

Mille Lacs County Comprehensive Plan

Environment & Energy Section

Environment & Energy Goal:

To be a County that balances human development with the natural environment, to protect the County's water, forest, energy and other natural resources.

Objective:

Balance human activity with the natural environment within Mille Lacs County.

- Create a variety of opportunities for human activity in a healthful and cost efficient manner.
 - Provide amenities that are in balance with the natural environment.
 - Consider development of an amenity plan for future use.
 - Promote the County's natural resources as a driver for the local economy, working with tourism, environmental, hunting, farming, nonprofit, advocacy groups; local governmental units; and educational institutions.
 - Maintain the natural beauty of the environment that nourishes the human spirit.
- Balance between the regulation and protection of our natural resources.
 - Review the wild and scenic boundaries of the Rum River and make recommendations to the state and federal regulating agencies.
 - Partner with the private business community to determine the best use for shoreline property, while maintaining its environmental integrity.
 - Work with both internal and external partners to review existing codes and regulations, as well as best practices to achieve minimal regulation while conserving our natural resources.
 - Develop a plan to best manage wildlife corridors and existing green spaces.
- Maintain viability of wildlife habitat.

- Work with partners such as DNR and Mille Lacs County Land Services Office to ensure impact to wildlife is considered when planning future development.
- Maintain viability of wetlands.
- Sustainably manage forest resources for economic benefit, wildlife habitat, and recreation.
- Review land use controls and update as necessary, in relation to the Comprehensive Plan.
- Establish a Natural Resources Task Force composed of elected officials, residents, and key strategic partners.
 - Develop a natural resources protection plan that encompasses and ties together other natural resource and land use plans work on promoting parks and resources.

Objective:

Preserve and protect the water supply and water quality within the County.

- Work with partners to control aquatic invasive species.
 - Work with local and state partners to develop best management practices, education, and implementation plans.
 - Initiate mitigation activities, and look for ways to stop further infestation.
- Protect drinking water supplies from contamination and depletion.
 - Promote well head protection planning.
 - Review land use regulations regarding the withdrawal of water from aquifers for development.
- Preserve surface water from pollution, runoff, and other sources of contamination.
 - Review County ordinances for setbacks and other requirements.
 - Collaborate with partners and stakeholders on a natural resource protection education program.

Objective:

Protect and support agricultural food supply opportunities, and work to ensure their long-term viability.

- Support all agricultural businesses and marketing opportunities for locally produced foods.
 - Develop plan working with local growers and markets for long-term sustainability of small agricultural businesses.
 - Provide information about research grant opportunities related to the local food supply.
- Protect top soil from erosion and degradation by working with stakeholders.
- Promote educational opportunities on local agriculture, including locally produced foods.

Objective:

Promote and further study existing and alternative energy sources.

- Review viability and encourage growth of all alternative renewable energy sources within the County.
- Promote energy efficiency and energy conservation.

Objective:

Protect Mille Lacs County's air from pollution, to maintain air quality for future generations.

- Work with local, state, and federal partners to develop plans for mitigating existing pollution and preventing future pollution threats in the County.
- Mitigate sources of air pollution.
 - Reduce particulate counts from the burning of plastics, garbage, and other contaminants.
 - Develop education plan for residents about open burning and other contributors to air pollution.

Objective:

Encourage the proper disposal of solid and hazardous wastes.

- Promote recycling and reuse.
 - Provide education and information for residents.
 - Encourage private haulers to implement recycling programs.
 - Work with the private sector to explore private enterprise opportunities related to re-use and recycling.
- Promote solid waste disposal options in place of open burning.
- Provide / promote a variety of options for hazardous waste disposal.
 - Develop ongoing educational programs and disposal options for residents.
 - Work with the private sector to explore private enterprise opportunities for hazardous waste disposal.

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Mille Lacs County Comprehensive Plan

Public Safety Section

Public Safety Goal:

To be a County that provides a safe environment for all residents and visitors using collaboration and prevention programs.

Objective:

Develop partnerships to study and decrease drug usage and drug-related public safety issues

- Develop ongoing partnerships among county, city, tribal, state, medical, education, public safety, social services, and associated elected officials to study, develop, and recommend a workable plan to address drug usage issues in Mille Lacs County.
 - Increase awareness of drug activity
 - Reduce drug activity within the County
 - Support prevention programs
 - Review and recommend best practices related to prevention and support programs

Objective:

Develop partnerships to study and decrease Gang Related Activity and related public safety issues

- Develop ongoing partnerships among county, city, tribal, state, medical, education, public safety, social services, and associated elected officials to study, develop, and recommend a workable plan to address gang activity issues in Mille Lacs County.
 - Increase awareness of gang activity
 - Reduce gang activity within the County
 - Support prevention programs
 - Review and recommend best practices related to prevention and support programs

