

# TOWN OF NORMAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Prepared By

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In Cooperation with the Town of Normal

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# Executive Summary

The Town of Normal has many attributes that continue to attract people and businesses. These attributes include strategic location; outstanding highway, rail and air transportation; excellent neighborhoods and schools of many varieties; parks; trails; abundant shopping and entertainment; a comprehensive and expandable utility infrastructure; and a favorable business climate. As a result, the recent growth of the Town of Normal has been robust and is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

The challenge for the future will be to efficiently accommodate this growth while sustaining the community's high quality of life. In recognition of this challenge, the Town has been and continues to be actively engaged in the long range planning process that led to the preparation of this comprehensive plan. The plan provides a vision for the future and is intended to serve as an advisory guide for the long range development of the community and the preservation and enhancement of the local quality of life. It provides a framework for making decisions on development matters, including public improvement projects and private development proposals that may require actions involving annexations, zoning and/or capital improvements. To increase its effectiveness, the plan is designed to be flexible, generalized in nature, and intended for periodic review and update.

It is within this context that the Town's comprehensive plan was developed in close cooperation with citizens, elected and appointed Town officials and staff. This plan was developed concurrently and coordinated with the development of the Town's parks and recreation plan and the update of the City of Bloomington Comprehensive Plan, and will therefore, serve as a companion document to these plans. The plan also provides a means of coordination with other government agencies that could be affected by the Town's development plans.

The key findings and provisions of the Town of Normal Comprehensive Plan are outlined below by subject area.

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

- The natural environment of Normal and surrounding areas exhibits relatively few physical constraints for development, most of which can be overcome with careful planning and design and adherence to the Town's subdivision ordinance.
- The Town's projected growth, combined with a prevalence of highly productive agricultural soils, will necessarily result in the urbanization of some prime farmland in areas immediately adjacent to the Town. The plan promotes compact and contiguous development in order to minimize the loss of prime farmland.
- Normal's historical growth and development was aided by a number of significant events, which included the coming of Illinois State University, the Illinois Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's Home and the railroads, the development of public water and sewer systems and other infrastructure, the opening of Route 66 and later interstate highway service, the beginning and expansion of air service to the Twin Cities, and the development and expansion of the area's employment base.
- Normal's population increased by nearly 72 percent between 1970 and 2000.
- The peak period of growth occurred during the 1960s when the population increased by over 97 percent, but significant and steady growth has continued through the present.
- Incomes are significantly higher in

Normal than in other major Central Illinois Cities outside of McLean County.

- The percentage of the Town's population residing in owner occupied housing has remained at about 55 percent during the 1990s.
- Normal has a well educated population with a high percentage of college graduates.
- Employment and labor force each increased by over 9,000 from 1980 to 2000.
- The Town's unemployment rate dropped from 4.8 percent to 3.4 percent between 1980 and 2000.
- The Town's growth in total employment and corresponding overall economic growth were led by dramatic employment growth in the "professional and related services sector," the "finance, insurance and real estate sector," and the "personal, entertainment, and recreation services sector."
- Despite the downturn in the national and state economies, Normal's sales tax receipts continued to grow from 2000 to 2002.
- Urban development is fairly compact and generally contiguous and well confined to the incorporated area.
- As in most communities, densities in Normal have declined, thus increasing the per capita cost of providing services.
- Normal's older neighborhoods generally feature more convenient access to a greater variety of services and activities by alternative transportation modes than do newer neighborhoods, which typically feature more segregated land uses and greater automobile dependency.
- The Town's network of major streets is well linked and provides reasonably efficient access.
- The Bloomington-Normal Public Transit System primarily services transit-dependent riders, including Illinois State University students, with fixed route service, but also operates paratransit services for persons unable to use the fixed route system.
- The Constitution Trail system extends for 6.9 miles throughout much of the Town and connects many important origins and destinations.
- The Town has a variety of excellent and well-maintained public buildings that include the City Hall and police station, three fire stations, library, public service facilities, Normal Theater and the Children's Discovery Museum. The Town also plans to construct a downtown multi-modal center.
- The Town owns and maintains a wide variety of parks and recreation facilities that includes a golf course, athletic fields, playground equipment, trails, swimming pools, the Normal Theater, Children's Discovery Museum, and a variety of other facilities that offer outstanding recreational opportunities.
- The Town has outstanding schools, both public and private.
- Normal maintains excellent water and sewer systems that serve virtually all Town residences and businesses.
- The Town maintains and encourages both structural and non-structural methods of stormwater management.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

The Comprehensive Plan presents goals, objectives and policies for each of the following community issues identified in cooperation with the Town's Comprehensive Plan Committee: urban design and aesthetics, natural environment, historic preservation, neighborhood preservation, urban revitalization, downtown revitalization, economic development, population growth, housing, land use and growth areas, transportation, parking, community facilities, cooperation, and implementation.

## FUTURE GROWTH AND IMPLICATIONS

- The Town's economic growth is expected to continue for the foreseeable future but at a reduced rate over that of recent decades, due mainly to the anticipated leveling off of employment growth in the "finance, insurance and real estate" sector and in the "professional and related services" sector.
- Accordingly, population growth is expected to remain robust, but less so than during earlier decades. The Town's population is projected to increase from the 2000 level of 45,386 to 62,300 by the year 2025.
- Normal's projected growth in population will require over 4,800 additional housing units by the year 2025, with over three-fourths expected to be owner units.
- Future growth is expected to require nearly 5,200 acres of land for new development, including commercial and industrial development, as well as new housing, streets, and other public uses.
- The Town is expected to continue to grow in virtually all directions, with the greatest demand for new land, housing and infrastructure to be around the northern, east-

ern, and northwestern edges.

