

PLANNING FOR 2025

A GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
FOR
WOODBURY COUNTY

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Preface -- A Background to Planning in Woodbury County in 2005

The "Woodbury County Comprehensive Development Plan – Planning towards 2023" was approved in 2003 and almost immediately rescinded in 2004. That is the most salient single fact to consider in preparation of this 2005 General Development Plan for Woodbury County. The rescission of the 2003 Plan was for both technical and practical reasons. The technical reason, issues with public notice of hearings, is of little concern other than to avoid repeating. The practical reason, principally a deeply held and loudly communicated disapproval of a number of policies and regulatory measures by a large, vocal constituency, is the primary reason that a planning process is being undertaken again in 2005.

At the time that the 2003 Plan was rescinded, vocal opposition to many of its tenets as well as the regulations intended to implement them was very loud and clear. Concern about losses of deeply valued property rights was being expressed on at least three separate bases.

First, many people noted that the Plan and zoning regulations seemed to ignore the exemption of agriculture from zoning control as set forth in the state code.

Second, the provisions intended to protect the unique natural resource identified as the Loess Hills formation were felt to be a burden on property owners without consideration of either their ownership rights, the costs involved, or the significant evidence of a long-standing stewardship of the resource.

Finally, the proverbial straw related to the broken back of the 2003 Plan was a serious, but apparently unintended mistake. The Plan included a Future Land Use Map, which proposed a land use pattern that might be appropriate by the end date of the plan in 2023. The Future Land Use Map accurately indicated that "rural residential" (minimum two-acre parcel size) development might be expected to surround much of what is currently Sioux City as well as the other cities in the county 20 years in the future.

The critical mistake was adoption of that future land use map as the new zoning map with the effect of eliminating the actual, current uses of most of the land in that rural residential area from the list of permitted principal uses. Put simply, the people in that area could no longer have horses or 4-H animals on their acreages as a matter of right – not an acceptable outcome for the hundreds of property owners affected.

The rescission of the 2003 Plan adoption process means that Woodbury County is still technically relying on its 1970 General Development Plan as the policy basis for its zoning and development regulations. Given that the

1970 Plan is not commonly referred to any longer for other policy direction by County leaders, a more current plan should be in place to guide the physical development of Woodbury County, both as a basis for its zoning and for other investment and policy decisions.

This General Development Plan is intended to more accurately describe a preferred future for Woodbury County.

The Planning Process

Planning is simply a process for identifying both a desired future outcome and also how to go about achieving that end result. Sometimes planning is for personal issues as mundane as deciding when to fill up the gas tank. Other times it becomes a complex interrelated series of options, calculations and strategies, such as might be involved in launching a space shuttle. In this case, the planning process is applied to the forces involved in the physical development of a land mass better known as Woodbury County, particularly the part of the county lying outside any incorporated cities.

The typical planning process begins with a description of current reality based on an inventory of known factual information and an identification of issues and trends. A future end state is described in terms of a vision (see Vision Statement on page 16) and a series of goals (beginning on page 17). A plan is a statement of the means by which the planning entity will move toward the vision or goals throughout the time span of the planning period. Sometimes the plan involves a series of strategies with detailed action steps including assignment of responsibilities and timeframes. Or the plan can be a statement of policies that, if followed, will result in the desired future outcome. Or the plan can be in the form of identified investments that will achieve the desired outcome. This General Development Plan for Woodbury County incorporates some of each of those methods.

An inventory of existing conditions in the county was documented. This planning process has been expedited by accepting most of the factual, background data set forth in the 2003 Plan with only some updates, supplements and corrections where deemed appropriate. The bulk of the factual information documented in the "Assessment" section of the 2003 Plan is as good now as it was when it was prepared. There is no additional population census information available. Descriptions of natural resources and community facilities and programs are unchanged.

The level and intensity of public participation in a series of public input meetings greatly enhanced this most important phase of the planning process. Over 100 people attended each of four initial input meetings in March 2005, compared to similar meetings for the 2003 Plan which often had fewer citizens than governmental representatives. The comments received at and immediately following those meetings are the primary basis for the vision of this 2005 General Development Plan.

A vision statement was distilled from the issues and opportunities identified by citizens during the initial town hall meetings. The vision statement describes what the people of Woodbury County would like the rural area of their county, outside the boundaries of any of the incorporated cities, to become.

Those initial public meetings were probably the most important phase of the planning process. The fact that there was an apparent disconnect between the will of Woodbury County's residents wishes and significant aspects of the 2003 Plan led to its early demise. If the 2003 public input sessions had been more successful either in quantity or clarity of communication, the results would also have been much more successful.

The purpose for this plan is to provide a framework for decision making that will guide the future growth and development of Woodbury County. In summary, the process used identifies the key issues and concerns of residents and businesses as a basis for setting forth goals, policies and, ultimately, strategies and action plans to seek a future end-state as described in a vision statement. This is a plan for achieving that vision based upon a realistic description of current conditions and an understanding of what Woodbury County could become compared to what it is likely to become if current trends and forces continue.

Background Information

Because most of the factual data upon which the 2003 Comprehensive Development Plan (to be referred to as the "2003 Plan" for the balance of this process) was based is still current and accurate, only limited additional data will be presented as a basis for the 2005 General Development Plan. Significant portions of the 2003 Plan documentation are included in relatively unchanged condition as Appendix A and serve as part of the basis for this Plan. Additional information either to supplement or to update the information in Appendix A follows in this section.