Objectives:

Increase public awareness related to crime prosecution rates

- Develop an ongoing public education media campaign related to crime in the County
 - Encourage and educate legislators on related issues impacting the County
 - Recommend activities and other ways to reduce recidivism
 - Develop ongoing crime prevention programs with all affected parties within the County

Objective:

Strive to increase the safety of all Mille Lacs County citizens

- Increase education and public awareness relating to abuse in the County, with an emphasis on Elder, Child, and Domestic Abuse.
- Support prevention programs related to abuse.
- Develop joint (governmental units, private, non-profit, etc) planning efforts to address domestic abuse issues in the County

Objective:

Provide ongoing support for the prevention of juvenile crime

- Support planned youth activities within the County
 - Support plans to reduce recidivism jointly with all local governmental units within the County.

Objective:

Continue to support the interoperability of all public safety organizations which operate within the County.

Mille Lacs County Comprehensive Plan

Economic Development Section

Economic Development Goal:

To be a growing county with a broad economic base that is achieved by supporting and retaining local and other private businesses, using existing developments as well as promoting growth in new development areas .

Objective:

To promote the growth and diversification of Mille Lacs County's economy, thereby developing a broad economic base.

- Promote development that will strengthen the County over the long term, through increased tax base, more jobs, and new resources being brought into the County.
- Promote Mille Lacs County as a progressive area willing to cooperate with suitable and compatible businesses and industries seeking new sites; highlight the natural amenities of the Mille Lacs County area to attract a wide range of industries.
- Promote a steady rate of commercial/industrial growth, providing additional employment opportunities requiring a broad range of knowledge and skills.
 - Encourage agriculture related businesses of a diverse nature.
 - Encourage businesses related to tourism.
 - Encourage technology businesses that create good paying jobs.
 - Encourage the development of student technological skills through various events such as robotics competitions, science fairs, etc.
 - Encourage partnerships, mentorships and sponsorships between schools, private industry, non-profit groups, and tribal and local government.
 - Encourage technical, post-secondary schools to establish satellites for continuing education.

- Foster the growth and expansion of broadband internet service and fiber infrastructure for business, education and private use, making it accessible to all residents of the County.
- Leverage the County’s available natural resources to promote business growth, i.e. tourism, agriculture, etc.
- Promote economic development within existing development areas; work with planning commissions to develop commercial/industrial zones in appropriate and well thought-out areas.
- Cultivate opportunities provided by being located on the US Highway 169; and State Highway 23, 27, and 95 corridors.

Objective:

Promote private business growth to create living wage jobs in Mille Lacs County.

- Promote creation, retention, and expansion of private business.
 - Work to create and market a “toolbox” of economic development tools to assist with business retention, expansion, creation, and attraction. Some examples of this may include various business subsidy policies, loan funds, regulatory and technical assistance, as well as partnering with chambers of commerce, non-profit agencies, and other organizations.
 - Assess the needs of local businesses, and how regulations directly impact those businesses. Study Mille Lacs County’s zoning ordinance provisions and other regulatory tools on a regular basis to minimize restrictions and barriers to business, wherever practical.
- Foster the growth and expansion of broadband internet service and fiber infrastructure for business, education, and private use in the County, making it accessible to all residents.
- Promote, cultivate, and support various suitable and compatible types of businesses including small, industrial, commercial, retail, agriculture, forestry, tourism, and others that create and retain living wage jobs within the County.
- Capitalize on opportunities provided due to County’s location relative to the US Highway 169; and State Highway 23, 27, and 95 corridors.

- Market the County to bring in additional businesses, while emphasizing the County’s assets in trails, natural resources, tourist revenue, arts, etc.

Objective:

Promote and support local small businesses (retention, creation, and expansion) within the County.

- Review Mille Lacs County’s zoning ordinance provisions and other state and federal regulatory tools on a regular basis to ensure that they are compatible with small business retention, creation, and expansion.
- Promote the development and creation of broad types of businesses that meet residents’ needs.
 - Provide information and tools for existing and future residents to start businesses.
 - Create local shopping opportunities to keep resources in the County.
- Work to create a “toolbox” of economic development tools to assist with small business retention, expansion, creation and attraction by coordinating available resources to make their availability known to business owners and entrepreneurs.

Objective:

Develop working relationships within the County to promote economic growth in new and existing development areas.

- Create an Economic Development Authority (EDA) with representation from all local government jurisdictions and each business sector within the County.
 - Retain an Economic Development staff person for Mille Lacs County who will focus on developing, retaining, and strengthening existing businesses in the County, as well as recruiting new businesses.

