

Land Use Guide Plan for Cook County, Minnesota

Adopted May 21, 1997

Cook County Board of Commissioners

James Hall, Chair
Dave Eliassen
Gene Erickson
Wes Hedstrom
Walt Mianowski

Land Use Planning Task Force

JoEllen Hurr, Chair
Mark Adams
Chel Anderson
Virginia Danfelt
Aadne Eliassen
Gene Erickson
Irving Hansen
Jean Marie Modl
Judy Motschenbacher
Amy Neilsen
Doug Nordahl
Jim Raml
Dave Redelman
Don Sivertson
Charles Skinner
Rod Wannebo
George Wilkes
Ted Young
Jo Barnier, ex officio
Al Hodapp, ex officio
Tim Kennedy, ex officio

The Task Force and Consultant Team acknowledge the valuable contribution to the preparation of this plan by the citizens who attended the public forums and hearings, filled out the survey, and participated in our Work Groups.

Prepared by the Consultant Team of:

- ◆ Klaers, Powers and Associates / Duluth, MN ◆
- ◆ Robert J. Bruce / Duluth, Mn ◆
- ◆ Pro-West & Associates, Inc. / Walker, MN ◆
- ◆ Donald Bargaen / Grand Rapids, MN ◆

Land Use Guide Plan for Cook County, Minnesota

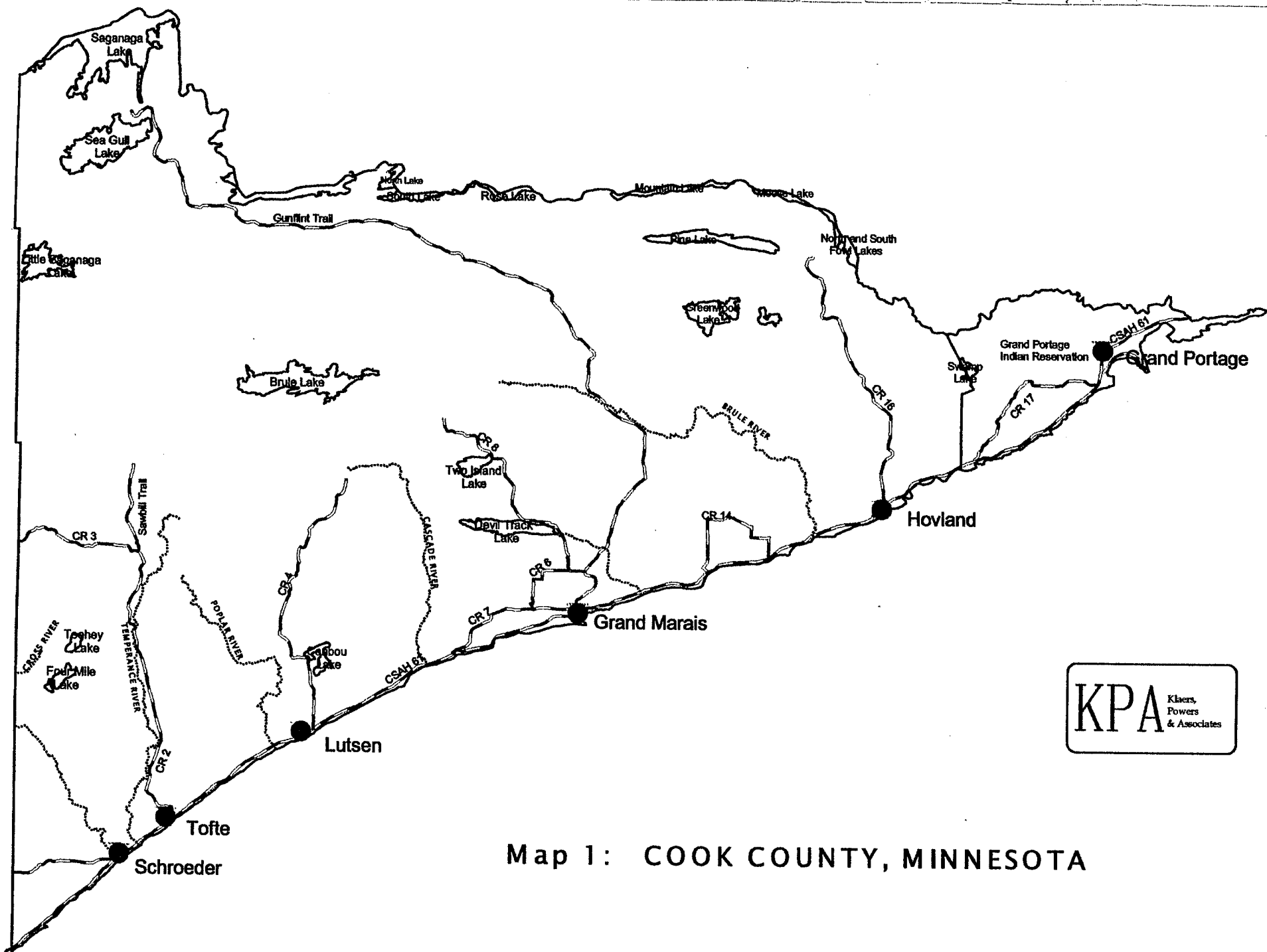
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Map 1: COOK COUNTY, MINNESOTA

