

# INTRODUCTION



## **PURPOSE OF THE PLAN**

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The Yellow Medicine Comprehensive Plan establishes a vision for the future. It is a guide to help the County identify what citizens value, do not want changed and feel should be improved. It provides day-to-day direction for the County in making decisions. In addition, the Plan serves the following purposes:

- Addresses the planning areas of housing, agriculture, business/economic development, transportation, natural resources/parks/recreation and county services. The Plan also considers social and economic issues.
- Ties together components of the County into a single “comprehensive” plan that reflects the interrelationships and the importance of all aspects of the County.
- Creates a forum for County residents to express and develop a long-range vision for Yellow Medicine County through the year 2025.
- Identifies key issues expressed by residents through public input.
- Sets goals, develops strategies for achieving the goals and creates an implementation process.

- Provides a basis for County land use controls and a link to the County’s ordinances that should be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Guides County staff, the Planning Commission, the County Board of Commissioners and others making decisions related to development in the County.
- Addresses both short and long-term issues within the County.

## **WHY PLAN?**

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Issues may differ but the need to plan does not. A comprehensive plan fosters the kind of development that citizens really want. There are several benefits or reasons for an entity to do comprehensive planning. They include the following:

- Build and guide the future.
- Identify and prioritize issues.
- Accommodate change.
- Stay ahead of trends.
- Leverage scarce resources.
- Protect public investments.
- Help to maintain the resource base and other “natural capital”.
- Ensure a safer, more pleasant and economical environment in the County.
- Create policies and ground rules that are fair, stable and predictable.
- Save money in both the private and public sector.
- Encourage other agencies to plan in harmony with the County.
- Coordinate with other jurisdictions and levels of government on topics of mutual concern.
- Provide services in the most cost effective manner.
- Achieve a more secure tax base.
- Promote the public health, safety and general welfare of the County residents.
- Approach decisions thoughtfully considering all sides and interconnections.
- Provide a basis for justification on land use decisions and ordinances.

## **USE OF THE PLAN**

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Many people will find this Plan useful including:

***County staff and government*** will use the Plan to assist them with a variety of tasks including:

- Making development and infrastructure decisions.
- Acquisition and use of public land.
- Budgeting capital improvements.
- Considering annexation issues.
- Establishing regulatory changes.
- Communicating to the public Yellow Medicine County's vision for the future.

***Property owners and residents*** will use the Plan to assist them with tasks such as:

- Determining potential property use.
- Understanding possible land use changes in the surrounding area.
- Understanding future infrastructure improvements.
- Making property improvements.

***Developers*** will use the Plan as a basis for:

- Doing property acquisition.
- Coordinating development plans with County infrastructure plans.

***Agencies and providers serving Yellow Medicine County*** will use the Plan to assist them with tasks such as:

- Strategic planning to establish a common vision with the County.
- Coordinating common goals, objectives and strategies.
- Considering development and growth decisions within the County.