- Partner with local and regional business development organizations (such as GPS45:93, the East Central Regional Development Commission, and the MN Small Business Development Center) to explore new business assistance programs and learn from best practices.
- Review existing codes and regulations from a business point of view; work with EDA to make recommendations for changes to local, state, or federal rules.
- Review and pursue grant and / or loan opportunities for business development.
- Create a “toolbox” of economic development tools to assist with business retention, expansion, creation, and attraction by coordinating available resources and making their availability known to business owners and entrepreneurs.
- Create and implement a County Economic Development Plan, in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan.

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Mille Lacs County Comprehensive Plan

Transportation Section

Transportation Goal:

To be a County that maintains its existing road system, while working on congested traffic areas and active and public transportation needs.

Objective:

Maintain existing county roads.

- Widen shoulders for active transportation, vehicle recovery, etc using available resources
- Maintain road ratings to road specific standards using available resources.
- Work to lessen forces that negatively impact road conditions (enforcement of weight restrictions, etc.)
- Prioritize roads with highest average daily traffic count.

Objective:

Repair bridges.

- Repair deficient bridges in the county, with priority given to those with the greatest safety concerns.

Objective:

Control, preserve, and expand county road right-of-ways.

- Develop long term plans to control, preserve, and expand county road right-of-ways consistent to standard widths.

Objective:

Support active transportation options for biking and walking when feasible.

- Promote stakeholders efforts towards safe walking/biking opportunities.

Objective:

Promote public transportation where feasible

- Promote incentives for private business development.
- Support stakeholder group activities towards alternative transit opportunities.

Objective:

Maintain safety as a transportation priority.

- Solicit feedback from residents on safety concerns.

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Mille Lacs County Comprehensive Plan

Recreation and Tourism Section

Recreation and Tourism Goal:

To be a County that supports our tourism, recreational, and cultural assets within the County.

Objective:

Promote and support Mille Lacs County tourism.

- Increase revenues by promoting tourism within the County.
- Develop partnerships with private, non-profit, and governmental units to promote tourism and recreation.
- Work with and educate state legislators, departments and the general public on topics pertaining to recreation and tourism as it relates to the County.

Objective:

Maintain public hunting and fishing access within the County.

- Work with DNR and other stakeholders in maintenance and improvements at public hunting and fishing locations.
- Help promote public recreation opportunities (signs, websites, etc.).
- Encourage better way of defining public accesses to hunting and fishing areas.

Objective:

Promote and support recreational opportunities within the County.

- Encourage establishment/expansion of privately owned recreational businesses.
- Continue partnership with DNR and other stakeholders in an effort to preserve our County's natural resources.
- Promote and help to preserve the County's historical and cultural assets.
- Support the creation of a historical and cultural asset inventory, and use it as a tourism driver.
- Consider the development of a park and trails plan, including a cost/benefit analysis.

- Explore opportunities for creating or expanding County parks and trails.
- Explore incentives for private natural resource protection.

Objective:

Responsibly utilize the Wild and Scenic Rum River corridor within the County.

- Encourage DNR and other stakeholders to explore the creation of primitive camping sites.
- Encourage establishment/expansion of privately owned recreational businesses.
- Work with DNR and other stakeholders on developing recreational uses that will have a minimal impact on the river.

Objective:

Improve connections between people and destinations in the County.

- Assess and promote regional trail systems, and consider possible connections with proposed County trails.

Objective:

Promote and support Mille Lacs Lake as a recreation and tourism destination in the County.

- Promote and support tourism in the county
- Promote natural resources in the county
- Promote cultural resources in the county

Objective:

Promote and capitalize on location on Highway 169 corridor and volume of traffic.

Mille Lacs County Comprehensive Plan
Social, Public Health & Quality of Life Programs Section

Social, Public Health & Quality of Life Programs Goal:

To be a County that supports all levels of education, senior related programs and activities, encourages workforce training and overall healthy communities.

Objective:

Work with all types of schools, local units of government, businesses, residents and elected officials to create a culture that supports all levels of education

- Promote early childhood education programs and opportunities to help make residents aware of their availability.
- Encourage technical and college campus sites and programs in the County
- Promote technology to further educational opportunities for all residents.

Objective:

Encourage accessible and affordable senior related programs and activities

- Promote eldercare, senior housing and related programs
- Encourage coordination and promotion of senior service programs.

Objective:

Encourage programs and activities related to improving employment and training opportunities for all residents.

- Encourage economic development and job training programs.
 - Utilize technology and infrastructure for training
- Encourage government, schools, community education programs, and businesses to identify needed skills.
 - Develop programs to meet needed skills.

Objective:

Encourage healthy communities.

- Encourage access to fitness, healthy food, and other activities and promote their availability.
- Encourage and promote mental health services.
- Encourage and promote alcohol / chemical prevention and treatment programs.
- Encourage parenting activities and programs.
- Encourage teen based programs and activities.

