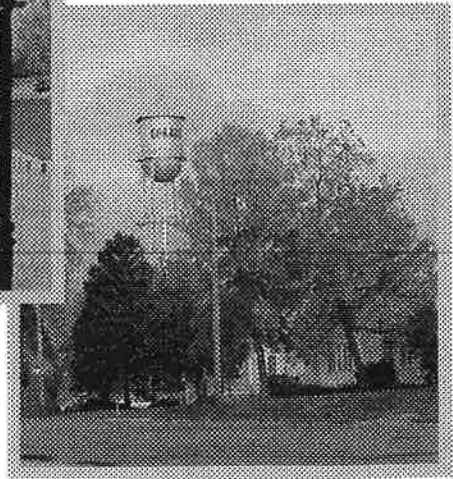
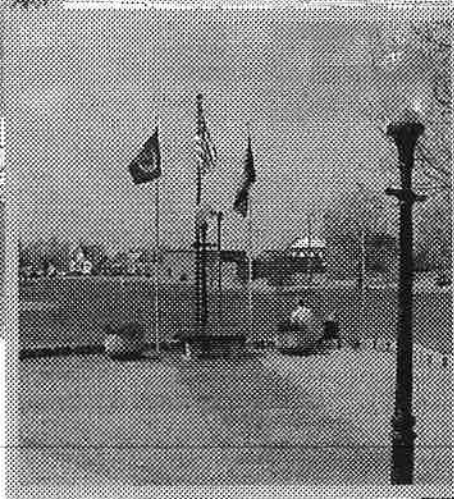
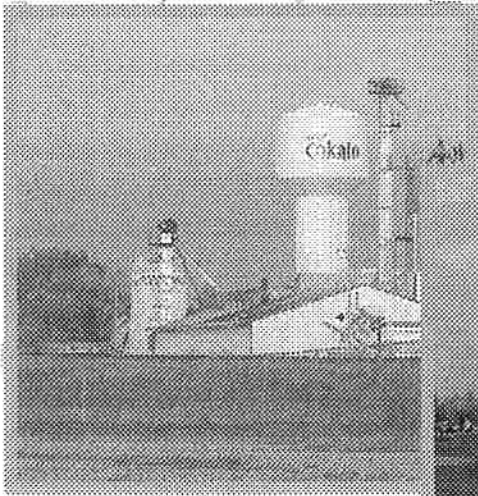


Cokato Comprehensive Plan 2003



Approved January 21, 2003

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

COKATO COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

INTRODUCTION	1
Community Setting	
Planning Process	
Strengths/Opportunities	
Weaknesses/Threats	
Community Wide Vision Statements	
BACKGROUND REPORT.....	10
Demographic Characteristics	
Housing	
Economic Overview	
Transportation Overview	
Park and Recreation Overview	
Community Facilities Overview	
Environment	
Land Use Overview	
GOALS AND STRATEGIES	59
Formulation of Goals and Strategies	
General Goals and Strategies	
Land Use Goals and Strategies	
Housing Goals and Strategies	
Transportation Goals and Strategies	
Economic Development Goal and Strategies	
Park, Recreation and Open Space Goal and Strategies	
IMPLEMENTATION	76
Land Use and Growth Management	
Growth Management Areas	
Plan Recommendations	
Official Controls	
Review and Revision	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Community Base Map.....	4
Figure 2	Population Change 1990 to 2000	12
Figure 3	Median Age in 2000.....	16
Figure 4	Existing Road Functional Classification System Map.....	40
Figure 5	Existing Park Facilities Map	51
Figure 6	Environmental Features Map	52
Figure 7	Existing Land Use Map	58
Figure 8	Future Land Use Map	80

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Population Trends 1980-2000	14
Table 2	Population by Age 2000.....	17
Table 3	Household Characteristics Cokato Area 1980-2000.....	23
Table 4	Housing Units Built by Year 2000.....	25
Table 5	Household Projections – MN and Wright County 1990-2020	27
Table 6	Employment by Occupation 2000.....	29
Table 7	Employment by Industry 2000	29
Table 8	Household Income 1999	30
Table 9	Major Employers 2001.....	32
Table 10	Traffic Volumes – Highway 12 1988-2000.....	37
Table 11	Traffic Volumes – County Road #3 1988-2000	37
Table 12	Traffic Volumes – County Road #53 1988-2000	37
Table 13	Traffic Volumes – Other 1988-2000	38
Table 14	Parkland Ratio	41
Table 15	Existing Land Use 2002.....	54

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF CHARTS

Chart 1 Population History 1900-2000.....15

Chart 2 Population by Age – Minnesota 1990-2000..... 18

Chart 3 Population by Age – Wright County 1990-2000..... 19

Chart 4 Population by Age – Cokato 1990-2000 19

Chart 5 Population by Age – Cokato Township 1990-200020

Chart 6 Population by Age – Stockholm Township 1990-200020

Chart 7 Median Age 1990-2000 21

Chart 8 Owner and Renter Occupied Housing Units (1990) 23

Chart 9 Owner and Renter Occupied Housing Units (2000) 24

Chart 10 Total Housing Units 1990-200026

**City of Cokato
Comprehensive Plan**

Introduction

COMMUNITY SETTING

Cokato is a city of just over 2,700 people located in Wright County in Central Minnesota. It lies roughly 40 miles south of St. Cloud and 50 miles west of the Twin Cities on Highway 12. The city currently covers approximately 1.51 square miles. Cokato contains numerous natural features such as wetlands, a creek that meanders through the community and Brooks Lake located on the north end of the community.

The first settlers came to the Cokato area in 1858, settling just south of Sucker Creek. At the time, all of southwestern Wright County was called Middleville Township. Cokato and Stockholm Townships were established in July of 1868.

As with many Central Minnesota communities, the railroad played a crucial role in defining a community and attracting residents. The First Division of the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Company (later Great Northern) built a line west from Howard Lake to Willmar in 1869. A station was built at the 59-mile marker. After building the rail station in 1869, settlers began arriving. Businesses sprang up virtually overnight to serve the influx of people. These businesses included hotels, general stores, saloons, blacksmith shops and a post office. The Village of Cokato was officially founded by a vote of young settlement residents on March 9th in 1878.

The first settlers were Yankees, people from states like New York, New Hampshire and Maine. They came to speculate (buy and sell) land and establish businesses. Soon, waves of immigrants from Europe began to arrive. They were mostly from Sweden and Finland, but also included Norwegians, Germans, Poles and Bohemians. Today, Cokato is still known as a Swedish and Finnish community.

The name Cokato is a word from the Lakota language. Roughly translated from “co-ka-ta” it means “in the middle of” or “in the midst of”. This area was once the geographic center of a region known as the Big Woods, which stretched from the Mississippi River to about Willmar. So, the first settlers choose the name Cokato assuming they were in the middle of the woods.

Over the course of History, Cokato has experienced steady population growth, serving as a regional commerce center for the rural community and railroad operations. During the 1990’s, the city began to grow at a more rapid pace due to the rising trend of people desiring to live in a small-town, rural setting that is in close proximity to the metropolitan area. Although the city largely functions as a stand-alone community, the city recognizes its unique position as a bedroom community for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. This is largely due to the location of the community on Highway 12 and direct access to the west metro suburbs of Minneapolis.

The first school building was built in Cokato in the early 1870’s. This one-room structure was soon outgrown, and buildings in town were used for classes. A new, two-story, brick structure was built on the site of the present Cokato Elementary in 1884. The first graduating class was in 1904, with three graduates.

INTRODUCTION

In Central Minnesota, cooperation among governmental agencies (townships and cities) has been contentious at best. However, the residents of Cokato and the City of Dassel put differences aside and created the Dassel-Cokato School District in 1972 to meet the growing demand for service as the population grew.