Population –

Most of the 2000 Census of Population information provided in Appendix A relates to the entirety of Woodbury County. Since the purpose of this Plan is to guide the growth and development of the rural (i.e. outside Sioux City) area of the county, some additional Census data analysis is developed here to provide a snapshot of rural Woodbury County population, which differs somewhat from the whole county or the incorporated area trends .

Table 1 appears to show relatively stable trend lines over the period from 1970 to 2000. The population of the entire county posted a net gain of 825 people or about 0.8%. Sioux City had a net decline of 885 or about 1.0% during the same period, while the other cities as a group grew by 2775 or 36%. The unincorporated, rural area of the county lost 1065 people for an 11.2% decline!

Table 1
Population Change, Woodbury County by Subareas, 1970 to 2000

	1970	1980	1990	2000	1970 to 2000	1990 to 2000
Total Woodbury County	103,052	100,884	98,276	103,877	+825	+5,601
Sioux City	85,925	82,003	80,505	85,040	-885	+4,535
Rural Woodbury County	17,127	18,881	17,771	18,837	+1,710	+1,066
Other Cities	7,626	9,321	9,175	10,401	+2,775	+1,226
Unincorporated Areas	9,501	9,560	8,596	8,436	-1,065	-160

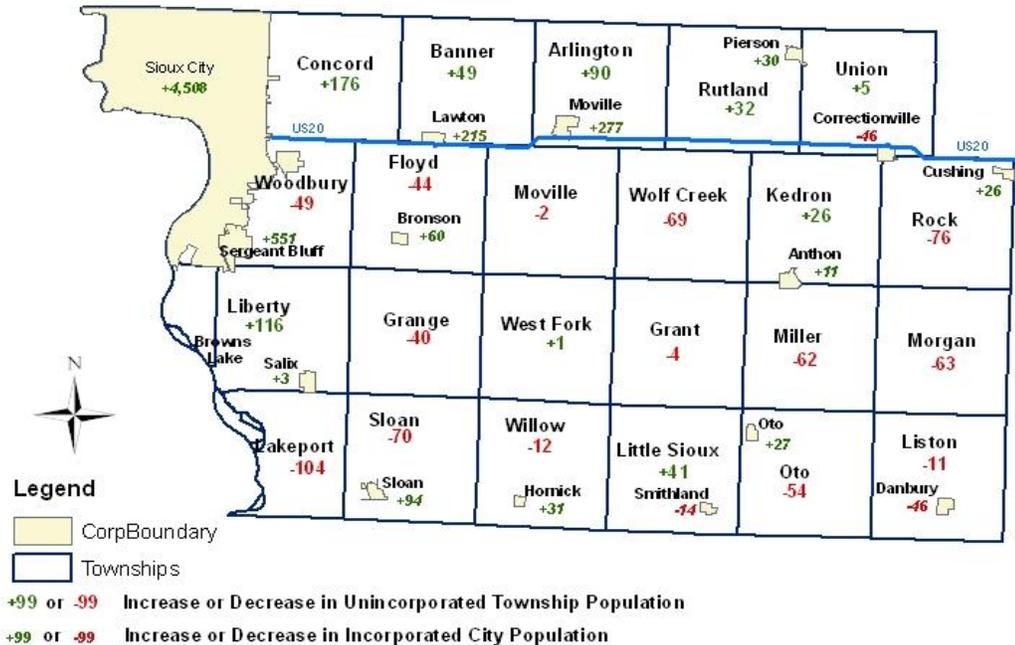
Source: U.S. Census of Population

During the period from 1990 to 2000, the skew between urban and rural population trends is even more pronounced. The county as a whole grew by 5601 people or 5.7%. Sioux City grew by 4535 or 5.6%. The other cities had a cumulative growth of 1226 or 13.4% while the unincorporated area lost 160 or 1.9%. This loss of rural population is consistent with the drop in number of farming operations documented in the Census of Agriculture in the next subsection.

The net loss in population during the 1990s in the unincorporated area is also not evenly distributed. Concord township, directly adjacent to Sioux City on the east, had a net gain of 176 persons, compared to the net loss of 160

for the all the unincorporated areas in the county. As shown on Map 1, the rural portions of the townships along the U.S. 20 corridor to the east grew, while most of the rest of the unincorporated area of Woodbury County declined in population between 1990 and 2000. The only areas not along U.S. 20 that grew in population were in the Browns Lake/Salix area and small pockets near Smithland and Anthon. Even the rural area surrounding Sergeant Bluff declined in population during the decade.

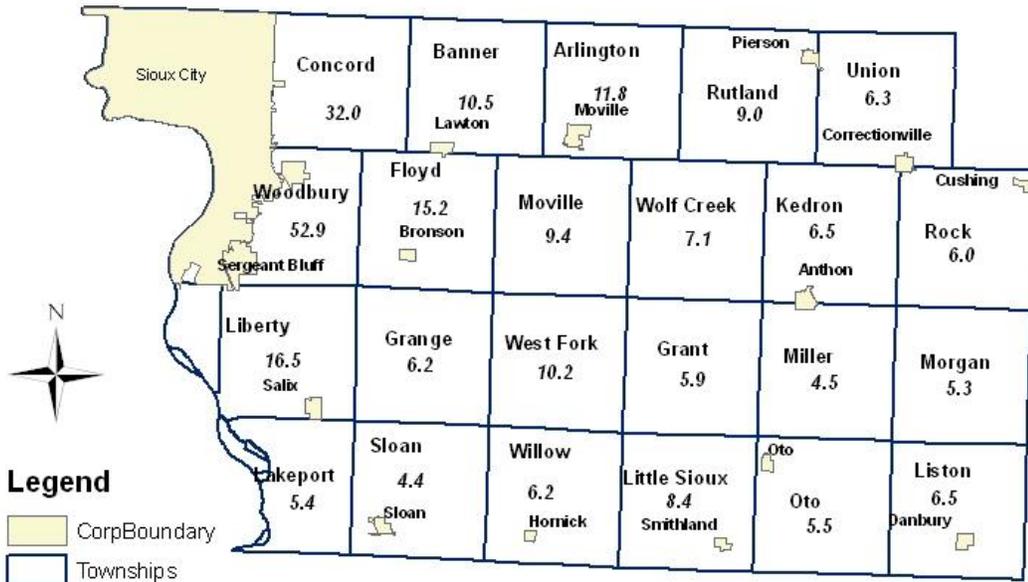
Map 1 -- Population Change 1990 to 2000 -- Woodbury County



