

RESULTS OF THE SECOND NIGHT OF THE VISIONING WORKSHOP 2-25-09

St. Croix County

Land Use, Housing, Agriculture

Land Use

St. Croix County values its historic roots in farming and other natural resource based activities and desires to maintain its rural character or feel. We have achieved a rural feel by ensuring that there are ample amount of open space between cities and/or villages by restricting commercial and industrial development adjacent to cities and villages and limiting subdivision development outside of city and village limits. The open space is a mix of farming and natural resources including parks, trails, natural areas, river ways, hunting land, woods and wetlands. In addition, historic barns have been preserved and restored as part of the open views. However, the western side of the county needs a different approach to open space and housing than the eastern side which has less pressure to develop.

Agriculture

St. Croix's agricultural sector is particularly important to its residents. We work to maintain farming as an occupation for families and as an active land use. We support both small and large farms by using agricultural zoning to identify prime agricultural soils to limit development and encourage all sorts of farms from hobby to buffalo to corn and soybeans.

Housing

St. Croix County has maintained a stock of affordable and moderate income housing for its residents. In particular, the County has paid attention to the need for affordable and appropriate housing for its aging population. The County has aimed to control sprawling residential development. When and where possible, the County encourages development into cities and villages or in conservation subdivisions in rural areas where shared septic systems are allowed. In addition, the County has created incentives for homeowners and developers who use the LEED process to build new homes.

Preserve:

- Historic farms/barns
- Old and used town buildings – restore
- Rural character, with appropriate viewshed ordinances
- Strong urban centers with mixed use
- Rural feel
- Historical sites/buildings
- Highways for easy access to industry
- Our natural resources, including parks and river ways, hunting land access for all
- Large and small farms between cities
- Open spaces between cities
- Collector road system (plan to widen) Roads
- Restrict development to adjacent cities, villages, towns
- Business development clusters around I-94 (and mostly in western St. Croix)

- Land open, land for public use
- Woodlands for all to use

- Waterways – to keep clean
- Willow River
- Water quality; Runoff areas to groundwater and streams
- Large tracts of open land; Open spaces
- Open areas and green space preserved
- Water quality
- Land with historic and natural features
- Woodlands and productive timber stands
- Wetlands
- Policies to ensure quality groundwater supplies
- Land for parks/recreation/public use
- Recreational areas
- Public lands Recreation
- Trails and existing natural areas
- Large, open natural wildlife corridors open to people with trails

- Open zoning
- Agriculture zoning
- Keep like uses together
- Farming as an occupation
- Century farms
- Farm lands
- Retirement income for farmers whose plan was to subdivide the farm
- Family farms
- Novel farm uses stressing organic produce
- Buffalo farms
- Hobby farms
- Agricultural enterprises – family farms
- Well-run, environmentally sound family farms
- Large productive farms with good soils
- Small productive farms with good soils
- Preserve good farm land for farming
- Agriculture: As much of our farm land as possible
- Agriculture land
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- Land use taxation
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- Housing stock throughout the county in the affordable, but unsubsidized \$75,000 - \$125,000 range
- Moderate income housing
- Housing
- Housing: Our natural heritage, retaining if possible historic sights
- Higher density housing in west
- More rural homes in east
- Historic homes/farms
- Ability of affordable housing both in rural and communities with services
- Ability of housing for hobby farms
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- Land use policies to encourage smaller rural lots

Change:

- Limit – stop large developments, or at limit to use the land wisely
- Promote consistent public areas required in municipalities growth
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- Large farming practices
- Farming practices to help preserve the land with less erosion and less chemicals used
- Agriculture: Attitude that land is only benefit is for building. Support larger farms that employ many people
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- Land taxes
- Junk properties – adoption of more rigorous enforcement of junk properties
- Enforcement (or establishment) of buffer zones near livestock/farms
- Higher requirements regarding animal waste and chemical run off
- Reduce the number of above ground power lines
- Reduce impact fees to realistic levels based on true costs
- Tighter regulations to protect against large scale corporate farms
- Restrictive ordinances – commercial sense
- Promote better methods of control of waste management for farming and chemical use
- Instigate more PDR or outright purchase of lands of historic and cultural aid
- How non-resident recreational owners currently receive favorable agriculture use tax benefits
- Real estate tax formulas to allow senior citizens to be able to live in their homes affordably
- Change the zoning lot minimum in transitional areas to a smaller, more efficient pattern
- Ag II districts to 5-20 acres where applicable – not good soils
- Ordinances that allow large lot rural development by urban centers
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- Multiple septic sanitary systems
- Waste water treatment plants to service several communities
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- Allow cluster housing development maintaining open space
- Restrict mobile homes
- Get rid of mobile home parks
- Create methods to control sprawl (housing)
- Promote and educate use of conservation design
- Subdivisions with shared wells and sewers
- To smaller homes no McMansions
- Single lots on large rural lots
- Rural housing developments near urban centers but not connected to city services
- Smaller houses/tracts for affordability and less carbon footprint
- Housing: more focus on elderly housing focus more on keeping them independent
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- Pits and quarries regulations – we must have aggregation to maintain competition pricing

- Arterial and collector road system that can be expanded (widened) when demand makes it necessary
- Energy policies to preserve our resources

Create:

- More organic farming
- More eco-friendly farming
- Small farms
- Plans to control introduction of large feeder lots, cattle, hogs, etc.
- Ways to protect agricultural use
- Agriculture enterprise areas
- Agriculture programs that benefit new or younger people to have farming available to them
- Create an agricultural zone (that can be profitable for 20-30 years) in the most productive soils in the center of the county
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- Low income housing
- Multi-dwelling central sewers
- More elderly housing
- Higher density in western part of county
- Controlled subdivisions
- More and affordable senior housing
- Rural area cluster development
- Dense housing in village not on land for agriculture use
- Affordable housing
- Multi-home rural septic systems
- Housing options that are affordable for all segments of our population
- Cluster development
- Clustered development in rural areas with open green areas
- More affordable housing for low income people
- Density of housing to maximum value of infrastructure (i.e., roads needing to be improved, leading to urban center)
- Ability for housing density by urban areas
- Methods to allow senior housing in rural atmosphere
- Affordable housing
- Shared
- Incentives for “green” building codes
- Housing choices for all citizens/affordable multi-jurisdictional methods to cooperate on land use policies to enable future farmers to be able to afford to farm
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- Walking trails/bike trails
- Create connected environmental corridors with trails
- More available hunting areas for the public
- More trails, both hunting and sporting vehicles
- Wildlife corridors
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- Land for wind farms/energy
- Land use incentives for incorporating renewable energy

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- TDR; Create “cap and trade” programs to manage density/sprawl (developer wants to build rural lots could go to land density “bank”)
- Density standards
- Preservation easements
- In centralizing development around transportation corridors by promoting business cluster zoning attached to financial incentives
- New ordinances
- PDR – TDR
- PDR programs, conserving special lands, waterfronts
- Official mapping of roads, utilities to promote effective planning
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- Keep like uses together
- Require every municipality to provide a facility to dispose home septic waste
- Community centers – joint parks and facilities
- A plan for county owned lands

Utility and Community Facility, Intergovernmental Cooperation

Intergovernmental Cooperation

The County, municipal and schools have developed and maintained a way to communicate about all sorts of issues, particularly those that generate controversy. We keep collaboration and cooperation as a part of our everyday communication. The County has taken the lead to establish a dialogue with all St. Croix municipalities to discuss cost sharing and tax base sharing arrangements, to decrease the level of duplication of services, and to increase the number of shared community facilities especially among towns and cities. In addition, the County has worked with all St. Croix municipalities to make sure policies are consistent. When issues that concern the entire county need to be addressed such as utilities (siting) or wildlife corridors, the County works at cross-jurisdictional cooperation.

Utility and Community Facility

St. Croix County has worked with the utility companies to ensure appropriate utility corridors for electrical transmission, fiber optics, and future technological possibilities. The County has worked with the DOT in Minnesota and Wisconsin to identify future lands appropriate for different types of public transportation, such as rail. The County is leading the way for its residents by making sure its existing buildings are energy efficient and use a LEED process in any new county construction of buildings. The County has reworked its rules to allow for solar and wind generation for private residences and have ensured the right to solar and wind access from adjacent properties.

The County works with St. Croix’s municipalities to make sure that a range of community services are both available and accessible within a reasonable distance of municipal boundaries. The County has worked with municipalities to create a county-wide bicycle path that is useable in many sections in all seasons.