Figure 1 – Community Base Map

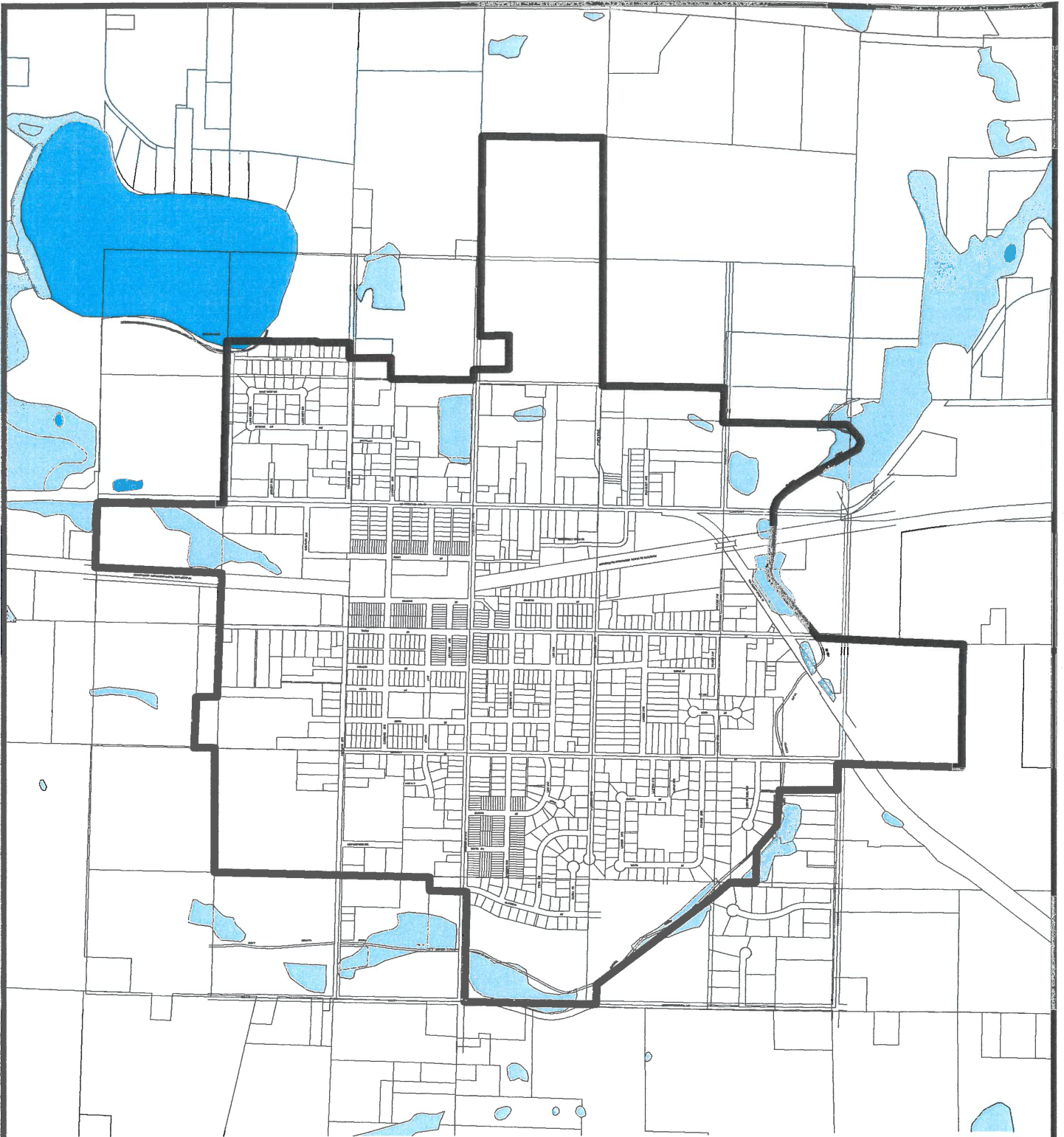





Figure 1
Community Base Map
 2003 Comprehensive Plan
 Cokato, Minnesota



Cokato parcel data provided by BRA, Inc.



0 1000 2000 3000 Feet

	City Boundary
Waterbodies	
	Wetlands/Marshes
	Lakes

PLANNING PROCESS

The community planning process was divided into three primary phases:

1. Inventory and Analysis,
2. Goals and Strategies Development and Plan Preparation,
3. Plan Refinement, and Adoption.

The city secured the services of a professional consulting firm to facilitate the planning process. The city also appointed a Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) made up of citizens and City Officials representing many interests and perspectives in the community. The PAC was charged with providing input on the background research and other work products prepared by the consultants. The group was particularly focused on developing a set of goals and policies for inclusion in the Plan and reviewing the Plan document. A listing of the PAC membership is included in the Acknowledgements.

Public involvement was an important component of the Cokato Comprehensive Plan process. The planning process began in February of 2002 with the Project Kick-off Session. At this meeting many community members participated and brought important opinions to the table. At the Kick-off meeting Cokato citizens had the opportunity to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the community, define the issues the city should address in the Plan, and discuss community-wide goals. The strengths and opportunities were used to form the major focus points of the Plan.

STRENGTHS/OPPORTUNITIES

Although the listed strengths and opportunities cover a broad spectrum of issues, the issues that elicited the most agreement can be grouped into four main themes. A detailed report of the Strengths/Opportunities is located in Appendix A.

Small Town Community Spirit. Many residents felt that the sense of community in Cokato has propelled the community to success. The community is defined in many ways by its heritage, residents, the faith community, strong moral values, low crime and a strong ethic.

Economy / Location. The community is blessed with many economic and geographic advantages that will help to ensure a positive future for Cokato, not the least of which was the location of the community in relationship to the Twin Cities and St. Cloud Metro Areas, the presence of strong business leaders and the ability to grow a local business base.

Parks & Open Spaces/Visual Appeal. Cokato is located in the midst of prairie and farm fields. Much of the beauty of the area is represented by the amount of open space, parks and natural beauty. Brooks Lake provides an opportunity for recreational opportunities and an enjoyable backdrop to the city. Although identified as a weakness, Sucker Creek may be considered an asset for future park and trail development.

The city will need to address maximizing the utilization of the existing open space and designing appropriate additional parks and recreational facilities for the future.

City Services. The city of Cokato is a progressive community with significant investments in public infrastructure. The city is responsible for the maintenance of city streets, water system, sanitary sewer, flood control, and police and fire. In addition, the city operates a public library and the Cokato Museum. The public was generally satisfied and pleased with the infrastructure and public facilities within the community during the winter of 2002. However, due to an abundance of rain and high water levels in the City and Wright County during the spring of 2002, the City experienced tremendous stress on the storm sewer and sanitary sewer systems in portions of the community. It will be important for the community to address improvements to the infrastructure and public facilities in the future. The Comprehensive Plan will help to set forth goals and policies that continue to allow for the provision of adequate services and continued maintenance/upgrading for the residents.

The community needs to not only recognize its assets, but also its shortcomings. The weaknesses and threats to the future health of the community were noted at the Kick-off Session.

WEAKNESSES / THREATS

Although the listed weaknesses and threats also cover a broad spectrum, the issues that elicited the most consensus can be grouped into five main themes. A more detailed report of the Weaknesses/Threats is located in Appendix A.

City Government. By far the greatest concern expressed by the group was inadequate service provided by city government and administration. The residents expressed frustration with City Hall and responsiveness to issues. As with any growing community, city services tend to have growing pains as well.

Social and Cultural Concerns. Nothing is so constant as change. As the community celebrates its successes, it must also address new social and cultural concerns. The community recognizes the changing demographics for the city. Specifically, the city needs to address the lack of opportunities and activities for youth and seniors.

Economic Development. The residents recognize the need to provide a variety of economic opportunities. There is interdependence between a healthy downtown and a vibrant retail community. The residents also desire more opportunity and choices when it comes to specific retail services that are available in Cokato. In addition, the limited activity of the Economic Development Authority and industrial development has provided some opportunity for the local work force. The Plan will work to further define these local needs and establish action steps for the city.

Transportation. The concerns focused on the development of the community as it relates to Highway 12. With the recent expansion of Highway 12, many citizens feel it has divided the community physically. In addition, the maintenance of the current street infrastructure was deemed inadequate. The Comprehensive Plan will guide the city as it addresses capital improvement projects and suggest tools to assist in dealing with the Highway 12 corridor.

Growth Management. The community is concerned that growth is not managed in an appropriate manner. Participants recognize that the costs of growth are significant both to the developer and to the community. The city must also address environmental issues as it sees additional growth. The Comprehensive Plan will address these issues as it examines future growth boundaries, annexation and capital improvements.