Map 2 on the following page, shows the cumulative effect of the comparative vitality shown by the growth in rural areas along the U.S. 20 corridor and in the concentric ring around Sioux City. The unincorporated areas in Woodbury Township had the highest population concentration, 1295 people or nearly 53 people per square mile. Other "commuter" townships had from 9 to 32 people per square mile while the outlying townships had much lower population densities, generally averaging from 4.5 to 6.5 people per square mile.

Indeed, the trends shown in the census data for 1990 and 2000 appear to have continued in new housing starts as shown in Map 3 on the following page. Proximity to Sioux City appears to have been more important than the U.S. 20 corridor since 2000. Of the 266 single family housing starts from 2000 through April 2005, over half, 140 were in the four townships lying closest to Sioux City. Nearly one-fourth of the total for the county were in Woodbury Township which abuts Sergeant Bluff and the Morningside area of Sioux City. Conversely, Liston Township, lying in the southeast corner of the county farthest from Sioux City, has not had a single housing start since 2000.

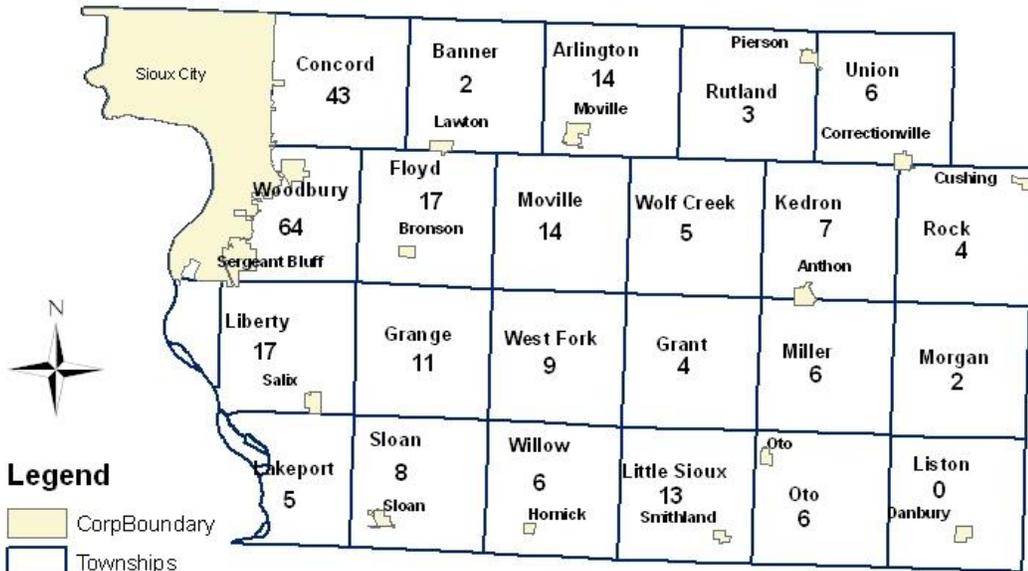
Map 2 -- Population Density in 2000 -- Woodbury County



9.9 Population per Square Mile in Unincorporated Township Areas

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Map 3 -- New Housing Starts In Unincorporated Areas by Township 2000 to 2005 -- Woodbury County



266 New Single Family Dwellings in Unincorporated Areas

Another way of searching for future viability of an area is to examine the age structure of its residents. Most of the rural, unincorporated areas of Woodbury County have comparatively younger populations than the

Table 2
Age Group Percentages by Township in 2000
Woodbury County 2000

Township Name	Under 19	20 to 39	40 to 64	65 & over
Arlington	32.1	24.6	26.8	16.8
Banner	32.2	25.5	29.6	12.6
Concord	30.6	20.6	36.4	12.3
Floyd	28.9	25.6	34.6	10.7
Grange	26.4	18.8	45.8	8.8
Grant	27.9	23.5	37.9	11.0
Kedron	25.7	21.7	29.1	23.4
Lakeport	33.4	18.5	38.3	9.9
Liberty	31.2	25.2	31.5	12.1
Liston	29.0	19.9	31.4	19.8
Little Sioux	26.1	20.8	34.7	18.5
Miller	27.3	18.7	38.6	15.3
Morgan	35.4	20.8	35.4	8.2
Moville	32.2	24.7	34.4	8.8
Oto	30.2	29.5	27.5	12.8
Rock	28.5	23.4	31.1	17.0
Rutland	28.7	24.8	29.1	17.5
Sioux City twp	30.4	29.1	27.2	13.3
Sloan	30.7	22.2	31.1	15.9
Union	26.2	22.0	26.7	25.3
West Fork	32.0	18.7	33.7	15.9
Willow	30.2	26.9	28.1	14.8
Wolf Creek	33.6	22.0	32.4	11.8
Woodbury	35.1	24.7	32.3	8.1
Woodbury Co. Total	30.5	28.1	28.1	13.4

Source: U.S Census 2000

county as a whole. Countywide, there are 13.4% 65 years of age or older compared to 11.7% outside its cities. As shown in Table 2, rural township populations are all over the range above and below that level. Along with some apparent relationship to the job commuter populations nearer to Sioux City, another correlation with age distributions seems to be the fact that the populations tend to be more elderly inside the county's small cities, which suggests that many older rural people have retired to homes in the small towns that they consider their communities.