Preserve:

- Utility corridors (electric)
- Utilities: Our great access to utilities, including fiber
- Ability to establish joint municipal services (i.e., fire, ambulance, other)

- Utility corridors and future lands for projected public transportation
- Stability of existing grid
- Clean water and use of public facilities where needed
- Water systems
- Existing wastewater capacity
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- Community Facilities: The strengths of environmental resolve
- EMS and fire department services
- Library and historic sites
- Law enforcement
- County, town road and highway services
- Cemetery sites
- Inter municipality utility cooperation
- Our library, community center
- Country churches
- Local/town fire department
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- Intergovernmental Cooperation: Keep and expand on those projects that work
- County to local zoning communications and collaborative cooperation
- Zoning areas for commercial/industrial development
- Distinguishing town/village/city/county government to give maximum representation to the people
- Cost sharing arrangements between county, cities and townships
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- Good schools/educational opportunities
- “Small” community schools – don’t consolidate
- Old schools (1 room). Some, not all
- Historic sites/buildings
- Strong school systems
- Historic buildings for re-use by compatible needs
- UW-RF and WITC as a drive for economic development
- Small schools
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- A variety of housing options for seniors
- Public access to lakes and rivers
- Recycling increase by laws regulating recycling
- Local town boards
- Rural character where applicable
- Preserve and enhance each community’s identity – sense of place

Change:

- Force communities to use of newest technology for utilities to include WWT, water, communication, heat, transportation
- Force a serious effort to share fire and police services and facilities between communities
- Any codes that impede on-site wastewater treatment
- More underground
- More buried electrical and service lines

- Utilities: More underground, less poles for natural scene
- Limit cell phone towers
- Decrease EMF energy or govern
- Utility companies to go green
- Govern stray Wi-Fi
- Incentives for renewable energy
- Regional telecom/broadband
- Mandate renewable energy use by government units and building standards
- Develop more regional service centers (either bricks and mortar of electric storefronts)
- Fiber-optic throughout county or another high speed communications options
- Require underground power lines
- Provide recycling pickup to rural areas
- Improve telephone/internet/cable options to rural areas
- Work towards elimination of overhead lines
- Change rules/regulations on home wind generators
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- Intergovernmental Cooperation: communications, all aspects
- Some duplication of emergency services
- East/west divide in county
- Intergovernmental Cooperation: Need more cooperation, less duplication of services
- Inter workings of municipalities to provide combined services when economically feasible to the benefit of the public
- Not be so quick to destroy existing public
- Reduce conflicting rules between various agencies and communities
- Better cooperation among governmental bodies
- Continue to improve communication and cooperation between cities and villages and the townships adjacent to them impacted by annexation (front porch project)
- How we fund the county nursing home
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- Community Facilities: More cooperative efforts
- More elderly facilities
- Centralize community services for those needing community assistance
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- Better walking/biking paths

Create:

- Task force to stay ahead of the curve on generation of electric power transmission
- Incentives to become less energy dependent
- Better phone service – cell towers?
- Broadband service – rural
- Utilities: Green for the future, more windmills, etc.
- Facilities: More affordable products
- Fiber-optic availability for entire county
- Wastewater treatment options to include more than one municipality or lot
- Internet availability for everyone who wants it
- Wastewater treatment facilities that can (efficiently) serve multiple communities
- Green power. Incentives

- Mandatory solar and environmental coalition
- More accessible recycling for all materials and chemicals
- More recycling options
- Areas dedicated to wind farms
- Biomass generation
- Regional wi-fi? Super wi-fi
- County wide high speed communication system to every home
- Wind energy
- Solar energy
- Laws to govern all wireless energy (WTF, enforce stray electricity, cell towers, etc.)
- Local regional recycling
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- Joint parks and centers for each community
- Commercial – school district
- A different kind of senior citizen center for more active people
- More recreation centers
- New higher education opportunities
- Land use plan for surplus county lands
- Park or trail corridors throughout county – bike/winter
- More elderly facilities
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- Working cooperation between all government entities
- Intergovernmental Cooperation: consistencies in policies
- Greater ability/incentives for shared community facilities between towns and cities
- Cross jurisdictional cooperation on preservation of wildlife corridors
- Better intergovernmental cooperation and communication
- A revenue sharing mechanism for industrial/business parks
- More cooperation between and understanding of what each municipality has for regulations
- More cooperation between towns and villages at boundary
- A reasonable formula based on population of assessed valuation for shared assets/costs – such as library, ambulance, fire, police, parks and recreation
- Less government involvement
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- County wide educational tax credits to parents who use other methods than publicly funded tax schools
- Allow smaller lot sizes near villages and cities so that future hookups are more practical