Cook County Plan

Introduction

It is unreasonable to expect "permanence" from a plan. To be effective a plan must balance as a credible, respected and consulted guide without being absolute or rigid. A time threshold of fifteen to twenty years of validity is good performance from such an effort.

*Cook County Plan
1980 version*

The future does not emerge out of nothing. It is the result of myriad present day actions taken or not taken, decisions made or deferred. Planning for the future assumes that we can understand how our actions today may affect the unfolding future and thereby seek to shape or at least influence the future. It is not arrogance that underlies this assumption, but rather a concern that we, our children and the future citizens of our community will live in a place filled with the qualities we value today.

In 1980 Cook County adopted its first-ever land use plan. That plan has served the county well. But times changed, many of the premises upon which that plan was founded had transformed or even disappeared. People began expressing concern over the recent pace of development, its intensity and resulting population growth. Others voiced a belief that not enough land was available for future development. Nearly all felt that substantive change had occurred and that the old plan may no longer be fully relevant to the emerging situation. In early 1995 the County Board decided that a new plan was required to guide land use decisions into the next century.

Over the course of nearly two years a Task Force of county citizens worked with staff and a consultant team to prepare this updated plan. Public meetings were held to discuss issues with concerned residents. A survey was distributed to year-round and seasonal residents to gain additional insight and comment about land use issues. Before the Task Force recommended a plan for the County Board's formal consideration, a public meeting was held to gather citizen comment. Only then did the County Board formally take the plan to the people, hear their opinions, and adopt this plan.

What is the Plan?

This plan is less of a blueprint that "fixes" the future into a set configuration and more of a guide for making future decisions. The document does not attempt to make every future decision today. Rather, it paints a picture of a desired future Cook County, presents firm guidelines in the form of goals and policies to achieve that desired future state, and offers a rationale for public process and decision making. This plan is less a "product" and more of a "process", a system for making public policy and decisions regarding land use over the next 10-20 years.

The plan is composed of these elements:

- A statement of the **Sense of Place** of Cook County defining the qualities of the county that attract people to the area and keep them here as a place to live, work and recreate.
- Descriptions of the **Desired Future State** of the various subareas of Cook County as they would look in the year 2010 if the plan is fully implemented.
- Specific **Goals and Policies** grouped by topic to provide firm yet flexible guidance for decision makers.
- A **tool box** containing suggested techniques for implementing the plan. Some are modifications of existing methods such as zoning while others are new to the county.

Definitions

The Planning Task Force felt it necessary to define several terms to assist in understanding the intent of the plan.

Community Center: The commonly recognized immediate core area of the historic settlements of Cook County specifically including Schroeder, Tofte, Lutsen, Grand Marais, Hovland and Grand Portage.

Desired Future Condition: A statement describing how citizens wish a particular area to be developed, exist, or feel at some point in the future.

Ecosystem: a dynamic interacting community of organisms (including humans) considered together with their physical environment. Ecosystems are the fundamental units of nature; they are the life support systems for all living things.

Home Business / Occupation: A home occupation is a economic enterprise that takes place within the residence of the business owner, generally only employees family members, and has little noticeable impact outside of the structure. A home business is an enterprise that may occur within the residence of the business owner or an out building, may employ non-family members, is consistent with rural residential lifestyle, and has some but not significant noticeable impacts on such things as traffic, noise, dust and similar concerns.

Land Use Plan: A statement of the community's collective vision for the future of the community in terms of land use and management and a series of goals, policies and other statements that guide decision making to achieve that vision.

Public Services: As used in this plan, the term refers to services that generally serve property such as roads, and utilities.

Resort: A lodging facility under single ownership containing two or more sleeping rooms, suites or cabins. A bed and breakfast is different in that the lodging is in the residence of the owner.