

EMERALD -- RESULTS OF THE 2ND NIGHT OF THE VISIONING WORKSHOP 2-25-09

Land Use, Housing, Agriculture

The Town of Emerald has maintained large tracts of agricultural land for small farms while balancing private property right by allowing small residential lots and where appropriate renewable energy systems, such as wind turbines. The Town has passed a resolution in support of the right to farm allowing farmers to spread manure when appropriate and operate farm machinery when necessary. The Town discourages residential living in agricultural areas except in clustered developments close to wooded properties. These clustered developments use and share small water and sewer systems.

Preserve:

- Large blocks of agriculture land and rural atmosphere (open spaces)
- Ability to conduct farming operations using reasonable practices (flexible zoning and tolerant residents)
- Small farms
- Ability to spread manure (because of smell)
- Dairy farming – all sizes
- Crop farming
- The right to operate farm machinery at any hour
- Farmers right to farm
- Farming
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- Single family housing in general (multi-family housing in certain areas)
- Single family homes
- Housing
- Single family homes
-
- Woodland for wildlife
- The wooded land
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- Old barns and historic buildings
- Historical building
-
- Private property rights
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- Electric right-of-ways
- Groundwater
- Rural lifestyle
- Clean well water

Change:

- Breaking large agriculture tracts into too many too small hobby farms
- Exceptions for huge factory agriculture production facilities
- Random placement of housing subdivisions

Create:

- Areas of open land for agriculture, recreation and natural beauty
- Habitat for wildlife
- Small lots for housing so as not to use large amounts of acreage – save for woodlands and farming
- Housing
- Small housing developments, less than 10, with single point water and sewer
- Small businesses
- Renewable energy
- Internet availability

Utility and Community Facility, Integrate Cooperation

The Town has worked with the County, neighboring communities and utility companies on the placement of transmission lines, high speed internet and fiber optics, and on regular road maintenance.

Preserve:

- Township/county cooperation in road maintenance
- Electric transmission right-of-ways
- Town hall

Change:

- Lack of community cohesiveness

Create:

- High speed internet
- Fiber optic communication

Transportation and Economic Development

The Town of Emerald has maintained the railroad right of way and has worked with the County and neighboring communities on a rural transportation system

Preserve:

- Rebuild Emerald town into a viable economic center
- Railroad right-of-way
- Not splitting the township with a freeway

Change:

- Too small an area for development
- Have more blacktop roads

Create:

- More hard surface roads
- Need public transportation at least to New Richmond, ideally to St. Paul or Minneapolis
- Small industry near main corridors
- Alternative energy sources from farms

Natural Resources and Cultural Resources

The Town of Emerald has maintained and increased the amount and types of open space (forests, wetlands, riparian areas, and agriculture) throughout the town for both wildlife habitat and maintaining the integrity of our groundwater. In particular, the town has focused on the Willow River to maintain habitat for water fowl. The town has worked with the County and DNR to access the river for fishing and hunting. The town has worked at creating bicycle paths and trails for both ATVs and snow mobiles.

The Town residents also want to recognize and remember their history and have worked to preserve original barns and farmhouses, the Town hall, and other historic building sites.

Preserve:

- Open spaces
- Wetlands
- Forests
- Clean groundwater
- Water quality of creeks and flow of creeks
- Woodlands
- Swamps – wetlands
- Wildlife habitat
- Drinking water
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- Old original barns
- Original farmhouses
- Historic building sites
- Town hall
- Register historic structures
- Farm buildings to preserve family farm atmosphere and local history/heritage
- Town hall

Change:

- Property tax structure to allow better two way communication
- All terrain vehicles use of all roads
- The way non-agriculture land is taxed
- Don't tax woods as development property unless that is what it is being used for. If it is part of an agriculture tract of land it should be taxed agriculture

Create:

- Wildlife preservation on wetlands of Willow River for water fowl
- Bicycle paths
- A public park
- Snow mobile trails
- Encourage preservation of wooded areas (incentives without unreasonable restrictions)
- County develop Willow River recreational opportunities (access – fish/wildlife habitat)
- More wildlife habitat (tree lines, grasses, etc.)
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- One unified school district