

## 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update

# Innovative land development option proposed

This article is the first in a series highlighting key initiatives of the *2030 Comprehensive Plan*, which will guide growth and development of Scott County over the next twenty years. With major growth expected to continue, the *2030 Comprehensive Plan* provides a number of innovative ways to maintain a high quality of life while protecting the County's unique natural environment. A different initiative will be discussed in each *SCENE* issue throughout 2008. The *2030 Comprehensive Plan* is anticipated to be adopted by the County Board at the end of 2008.

Change will be a common thread in Scott County over the next two decades: More people, more homes, more traffic, and more demand for public services. One of the overarching themes in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan focuses on **managing change** in Scott County. It became readily apparent during the public participation process that changes are also needed in how the County handles the land development process in the unincorporated (township) areas. The traditional approaches to reviewing and approving developments have not always worked. "The County needs to do a better job managing land use projects to ensure the developments are good for Scott County. Growth for growth's sake can lead to problems," wrote a survey respondent at the start of the planning process. Taking sentiments like these to heart, County



staff began looking at ways to redefine the County's role in managing the land use development review process to **maximize public value** and guide projects that are not just good, but great for the community.

All too often, the traditional development process results in the County reacting to development proposals. County departments review the proposal to ensure it meets the minimum requirements of County regulations (i.e., zoning, subdivision, environmental, roads, et cetera). There is little authority to ensure that unprotected natural features or local landmarks will be preserved. The *2030 Plan* proposes a process that

builds on a concept approved by the County Board in 2001, when the County introduced a "cluster development" option. As the name implies, this approach allows developers to group or "cluster" residential lots onto one portion of a site so the remaining land can be preserved for future development or open space. Since 2001, roughly two-thirds of approved developments in the townships has followed the cluster development option. This has resulted in preserved – but not necessarily protected – farmland, woodlands, habitat areas, and additional protection for sensitive wetlands. Cluster development changed how development would look, but still followed the same standard development process. The County had little input on the design of the development and how it impacted public investments.

With the adoption of the *2030 Comprehensive Plan*, a third development option will be available where the County takes a more proactive approach in the development process. In addition to the standard and cluster development options, the *2030 Plan* establishes a voluntary development option that puts the focus on creating quality neighborhoods and communities rather than meeting basic subdivision requirements. Through a planned unit development (PUD), a developer can negotiate zoning and subdivision requirements (i.e., lot sizes, setbacks, street widths, et cetera). **2030 Comp Plan to Page 7**

## Free waste electronics collection set for April 11-12

To celebrate Earth Day, Waste Management and Sony are teaming up to offer **free** recycling services during a used electronics collection event to be held from **9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, April 11 and 12**. On these two dates, Minnesota residents will be able to drop off their used electronics at several drop-off locations throughout the Twin Cities. One of the free drop-off events will be held at Canterbury Park in Shakopee. For more information, or to view a complete list of drop-off locations, visit [www.wmtwincities.com](http://www.wmtwincities.com).



## Watch for your valuation notice...

Many homeowners are being inundated with headlines on the slowing real estate markets both nationally and locally, and the impact that the slowdown is having on the economy. Many people have first-hand knowledge of current market trends simply by watching their own home — or their neighbor's home — stay on the market for increasingly longer periods of time with lower listing prices than a few years ago; others have witnessed higher foreclosure rates or undisciplined lending practices affecting their communities.

The Scott County Assessor's Office has been working on these very concerns. A large part of their duties include studying, analyzing, and understanding current real estate market trends and sales. The assessor's duties include drawing conclusions from the 2007 sales data for all properties in Scott County, and applying that information to the 2008 Estimated Market Value, (EMV), for property taxes payable in 2009. Throughout Minnesota, assessors are estimating values based upon these sales; by state statute, property is to be valued at its market value. The assessor's EMVs for sold properties must have a median ratio (that is, Estimated



Market Value to sale price) of between 90 and 105 percent.

The Scott County Assessor's Office is currently wrapping up the 2008 assessments and making needed adjustments that will be for taxes payable in 2009.

As a taxpayer, you will receive your new *Estimated Market Value Notice* in the mail in early to mid-March. This notice will be in the same mailing as your 2008 tax bill. On this notice, your EMV and classification will be stated along with the phone number of the assessor assigned to your area and notification of the Local Board of Review or Open Book Meeting.

