

1. INTRODUCTION AND COUNTY VISION

Kankakee County faces a bright and exciting future. Through the 1990's and the first half of this decade, the County has undergone economic restructuring, and is well positioned to define its future growth patterns. Growth pressures from the greater Chicago Metropolitan area have begun to spur a new of cycle residential and nonresidential investment in the County. The County understands that this change could have positive or negative consequences depending on how it is directed and managed in the future. The new Comprehensive Plan has carefully examined patterns of influence and change at work in the County, and has defined a road map which will preserve the County's rural traditions while continuing to improve county-wide economic conditions.

Figure 1-1: Regional Location Map



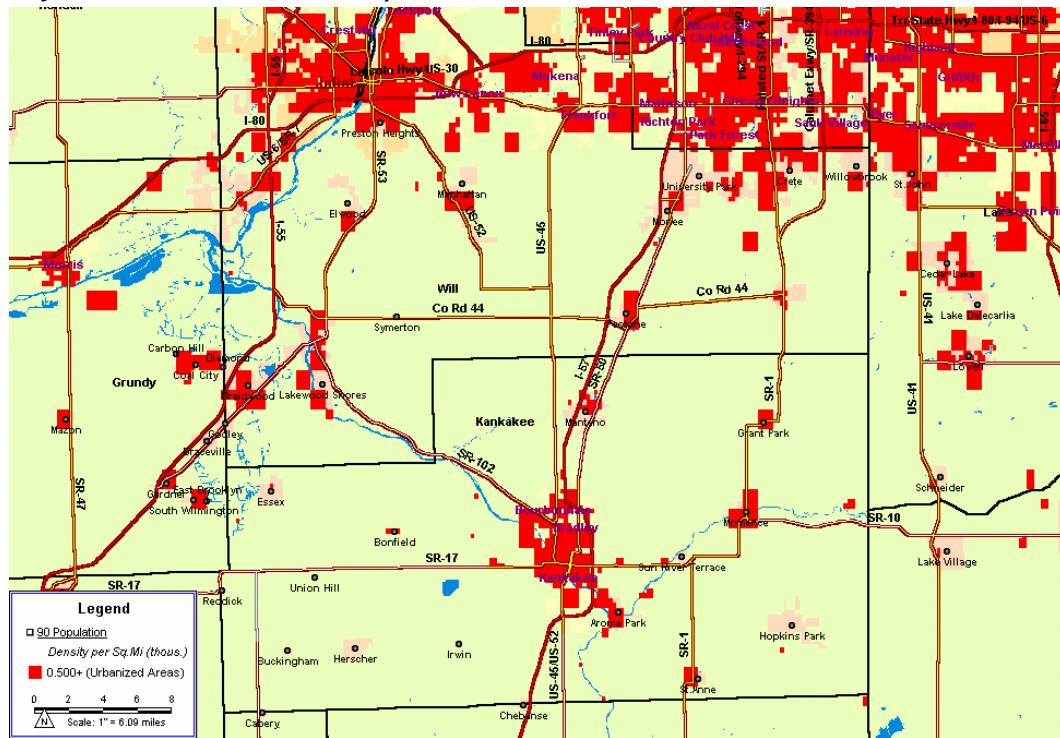
Kankakee County's history has long been one of economic independence from the greater Chicago Metropolitan area. However, the growth of Chicago's south suburbs into Will County has begun to influence development patterns in Kankakee County over the last decade, and will become a stronger force for change in the future. Although development trends would suggest otherwise, Kankakee County is determined to preserve its unique urban and rural quality of life through progressive planning and strong intergovernmental cooperation. Therefore, the Kankakee County Comprehensive Plan establishes a vision, policies, and actions that emphasize the unincorporated areas of the County remain substantially agricultural in nature with a clear distinction between its urban and rural settings.

Many physical developments and socio-economic changes have taken place in the County since the adoption of the 1992 Comprehensive Plan. The following developments and changes are key reasons for a new Comprehensive Plan:

- In the 1990s, the County's population increased by 7.9%, the largest gain since the 1950s. In addition, the urbanized area (Kankakee, Bradley and Bourbonnais) increased by 54% since 1990, clearly affecting land use patterns in the area.
- Demand for new housing has increased substantially. Currently nearly 6000 housing units are planned or proposed near the Villages of Bourbonnais, Bradley, or Manteno.
- Figures 1-2 and 1-3 contrast the level of change in County urbanization between the years 1990 and 2003 (where the population density exceeds 500 persons per square mile). It is clear that urbanization is spreading southward through Will County and into Kankakee County.
- Several regional transportation projects may also fuel growth and development pressure in the County in the future. The Chicago Area Transportation Study's 2030 Regional Transportation Plan for Northeastern Illinois incorporates recommendations that could influence change in Kankakee County, such as the I-355 extension to I-57, the Illiana Corridor to connect I-65, I-57, and I-55, and a proposed extension of the Metra Electric District Line into Kankakee. Further, the prospect of a third airport in Peotone in Will County to the north has long been discussed, and would have a major economic influence on Kankakee County.
- The northern portion of the County has experienced substantial truck traffic increases on County and state routes due to congestion I-80.