In addition to the Kick-off meeting, the Planning Advisory Committee conducted four (4) Focus Topic meetings where residents from the city and the surrounding townships, City Council members, Planning Commission members and EDA members learned about community issues, gave input into resolving the issues, and discussed goals and strategies to address the issues in the Comprehensive Plan. The Focus Topic meetings were well attended and a list of participants is located in the Acknowledgements. A concerted effort was made to make the public meetings accessible to a broad spectrum of citizens and meetings were scheduled during the early evening to make them more accessible to the greatest number of people. In addition, the city either broadcast the meetings live or on tape delay across the city's cable access channel.

Once the Focus Topic meetings were complete, a draft comprehensive plan was prepared and reviewed by the Planning Advisory Committee and Planning Commission.

COMMUNITY-WIDE VISION STATEMENTS

The vision for the city of Cokato is a compilation of ideas expressed by its citizens during public Kick-off and Focus Topic workshops. The vision statements are broad position statements which were used as a guide for the development of more specific goals and policies.

Cokato will be...

A Place that is Inviting, Family-Oriented, and has Strong Neighborhoods.

Cokato must be a place that promotes community pride and preserves the quality of life for all parts of the city. The community desires to be a place to raise a family within strong neighborhoods, which accept all races and new residents equally. Cokato shall be an accessible community where its residents Live, Work, Play, Serve and Worship.

A Place with Economic Opportunity

Cokato's location along the Highway 12 corridor and proximity to the Twin Cities has made it a major employment center in the county. The community must strive to diversify its economic base and plan for commercial and industrial development along growth corridors. However, the community must maintain a connection to the Downtown District from the Highway 12 Growth Corridor.

A Place that is Aesthetically Pleasing.

Development should not only be sensitive to the natural surroundings, but also the impact it has on the existing streetscape, buildings and architecture. The community desires to create an attractive community and implement a city beautification program to improve the quality of development through careful consideration of building materials, signage, landscaping and vegetation and attractive streetscapes.

A Place of Recreational and Cultural Opportunities

The city will strive to create a community with abundant trails, walking paths, parks and activities for people of all ages. The city will also strive to create an attractive downtown area for cultural and civic events, including the enhancement of the Museum and Library.

A Place where Development is Compatible with the Environment

Most residents see growth and change as continuing through the next decades. Residents also recognize the need to ensure that “growth for the sake of growth” does not become the theme for the community. The community must remain mindful of the need to balance growth and environmental preservation by ensuring planned housing growth, and orderly growth with public infrastructure and flexibility with city government.

**City of Cokato
Comprehensive Plan
Background Report**

The existing pattern of development and other conditions in the city of Cokato and the surrounding area have a great influence on the community's future. Accurate, complete and up-to-date information on existing conditions is essential to a successful comprehensive plan. However, an inventory and analysis of existing conditions provides merely a snapshot of a community at a point in time, but when analyzed against past trends, future trends may be estimated. Thus, the insight that any past and future trends offers is often more important than the numbers themselves. The Cokato story is a compilation of the snapshots.

Background information for this report was gathered and analyzed for eight key planning components including:

- Demographic Characteristics
- Housing
- Economic Overview
- Health Care
- Land Use & Growth Management
- Environmental Features
- Downtown
- Infrastructure

The information gathered during this phase of the planning process, combined with the issues articulated during the Kick-Off and Focus Topic Meetings, was instrumental in the development of goals and implementation strategies for the Comprehensive Plan. A summary of background information on each key component is included in this Background Report.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The city of Cokato has been the beneficiary of good location, good community growth and excellent economic opportunity. The community has seen steady growth over the past century that has allowed it to become a significant residential and economic center in Central Minnesota.

Below is a more detailed discussion of the population and other demographic characteristics of the community.

POPULATION

The identification of trends in population growth and other demographic data is a very important part of the comprehensive planning process. It can provide clues to future growth patterns and indicate what types of housing and public facilities may be needed in the future.

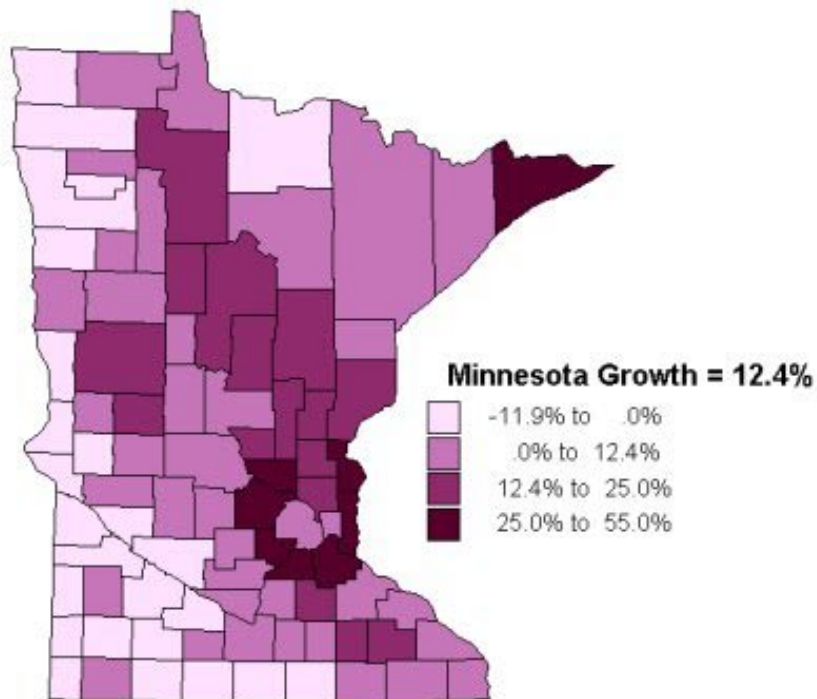
For example, an increase in young couples with children would require starter housing, new parks and schools, and new or upgraded community facilities; whereas, an increase in the elderly population would lessen the need for schools and increase the need for specialized housing. This section of the Comprehensive Plan contains information on Cokato's population including age, income, and education as well as household characteristics.

Minnesota is one of the fastest growing mid-western states. However, the population growth trends are not evenly distributed across the state as shown in Figure 2. From 1990 to 2000, population increases were generally seen in and around the Twin Cities metro area, retirement counties in north-central Minnesota and around major regional centers throughout the state. Rural counties in southwestern Minnesota and in the Red River Valley experienced population losses as residents moved to job centers and mid-sized communities.

Cokato and Wright County benefit from being located as a collar growth county just west of the Twin Cities.

Figure 2
Population Change 1990 to 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Population growth within Wright County can be attributed to the growth associated with the city of Cokato. The city of Cokato accounted for approximately 2.3% of all population growth within Wright County. Many rural townships in Wright County experienced a population increase over the past decade as well. This is consistent with the growth of Cokato and Stockholm Townships.

According to information in the 2000 US Census, the population of the city has increased by 32.6% in the past 20 years from 2,056 persons in 1980 to 2,727 in 2000. The city's population grew faster than the state as a whole, which increased in population by 20.7% during the same time period. On the other hand, Cokato's growth rate was slower than that for Wright County, which grew by 53.3% in the same time frame. The high growth rate of the county is attributed to the development in and around St. Michael, Buffalo and Monticello.

The city's proximity to the Twin Cities metro area has fueled some of its growth. Growth has been facilitated by the presence of Highway 12, which runs between Cokato and the western Twin Cities suburbs and the growth in local business and employment bases. These factors make Cokato an attractive location for those desiring to live in a semi-rural (mid-sized community) setting close to the Twin Cities. This is consistent with trends that show increased movement toward rural areas located near large metropolitan areas. This trend is evident throughout the Twin Cities metro area where smaller "satellite" communities such as St. Michael, Jordan, Cambridge, and others have experienced rapid growth over the past two decades.

It is reasonable to expect that the city's population will continue to grow as people migrate from the growing Twin Cities area in search of a more rural lifestyle and as existing younger residents of the city begin to establish families. Increased population coupled with the national trend of lower density development, essentially ensures that the city will increasingly experience geographic growth pressure as well.

Table 1 below, *Population Trends*, shows the changes in population that have taken place over time in Cokato and surrounding townships. Comparisons also are made to Wright County and the state of Minnesota.