Transportation and Economic Development

Transportation

St. Croix County consistently maintains and improves the county road system. The County has worked with St. Croix municipalities to identify safe roads to establish bike lanes. The County works with municipalities to plan for residential growth and transportation access in tandem. The County continues to explore transportation options from high speed rail to light rails to buses. The County is exploring options for encouraging more public transportation and increase bike riding and discouraging automobile use and purchasing more than one car per adult. The

County also works with all vested interests on the Stillwater bridge project. The County needs to ensure its ready for a bridge crossing in terms of land use and transportation issues.

Economic Development

St. Croix County has worked with cities, villages and towns to limit commercial uses to areas where services are available. This discussion has happened in tandem with tax base sharing. The County through the EDC works to encourage dialogue among communities to discuss the costs and benefits of economic development. That county effort has resulted in new industries such as artisan food processors and other food processing, an increase in knowledge workers residing and opening businesses in the county while maintaining the agricultural sector as a strong part of the local economy.

Preserve:

- Strong road maintenance
- Existing condition of roads
- Ride shares to TC
- Existing travel corridors
- Local dirt roads
- Multi-use trails
- Integrity of the existing highway system
- Road quality
- Transportation system
- Good roads
- Improved roadways. System is pretty good in rural areas, need to preserve natural and familiar areas
- Existing highway system
- Highways capable for industrial and agricultural needs
- Green spaces along highways
- Well maintained roads/streets, staying abreast of new technology to improve life of surfaces with little impact to the environment
- Future transportation corridors
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- Dialog amongst communities for economic development
- No spot zoning of commercial enterprises in rural township
- Limit commercial use to areas with services (villages, industrial parks)
- County EDC
- Loan funds
- Rural business
- Farming related business
- Small farms
- Local business area
- Positive attitudes toward attracting new industries
- Community-based industrial parks
- Good paying manufacturing jobs
- Manufacturing jobs
- Small business
- Effort to encourage economic development
- County government locations throughout the county (especially central and east)

- Preserve and expand the creative class in the county and the St. Croix Valley
- Preserve and expand the artisan food producers in the region
- Tax incentives to promote industry in the area
- Economic development
- Great work ethic
- Diversity of services provided
- Farming background
- Incentives for business parks, industrial parks, economic development
- Efforts to bring good paying jobs to county
- Good economic development programs that have shown positive impacts to municipalities

Change:

- Eliminate the wheel tax
- Improvement of rural roads – maintenance
- Limit – reduce large lane roadways
- Wider roads with good shoulders and bike lanes
- Transportation: to alternative access not necessarily autos
- Licensing fees for households with more than 2 cars? To encourage less driving on the highways (fleet licenses?)
- Ability for rural development to burden rural road system without investment in collector system upgrades
- Idea that a bridge is the only solution for a St. Croix River crossing at Stillwater. Why isn't a tunnel considered?
- Sierra Club's agenda – Stillwater Bridge?
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- Funding structure of GDC – needs more funding
- Cooperation among communities in attracting business
- Entice larger employers to St. Croix county
- Find 2-3 anchors
- Simplify restrictions on business – new business development
- Free time for jobs to regain eco-friendly practices of recycling, conserving energy and travel time for workers by working from home by computer
- Avoid TIF battles between communities for new businesses
- “Yours and mine” mentality to “ours-”
- More long range planning for development/non-development areas with good official mapping to ensure good stewardship of lands with no backtracking
- Combined service or more use of combined sector to road/maintenance/snow where services can be provided more cost effectively
- Have more effective communication between government and businesses to encourage more growth and retention
- Economic development efforts to allow for greater collaboration and revenue sharing
- Expand freeway to 6 lanes at least to Baldwin
- Promote services available over a larger area bringing more services closer to rural areas
- Intergovernmental cooperation to bring industry to county
- Attitudes to welcome density and use of public utilities
- Increase levels of county support of economic development