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

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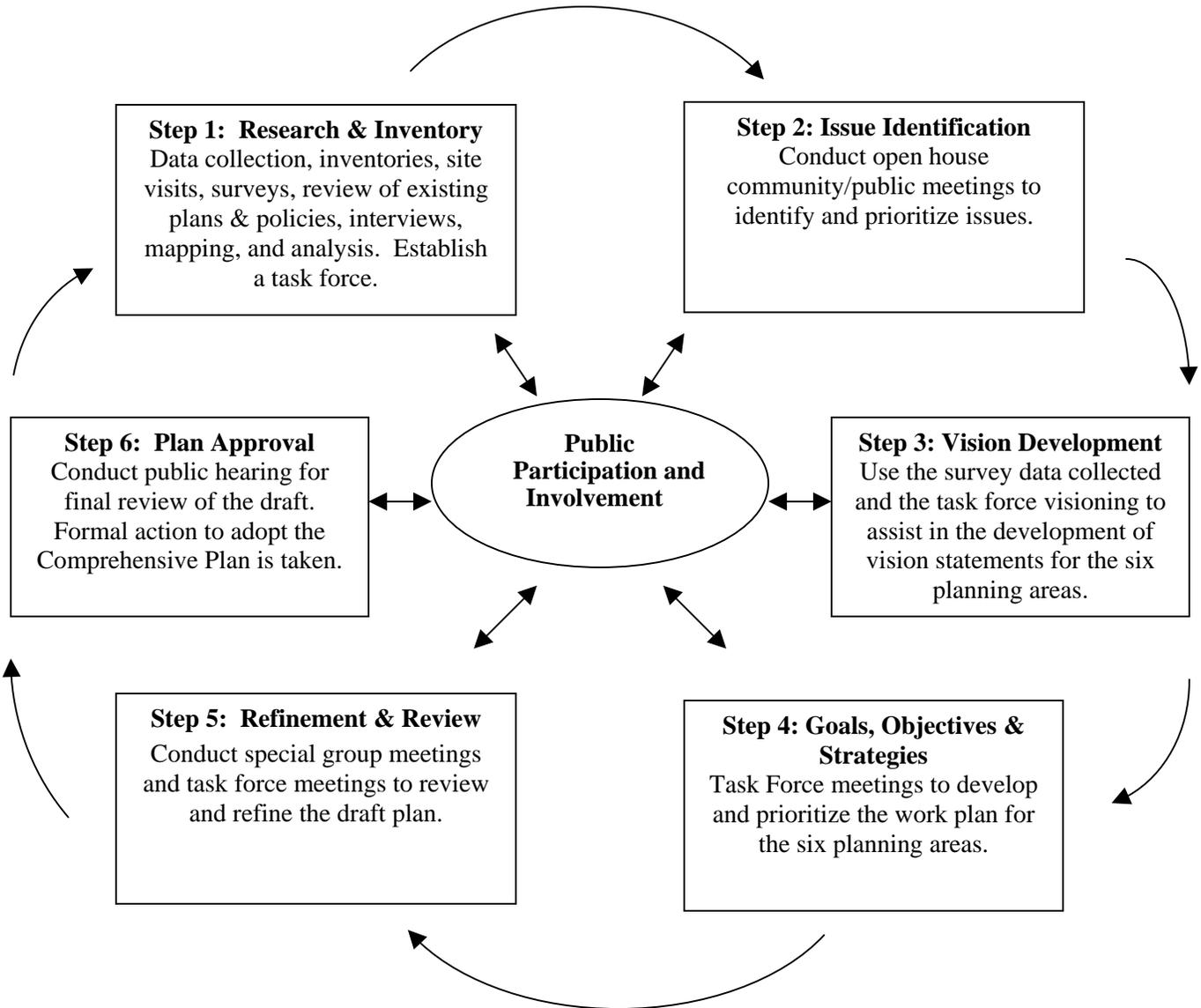
The Yellow Medicine County comprehensive planning process began in December of 2004. The County last completed a comprehensive plan in 1979. The new Plan will address changes in land use policies and practices, demographics, and other socio-economic factors since the last plan. Yellow Medicine County contracted the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission (UMVRDC) to facilitate the planning process and write the Plan.

A Comprehensive Plan Task Force was established to provide input into creating the Plan. A broad representation of individuals was selected for the planning task force. Task force members included representatives from the Yellow Medicine County Board of Commissioners, Planning Commission, County staff, and township officials. The task force met periodically with UMVRDC staff to address key planning issues and review progress on the Plan.

