

Scott County Comprehensive Plan

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Scott County is located on the border of eastern Iowa and western Illinois along the shores of the Mississippi River. Refer to Map 1.2 for the townships and cities located in Scott County. Davenport, Iowa is the largest community in Scott County with a population of 98,359. It is one of 14 contiguous communities comprising the Quad City Metropolitan Area. Scott County is within 160 miles of Des Moines, Iowa and approximately the same distance to Chicago, Illinois. Interstate 80 bisects the County from west to east along its lower one-third. Map 1.1 illustrates the location of Scott County, the Quad City Metropolitan Area boundary, and the cities within Scott County. The population of Scott County is currently 158,689 (2000 Census). Residents describe the County as their home, along with a place that treasures its farmland and natural resources while promoting economic vitality in its urban centers.



Scott County recognizes the importance of a well-defined comprehensive plan with a vision, clear goals, and objectives. To further the County vision, the Board of Supervisors has updated its plan with the assistance of the County Planning Commission, Comprehensive Plan Advisory and Technical Committee, focus groups, and citizen involvement. Bi-State Regional Commission assisted with plan facilitation and compiling of the document. This broad-based involvement offered opportunities from a diverse and comprehensive source of county and city interests. The purpose of the plan is to outline the vision, existing conditions, future needs, and land use identification as well as to set goals and objectives and recommend strategies for implementation.

History of Zoning and Comprehensive Planning in Scott County

Scott County is enabled by the State of Iowa under Chapter 335 County Zoning to adopt a zoning ordinance. Zoning is a police power utilized by a local government to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of its residents. The Iowa Code also requires that county zoning regulations should be made in accordance with a comprehensive plan, without defining what a comprehensive plan should contain. Although zoning applies to many land activities, Iowa Code exempts farm land, farm houses, and farm buildings from county zoning regulations as long as they are used for primarily agricultural purposes. The Iowa Code doesn't establish how counties should determine how farm land, farm houses, or farm buildings should be defined, leaving it to the counties to determine locally. Ultimately, Scott County has the ability to adopt zoning regulations and must have a comprehensive plan. Under state law, the county has the latitude to determine how these regulatory and guidance documents will be developed and utilized.

The first zoning ordinance for Scott County was adopted in 1949 and was followed by the adoption of the county subdivision ordinance in 1979. In 1980, the Scott County Development Plan and Land Use Policies document was adopted by the County Board. The land use policies were revised in 1997 and followed by the creation of a future land use map in 1998. The County also created an agriculture service floating zone as part of their zoning regulations in 1994. In an effort to routinely review the planning and zoning processes, the Scott County Board of

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Supervisors agreed in 2006 to undergo an update of the County's comprehensive plan under the advisement of the County Planning Commission. The planning process includes gathering of information and data, a public involvement process, and evaluation of the land use policies and future land use.

Elements of the Comprehensive Plan

This updated Comprehensive Plan is composed of several elements, from the county vision to implementation strategies. It is a valuable document with the following purposes: advisory, educational, guidance, coordination, and needs. The Plan declares the county purpose and policies. It informs the citizens of strengths and weaknesses. The Plan guides land use decisions and investments. It provides elements for joint efforts among community groups and organizations within and outside Scott County. The Plan also outlines areas for further study or planning. It documents community needs that will help the County pursue funding opportunities, such as grants, loans, public-private partnerships, etc. The planning process is just as important as the plan document. Gathering information and ideas, developing a framework to guide how decisions on land use and development are made, and prioritizing goals and strategies for implementation are essential for a successful plan document.

As an advisory document, the Plan's goals and objectives transform the county vision into achievable tasks or benchmarks. It provides the foundation for decisions on land use, public infrastructure and services, public facilities, growth, development, and level of public investment needed to meet future community needs.

The County Profile section of the Plan outlines existing socio-economic characteristics of the county by population, gender, income, housing, and educational attainment. It also outlines trends and projections for the future of Scott County. The Resources Profile inventories characteristics of the county related to agriculture, watersheds, floodplains, geology, slope, wildlife habitats, and historic and cultural facilities.

Land use defines where people live and where they work or play. Land use patterns shape the nature of the community by reflecting urban and non-urban activity through population, employment, dwelling units, school enrollment, etc. Some locations represent areas with a greater density of urban activity, from residential, commercial, industrial, institutional or recreational land uses, or a lesser density of activity that may include parks or recreation areas, agriculture, and open space. Natural resources affect land use patterns through development limitations due to slope, erosional surfaces, prime farmland, floodplain, wetlands, archaeological sites, etc. By planning for the arrangement and intensity of land uses, Scott County can reduce infrastructure costs, which often result when the long-range impacts of zoning, subdivisions, and site development decisions are not considered.