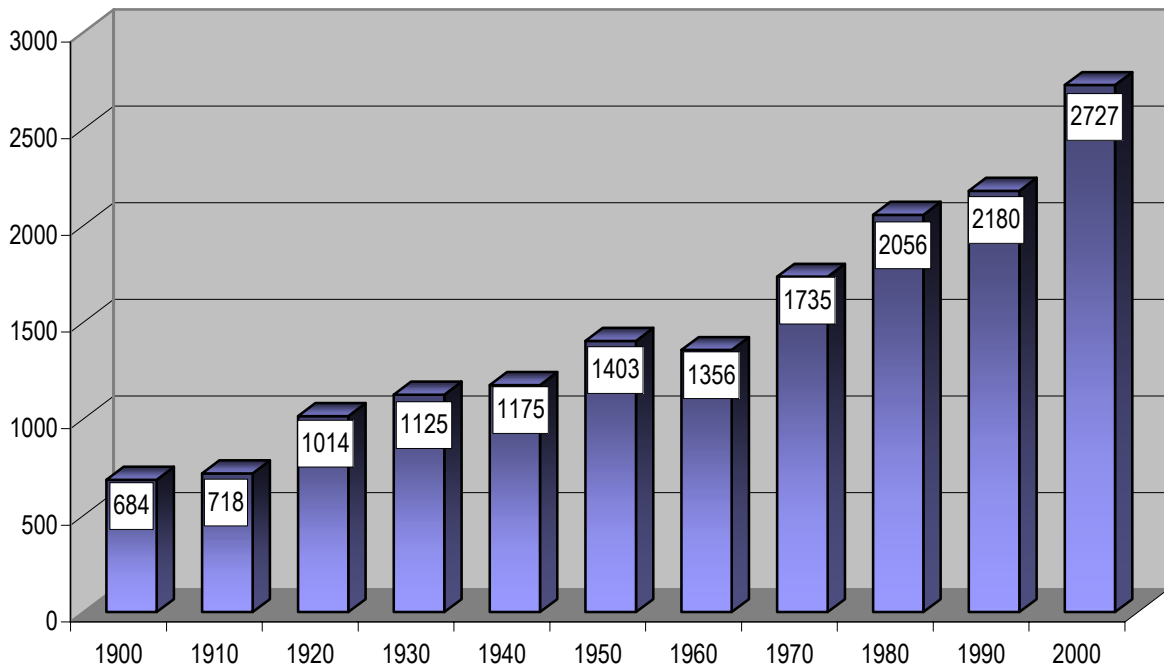
**Table 1
Population Trends
Cokato Area
1980-2000**

	1980	1990	1980 - 1990		2000	1990 - 2000	
			Change	% Change		Change	% Change
Cokato	2,056	2,180	124	6.0%	2,727	547	25.1%
Cokato Township	947	1,100	153	16.2%	1,238	138	12.5%
Stockholm Township	779	773	-6	-0.8%	805	32	4.1%
Wright County	58,681	68,710	10,029	17.1%	89,986	21,276	31.0%
Minnesota	4,075,970	4,375,099	299,129	7.3%	4,919,479	544,380	12.4%

Source: US Census

The city of Cokato’s growth rate increased significantly over the past decade. There were over four times the number people added in 1990s as compared to the 1980s. There are many factors for this population increase; the biggest is the age cohort of the area, which will be explored in later sections.

**Chart 1 - Population History
Cokato
1900-2000**



Source: US Census

Chart 1 above indicates the population of Cokato has increased steadily over the last 100 years. The only decade that lost population was 1950-1960. The chart above demonstrates the stable growth of the community. This trend is expected to continue into the future.

POPULATION BY AGE

The population in Minnesota and the nation is steadily aging as the baby boomer generation reaches maturity. There has also been a recent increase in the younger age groups in many communities – known as the baby boomer echo. This trend is replicated in Wright County and in the Cokato area specifically, with the median ages being below the statewide average.

Figure 3 Median Age in 2000

Source: U.S. Census

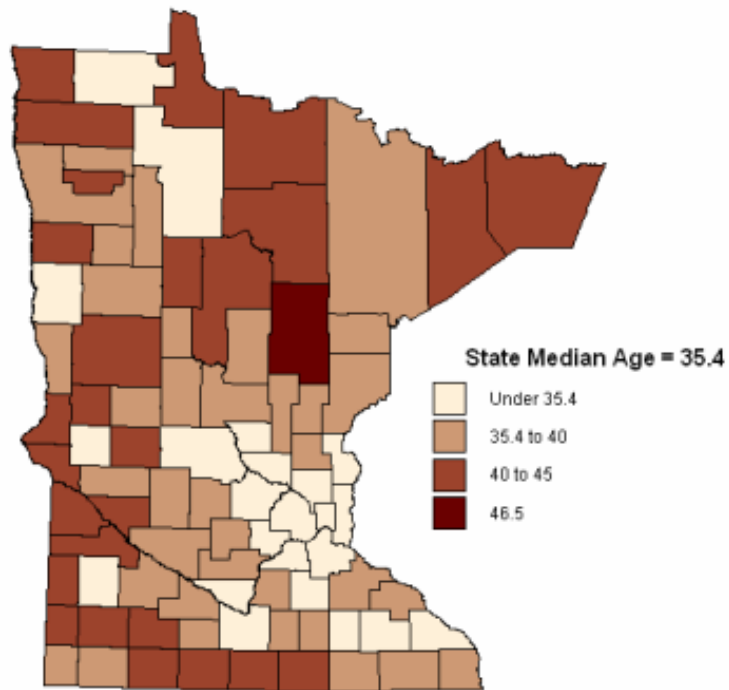


Table 2, *Population by Age*, shows population breakdown by age for Cokato, Wright County, surrounding townships and the state of Minnesota. As evidenced in Table 2, the median age for many communities throughout Minnesota has been increasing in recent decades. However, Cokato has not followed this trend with its median age dropping from 35.2 in 1990 to 33.3 in 2000.

Information from both the 1990 Census and the 2000 Census indicates that the city has seen its largest population gain in the Under 5 to the 15-19 year old age groups. This correlates to the city having a lower median age than surrounding areas and the state.

**Table 2
Population by Age
2000**

Age Cohort	Cokato		Wright County		Minnesota	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 5	260	9.5%	7455	8.3%	329594	6.7%
5 - 9	234	8.6%	7775	8.6%	355894	7.2%
10 - 14	231	8.5%	8082	9.0%	374995	7.6%
15 - 19	218	8.0%	6981	7.8%	374362	7.6%
20 - 24	155	5.7%	4561	5.1%	322483	6.6%
25 - 34	325	11.9%	13084	14.5%	673138	13.7%
35 - 44	367	13.5%	16257	18.1%	824182	16.8%
45 - 54	282	10.3%	11101	12.3%	665696	13.5%
55 - 64	178	6.5%	6775	7.5%	404869	8.2%
65 - 74	164	6.0%	4114	4.6%	295825	6.0%
75-84	195	7.2%	2751	3.1%	212840	4.3%
85 years +	118	4.3%	1050	1.2%	85601	1.7%
Total	2727	100%	89986	100%	4919479	100%
Median Age	33.3		33.1		35.4	
Age Cohort	Cokato		Cokato Township		Stockholm Township	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 5	260	9.5%	118	9.5%	48	6.0%
5 - 9	234	8.6%	125	10.1%	83	10.3%
10 - 14	231	8.5%	161	13.0%	93	11.6%
15 - 19	218	8.0%	186	15.0%	69	8.6%
20 - 24	155	5.7%	53	4.3%	36	4.5%
25 - 34	325	11.9%	78	6.3%	90	11.2%
35 - 44	367	13.5%	219	17.7%	139	17.3%
45 - 54	282	10.3%	144	11.6%	103	12.8%
55 - 64	178	6.5%	69	5.6%	75	9.3%
65 - 74	164	6.0%	53	4.3%	33	4.1%
75-84	195	7.2%	26	2.1%	31	3.9%
85 years +	118	4.3%	6	0.5%	5	0.6%
Total	2727	100%	1238	100%	805	100%
Median Age	33.3		22.0		32.2	