- County attitudes on talking, planning and selling county farm

Create:

- A new Stillwater Bridge and encourage public transportation options
- Resolution requiring a minimum percentage of county budget goes to road maintenance sufficient to maintain a road's lifecycle
- High-speed rail between Minneapolis and Chicago with Hudson stop
- Mass transit
- Shared transportation opportunities, private – carpooling, public – mass transit from central locations with incentives to encourage use
- Infrastructure for electric/plug-in vehicles
- New bridge over St. Croix
- Multi-use transit system
- New Stillwater Bridge
- Public transportation
- Mass transit options to St. Paul/Minneapolis
- More biking routes
- Walking/biking trails
- Community where people can walk to all areas of their town
- Ability for a trails collector to be expanded after development (officially map corridors preserving right-of-way)
- Rail spurs – better serve community
- Safer highway standards – improve intersections
- More ride shares
- Mass transit – bus, not rail
- Safe St. Croix crossing
- A new (already planned) interchange at the Roberts exit
- Tax incentives to build light rail from exit 10 to St. Croix with connections to St. Paul
- Mass transit using rail system if cost effective
- Alternate means of transportation, e.g. high-speed rail, bus service
- New fees for licensing for trucks on highway with load limits and strict enforcement
- Bike trail systems
- Other transportation methods
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- A tax incentive for high paying corporations to come to St. Croix county
- High quality early childhood programs and strong schools are economic development
- County-wide broadband
- More robust ED corp. – endorsement? Tax incentives, loans
- Business clusters in sustainable industries
- Higher education centers around businesses
- Additional incentives to encourage businesses to locate in St. Croix county
- Desire for companies to “outsource” to St. Croix county
- Affordable, safe, child care
- Alternative methods of transportation
- Opportunity for business development
- More incentives for business development
- More local jobs, locate by existing freeways
- Incentive to buy local

- County effort to work with cities
- Shared revenue – commercial development parks
- A university research park to the talents of UW-RF Food processing and safety international experts
- More work opportunities, higher paying jobs available
- County supported economic development group (more support from all municipalities in county)
- More effective measure to stop loss of good jobs and create new through programs and listening to business
- Economic districts/groups to combine marketing and symbiotic to weaning businesses

Natural Resources

St. Croix County has a healthy diversity of natural land resources – lakes, rivers, streams, woods, wetlands, prairie – that contributes to the quality and abundance of wildlife and to the beauty of the county. The County has conducted a natural resources inventory to provide a basis for exploring new policies such as preservation and transfer of development rights. The County works to maintain the lake and river water quality in particular in the St. Croix River, Willow, Apple and Bass watersheds, and to preserve and enhance wildlife corridors along streams and rivers and through woods and prairies. Enhancing water quality has occurred through preventing contaminated runoff from agricultural lands, and impervious surfaces like highways and driveways. The County has worked to give the public access to many of these natural areas for walking, nature study and quiet contemplation in coordination with the DNR and in some cases private landowners. The County has promoted the use of purchase of development rights through a land trust, has considered incentives to preserve viewsheds and openspaces, and continues to examine new techniques as they are created.

The County has identified a network of natural resource corridors that provide various activities like hunting, fishing, and walking when appropriate. The County has identified in conjunction with these corridors a network of bike trails and other recreational opportunities.

Cultural Resources

St. Croix County has an interesting history and local traditions, unique architecture and historical sites in part represented by Baldwin’s windmill??, old train depots, barns, churches, and the Octagon. The County has worked with appropriate organizations to work at funding and marketing St. Croix’s cultural resources to its residents and others including its Native American and pioneer roots. The County has worked with local units of government to maintain their unique local character whether through buildings and events (both art and cultural). The libraries throughout the County are important resources for our children and adults as are community centers and 4-H programs.