Public infrastructure and services provide the basic facilities and equipment needed by the County to serve its residents. The various land uses and their related activities create greater or lesser need for these facilities or services depending on the activities. While one acre of land with new houses generates more total revenue to a County than an acre of farmland, this does not provide the entire picture of the County's fiscal stability. In reality, there are times when it costs

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local government more to provide services to homeowners than these residential landowners pay in property taxes. In contrast, commercial and industrial land increases the tax base and help balance local budgets in order to provide a variety of public services. While one type of land use is not better than another, balancing a variety of land uses in the County and directing development toward existing communities provides reliable services and adds stability and quality of life for residents.

An extremely important section of the Plan is the Strategies for Implementation. This section is a summary of specific projects, tasks, and/or actions to be undertaken in the next 20 years. The implementation strategies are considered the means by which Scott County can address its needs and meet its goals. The course of action for implementation will require periodic review to assess needs, timing, and financial feasibility. In the implementation of projects, careful consideration will be given to full utilization of existing facilities and funding opportunities.

The final section of the Plan relates to mechanisms for Plan implementation. This section outlines development tools a county can utilize to implement its strategies for action.

Public Involvement

Comprehensive planning in Scott County began in 1980 with the adoption of the first county development plan. There have been subsequent updates and revisions. The current update allows for the review of these prior planning efforts and incorporates either new or enhanced information and/or confirms the appropriateness of the existing data and policies.

Public involvement is a critical component to building consensus in the planning process. Scott County provided three methods for public input into the initial planning process. Town hall type meetings—Scott County Analysis of Needs/Services (SCANS) Workshops- were held between February 1 and March 6, 2007 at five locations in Scott County, including Blue Grass, Davenport, LeClaire, Parkview, and Walcott. Participants were invited to share their opinions on what they liked about Scott County and its strengths. They also provided their input on needs for improvement for Scott County in 25 years. A summary of these meetings can be found in Appendix A. Additionally, focus group meetings were held from June through August 2007. Participants at these meetings were asked to help refine ideas from the SCANS workshops and identify strategies for action or implementation. Another opportunity for input involved the use of advisory and technical committees.

The Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee represented a large, diverse group of interests in Scott County, including representatives from city planning commissions, fire chiefs association and emergency management, Farm Bureau, real estate developers, chambers of commerce and/or small business owners, school board members, homeowner associations, and environmental interests. The Advisory Committee was called on to help formulate and/or review a variety of issues and viewpoints in the development of the plan goals, objectives, and policies. The Comprehensive Plan Technical Committee met regularly to review the process and progress for plan development. The Technical Committee was comprised of representatives from the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment, Planning Director, Engineer, Health Department, Attorney, Conservation Board, Sheriff, Assessor, and GIS

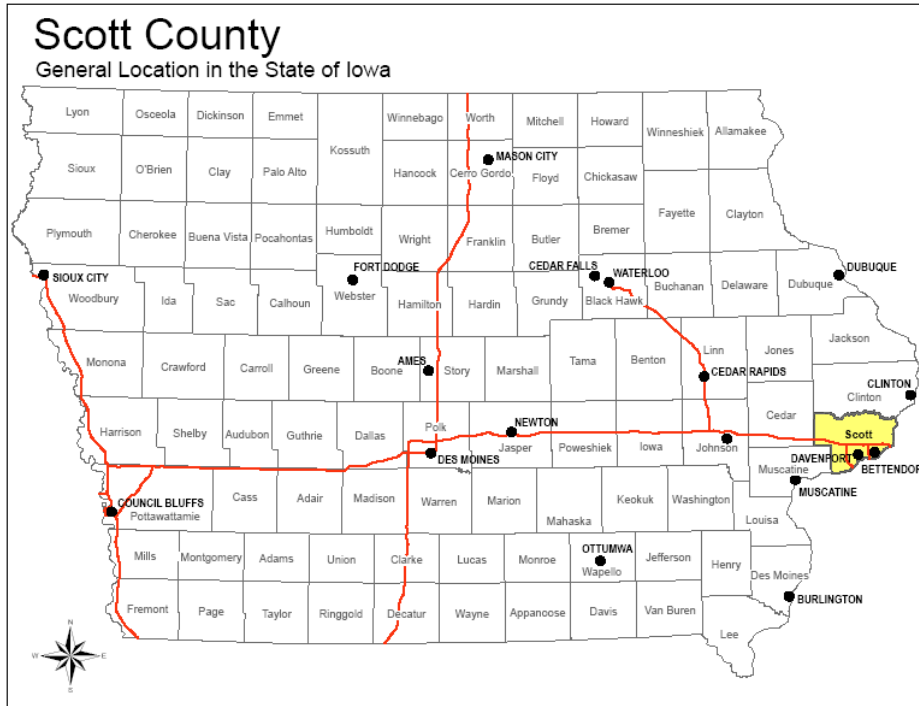
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Coordinator. Other representatives on the Technical Committee included the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Bi-State Regional Commission.

Each of these public involvement opportunities aided in the development of this Plan. The Advisory and Technical Committees presented a final draft of the Comprehensive Plan at a public hearing of the Planning Commission on November 20, 2007 to solicit additional comments and make recommendations to the County Board of Supervisors. County officials used the public comments to shape the final plan.

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Map 1.1



Map 1.2