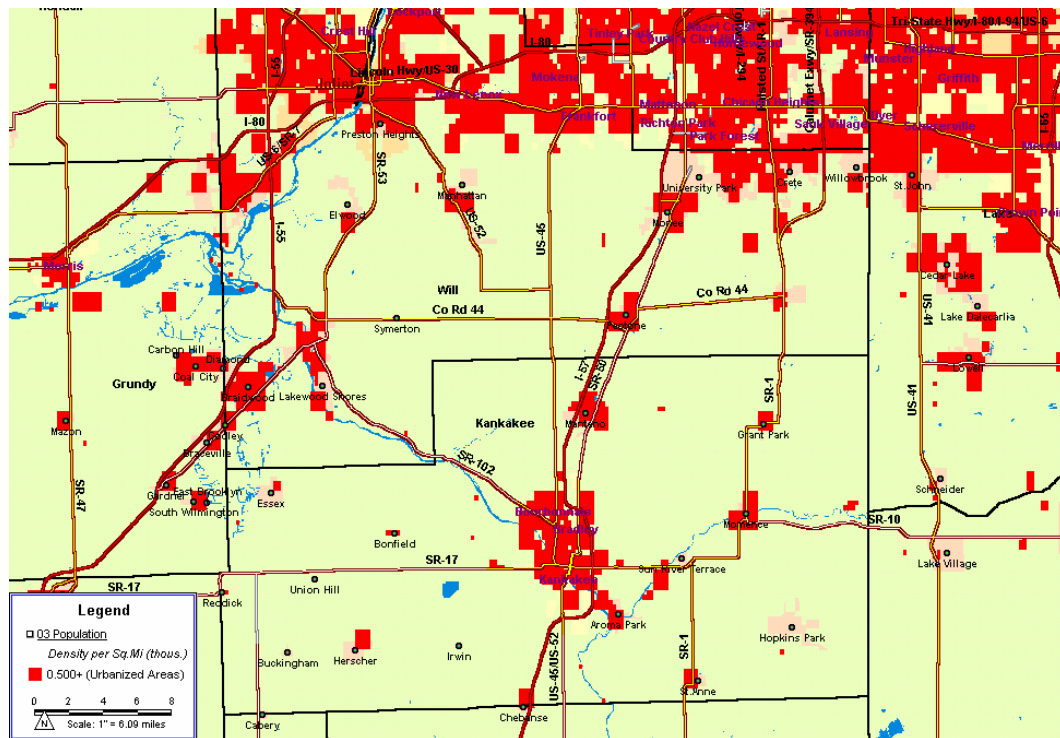


Figure 1-2: Kankakee County's Urbanized Areas, 1990



Source: Scanus and Real Estate Planning Group (REPG)

Figure 1-3: Kankakee County's Urbanized Areas, 2003



Source: Scanus and Real Estate Planning Group (REPG)



- Historically, Kankakee County's at place of residence employment has been fairly high—meaning that the majority of workers who live in Kankakee County also work in Kankakee County. As a result, there is currently a limited number of inter-County work trips and commuting. In the future, should market pressures for residential growth persist, out-of-county commuting could substantially increase.
- Traffic on the County road network continues to increase, creating conflicts with agricultural operations and rural roadway capacity. This is especially an issue in the northern portions of the County.
- Growth in the County's unincorporated areas has placed maintenance pressure on Township road systems and stressed the capacity of a number of rural schools
- Environmental sustainability, particularly associated with on-site waste water treatment systems and ground water quality, is becoming more of an issue as rural development continues.