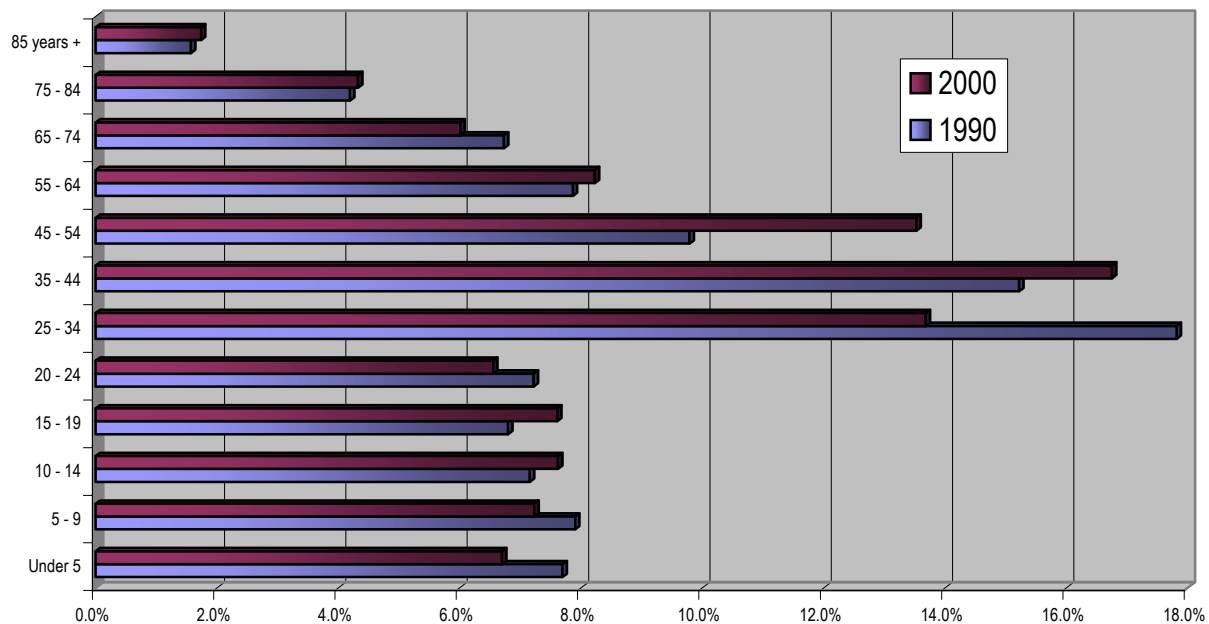
Source: 2000 US Census

The 30 to 49 year old age groups tend to be looked at as the new generation of community leaders and business owners, and their children are found throughout the school system from kindergarten to 12th grade. These age groups also tend to be active in the community and demand high quality services for their children and families. However, these age groups also tend to be highly mobile and may move away from a community to find better opportunities. Within this population range, the 30 to 34 year olds are typically first-time homebuyers while the 35 to 49 year olds are typically included in the move-up homebuyer market.

Cokato has higher than average percentages in the “under 5”, through “15-19” and 75-84, and 85 years + age cohorts. This would indicate both the presence of young families with small children and the presence of post retirement age residents.

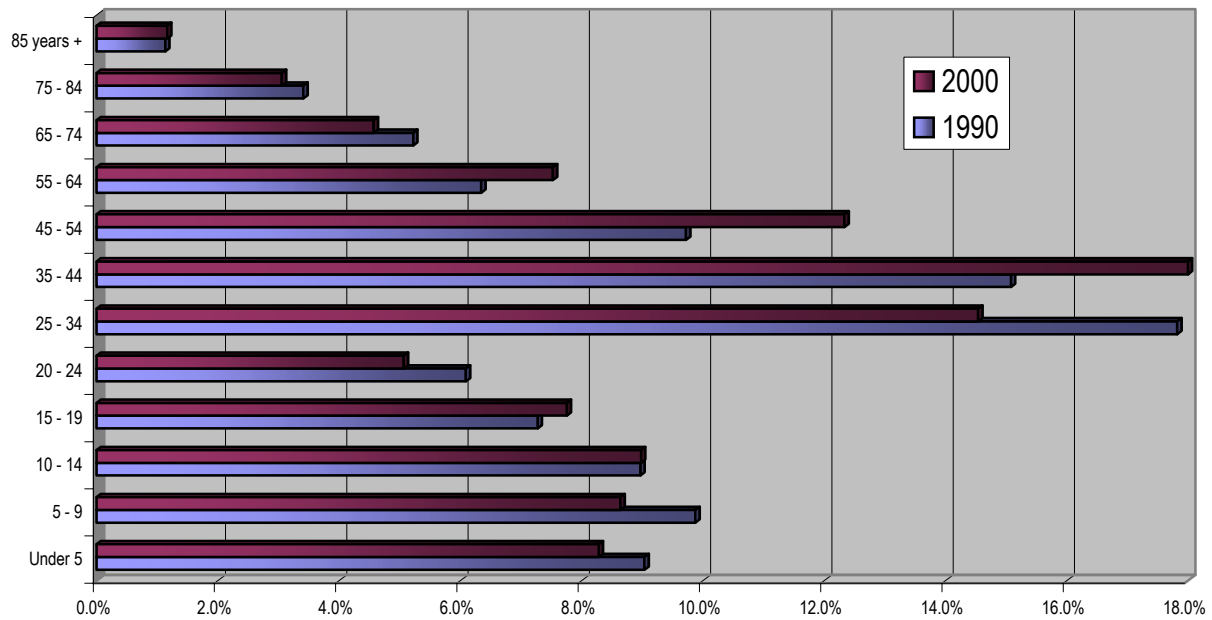
The significantly larger percentages in the 19 and under cohorts indicate the presence of a larger group of young families with many small children. This may cause a need for the community to provide entry-level homes. The community also has a strong presence of people in the “75-84” and “85+” category. The availability of health services, churches and shopping make Cokato a logical location for senior or elderly housing options. As a result of the aging of the baby boomer generation, this trend will likely continue into the next ten to twenty years. Housing for these individuals will continue to change over time and the community should work to offer the newest and most effective facilities for this population group.