Preserve:

- St. Croix River water quality
- Lake and river qualities
- Watersheds – protect water quality
- Open spaces
- Preserve river way corridors using incentives for private owners
- Scenic river way

- Natural lands and parks
- Water basins into our lakes, rivers and streams, i.e., Willow, St. Croix, Apple, Bass, Perch, etc.
- Parks – public lands
- Lakes – streams
- Large woodlands
- Preserve and enhance green corridors
- Wildlife areas
- Parks
- St. Croix River and the valley
- Rivers, lakes, waterways
- Woodlands
- Wildlife travel corridors
- Prairie areas
- Public lands
- Water quality, both ground and surface
- Water quality – both ground and surface waters
- Lakes, rivers, wetlands, woodlands, park lands, wildlife habitats
- Open lands for hiking, hunting and nature study
- Clean water and prevent contaminated runoff and other sources of contamination
- Woodlots
- Large land tracts
- Wetlands
- Rivers and lakes kept clean and used wisely
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- Cultural centers currently in use
- 4-H participation with county assistance
- Local character of cities and villages
- Libraries
- Ability for people to connect towns, cities and sites to meanings – historic, etc.
- History
- Architecture
- Funding
- Preserve historic structures without heavy-handed governmental regulations
- Local traditions
- Historical sights
- Funding of things like community theater, Phipps, Octagon, local art and cultural events
- Cultural heritage sites of communities marketing their importance to our citizens, such as N.R. Heritage Center, Bald. Windmill, old train depots, octagon, etc.
- Indian heritage sites
- Historical buildings and sites that must be torn down by thorough documentation
- Historical buildings – sites
- Heritage within community
- 4-H
- Old barns
- Old churches
- Farm houses

- Local “Town Days”
- Historical sites – Heritage Center, Octagon House, etc.
- Protect and restore prairies
- Strong art/cultural programs in schools
- Recreational opportunities, trails, woodlands, agriculture, heritage
- Quality education

Change:

- County tax and reimburse of library expenses (now 71%, need 100%)
- Institute a special \$1,000/year auto license plate sticker that permits single occupants in cars/trucks during rush hour
- Fee structure for use of county recreation facilities (parks)
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- Use stealth cell towers
- Get rid of towers.
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- Need to educate our people more to their heritage and need for values
- Change education at middle school and elementary level to impart a more complete knowledge of local history/heritage
- Educate public on importance of preserving these natural and cultural resources (recreational opportunities, trails, woodlands, agriculture, heritage)
- Promote a historical cultural preservation society to document our history for county and communities
- Marketing of cultural/natural gems
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- Promote use of PDR programs to preserve natural resources
- Preserve water basins of sensitive water aquifers
- Laws to make landowners accountable for what they are pumping or spraying on their land and runoff groundwater quality
- Taxation on lakes. Clarify – who does and does not own water/land under it – DNR and state laws are in conflict
- Development incentives to entice preservation of viewsheds and open spaces
- Preserve wild river and stream areas. Not just set backs for building
- Coordinate control and maintenance of public landings at lakes. County owns boat ramp on Bass Lake but has no money to maintain it. Should a fee be charged to launch?

Create:

- County wide natural resource corridors (along railroad corridors of other off road areas)
- Access to and along and through natural resource corridors
- A natural resource/land ore inventory as robust as Dakota County’s, to allow for an effective and community supported PDR program
- More green space areas
- Public hunting and fishing areas
- Bike trails – green spaces/wildlife
- More intergovernmental cooperation for preserving wild and natural areas – streamline and enforce ordinances

- New trail corridors
- New recreation opportunities
- Valley tours
- Wetlands
- Better management of storm water runoff
- Buffer zones for agriculture runoff to lakes and rivers
- Additional park lands as population density warrants
- More access to lakes, waterways
- More public lands for recreation
- Renew areas that were once prairie land
- Regulate high cap wells
- Trails between green spaces – wildlife corridors
- Corridors to connect those many recreational opportunities
- More recreational opportunities
- More community garden options
- Turn Lake Mallalieu Dam into a hydro-electric one
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- Cultural opportunities for both town and city residents based upon shared financial responsibility
- Consistent resource to help preserve and advertise our attributes and heritages, and our unique buildings and culture
- Fine arts and performance centers
- More parks – community gathering
- Joint library funding and maintenance
- Youth centers in each city or village
- Neighborhood watches/groups
- SR/student relations for education
- Use SR groups as “elders” such for historical reference and help
- Public parks and pools
- Incentives for more: recycle, reuse, reduce
- St. Croix Indian Historic Park