Table 3
Age Group Percentages by City
Woodbury County 2000

	19 & Under	20 to 44	46 to 64	65 and over
Anthon	26.0%	27.1%	20.5%	26.3%
Bronson	32.0%	42.0%	18.6%	7.4%
Correctionville	26.7%	28.2%	19.9%	25.3%
Cushing	28.9%	30.5%	19.9%	20.7%
Danbury	26.3%	26.8%	22.4%	24.5%
Hornick	28.1%	34.4%	21.3%	16.2%
Lawton	31.6%	36.9%	19.2%	12.3%
Moville	31.8%	32.2%	18.0%	17.9%
Oto	33.1%	38.6%	14.5%	13.8%
Pierson	28.8%	30.5%	18.9%	21.8%
Salix	30.0%	34.6%	17.8%	17.6%
Sergeant Bluff	37.0%	36.3%	19.5%	7.1%
Sioux City	30.3%	36.2%	20.2%	13.3%
Sloan	31.0%	29.7%	23.4%	16.0%
Smithland	21.7%	21.7%	29.4%	27.1%
City total	30.5%	35.8%	20.2%	13.5%
Iowa	28.3%	34.6%	22.2%	14.9%

Source: U.S. Census 2000

Indeed, as shown in Table 3, all the towns have a higher proportion than the county average of 13.4% in the over-65 group except Sergeant Bluff (7.1%), Bronson (7.4%), Lawton (12.2%), and Sioux City (13.3%). In fact, in the cities lying the farthest from the Sioux City hub, Cushing (20.7%), Pierson (21.8%), Danbury (24.5%), Correctionville (25.3%), Anthon (26.3%), and Smithland (27.1%), the portions of the population above 65 suggests significant population declines in the not-too-distant future.

Agriculture –

Since the 2003 Plan was written, the 2002 Agriculture Census has been compiled. The following table provides that information along with somewhat revised information from the 1997 Census.

The 1997 data is somewhat problematic, regardless of whether the currently provided data or the data apparently available at the time of the 2003 Plan is used. A careful examination of the information in Table 4 below shows that both versions of the 1997 data are aberrations compared to the trend lines that generally run through from 1982 to 2002. The idea that total land in farms should jump by either 12% or 19% in five years and then drop back to the original values in the next five years is not very realistic, particularly when that jump would also convert about three-fourths of the non-farm land in the county to farm use and back again during that timeframe. Also, the steady decline in the number of farms in the county has a noticeable blip in the trend with either set of 1997 numbers. For these reasons, the longer term trends will be examined without further regard for the shorter term trends involving the 1997 data in comparison with either before or after.

In the twenty years between 1982 and 2002, the number of farms declined by 27% from 1579 to 1148, while the average size of farms grew from 303 to 385 acres. Of those 1148 farms, only 727 listed farming as the principal occupation of the operator. The total acreage in farming operations dropped by 7.6% from 478,624 acres to 442,152 acres. Another way of viewing that decline is that Woodbury County went from 86% to 79% of its total acreage being farmed. Harvested cropland declined by similar proportions from 359,752 acres in 1982 to 332,515 acres in 2002. The average value of an acre of farmland in Woodbury County dipped from a high of \$1,243 in 1982 to \$998 in 1992 and then rose to \$1,149 in 2002. That trend correlates with the farm crisis of the late 1980s.

Table 4
Agricultural Profile, Woodbury County, 1982 through 2002

	1982	1987	1992	1997		2002
				See #1	See #2	
Number of Farms	1,579	1,360	1,254	1,306	1,418	1,148
Land in Farms (acres)	478,624	451,759	442,247	497,241	526,671	442,152
Average Farm Size (acres)	303	332	353	381	371	385
Total Land Area in the County	558,720	558,720	558,720	558,720	558,720	558,720
Percent of Land in Farm Production	85.7%	80.9%	79.2%	89.0%	94.3%	79.1%
Total Cropland (acres)	414,894	399,325	386,499	427,501	383,871	383,871
Harvested Cropland (acres)	359,752	278,373	310,103	380,228	365,559	332,515
Estimated Market Value of Average Farm	\$384,259	\$255,831	\$374,368	\$506,937	\$494,060	\$698,733
Estimated Market Value per Acre	\$1,243	\$769	\$998	\$1,332	\$1,349	\$1,149

Source: U. S. Department of Agriculture, Census of Agriculture
 #1 -- 1997 information as shown in 2003 Plan
 #2 -- 1997 information as found in US Census of Agriculture 2002

Table 5 shows changes in the pattern of typical farm sizes in Woodbury County during the twenty years from 1982 to 2002. As might be expected given the lower numbers of farms and the larger average farm size trends in the preceding table, the smallest size grouping, 1 to 9 acres, shrank from 122 to 49 during the 20 year period and largest size category, over 1000 acres grew from 67 farms to 119 farms. Interestingly, the next-to-smallest category, 10 to 49 acres, also grew during the last half of the data period, but all the remaining categories from 50 to 999 acres shrank by considerable numbers from 1982 to 2002.