The *2030 Kankakee County Comprehensive Plan* has been developed based on input and support of citizens, business interests, County communities, townships, schools, and many other people sharing an interest in the bright future of Kankakee County. The Plan looks to the year 2030, and seeks to understand those critical long-range issues and opportunities the County and its communities must effectively manage to realize its vision. The Plan establishes the County's official policy guide and course of action for future land use, transportation facilities, public services, and natural resources over the next twenty-five years. The Plan's geography includes the unincorporated portions of Kankakee County. Planning within the extraterritorial jurisdictions (ETJ's) of the County's municipalities, was based on substantial cooperation and input from each community to ensure the County Plan reflects local community growth and development preferences. Under Illinois law, cities and villages have the right to plan and approve subdivisions, as well as review County zoning petitions, within one and one-half miles of the communities' limits (the ETJ). So too, the County has a right to plan within these areas. Yet, the only reasonable and effective way to plan within these areas is through collaboration and plan consistency. Therefore, Kankakee County is committed to developing cooperative relationships with municipalities in order to create sound plans, effectively utilize limited resources, and streamline government and reduce redundancy.

The new Comprehensive Plan builds upon current major land use patterns of the County. Because the County is vastly agricultural in character (87% of its land mass), a key element of the plan is agricultural conservation and protection. While the planning program

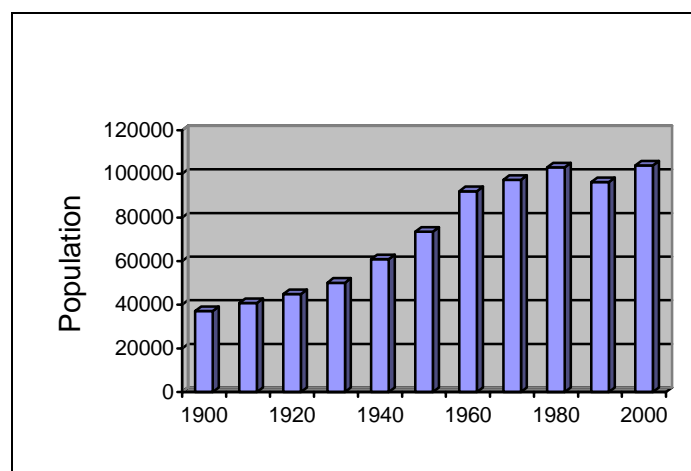


will allow limited development to support agricultural services, it will seek to direct new development to the County's communities. 71% of the County's population currently resides in County municipalities. Further, the plan emphasizes the need to provide adequate services and facilities with new development, and encourages community annexation and infill development.

A. A Brief History

Kankakee County was first settled by Europeans in the early 1830s. Pioneering families converted prairies to corn and wheat fields, and supporting industries were built along the County's rivers. In 1853, the Illinois Central Railroad was built through the County, and Kankakee County formalized its geographic boundaries. The City of Kankakee became the County seat, and grew around the County's train station, which transported crops to Chicago. By 1900, most of the County's current villages were incorporated and provided basic services for the rural settlers. Throughout the 1900s, the County's population grew and prospered by producing agricultural and industrial goods. By 1940, industry displaced agriculture as the County's prime income source. Due to foreign competition, the County experienced a major economic decline in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which resulted in employment and population declines. However, the County rebounded in the 1990s with a focus on transportation, food, and chemical industries. Figure 1-4 highlights the County's population growth over the last 100 years.

Figure 1- 4: Kankakee County's Growth, 1900-2000



Source: U.S. Census and REPG



B. Purpose of the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is Kankakee County's official policy guide to future land use, development and conservation over the next twenty-five years. The Plan addresses county needs and opportunities, while placing an emphasis on physical development, transportation, and services and facilities for the County and its municipalities. It is geographically comprehensive in coverage, in that it applies to all unincorporated areas of the County. It is long-range in orientation, and intended to express general goals, policies, and implementation actions. Nevertheless, the Comprehensive Plan is also specific enough to guide day-to-day land use and development activities in the County.

C. Planning Process

Community involvement in the development of the *2030 Kankakee County Comprehensive Plan* has been essential to ensure it represents the needs and interests of the County as a whole. A range of participation activities were conducted to elicit citizen and community concerns and aspirations for Kankakee County during each step of the planning process. Ultimately, the *2030 Kankakee County Comprehensive Plan* is the product of a consensus-building process to determine a future vision that provides a basis for intergovernmental cooperation and implementation. Copies of background reports and work papers described below are available for review on the County's web site, or are available at the Kankakee County Planning Department.

Step 1: Existing Conditions Analysis

The first phase of the planning process documented existing conditions in the County including population, economic trends, natural resources, transportation, and land uses. The following community activities provided support for a vision statement, issues and opportunities, and goals and objectives:

- A Project Initiation meeting with the Kankakee County Regional Planning Commission's Land Use Subcommittee
- Key Person Interviews with a range of Kankakee County and community interests
- A Joint County Board, Land Use Subcommittee and Zoning Board meeting
- Regular meetings with the Land Use Subcommittee

The product of this step, *Existing Conditions Report*, was produced, reviewed and refined by the County and the public.



