kane County Development Department, Kane DuPage Soil and Water Conservation District, and the United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service.
- 1984** *Village of Burlington Comprehensive Land Use Plan.* Adopted by local ordinance 1984-3. Kane County Development Department.
- 1986** *Wild Plants and Natural Areas of Kane County.* Young, Dick. Kane County Environmental Department.
- 1987** “A Resource Management Approach to Planning for the Mill Creek Watershed”. Paper prepared for the Kane County Development Department. Sheaffer and Roland.
- 1987** *Village of Maple Park Comprehensive Land Use Plan.* Kane County Development Department.
- 1989** “Rural Settlements in the Mill Creek Watershed”. Mill Creek Task Force. Paper prepared for the Kane County Development Department by Teska and Associates.
- 1989** *Welcome to Natural Kane County.* Kane County Development Department.
- 1990** “Land Use and Design Guidelines for the Peck Road and Wenmoth Road Corridors”. Paper prepared for the Kane County Development Department. Teska and Associates.
- 1991** *Built for Farming, A Guide to the Historic Rural Architecture of Kane County.* Kane County Development Department.
- 1991** “Land Use and Design Standards for Watershed and Settlements in Urban/Rural Borderland Areas”. Paper prepared for the Kane County Development Department. Teska and Associates.
- 1992** *That Darn Barn, A Facelift After 80 Years.* Kane County Development Department.
- 1992** “Water Resources Utilization Study, Mill Creek Demonstration Site”. Paper prepared for the Kane County Development Department. Hey and Associates.
- 1993** *Kane County Data Book.* Kane County Development Department.
- 1994** “Conceptual Land Use Strategy for Kane County”. Adopted by local ordinance 94-29 on February 8, 1994. Kane County Board.
- 1994** *Wild Plants and Natural Areas of Kane County, 2nd Edition.* Young, Dick. Kane County Forest Preserve District.
- 1997** Kane County Economic Development Advisory Board. Kane County Development Department.

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- 1998** *Kane County Housing and Community Development Consolidated Plan, 1998-2003* for the Community Development Block Grant Program. Kane County Development Department.
- 1998** Small Cities Grant Program—Economic Development Visioning. Economic Development Advisory Board. Kane County Development Department.
- 1999-2003** “Making It Work” workshop series. Kane County Development Department.
- 2000** Rustic Roads Program. Kane County Development Department.
- 2000** Agricultural Conservation Easement and Farmland Protection Program. Kane County in conjunction with agriculture professionals.
- 2001** *Kane County Stormwater Ordinance and Kane County Stormwater Technical Guidance Manual*. Kane County Water Resources Department, the Department of Environmental Management, and the Kane County Development Department.
- 2001** *Wage and Benefits Survey*. Prepared for the Kane County Economic Development Advisory Board and the Kane County Development Department. Center for Governmental Studies, Northern Illinois University.
- 2002** *A Commuter Patterns Study*. Prepared for the Kane County Economic Development Advisory Board and the Kane County Development Department. Paragon Decision Resources, Inc.
- 2002** *Countryside Vision Plan* for the city of Aurora. Kane County Development in partnership with the City of Aurora Community Development Department, Land Vision, Inc., Kane County Forest Preserve, Kane County Department of Environmental Management, Kane County Division of Transportation, and the Conservation Foundation.
- 2002** “*Urban Corridor Study*”. Prepared by Shauna Wiet, SJW Consulting, for the Kane County Development Department.
- 2002-2007** *Water Resources Study of Kane County*. Kane County Water Study Stakeholders Committee and the Kane County Water Resources Department. Being prepared for Kane County by the Illinois State Water Survey and the Illinois State Geological Survey.
- 2003** *Big Rock Comprehensive Land Use Plan*. Kane County Development Department. Big Rock Planning Committee.
- 2003** *Corron Farm Open Space Master Plan*. Kane County Development Department and Campton Township Open Space Committee.
- 2003** Economic Development Website. Prepared by Innovative Information Systems and the Kane County Development Department.
- 2003** “*Improving the Alignment Between the Skill Set of the Local Workforce and the Skills Demanded by Kane County Employers*”. Prepared for the Kane County Development Department by Gruen Gruen + Associates.
- 2003** *Kane County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan* and map. Kane County Council of Mayors. Kane County Department of Transportation. Kane County Development Department.
- 2003** “*Leveraging Purchase of Development Rights to build a strong farm economy*”. Prepared by Robert Heuer, a Public Policy and Marketing Consultant, as a report to the Kane County Board.

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- 2003** *Maple Park Comprehensive Land Use Plan*. Kane County Development Department and Maple Park Plan Commission.
- 2003** Workforce Development Vocational/Technical Training. Economic Development Department and Gruen Gruen + Associates.
- 2003** *“Kane County Land Resource Management Plan 2030, Planning for Safe, Healthy and Livable Communities”*. Kane County Development Department.
- 2003** *“Renaissance of the Urban Corridor”*. Kane County Development Department.
- 2004** *“Anticipating the Future: Revolutionary Changes and Policy Recommendations for Enhancing the Randall Road Corridor”*. Prepared for the Kane County Development Department by Gruen Gruen + Associates.
- 2004** *Kane County Land Evaluation and Site Assessment* system update. Kane County Development Department, Kane County DuPage Soil and Water Conservation District, and United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- 2004** *“Recommitment, Preserving Farmland and Agriculture in Kane County”*. Kane County Development Department.
- 2004** *“Refinement, Challenges for the Critical Growth Area”*. Kane County Development Department.

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Figure 3