- In addition to necessary improvements to City Hall and the Parks and Recreation office, an expanding urban area will require careful monitoring of the need for additional public buildings, especially a new fire station to serve developing areas to the east.
- The Town will need to acquire significantly more park land to meet and maintain community-wide standards and properly serve developing areas.
- The need for future schools should be closely monitored and evaluated in context with the Town's comprehensive plan.
- Although water supply and treatment capacities should be adequate for the foreseeable future, the potential benefits of a regional water system make participation in a regional system a possible consideration for meeting the Town's long range water supply needs.
- The water distribution and storage system will need to be extended to developing areas to meet water service and fire protection demands.
- The recent construction of an additional sewage treatment plant to the southeast of the urban area by BNWRD should ensure abundant treatment capacity throughout the 2025 planning period.
- In 2005, IEPA approved an application submitted by BNWRD to expand the Town's Facilities Planning Area (FPA) boundaries to meet the service area demands of projected growth.
- Effective stormwater management will become increasingly important as the Town continues to grow and the amount of impervious ground cover increases due to urbanization.

## LONG RANGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The general features of the Town's long range development plan are outlined below and presented graphically on Map E.1.

- Future growth is planned to be compact and contiguous to existing service areas in order to minimize farmland loss and any potential adverse impacts on the environment.
- The plan allocates sufficient land to allow flexibility in meeting projected demands for residential, commercial and industrial development.
- The plan identifies six target planning areas for more detailed planning in support of ongoing efforts to preserve, and where appropriate, revitalize the Town proper through infill, redevelopment and rehabilitation. These target planning areas include: the downtown, the ISU campus, the BroMenn Medical Complex, Heartland Community College, the Main Street corridor, and the former ISU farm. Additional target planning areas may be identified in the future.
- Greenways, which serve as conservation and recreation corridors, have been designed as a framework to guide urban growth.
- The plan provides for the development of complete neighborhoods as building blocks of the community.
- The plan provides for a number of regional commercial and industrial centers of varying types and scales in areas of major traffic flow.
- Public and semi-public areas are planned to accommodate future park land and other public use areas, such as public buildings and churches.
- The plan for major streets features the extension of the Town's network of arterial and collector streets into planned growth areas.
- The plan for transit service reflects the Transit Board's planned service enhancements, including expansion of the fixed route fleet, route realignments, expanded service hours, and greater frequency on certain routes.
- The bicycle and pedestrian plan expands the Constitution Trail system to provide connections to planned neighborhood activity centers, parks and other destinations throughout the urban area and McLean County.
- The plan encourages the clustering of new public buildings in planned neighborhood activity centers when demands dictate.
- A new fire station is proposed to serve planned growth to the east.
- The plan supports enhancements to the downtown library and the concept of developing one or more branch libraries to serve planned neighborhood centers.
- The plan identifies a system of parks and interconnecting trails and greenways intended to provide alternative transportation in developing areas and meet community-wide standards for parks and open space.
- Parameters are identified for close coordination between the Town and school districts in planning for the development of future schools within the Town's jurisdiction.
- The water system plan encourages conservation, extends service to planned growth areas, and continues cooperation with area governments in evaluating the potential





advantages of a regional water system.

- The sewer system plan entails maintaining the existing collection system and pump stations, and extending sewer service into planned growth areas.
- The plan for stormwater management is to support the implementation of the Town's recently adopted stormwater management plan, adopt and enforce the recently developed erosion and sedimentation control ordinance, and encourage implementation of the greenways identified in this plan in order to limit impervious cover and offer options for innovative runoff control.

## **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

- Normal Town Planning Commission should complete the public hearing process and recommend any revisions to the preliminary comprehensive plan that may be needed.
- McLean County Regional Planning Commission should revise the preliminary plan as needed and as agreed to by the Normal Planning Commission and Comprehensive Plan Committee.
- Normal Town Council should review and adopt the comprehensive plan as an official statement of community development goals, objectives, proposals and policies.
- Identified target area plans should be completed.
- A capital improvements program that incorporates costs, funding sources and timelines to implement target area plans and other projects consistent with the comprehensive plan should be developed.
- New development should be required to provide its proportionate share of costs for needed infrastructure.
- The Town should provide infrastructure improvements in support of development projects that are approved for annexation to the Town in accordance with the comprehensive plan and capital improvements

program.

- The Town should consider public financial participation to encourage development projects that strongly support the goals, objectives and policies outlined in the comprehensive plan.
- Other improvements should be initiated in conformance with the comprehensive plan and capital improvement program.
- Zoning and subdivision regulations should be reviewed and revised as needed to encourage consistency with neighboring jurisdictions and current concepts in planning, design and development.
- Additional development regulations should be adopted as appropriate to provide improved guidance and a stronger legal basis for directing the Town's future development. Examples of such regulations recently adopted or under consideration include storm water management, erosion and sedimentation control, traditional neighborhood development (TND), and access management.
- Additional target area plans should be identified and completed in conformance with the comprehensive plan.
- Annual progress reports on the implementation of projects in support of the comprehensive plan should be prepared.
- The Town should continue the practice of updating the comprehensive plan on a five-year basis in order to keep the plan current and relevant.



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