**Table 5
Number of Farms by Size, Woodbury County, 1982 through 2002**

	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002
1 to 9 acres	122	123	118	74	49
10 to 49 acres	208	170	175	198	226
50 to 179 acres	398	289	266	343	326
180 to 499 acres	560	483	385	375	269
500 to 999 acres	224	226	225	207	159
Over 1000 acres	67	69	85	109	119
	1579	1360	1254	1306	1148

These data suggest some unrelated trends. At the small end of the size spectrum, it is likely that a number of very small acreages (less than 10 acres) ceased to qualify as farms and became non-farm residential lots. In the next larger category (10 to 49 acres) a number of marginal small operations phased out of farming activity as a result of the farm crisis in the 1980s which then came back in with somewhat improved farm economics, or perhaps the size of typical hobby farms simply increased during the period. A small net gain over the entire period is not very significant. The near doubling of the number of larger (over 1000 acres) farms from 67 to 119 between 1982 and 2002 is the other side of the reduction from 1182 to 754 farms in the categories between 50 and 499 acres. By using median farm sizes within each category, it can be estimated that about 85,000 acres shifted from smaller farms to the over-1000 acre category, which is about 15% of the total farmland in the county being absorbed into larger operations.

Summary --

There are two principal economies in Woodbury County. There is a county-wide agricultural economy that has a historic, and a continuing role in providing jobs, income and opportunity for a significant segment of the county's population. The other obvious economy is the combination of industrial, commercial and service business enterprises located primarily in the Sioux City metropolitan area, consisting of Sioux City, South Sioux City, Dakota City, North Sioux City and Dakota Dunes, Sergeant Bluff and the Port Neal area. The list of locations for the non-agricultural jobs indicate that they are primarily urban based. Certainly there are viable non-agricultural businesses located outside the Sioux City sphere of influence and even outside the other municipalities, but they are not the engine that drives the overall Woodbury County economy.

There appears to be a correlation between the population trends and the agriculture census trends noted above. The trends toward larger, more efficient production in the agricultural sector such as larger machinery, minimum tillage, confinement feeding, etc. have all reduced the labor demand needed for grain or livestock production. As a result, farmers take on larger operations to increase their profitability or even to remain competitive, and conversely, a smaller number of people living in rural areas are supported by farm businesses. That trend of declining population is apparent throughout Woodbury County except in those areas that are close enough to economically commute to Sioux City's job opportunities.

The combination of trends and relationships between the economy and the people of Woodbury County are the basis for any projections of the future of the county. Significant growth in the outlying portions of the county is not likely unless a paradigm shift in agriculture results in smaller, more efficient farm operations that require, and can support the cost of, more manpower. Also, convenience of vehicular transportation to and from the employment opportunities in the Sioux City metropolitan area seems to be directly related to the location of new residential growth in the county, particularly along the widened portion of U.S. 20.

Public Participation –

Four town hall meetings for public input were held throughout Woodbury County in mid-March 2005. Meetings in Sloan, Correctionville, Sergeant Bluff and Merville attracted vocal crowds ranging from 110 to over 150 in number. A brief presentation outlining the process and status of the planning process was followed by discussions aimed at answering a series of key questions:

- ... What are Woodbury County's strengths or positive aspects?
- ... What are Woodbury County's weaknesses or negative aspects?
- ... What trends concern you for Woodbury County's future?
- ... What are issues facing Woodbury County that need to be acted upon in the near future?
- ... What specific projects would you like to see completed in the next 5, 10 or 20 years?
- ... What opportunities do you see for Woodbury County's future?

For the meeting in Sloan, a small group participation process was attempted because it was assumed that over 100 participants was too large to effectively draw out responses. The results were spotty with some tables working diligently to present a clear list of responses to the questions, while other tables submitted comments that represented the flow of conversation in their group, but not necessarily in response to the lead questions. At the subsequent meetings a single group discussion was facilitated to bring all responses together in one coherent listing. The single group discussion technique was more successful, but the general content of the responses from all of the meetings was quite similar. The responses received are listed in detail in Appendices B-1 through B-5.

Strengths:

Several significant threads of commentary were clearly expressed throughout the initial Town Hall meetings and in written responses received. Residents of Woodbury County were quick to point out a number of quality of life indicators to be the strengths of this area.

- A strong appreciation for the social infrastructure of schools, parks, churches, health care, entertainment and various activities that contribute to the essence of the quality of life to be had in Woodbury County.
- A preference for rural lifestyles and freedoms.
- The mix and interrelationships between urban and rural economies and lifestyles is an opportunity to have the best of both worlds.
- The friendly people with their high standards and personal ethics and morality foster a positive sense of community in every corner of the county.
- Environmental assets such as abundant clean air and water and resources such as the Loess Hills, Missouri and Little Sioux Rivers and the fertile soils.

- The resilience of an economy based on agriculture blended with other industries is a strength of this area.
- The work ethic and resourcefulness of a well educated work force is a strength of the economic base of Woodbury County.
- Excellent services available, particularly, health care, emergency and public safety.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses, interestingly, were often found on the other side of the same coins described as strengths. Residents noted the following themes often throughout the public meetings and in written responses.