**Chart 2 - Population by Age
Minnesota
1990-2000**



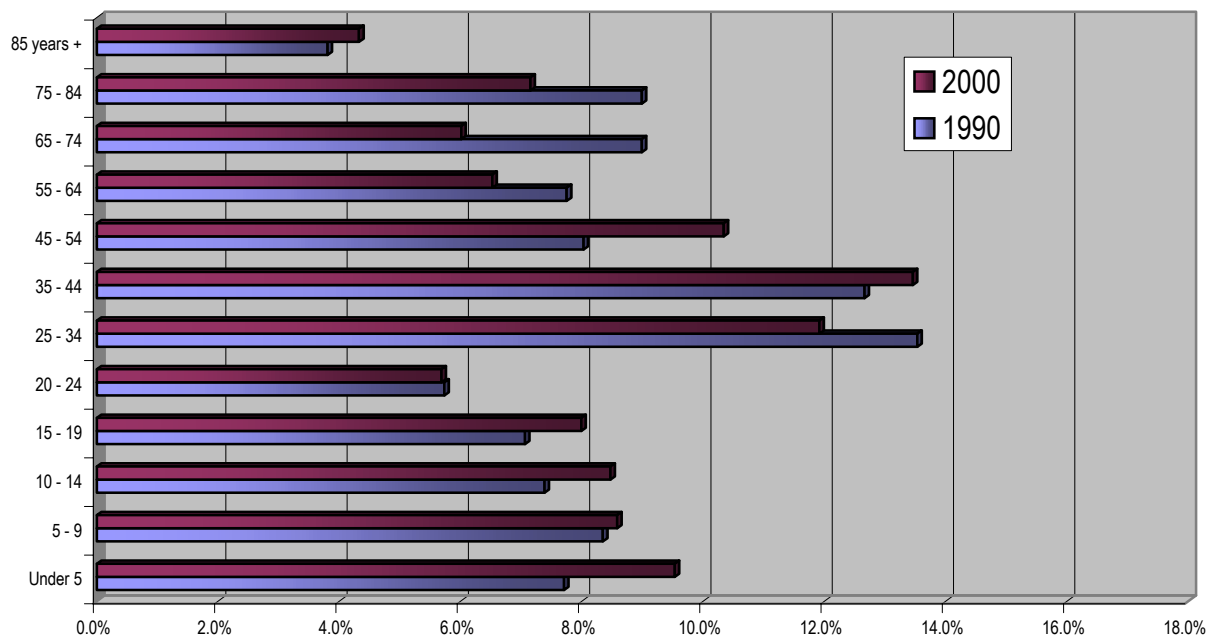
Source: US Census

**Chart 3 - Population by Age
Wright County
1990-2000**



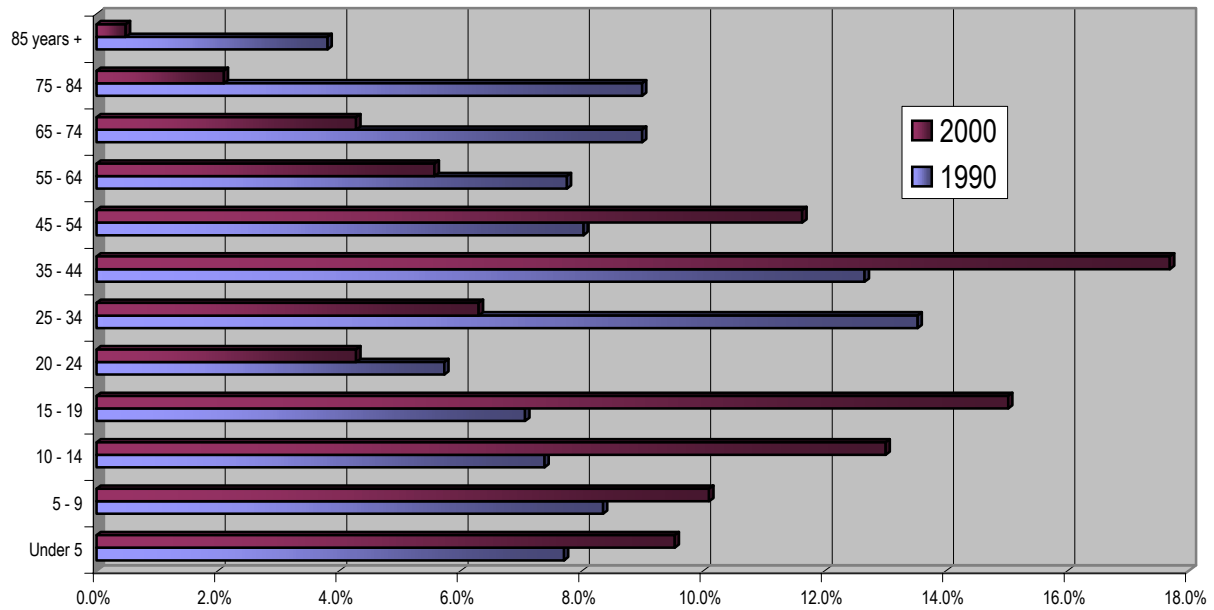
Source: US Census

**Chart 4 - Population by Age
Cokato
1990-2000**



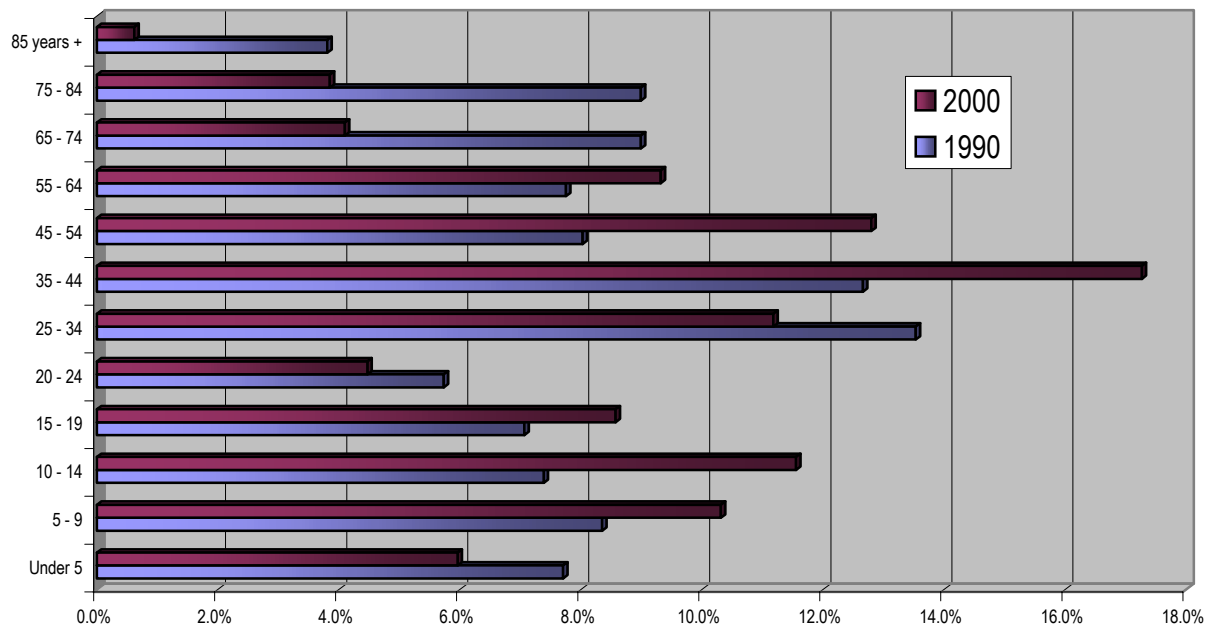
Source: US Census

**Chart 5 - Population by Age
Cokato Township
1990-2000**



Source: US Census

**Chart 6 - Population by Age
Stockholm Township
1990-2000**



Source: US Census

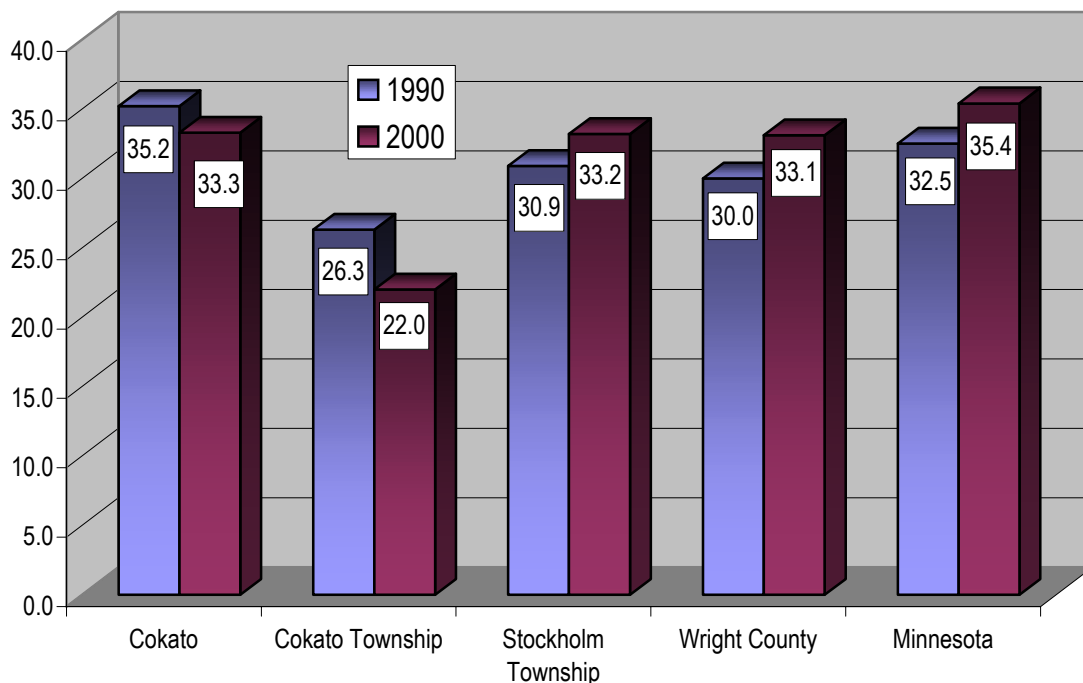
The 20 to 29 year old age group is typically the group that is starting out on its own and putting stakes in the community. Members of this age group, particularly in the upper end, are beginning to enter the family formation years, thus increases or declines in this age group may indicate increasing or declining school enrollments in the near future.

The 20 to 24 year old group is typically the age when many are seeking higher education and broader employment opportunities, which may account for the decline as these people leave Cokato to explore these opportunities.

The 55 to 64, 65 to 74 and 75-84 year old groups have seen increases in Cokato. Persons in the 55 to 64 year age group tend to be empty nesters and may move to smaller homes while young seniors aged 65 to 74 often seek a variety of housing options. Empty nesters in these age groups begin to abandon homes with several bedrooms and two or more stories for lower maintenance, two bedroom units, often on one story.