**SWCD wins awards**  
Employee Pete Beckius and the Board of Supervisors take home honors.  
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**Handling emergencies**  
New Emergency Manager Chris Weldon provides advice in EmergenSCENE  
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**A book about baseball**  
Columnist Tom Melchior has been writing about Scott County baseball, now he's publishing a book.  
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## EmergenSCENE

By Chris Weldon  
Scott County Emergency Manager



### Stay safe and warm this winter

Weather in Minnesota is probably one of the most talked about subjects in our day-to-day conversations. Questions such as "What's it doing outside?" or comments such as "I hear it's supposed to be nice tomorrow..." are heard every day. Of course, sometimes it serves as a simple conversation starter — but let's face it, weather has a huge influence on our normal activities.

Because of this reality, it's important to keep an eye on the forecast and to know some common weather terms and how they impact us. A change in weather can be downright deadly, and preparing in advance could make a big difference to you or your family's health and safety.

Because it is the season, we will discuss winter weather. A wide range of weather conditions can occur during a **winter storm**, including snow, sleet, and ice accumulations, strong winds leading to blowing and drifting snow, and dangerously cold temperatures. Winter storms can affect a large area — even portions of multiple states — and can last for many days. Regions affected by a winter storm can be crippled for several days, with the effects felt for weeks. Travel becomes dangerous and even impossible.

**Blizzard** conditions occur when falling snow and strong winds, frequently at speeds of 35 miles per hour or more, combine to produce blinding, wind-driven, blowing snow and severe drifting. Visibilities in a blizzard are significantly reduced, often to under a quarter of a mile, making travel virtually impossible.

A **ground blizzard** happens when strong winds and existing snow cover lead to blowing snow and visibilities reduced to a quarter mile or less. The sky may be clear during a ground blizzard.

Even **heavy snow** can immobilize a region and paralyze a city, stranding commuters, stopping the flow of supplies, and disrupting emergency and medical services. Accumulations of snow can collapse buildings, break large tree limbs, and bring down power lines. In rural areas, homes and farms may be isolated for days.

**Lake effect snow** develops over open water of a lake and blows onto land. Lake effect snow results from cold air residing over a large unfrozen lake, such as Lake Superior, and can affect locations as much as 20 miles inland from the lakeshore. Very large accumulations can occur, mainly because the conditions favorable for lake effect snow can persist for several days.

**Ice storms** can be exceptionally damaging, as large ice accumulations can down trees, electrical wires, and telephone poles. Communications and power can be lost for days. Even small accumulations of ice can cause extreme hazards to motorists and pedestrians.

Extreme cold often accompanies a winter storm or is left in its wake. The combination of cold temperatures and wind produces a **wind chill**, which is a cooling effect on exposed skin. Prolonged exposure to the cold can be dangerous and life-threatening, causing hypothermia or frostbite.

Because the conditions described above can cause severe stress and discomfort you should consider making plans for sheltering in place or having supplies in your vehicle. The time to make these plans and kits is before a winter storm strikes.

Some of the things you can do to protect yourself include listening to the weather reports on the television or radio. We all know forecasts can be wrong, but it is a good idea to at least stay informed of what might be coming to your area. National Weather Service websites and a NOAA weather radio also provide direct links to this information.

Winterize your vehicle. Keep antifreeze fresh. Assure you have a strong car battery. Do not let your gas tank get much below half full, especially if you think heavy snow, ice, or below freezing cold are headed your way. Use snow tires if appropriate for your vehicle and consider keeping a winter survival kit in your car.

#### The kit should include:

- A three-pound coffee can, candle stubs, and matches (which can be used to melt snow for additional drinking water)
- A metal or plastic cup
- A red bandanna and a plastic whistle to alert rescuers to your location
- Pencil and paper
- A first aid kit, including any essential medications
- A plastic flashlight with spare batteries (reverse the batteries to avoid accidental switching and burnout, and replace batteries yearly)
- Two large plastic garbage bags and safety pins (bags are for insulation for feet, safety pins keep the bags together)
- Snack foods for energy, such as candy bars.

These basic items do not take up much room and are fairly inexpensive to purchase. Examples of some other items that could be left in your car include extra gloves or mittens, winter boots, a blanket and/or sleeping bag, jumper cables, a basic toolbox, shovel, bag of sand or other grit for traction, tow cable or chain, road flares, and reflectors. An extra set of dry clothing or a snowmobile suit could also come in handy at times.

Whenever traveling in winter, call ahead to your destination and tell when you intend to leave, your travel route, and your expected time of arrival. And if you do become stranded, never leave your vehicle. Your chances of survival greatly increase if you stay put. Consider carrying a cellular phone for use during emergencies, and if you need to use it, find a safe place to pull off the road when you need to make a call.