Step 2: Alternative County-Wide Land Use Plans

The second phase of the Plan involved the creation of three alternative land use scenarios and related implementation strategies. The three scenarios included:

- *Business as Usual* - which was prepared as an extension of current development and socio-economic patterns in the County. The business as usual scenario sought to provide citizens an understanding of the impacts, positive and negative, of continued current development trends in the County.
- *Urban North and Rural South* - which sought to focus development in the northern portions of the County - capitalizing on suburban development pressures in the area. The southern portion of the County would remain primarily agricultural in character.
- *Town and Country* - which seeks to direct the vast majority of new development to the County's municipalities. The purpose is to preserve the rural character of the County and minimize development impacts on rural services and facilities.

Community input to review refine and critique the scenarios was extensive and included:

- Workshops with representatives of Kankakee County cities and villages;
- Community Meetings with key representatives of Kankakee County cities and villages;
- County Zoning Board and Planning Commission meetings;
- County-wide open house for the general public; and,
- Regular meetings with Kankakee County Board Land Use Subcommittee.



Land use workshop in the City of Kankakee

As a result of this input, strong consensus was reached on the *Town and Country* scenario as the preferred land use vision. This concept emphasizes that new growth should be directed to the County's communities in order to maintain the distinction between urban and rural settings.

Step 3: Draft Plan and Adoption

The final phase involved the production and adoption of the final *2030 Kankakee County Comprehensive Plan*. The Plan incorporates key information on existing conditions, the preferred land use vision, and the final recommendations for land use, transportation, natural resources, and public facilities. With adoption, the County will implement priority recommendations of the Plan and work with municipalities to facilitate cooperative planning



within extraterritorial jurisdictions. Ultimately, the Plan provides guidance to proactively direct future growth patterns in a manner that preserves the County's urban and rural character.

D. Community Vision, Issues, & Opportunities

A successful comprehensive plan must be based on the needs and aspirations of the community. In Kankakee County, a variety of public participation activities have guided officials and citizens in defining a shared vision for its future. In particular, key person interviews were conducted with a cross section of Kankakee officials, residents, and business leaders. The purpose of the interviews was to introduce the comprehensive planning process and gain insight on county-wide issues and opportunities. A dozen different group meetings were held with various interests, including:

- Engineers working in Kankakee County
- Village of Manteno officials
- Chamber of Commerce and State Department of Commerce
- Commercial developers
- City of Kankakee officials
- Drainage Districts
- Soil and Water Conservation District
- Village of Bourbonnais
- Search Committee
- Pembroke Township officials
- Village officials from Momence and Grant Park
- Village of Bradley officials
- Limestone Township representatives
- Residential real estate professionals
- "County west" communities
- Farm Bureau representatives

This process helped generate the overall Vision for Kankakee County in the future. It also engaged citizens and public officials in identifying issues and opportunities facing Kankakee County. In the end, Kankakee County's Vision provides a central, orchestrating theme that guided preparation of its Comprehensive Plan.



Vision for Kankakee County

The County of Kankakee is committed to preserving, protecting, and enhancing our community's quality of life through responsible growth and sound fiscal management. As we build closer relationships to Chicago, downstate Illinois, and the "Global Regions," we also will protect our natural, cultural, and societal resources that define our heritage and legacy. We will continue to streamline all facets of county government, eliminate redundancy, consolidate public services, and establish quality of life indicators to measure our progress. Twenty-five years from now, we will celebrate our successes, rural and urban lifestyles, cultural diversity, agricultural resources, educational attainment, and exceptional quality of life.

The following summary serves as a "checklist" to help ensure that planning recommendations are responsive to community issues and opportunities and that they build upon and support the Vision for Kankakee County. The issues and opportunities in this section relate to the County as a whole, and were summarized from community input during interviews, committee meetings, and public meetings and workshops.

Strengths and Opportunities

The strengths and opportunities for Kankakee County were identified through the community participation process. Although priorities were not established, County-wide assets may be grouped into the following four general categories.