The 85 and over population has also seen high growth. This is due partly to the fact that people are living longer than they did previously, but it may also be the result of older residents in the surrounding rural areas moving to the city to be closer to services. A sustained 85+ population has several planning implications for the city. Park and recreational demands of this group tend to be for passive activities rather than ball fields and playgrounds. Social services, elderly housing and medical services will be in demand and will most likely need to be located near one another.

**Chart 7 - Median Age
1990-2000**



Source: U. S. Census

A low median age is associated with families that have young children. The median age of Cokato is lower than the state of Minnesota. Wright County, Cokato Township and Stockholm Township have a median age that is lower than the city of Cokato. This supports the previous analysis that the area as a whole has a large portion of young families with children. Such a population will place demands on community facilities such as parks, elementary and high schools, where if the population were older then more attention would need to be focused on senior housing and elderly care.

HOUSING

The character of households can change over time in two ways as it relates to a city's population growth: by number and by size. If over time population growth is coupled with an increase in both the number and size of households, it generally tends to indicate a community growing from within, i.e., a high birth rate. However, if population growth is reflected by an increase in the number of households and a decrease in the size of the household, it may indicate that the community is growing due to an influx of new residents. The Central Minnesota Housing Partnership in collaboration with the city of Cokato developed a Cokato Housing Plan to identify local housing conditions and to plan for future housing needs. The study consisted of the entire city of Cokato and the townships of Cokato and Stockholm. The study was completed in October of 2001.

The follow information was obtained from the Cokato Housing Plan. To review the Cokato Housing Plan and recommendations in its entirety, contact the City Administrator for the city of Cokato.

During the past ten years, the community has experienced very strong household and population growth. According to the 2000 Census, the community has a population of 2,727 with 990 households, a 25% increase in population and an 18% increase in households since 1990. Also, the 2000 Census indicates an increase of 159 housing units since 1990 for a current total of 1,035 housing units.

The city of Cokato and the surrounding townships have experienced larger increases in population due to larger household and family size. According to the 2000 Census, the community has approximately 2.75 persons per household compared to 2.61 in 1990. The household size is even larger in Cokato Township at 3.88 persons per household. This indicates that the community is growing from an influx of new residents with large families. This trend is not consistent with the national trends of smaller family sizes and more single person households. Table 3 shows that, along with the population, the number of households increased in Cokato and surrounding townships between 1990 and 2000.

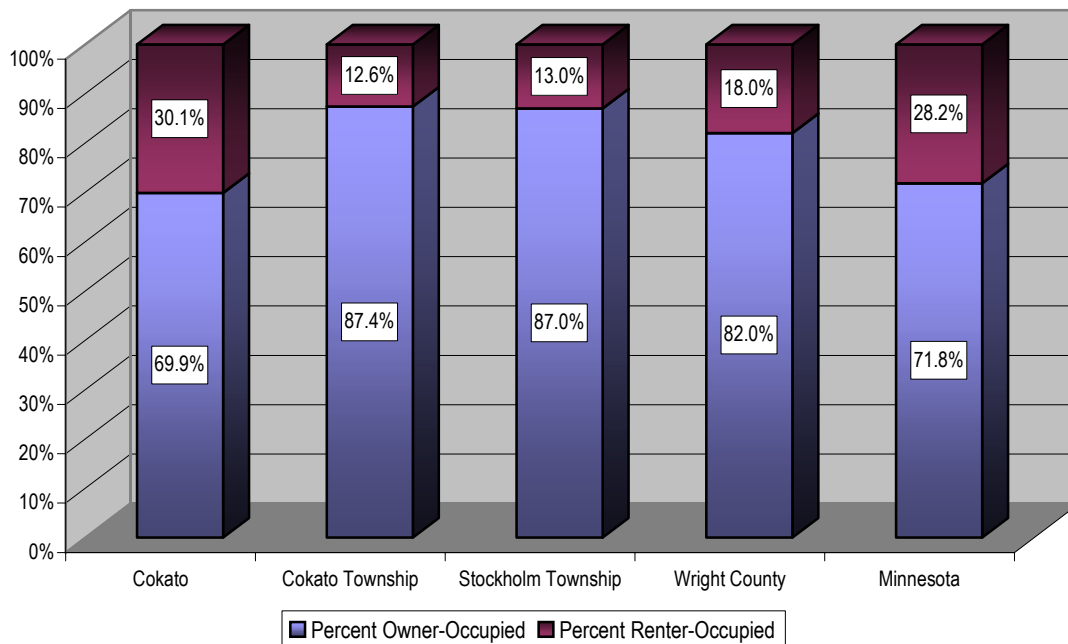
**Table 3
Household Characteristics
Cokato Area
1980-2000**

	Total Households			Average Household Size		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
Cokato	726	836	990	2.83	2.61	2.75
Cokato Township	285	310	319	3.32	3.55	3.88
Stockholm Township	231	240	258	3.37	3.22	3.04

Source: 1980, 1990, 2000 US Census

The following charts show the percentage of owner occupied housing compared to the percentage of renter occupied housing. From 1990 to 2000, the city of Cokato saw no significant changes in owner and renter occupied housing units. However, the adjacent townships of Cokato and Stockholm and Wright County have seen a decrease in the percentage of renter occupied units. This trend can be directly related to the increase in population and additional single family housing units constructed in the area and county.

**Chart 8
Owner and Renter Occupied Housing Units
1990**



**Chart 9
Owner and Renter Occupied Housing Units
2000**

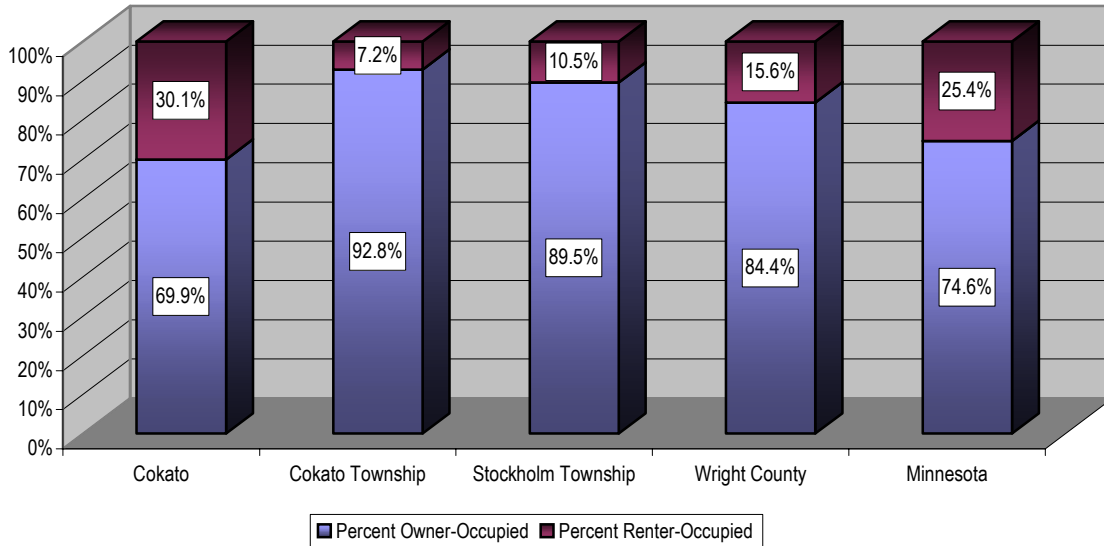


Table 4 illustrates the age of housing the city of Cokato. The largest percentage of the community’s housing stock was built prior to 1940. Prior to 1940, 286 housing units were created and account for over 27.7% of the city’s housing stock. Over 42.9% of the current housing stock in the community was built before 1960. This data supports two growth periods within the community. The development that occurred during the 1980s and 1990s was also one of the largest increases in new housing units. The housing units built in the 1980s and 1990s consist of 27.5% of the city’s current housing stock.

However, based on the first two years of the 21st Century, the city of Cokato is averaging 35 units per year. If that growth continues for the period of 2000-2009, it is anticipated that 350 new housing units would be constructed. This supports the demographic data of increasing population, low median age and an increase in families moving into the community.