A little preparation and planning can go a long way towards making your winter season safer for you and your family. For more information on this and many other weather tips, please feel free to call Scott County Emergency Management at (952) 496-8181 or visit the Minnesota Homeland Security and Emergency Management website at [www.hsem.state.mn.us](http://www.hsem.state.mn.us), the twin cities chapter of the American Red Cross at [www.redcrossctc.org](http://www.redcrossctc.org), or the national Weather Service at [www.crh.noaa.gov/mpx/safety.php](http://www.crh.noaa.gov/mpx/safety.php).



Over 300 residents attended last fall's 2030 Comp Plan Open House at Prior Lake Senior High School. Results and comments from the Open House are available on the County's website, [www.co.scott.mn.us](http://www.co.scott.mn.us)

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cetera) with the County and townships to provide more flexibility and creativity in designing a subdivision to the physical characteristics of the land. In return for the added flexibility, and in some cases added density, the developer will provide the County with identified public values that promote varied housing options, improve public infrastructure investments (roadways, parks, trails, drainage ways), and/or encourage natural resource protection.

This incentive-based development option, known as the "public value incentive program," was designed to ensure a win-win scenario for both the developer and the public. Improved collaboration between the County and developers can shorten the review process timeline, which helps developers remain on their project schedule. This, along with more flexible design standards, can lead to cost savings for the developer. On the public side, the public value incentive program will provide better neighborhood design in addition to a number of public benefits, such as improved water and natural resource quality, cost savings for future road right-of-way acquisitions, and safe and healthy communities.

The following "public values" are defined in the 2030 *Comprehensive Plan* to help determine where incentives should be provided and how public investments should be protected or enhanced:

- **Publicly managed utilities:** Providing publicly managed sewer and water utilities, such as a community sewage treatment system (CSTS), a planned service district for individual sewage treatment systems (ISTS), and/or a publicly managed community water supply system. Developments in defined areas where future urban services are planned should be designed for compatibility with and connections to future urban services.

- **Public roadway/transitway:** Providing additional dedicated public road right-of-way for an existing or new collector or arterial roadway. Or, alternatively, providing right-of-way for supportive local roads along major arterials or public transit facilities.

- **Public parkland:** Providing additional dedicated public parkland for a regional, county, or town park.

- **Public trailway:** Providing additional dedicated public trail right-of-way, easements, or trail construction for a regional, county, or town trailway.

- **Regional stormwater management:** Providing additional land for on-site stormwater management, if regional stormwater management is considered feasible for the site.

- **Natural resource conservation:** Conserving critical natural resource areas. A long-term stewardship management program involving a combination

of stewardship, endowment funds, and/or contract for long-term maintenance would be required.

- **Wetland restoration:** Restoring the hydrology and native plant communities of drained, altered, or disturbed wetlands through a long-term management program involving a combination of stewardship, endowment funds, and/or contract for long-term maintenance.

- **Livable neighborhoods:** Providing a variety of housing types, such as lifecycle and senior housing; utilizing environmentally friendly buildings that meet LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environment Design) certification; utilizing on-site alternative energy sources and water conservation; and/or implementing other sustainable development and active living design practices.

To make this third development option more enticing to the private development community, staff in the County's Community Development and Public Works Divisions will become more collaborative, proactive, flexible, and creative — terms not often associated with a governmental regulatory agency. Under this third option, staff will change the way they have traditionally done business when it comes to reviewing development proposals. This change will be necessary right out of the gates, with staff working with a prospective developer or landowner up front at pre-application meetings on identifying the public values inherent on the property, before any money is invested in site design or engineering. Both the public and private sectors will need to strive for win-win outcomes that respond to the interests of the public and developer.

This more collaborative, public values-driven approach to managing development was showcased at last fall's open house for the 2030 *Comprehensive Plan*. A composite map was presented to the public showing where many of the public values are located across the county. This same map will be used this year to market the program to larger landowners and local land developers at upcoming focus group discussions and meetings.

It is important to reiterate that this new, more collaborative development track will be voluntary, and it is recognized that not all development will want to participate. But with the added density, flexibility, and other incentives, this new track provides a responsible approach to balancing private development rights while maximizing public values in a manner that can take the County one step closer to its 2030 Vision.

For more information on the 2030 *Comprehensive Plan*, contact the Planning Department at (952) 496-8475 or visit the County's website ([www.co.scott.mn.us](http://www.co.scott.mn.us)).