The planning process is as much about engaging the public in local decisions as it is to create a document for guiding development. In order to do so citizen participation is a critical part of the process. A survey was distributed to every township homestead property and a random sample of 20 percent of the homestead properties in the cities located in the County. In total 2,005 surveys were distributed. The survey-return rate was 38.6 percent. In addition there were four public meetings held throughout the County to discuss and collect input on the six major planning areas of the Plan. A public hearing and review process was conducted in March 2006 to gain additional input into the Plan. Municipalities in the County were asked to participate directly in the Plan by identifying urban growth areas and land use in and around their communities and by providing additional information on land use for the Plan. The flow chart on the next page identifies the several steps of the planning process used to create this Plan.

In April 2006, the Yellow Medicine County Board of Commissioners approved the Yellow Medicine County Comprehensive Plan.

## Planning Process



## **CONTENT OF THE PLAN**

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**CHAPTER ONE: County Profile** - Chapter One provides a profile of Yellow Medicine County including their location, a brief history, demographic trends and other social-economic information.

**CHAPTER TWO: Current Land Uses and Services** - Chapter Two identifies current land uses within the County and provides an inventory and analysis of the six planning areas addressed in the Plan – Housing, Agriculture, Business/economic Development, Transportation, Natural Resources/Parks/Recreation and County Services.

**CHAPTER THREE: City Profiles** - Chapter Three provides a community profile for each of the nine incorporated cities located in Yellow Medicine County. There are three main features to each community profile: a brief description of the community; demographic data; and a current zoning map (when available) or aerial photo of the community to identify both current and future land uses.

**CHAPTER FOUR: Township Profiles** - Chapter Four provides a profile for each of the 21 Yellow Medicine County townships and the Upper Sioux Community. There are three main features to each township profile: a brief description of the township; demographic data; and a current zoning map (when available) or aerial photo of the township to identify both current and future land uses.

**CHAPTER FIVE: Issue Identification** - Chapter Five identifies current and emerging planning issues that impact Yellow Medicine County and are critical to residents. The issues are classified and identified by six planning areas: Housing; Transportation; Business and Economic Development; Agriculture; Natural Resources/Parks/Recreation; and County Services. The results of the comprehensive plan survey and the four community planning meetings held are tabulated in this chapter.

**CHAPTER SIX: Goals, Objectives and Strategies** - Chapter Six establishes Yellow Medicine County’s overall vision statement. Individual vision statements, goals, objectives and strategies were written for each of the six planning areas. Collectively it serves as a work plan and should be used to help make decisions on a day-to-day basis.

**CHAPTER SEVEN: Implementation** - Chapter Seven establishes priority projects. These priority projects are based on the goals, objectives and strategies established in Chapter Six and help to establish a starting point for the work plan. In addition, the chapter explains how the Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed and updated in the future.

## **OVERALL VISION STATEMENT**

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A vision statement for Yellow Medicine County was developed during the Comprehensive Plan Task Force planning meetings. The purpose of a vision statement is to articulate the values and concerns of the community and incorporate aspirations for the future. A vision statement reflects a “best possible scenario” based on an understanding of current reality and anticipated future change.

The following vision statement represents Yellow Medicine County’s view of the County in 20 years. The vision statement articulates what resident’s value and want to keep in their County. It also includes what can be improved on and things they hope to attain in the future.

This vision statement provides a foundation for future visioning processes. The vision is very general in nature, but could become more specific through additional visioning exercises. It also allows Yellow Medicine County to see where similarities occur when working with other communities/counties in the region and identifying partners on potential regional projects.

The overall vision statement also provides a foundation for planning decisions. When discussing projects, Yellow Medicine County should consider their vision statement to see if the project is compatible with the vision they have for the future. For each of the six planning areas of the Plan an individual vision statement was developed that is more specific but in concert with the overall vision statement (see Chapter Six).

### **YELLOW MEDICINE COUNTY OVERALL VISION**

*In 20 years we envision for the County:*

*All residents working together, using the County’s resources, to create a safe, pleasant, healthy environment to live in that has a rural, small town atmosphere and quality of life for all ages and all people by preserving the environment; providing opportunities to learn and grow; supporting young families; and encouraging people to attain their dreams.*

April 2006