

# Introduction

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Logan County today is poised between its stable small-town past and the shifting demands of the twenty-first century economics and demographics that will influence its future. Planning for that future is an essential part of this transition. The County is well-situated to capitalize on the opportunities ahead: its location at the center of Illinois, at the core of a regional transportation system, and at the heart of a socially and economically diverse region (see Map 1.1) all favor future development potential.

A healthy economic base increases the capacities of local governments to provide services and amenities to residents. These factors in combination serve to attract more people and business to the region and further contribute to the overall prosperity. The basic challenges and opportunities that accompany growth and prosperity relate to preserving and enhancing the social, economic and environmental resources that support that people and businesses to the area.

Sensible growth recognizes the potential benefits of population and economic growth but sets high standards to preserve and enhance the community for both present and future generations by minimizing the economic and environmental costs of growth. It attempts to balance concerns for community, economy and environment. Sensible growth involves the building of livable communities that feature distinctive identities with people friendly design and many social and cultural amenities. It also involves promoting economic growth to provide the jobs and tax base that can help support these amenities. Sensible growth also occurs in harmony with the natural landscape and environment.

Many growth issues involve multiple

jurisdictions and may require cooperative approaches to reach optimal solutions. While some issues may appear on the surface to be strictly urban or strictly rural, closer examination often reveals that one approach may apply to both issues, due to the complex interrelationships that often exist. For example, urban revitalization may appear to be only a concern for municipalities. However, successful revitalization of urban areas can direct some growth inwardly, resulting in less consumption of farmland. This would be considered by many to be a benefit to the rural area as well. Similarly, one means of addressing the seemingly rural issue of farmland preservation is through compact and contiguous urban development, which also provides many benefits to municipalities, developers and residents. Thus, many growth issues have both an urban and a rural side.

Growth issues affect multiple jurisdictions in other ways, too. The growth or lack of growth and development in one jurisdiction has an impact on neighboring jurisdictions in terms of development costs and revenues. Development in one jurisdiction could enhance or conflict with land use in another. Continuity and efficiency in the delivery of services can be greatly enhanced by how services are provided by neighboring jurisdictions. These factors point to the need for a coordinated approach with participation by all levels of government in order to effectively address the many growth issues that confront this Region.

This regional comprehensive plan uses such an approach to provide a framework for continuing regional cooperation in support of sensible growth. The purpose of the plan, therefore, is to provide a guide to coordinate local government actions toward this end.

## **Challenges of growth**

Growth brings with it increasing demands for land, infrastructure and services. More people mean more houses and more streets, utilities, schools and other urban and social services, such as police and fire protection. Growth's demands for land and services are heightened by today's dispersed patterns of development in fringe areas, which feature larger lots, wider streets, strictly segregated land uses and greater travel distances made possible by the widespread use of the automobile.

Such growth and associated features not only stretch a community's financial ability to serve developing areas, but also create the additional challenge of maintaining economically and socially interactive neighborhoods, while meeting growing demands for land, transportation and essential community services and amenities. An important problem confronting the communities of Logan County is to determine how to efficiently, effectively and equitably accommodate growth and development without adversely affecting the character of the existing community or jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Efficiency requires that development be not only compact and contiguous, but that it also maximize the use of existing infrastructure and resources through redevelopment of the existing community whenever possible. Effectiveness requires development to be based on sound principles of community and neighborhood planning and design that encourage social and economic interaction. The problem of equity as it pertains to financing growth will become more manageable if efficient and effective future development is achieved.

## **Why the Plan Was Prepared**

The purpose of the plan is to serve as an advisory guide for making decisions regarding the future development of Logan County and its municipalities. As an advisory

guide, the plan is intended to be flexible, generalized in nature and designed for periodic review and revision. It provides direction for the review of future development projects, and offers guidance on a regional approach to related decisions on annexations, zoning and capital improvements.