Objective:

Encourage improved communication infrastructure and increased accessibility.

- Encourage technology for personal, education and business use.
 - Explore grant opportunities for further development and accessibility of these communication systems.
- Use both new and traditional media to spread information quickly and efficiently.

Objective:

Promote the cultural and historical resources within the county.

- Encourage ongoing support of libraries.
- Encourage local arts, historical and heritage programs.

Mille Lacs County Comprehensive Plan Intergovernmental Relations Section

Intergovernmental Relations Goal:

To be a County that openly and transparently communicates and cooperates with other units of government and its residents to provide the continuously improving services

Objective:

Continue to improve the communications, relations and cooperation between governmental units.

- Continue and enhance open door communications between townships, cities, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, schools and Mille Lacs County.
 - Encourage countywide meetings of governmental units
- Improve and enhance use of websites, email, social media, and other available communications technologies.
- Encourage cooperation between units of government for cost savings.
 - Look for opportunities to “pair and share” services and resources between government units and public / private sectors.

Objective:

Continue to improve the quality of County services that are provided to residents.

- Continue high levels of customer service by staff and elected officials.
- Research opportunities for continuous improvement of services at an affordable cost.



Administrative Services Office

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Objective:

Improve citizen education about County services and encourage participation in all levels of County decision making.

- Make information easier to access through multiple avenues of communications.
 - Explore the use of new communications technology to update and inform the public.
- Strive to have a cross section of the County represented on appointed boards and committees.
- Market opportunities to learn about local government to schools and residents.

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Mille Lacs County Comprehensive Plan Agriculture & Forestry Section

Agriculture & Forestry Goal:

To be a County that supports the county's agricultural and forest areas and businesses thru a balance of conservation and education

Objective:

Maintain and encourage the efficiency, viability, and productivity of the county's agricultural areas for current and future generations.

- Encourage cities and townships to ensure the viability of agriculture.
- Encourage nontraditional farming practices such as agri-tourism, which retain the agricultural character of the land.
- Encourage development of an economically feasible infrastructure to support a local/regional food system.

Objective:

Balance development of land with open space conservation.

- Allow concentrated development in order to preserve farm and forest land, open spaces, and ecological connectivity.
- Balance environmental concerns with regulations
- Encourage the control and management of invasive species within these industries.
- Streamline the permitting process to make agriculture and forestry development user friendly, efficient and consistent.
- Keep agriculture and forestry industries viable for future generations

Objective:

Promote educational opportunities for residents and private land owners about forestry and farm management practices

- Encourage and support private forestry & farming businesses by providing information related to these industries.
- Promote and encourage private forest inventory / management plans
- Promote sustainable forestry & farming resources.
- Promote internet resources on topics.

Objective:

Recognize agriculture and forestry as part of the county's business community.

- Include a focus on the agriculture and forestry industries within the county's economic development work plan.
 - Encourage renewable energy and other value added industries that use locally grown inputs.
 - Encourage the creation of a one-stop clearinghouse for the business development process.

Mille Lacs County Comprehensive Plan Land Use Section

Land Use Goal:

To be a County that promotes development while balancing minimal regulatory impacts with conservation practices with an eye to minimizing regulations and pollution in order to preserve our water and other natural resources while protecting our quality of life.

Objective:

Review current land use controls and update County Zoning ordinances and codes to minimize regulatory impact on County residents and businesses.

- Work to increase allowable uses within zoning ordinance.
- Review land use controls in conjunction with required State and Federal rules and regulations
- Update the zoning map and zoning code to reflect Comprehensive Plan objectives
- Seek community input about changes and impacts.
- Make rules and regulations easier and simpler to understand.

Objective:

Balance development of land with open space conservation.

- Allow concentrated development in order to preserve farm and forest land, open spaces, and ecological connectivity.
 - Balance environmental concerns with regulations
- Streamline the permitting process to make development user friendly, efficient and consistent.
- Encourage development of compatible uses in proximity with regards to type of pollution generated such as noise pollution, odors, emissions, solid waste.

Objective:

Consider aggregate and mining deposit locations when developing zoning regulations

- Review and develop best practices regarding gravel, aggregate and mineral deposits

Objective:

Reduce pollution and nuisance problems related to solid waste

- Encourage responsible hazardous and solid waste disposal and recycling options

Objective:

Consider water quality and quantity when making land use decisions.

- Continue to work with our existing and potential new partners (State, DNR, Soil & Water organizations, neighboring local units of government, and other agencies) with regards to water quality and volume issues, both above and below ground, utilizing the County Local Water Management Plan when making related decisions.

Objective:

Promote awareness of animal control ordinances and state laws.

- Encourage the distribution of animal control information