- The interrelationships and conflicts between urban and rural life opportunities, particularly related to urban sprawl into the countryside and reactions to odors, dust, etc.
- The economy of Woodbury County in the midst of declining reliance on agriculture combined with a declining industrial base.
- Public policy issues were identified in several subareas
 - ... A perceived erosion of property rights related to land use regulations
 - ... Planning and development issues such as urban sprawl and urbanization affecting agriculture
 - ... Distrust of government expressed as dissatisfaction with rural representation on the Board of Supervisors and the Zoning Commission
 - ... High taxes
 - ... Declining service levels
 - ... Regulatory enforcement issues

Issues and Trends:

Issues and trends identified during the March town hall meetings tended to repeat the same concerns noted as weaknesses of Woodbury County. People communicated a sense of frustration and helplessness when describing the encroachment upon the personal and collective rural lifestyles they hold dear by the growing presence of residential development serving non-agricultural households moving out from the city. That frustration is often described by people who are themselves relatively recent urban/rural émigrés. The old Pogo cartoon saw about "we have met the enemy, and he is us." was accurately quoted as a self description at one of the meetings.

Economic concerns voiced related both to the dearth of higher paying jobs and to the difficult margins facing farmers in the marketplace. On the job front, Sioux City is usually identified as the expected location and source of good employment opportunities for the region. Changes in the meat packing industries over the past several decades combined with the more recent losses of industrial jobs due to outsourcing or moving operations off-shore to more competitive labor sources cause considerable concern for the future economy of the region. Most of the concern related to these trends is for the current and future viability of the economy to provide

meaningful employment opportunities for the next generation. Concluding that one's children are likely to leave the area to be more financially successful in life is not a bragging point to most Siouxlanders. The transitions in agriculture from small family farms to large-scale specialized operations were also noted as a necessary and natural, but not entirely positive, trend in rural American, Woodbury County included.

Most of the other issue and trend comments reflect concerns about some aspect of public policy, whether with the policies themselves or with the processes and people involved in creating or carrying out the policy. Not surprisingly, a common thread running through most of the comments categorized as public policy related are based in self-interest rather than upon altruistic motivation. When a person speaks up about property rights, it is likely he is motivated by a perceived attack upon his ability to enjoy the use and benefits of the real estate he owns, more than a societal interest in the balance between personal and public control. Comments either for more or less regulation or enforcement of regulations are almost certain to be based upon a personal situation – whether the speaker wants to run his own business as he sees fit, or curtail a neighbor's business that offends him in some way. A particularly confusing example of this phenomenon occurs when someone living on an acre or two at the fringe of Sioux City speaks up about the threat of urban sprawl against the sanctity of their cherished agrarian lifestyle. This observation may offend some people, but it is necessary to acknowledge the truth of it as a basis for finding balance in whatever regulations come to pass.

Trust is an overriding issue that may not be directly related to or likely to be resolved by an up-to-date land use or development plan and regulations. There is very little trust remaining among the residents of rural Woodbury County for the process or the people involved in creation of the 2003 Plan. There is a resentment of the perceived influence of Sioux City upon the governance of rural Woodbury County as evidenced by the residency of members of the Board of Supervisors and the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Opportunities and Projects:

When asked to identify opportunities and needed projects, most of the responses clustered around transportation needs and economic development, including projects such as widening U.S. 20 to four lanes across Iowa and ethanol production plant development. The interrelatedness of good transportation capabilities and economic development prospects was stressed repeatedly. The importance of a good east-west highway connection and improved air travel options to both the day-to-day economics of businesses in the region and as part of an amenity package of attractions to lure new businesses and keep existing ones was discussed at each of the meetings. There were also numerous mentions of local "gripes" such as the partial or missing interchanges on the U.S. 75 bypass route and frus-

tration with budget related maintenance shortcomings on county roads and bridges. Even if most of the transportation projects mentioned are not the direct responsibilities of County government, it is apparent that Woodbury County residents expect them to be priorities and it is incumbent upon county officials to support them to whatever agency is responsible.

There were also a number of opportunities noted to deal with some of the issues and weaknesses related to trust and communication. Some of that trust can be re-established simply by not making such monumental mistakes as the "R-1" zoning fiasco, but it is also clear that the degree to which this planning process results in a statement of county land use policy that reflects the letter and spirit of state law regarding exemption of agriculture from zoning as well as an acceptance of the importance of individual private property rights will determine whether the people of rural Woodbury County begin to feel some level of comfort with their county government again.

Vision –

Based upon the comments received during the initial town hall public meetings, a vision statement was developed to set forth a statement of how the people of Woodbury County see themselves and would like to be seen by others now and in the future.

A VISION FOR RURAL WOODBURY COUNTY

***Where, sharing a strong sense of community,
good people live freely without fear or want;
Where all people and businesses prosper,
rooted in a diverse agriculturally-based economy;
Where stewardship of natural resources is a matter of
individual and community pride and ownership;
Where government exists to serve people and to
protect the public health, safety and welfare.***

The citizens who offered their views and ideas were clear in their expectations that rural Woodbury County should be a place that people can live together with confidence that their freedoms and property are secure. They expressed hope for a bright economic future built upon a healthy mix of traditional agriculture and other business enterprises. They expressed confidence that people are capable and best qualified to determine how to use their property in a manner that well serves them today and their heirs tomorrow. Yet, as often as people voiced concern about a potential loss of freedom due to interference in their lives, they also were clear that they expect to live in a society with rules and fair, equitable enforcement of those rules for the good of all.

This vision statement is one that virtually any community of people could adhere to, but the tie to rural Woodbury County is the clarity with which its people can now voice their concerns for their personal freedoms and their property rights. The citizens who came to meetings by the hundreds to make their concerns known were motivated by personal brushes with potential loss; it was not a hypothetical case of “what ifs” to them.

The goals, policies and recommendations of this General Development Plan are intended to help rural Woodbury County achieve its vision.

Goals and Policies --

Based upon the foregoing vision statement developed from the background information, public comments and planning insights, a series of goals and policies are proposed to guide the future development of Woodbury County. Due to the focus of this planning exercise, these goals and policies deal primarily with issues related to the development of the land in the county.