Land Use and Development

- Diversity and strength of agriculture
- Small towns
- Rural environment
- Space for residential and independent growth
- Plenty of good lots with adequate infrastructure
- Diversity of population
- Diversified/business and agriculture
- People/educated workforce
- Low sales tax rate
- Industrial base that can be expanded
- Shopping mall
- Great quality of life
- Availability of diverse housing
- Rural aspects/open land/housing cost



Transportation

- Good North-South transportation
- Proximity to Chicago and Champaign
- Easy access to I-57, I-55 and airport
- Rail and road access
- Rail/Metra
- K3 Airport

Natural Resources

- Natural resources/farmland
- Open space/forest preserve and wetlands
- Water supply
- Kankakee River (recreational opportunities, water supply, etc)

County Facilities

- Good government
- Good government employees
- Education
- Good colleges: Olivet University, and KCC
- Two primary care hospitals in County
- State Park
- Recreational activities (boating, fishing and golf)
- Regional water treatment
- Stable school system
- 911 Safety system
- Police protection

Issues and Weaknesses

A number of issues and weaknesses for Kankakee County were identified and prioritized through the community participation process. The following forty-five issues are listed by order of importance, with number one being the most important issue.

1. Education funding
2. Lack of North, East-West corridor
3. Lack roadways throughout County
4. Growth model - compact vs. sprawl
5. Industrial growth
6. Infrastructure needs
7. East-West truck traffic
8. New airport impact costs
9. Protect natural open spaces
10. Landfills
11. Importance of agriculture preservation
12. Growth consensus
13. School districts overcrowding
14. Metro service to Chicago
15. Communication intergovernmental relations
16. Safe keeping of water supply
17. Residential spread
18. High growth in jobs
19. Prison in Pembroke need
20. Impact fees
21. Housing development higher quality
22. River crossing
23. Public transportation, rail, bus and air
24. Preserve and enhance river
25. Role of county in growth management
26. Subdivision of prime agricultural land
27. Too many objectives among local governments
28. Development without infrastructure
29. Special interest groups should not dictate policy
30. Adequacy of water in future
31. Incentives for infill housing
32. City comprehensive plan updates
33. Rezoning consistency decisions
34. Long range public services plan
35. Safety in future
36. Social service mutual aide agreements
37. Adequate financial structure



- 38. Water sewer service to west across river
- 39. Forest preservation
- 40. Health care affordability with growth sprawl
- 41. Cost of urban vs. rural living

- 42. Washington Street Corridor Study (continuity)
- 43. Media parochialism
- 44. Secure safety of existing neighborhoods
- 45. Overlapping jurisdictional issues

Without the benefit of a clear statement of community expectations and aspirations, there would be little consensus upon which to evaluate land use and development decisions. The *2030 Kankakee County Comprehensive Plan* fulfills this purpose. It has been developed with substantial community input, and represents the conclusion of a year-and-a-half long planning process.

E. Plan Organization

The *2030 Kankakee County Comprehensive Plan* is divided into seven major elements. The content of each of these major elements include:

- ***Demographic Profile and Trends*** - An overview of major demographic trends highlights the County's population growth, density, income, age, and minority populations. This element also shows population and housing projections on a township by township basis, as well as for the entire Kankakee County.
- ***Land Use Plan*** - The Land Use Plan illustrates the County's preferred overall pattern for future development and conservation in the unincorporated area's of the County. It explains in detail plan recommendations and describes planning concepts developed in association with communities for their extraterritorial jurisdictions. Finally, the Land Use Plan provides more detailed recommendations for three key sub-areas within the County: Limestone Township, Pembroke Township, and "North I-57" between Manteno and Bourbonnais/Bradley.
- ***Transportation Plan*** - Closely linked to the Land-Use Plan, the Transportation Plan establishes an overall program for improved access through Kankakee County. It includes recommendations for the local roadway and highway system, mass transit, commuter rail and freight service, and aviation. The Transportation Plan also incorporates the County Corridor Preservation Program, which has been updated to reflect recommendations made in the Land Use Plan.



- ***Natural Resources, Open Space, and Recreation Plan*** - The Natural Resources, Open Space, and Recreation Plan includes a variety of recommendations to maintain and expand the County's system open space system. The Plan incorporates and builds upon the County's Greenway Trails Plan. Based on citizen input, it includes several recommendations for open space and conservation.
- ***Public Facilities Plan*** - The Public Facilities Plan includes water service, wastewater treatment services, police and fire services, and public schools. Based upon Land Use Planning recommendations, the Public Facilities Plan makes provision for continued services in the County based on existing public facility capacities.
- ***Economic Development Plan*** - Kankakee County's overall employment trends and projections are explained in this element, as well as its live-work relationships and education levels. More importantly, the County's economic development options are highlighted, particularly those related to its transportation assets and educational investments.
- ***Implementation Summary*** - This section provides a summary of all implementation actions recommended as part of the comprehensive plan. It includes a prioritization of actions as well as an indication of those who would be responsible for implementation.