## **What the Plan Does**

The plan presents guidelines for coordinated actions that reflect general, community-wide consensus in support of sensible growth to preserve and enhance the quality of life for residents of Logan County. It considers community visions and establishes regional goals, objectives and policies to guide growth. Additionally, it identifies plans for the development of future land use, transportation and selected community facilities. And finally, it presents implementation plans to set a course of action to address top priorities.

The comprehensive plan is long range in scope. It generally is designed to cover a period of approximately twenty years to the year 2030. This is a commonly used design period for comprehensive plans, since it covers the normal life expectancy of many community facilities and utilities such as water and wastewater treatment facilities. It also becomes more difficult to develop reliable projections of population and community needs for longer periods.

## **How the Plan Was Prepared**

The comprehensive plan was prepared in cooperation with elected and appointed officials and staff using a process that involved research, analysis and policy review. The process began with research to update the base of information that determines the community's resources, needs and potentials. This research included compilation and mapping of a wide range of features and facilities, and a review and update of census and other data. The process also included coordination with



other ongoing projects and studies. Considering the results of these activities, the County's goals, objectives and policies were formulated. Plans for land use and transportation Countywide, and land use plans for the communities of Atlanta, Elkhart, Lincoln and Mt. Pulaski were then prepared and included in a preliminary report for review and comment by the public, County and municipal officials and other affected government agencies for consideration in the adoption of the comprehensive plan.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The data needs for each element were determined. Emphasis was given to use of recent plans and studies for data needs and to assess the implications of current policies and trends.

### **Formation of Goals, Objectives, Policies and Strategies**

Following consideration of the community vision and other relevant data, goals and objectives were formulated. Goals are generalized statements of desired conditions. Objectives are more specific statements of direction that provide the means to measure progress in achieving visions and goals. Policies are generalized statements of position that provide guidelines for actions in support of goals and objectives.

Strategies are specific actions that can be taken to implement policies. Along with goals, objectives and policies, strategies provide a framework for the comprehensive plan, for determining priorities, and for tailoring the evolving implementation of the plan. Strategies are considered in Chapter 6 of the plan.

### **Functional Plans and Maps**

Functional plans were developed for

land use, transportation and certain community facilities.

These plans graphically illustrate many of the policies and planning concepts identified throughout this document as they apply to land use, transportation and community facilities in support of sensible growth. These plans are intended to provide further guidance for development decisions.

### **Implementation Plans**

Implementation plans provide guidance in carrying out specific strategies, and identify resources and costs that should be considered in the assessment of future needs. Implementation plans include a summary description of the relevant strategies. Appropriate tools available for the implementation of specific strategies may also be discussed.

### **What the Plan Does Not Do**

The plan does not provide a mandate. It is advisory only. However, when adopted by local governments, it does represent a statement of official public policy and should therefore be used to guide development decisions. Decisions made in this manner have a rational basis and are usually more likely to stand up to legal challenges as well as receive wider public support. Moreover, the plan provides a framework for actions that can be binding through zoning, subdivision regulations or other means.

The plan does not advocate the implementation of all identified strategies. It recognizes that many strategies will require further study to determine appropriateness and/or the feasibility from a cost/benefit perspective. The plan does, however, provide a means to focus resources initially on those strategies that have been identified as high priorities in order to determine the follow-up actions that will be needed to move the plan forward.

A comprehensive plan has certain

inherent limitations. First, a community plan does not represent an end result. The planning report represents a series of intermediate steps in the planning process. Although the plan summarizes survey results, presents community goals and objectives, outlines policies and plans for future development, and identifies needed actions, these actions must be carried out and supplemented with continuous review and updating in order to complete the process. Secondly, the plan does not attempt to thoroughly analyze every aspect of community development. The plan is concerned with outlining a basic course of action to encourage development that preserves and enhances the local quality of life. Its recommendations are generalized in regard to future land use patterns, street alignments and facilities. In order to avoid duplication of efforts, the plan is deliberately more generalized where more detailed target area planning has been identified.