The goals and policies are organized into categories that are broad enough to group related issues, but still allow a clear distinction between them. These categories are used only for logical organization, not priority or importance. The categories are:

- Land Use
- Economic Development
- Agricultural
- Commercial and Industrial Business
- Residential
- Parks and Recreation
- Conservation and Environmental
- Facilities and Operations
- Public Safety
- Transportation

Land Use Goal – In order to minimize conflict with agriculture, which is the principal land use in Woodbury County, guide future growth and development of non-agricultural uses to a compact pattern by efficient and economical expansion of public infrastructure.

1. General Land Use Policies

- 1.1 Adopt a land use plan that designates areas for anticipated future population and business growth needs of the County.
- 1.2 Adopt development regulations (i.e., zoning and subdivision regulations) that promote efficient, stable land uses with minimum conflicts and provision of public infrastructure.
- 1.3 Encourage development near cities by discouraging leap-frog development outside of municipalities.
- 1.4 Recognize the Loess Hills from the “front range” to the steeply rolling hills tapering off toward the east as a unique natural resource

that should be conserved by good stewardship by the owners of the land involved.

- 1.5 Use transfers of development rights to encourage conservation of the Loess Hills.
- 1.6 Establish standards and practices for land development to minimize soil erosion and damaging water runoff, particularly in the fragile soils of the Loess Hills area of the county.
- 1.7 Prohibit development of residences or other structures in hazardous locations, such as down stream from water storage structures.
- 1.8 Develop intergovernmental cooperation agreements ("28E") with the city of Sioux City, Sergeant Bluff and other growing cities to eliminate unnecessary duplications in future subdivision, land use and zoning review.
- 1.9 Revise existing regulations to improve the review process for preliminary and final plats and site plans.

Economic Development Goal – In cooperation with other communities, Woodbury County should support growth and stabilization of existing and new, diverse enterprises that effectively leverage public investments to create jobs, payrolls and tax base that contribute to a healthy, stable local economy.

2. Economy and Economic Development Policies

- 2.1 Recognizing mutual benefits, seek cooperation with Sioux City and the other urban communities in economic development activities and encourage industrial investment near and around urban fringe.
- 2.2 Support existing, growing businesses in Woodbury County.
- 2.3 Form public-private partnerships to effectively direct resources and overcome limitations to promote business development.
- 2.4 Recognizing the resource and cultural base, expand and promote agriculture and agricultural employment opportunities in the county. This would include value-added agricultural industries, especially emerging opportunities such as ethanol or bio-diesel production. Alternative agricultural production such as organic farming and specialty crops should be encouraged.
- 2.5 Fully explore alternative renewable energy sources, particularly wind generation facilities both as a contribution to the total energy needs of the county and as a new source of income for property owners.

- 2.6 Take maximum advantage of available federal, state and local government and private sector resources to promote business/industrial development in the county.
- 2.7 Continue to use recreational and cultural amenities in the county to further promote recreation and tourism.

Agricultural Goal – Recognize agriculture as a principal economic sector in Woodbury County and the primary economic sector in the rural portion of the county lying outside Sioux City based on the natural resource of fertile, tillable soil to be found in Woodbury County,

3. Agricultural Policies

- 3.1 Promote agriculture as the main industry in the rural portion of the county.
- 3.2 Recognize the exemption of agriculture from regulation by county zoning as provided by the Code of Iowa, to wit, "except to the extent required to implement section 335.27, no ordinance adopted under this chapter applies to land, farm houses, farm barns, farm outbuildings or other buildings or structures which are primarily adapted, by reason of nature and area, for use for agricultural purposes, while so used." However, the ordinances may apply to any structure, building, dam, obstruction, deposit or excavation in or on the flood plains of any river or stream.
- 3.3 Establish a procedure and test for determining that a use is eligible for the agricultural farming exemption from zoning. A use that is not clearly non-agricultural in nature (i.e., not an industrial or commercial use) conducted on a site larger than a specified minimum tract should be assumed to be a "farm" and therefore exempt from zoning. A use conducted on a site of less than a specified minimum tract may be determined to be a "farm" and therefore exempt from zoning based on information describing the nature of the "farming" activity.
- 3.4 Protect prime farmland as determined by high corn suitability ratings (i.e. over 65 CSR) from conversion to other land uses. Discourage non-agricultural uses in prime farmland areas and other agricultural districts by providing residential lot size requirements and proper separation distances between residential and agricultural uses.
- 3.5 Recognize the importance of livestock production and related agricultural businesses as part of the agricultural economy of Woodbury County.
- 3.6 To the extent that the State of Iowa grants authority to the counties, location of feedlots and livestock confinements in close proximity to existing residential development will be discouraged. Un-

der this same policy avoid locating new livestock operations next to communities and/or residential developments when possible.

Commercial and Industrial Business Goal – Woodbury County shall build upon the strength of agriculture as the most important business in its rural area and shall encourage compatible commercial and industrial business development to develop a diverse, strong economic future in the rural portion of the county.

4. Commercial and Industrial Business Policies

- 4.1 Encourage location of highway service commercial businesses either at interchanges of freeways (e.g. I-29) or within the incorporated cities of the county to assure that adequate access and sanitary services are provided.
- 4.2 Encourage those commercial and industrial business land uses that have a need for a rural location outside a city to locate at intersections of federal and state highways, or other major, paved county secondary roads on sites that already have or can be efficiently supplied with public infrastructure.
- 4.3 Promote the efficient expansion of public infrastructure through the development of commercial and industrial centers as clusters of high-density development that efficiently utilize land resources.

Residential Goal – Woodbury County shall offer excellent rural residential opportunities, economically developed and maintained, conveniently located, and in harmony with neighboring natural and agricultural environments.

5. Residential Policies

- 5.1 Encourage non-farm residential development to locate near cities or on existing hard surfaced roadways, particularly in areas that can be served by urban services such as public water and sewer systems.
- 5.2 Encourage residential development to locate in areas with suitable accessibility, soils and terrain.
- 5.3 Promote the development of a variety of housing types with choices of size, density, and location.
- 5.4 Encourage the development of additional elderly housing in communities throughout the county.
- 5.5 Discourage non-farm residential uses in prime farmland areas (i.e. CSR over 65) and other agricultural districts.

- 5.6 Establish separation for proposed residential development in proximity to an established feedlot or livestock confinement operation.
- 5.7 Develop subdivision regulations that provide for a quality living environment with efficient and cost effective public infrastructure expansions.
- 5.8 Establish residential lot size requirements and adequate separation distances between residential and agricultural uses.
- 5.9 Establish standards for land development to minimize soil erosion and damaging water runoff, particularly in the fragile soils of the Loess Hills area of the county.
- 5.10 Establish specific location and design standards for residential acreage development.
- 5.11 Promote awareness of the realities of living in rural residential areas located near agricultural production areas including the dust, the use of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, as well as animal noises and smells.
- 5.12 Prohibit development of residences in hazardous locations, such as down stream from water storage structures.

Parks and Recreation Goal -- Woodbury County shall provide parks and recreational opportunities as desired by county residents and visitors.

6. Park and Recreation Policies

- 6.1 Continue to maintain and promote existing county parks and to develop new and/or expanded facilities within the county.
- 6.2 Establish standards that encourage dedication of parks and open space within rural subdivisions that are large enough to generate need.
- 6.3 Work with developers of future rural subdivisions to create conservation areas through cluster subdivisions and conservation easements. These conservation areas should be connected from subdivision to subdivision when possible.
- 6.4 Support area historical and cultural activities.
- 6.5 Encourage year round recreational amenities, such as public hunting areas.
- 6.6 Develop a countywide trails program, especially in the Loess Hills region.
- 6.7 The county and its residents should continue to strive to protect the Loess Hills area of Woodbury County through potential public ownership and/or recreational uses.

Conservation & Environmental Goal -- The natural resources and environment of Woodbury County shall be managed to assure quality and availability for current and future generations. Growth and development will be managed in a manner that conserves and protects all natural resources while allowing opportunities for appropriate development. Conservation of the Loess Hills is one, and only one, of the natural resources of concern.

7. Conservation and Environmental Policies

- 7.1 Establish zoning and subdivision standards that support conservation of natural resources. This might be accomplished by use of conservation easements and other tools, as part of planned unit developments in sensitive areas.
- 7.2 Establish grading standards that create stable development sites, minimize erosion and sedimentation and water runoff. These standards may encourage conservation of less developable sites, particularly in the steeper slopes of the Loess Hills.
- 7.3 Establish standards and practices to encourage preservation of environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, wooded areas, waterways (streams, ponds, lakes, rivers, etc.), and other amenities.
- 7.4 Develop a plan of education/action to prevent and cleanup roadside dumping in the rural areas of the county.

Facilities and Operations Goal – Woodbury County shall provide adequate public facilities and services to support growth and development. Provide the facilities and services to all residents as a cost-effective and conscientious investment of public resources.

8. Facilities and Operations Policies

- 8.1 Evaluate alternative means of providing public services in an efficient and cost effective manner by utilizing a benefit/cost ratio (or similar) in evaluating whether to contract out for services or to use county personnel (privatization versus in-house staff).
- 8.2 Identify opportunities to consolidate services and facilities with other communities through 28E agreements. These may include law enforcement, street and road maintenance, and other services.
- 8.3 Encourage expanded use of school facilities for non-school community activities.
- 8.4 Implement development standards that protect the area around well fields in the county.

- 8.5 Encourage rural water system development within Woodbury County to reduce potential for contamination of wells and well fields from waste.

Public Safety Goal – Woodbury County shall continue to support health care, fire protection and law enforcement programs by exploring programs and alternative services to insure optimum service levels at minimum public costs.

9. Public Safety Policies

- 9.1 Provide coordination services for all public safety agencies in Woodbury County and nearby jurisdictions in order to assure rapid responses to emergencies and cost efficient delivery of public safety services.
- 9.2 Clean and regulate nuisances and poorly maintained properties. This includes the continued efforts to regulate junk cars, junkyards and dilapidated/deteriorated residences/farm yards across the county.
- 9.3 Establish regulations that protect county residents from the secondary effects of adult entertainment.

Transportation Goal -- Woodbury County shall develop and support an efficient transportation system to serve current and future circulation and access needs.

10. Transportation Policies

- 10.1 Work with the Iowa Department of Transportation to assure the completion of U.S. 20 through the county and across the state as a four-lane expressway.
- 10.2 Support efforts to expand air service for passengers and freight at the Sioux Gateway Airport.
- 10.3 Encourage frontage roads for safe access and to maintain traffic carrying capacity of the roads for development along major roads and highways.
- 10.4 Continue to maintain and upgrade aging bridges on secondary roads throughout the county.
- 10.5 Continue working with Iowa Department of Transportation via County Engineer and public input to upgrade highways in and through the county by either resurfacing or widening of existing State and County Highways.
- 10.6 Encourage alternative forms of transportation to serve all mobility needs in the county (e.g. paratransit for elderly and handicapped citizens).