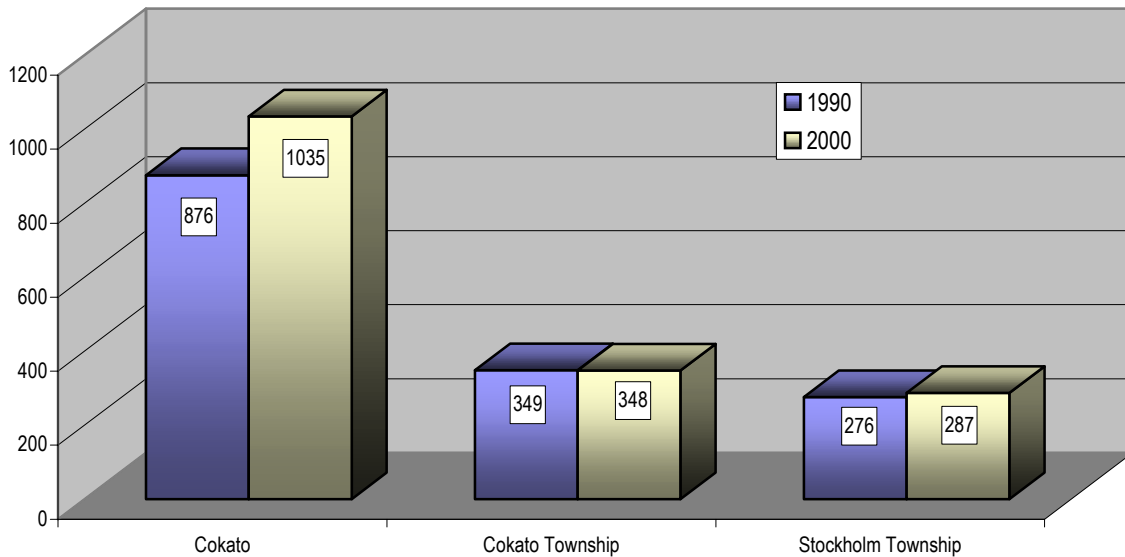
Table 4
City of Cokato
Housing Units Built by Year
2000

Year Built	Number of Units	Percentage of Units
1999-March 2000	10	1%
1995-1998	99	9.6%
1990-1994	67	6.5%
1980-1989	118	11.4%
1970-1979	204	19.8%
1960-1969	90	8.7%
1940-1959	157	15.2%
1939 or earlier	286	27.7%
Total	1,031	100%

Source: 2000 Census

Chart 8 indicates that the city of Cokato has seen a much larger increase in housing units compared to the surrounding townships. One could conclude from this data that people moving from the Twin Cities to Greater Minnesota want a small town atmosphere while still demanding the services that a city can provide. However, Stockholm and Cokato Townships are still experiencing growth in housing units which is not typical among Central Minnesota townships.

**Chart 10 - Total Housing Units
Cokato Area
1990-2000**



Source: U.S. Census

Table 5 indicates population and household projections for both the state of Minnesota and Wright County. The information was obtained from Minnesota Planning. Previous population charts indicate the potential statewide decline in younger age groups and a significant increase in older age groups over the next 20 years. This trend mirrors similar trends nationwide. However, the projections for Wright County show an increase in households of married couples with children, corresponding with the population statistics detailed earlier in this section.

It is important to note that household projections for Wright County have been surpassed based on the 2000 Census Data. In 2000, Wright County had a total of 31,465 households, which exceeds the number of households projected for 2010. Wright County is one of the fastest growing counties in the State of Minnesota, and the increase in households in the County will continue into the future and new projections should be monitored.

**Table 5
Household Projections
Minnesota and Wright County
1990 - 2020**

Household Projections					Household Projections				
State of Minnesota					Wright County				
Household Type	1990	2000	2010	2020	Household Type	1990	2000	2010	2020
Married-Couple	942,524	995,090	1,062,690	1,135,430	Married-Couple	15,741	17,120	19,370	21,490
Married Couples with Children	459,997	459,530	429,370	422,570	Married Couples with Children	8,924	9,330	9,250	9,640
Other Family Households	188,159	221,190	246,630	265,280	Other Family Households	2,330	2,850	3,380	3,800
Other Families with Children	112,063	128,780	131,610	143,070	Other Families with Children	1,491	1,740	1,970	2,210
Male Householder	21,668	25,540	26,920	27,740	Male Householder	400	480	540	600
Female householder	90,395	103,250	109,220	115,330	Female householder	1,091	1,260	1,430	1,610
Nonfamily Households Living Alone	413,531	468,540	525,900	589,430	Nonfamily Households Living Alone	4,026	4,820	5,960	7,330
Living Alone 65+	167,001	184,000	203,750	262,230	Living Alone 65+	1,804	2,020	2,520	3,660
Other Nonfamily Households	103,639	117,510	134,130	130,890	Other Nonfamily Households	916	1,190	1,460	1,480
Total Households	1,647,853	1,802,330	1,969,350	2,121,030	Total Households	23,013	25,990	30,170	34,090
% Change 1990 – 2020				28.7%	% Change 1990 - 2020				48.13%

Source: MN Planning Office

ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Economic development means different things to different communities over time. In some cases the creation of an industrial park, which would create jobs, is the most critical economic development initiative. In other communities, development of a strong tax base to support a school system and infrastructure is a priority. In any case, economic development is a common concern and goal of nearly every community and jurisdiction in Minnesota. Like many other things, economic indicators and trends are always evolving and changing. However, the economic development vision should always be clear to potential developers and investors, as well as to the community.

Economic health is an important component of a healthy and thriving community. A strong commercial and industrial base provides jobs to community residents, contributes to a city's tax base, and can be a source of psychological strength to a community. This can best be explained when one compares a downtown area consisting of boarded up buildings with one that has a thriving business sector.

The community with the vacant or boarded up buildings appears listless and drab, while the one with the strong downtown community is lively, busy and thriving.

Cokato has a relatively good economy. The city's existing commercial and industrial base is thriving, but new commercial and industrial establishments have not seen the same type of growth. A diverse economic base is needed to allow the city to survive economic downturns. The city currently has several significant employers, but has not seen a growing list of small businesses starting up in the community.

By taking a look at the city of Cokato's 2000 statistics on employment status, commuting patterns, current occupations and industry and household income, it may allow the users of this Plan to see a glimpse of the economic condition of the area.

EMPLOYMENT

Table 6 shows the occupation characteristics of citizens in Cokato. The occupation status indicates the various types of occupation types and the population of employed workers. The information contained in *Table 6* provides the city with valuable data to use when determining economic development needs and focus for marketing and recruitment. The city should use this data to focus efforts in occupational opportunities that are lacking in the community.

Table 7 shows in what industries Cokato residents work. The Manufacturing related industry employs more of Cokato's citizens, 337 more, than any other industry. This industry provides 26% of the jobs for the city's employed residents. However, due to recent closing to major manufactures in the community, Education, Health and Social Service related industry stands to employ the majority of Cokato citizens. Retail trade and construction employs about 21% of the city's workforce. It is important to note that based on the 2000 Census Data, the city of Cokato has a very diversified economic base and employment opportunities.

**Table 6
Employment by Occupation
City of Cokato
2000**

Occupation	Number of Persons	Percent of Total
Management, Professional, and related occupations	358	27.7
Service occupations	178	13.8
Sales and Office occupations	275	21.3
Farming, Fishing, Forestry occupations	17	1.3
Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance occupations	165	12.8
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving occupations	301	23.3
Total	1,294	100%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

**Table 7
Employment by Industry
City of Cokato
2000**

Industry	Number of Persons	Percent of Total
Ag, Forestry, Fisheries, Hunting and Mining	23	1.7%
Construction	123	9.5%
Manufacturing	337	26%
Transportation/Communications/Other public utilities	39	3%
Wholesale Trade	28	2.1%
Retail Trade	150	11.5%
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	54	4.2%
Information	28	2.1%
Educational, Health, and Social Services	285	22%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Admin, and Waste Mgmt.	64	4.9%
Public Administration	35	2.7%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodations, & Food Service	49	3.7%
Other Services (except public administration)	79	6.1%
Total	1,294	+/-100.0%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

PERSONAL INCOME (WRIGHT COUNTY)

According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis in 2000, Wright County had a per capita personal income (PCPI) of \$26,931. This PCPI ranked 21st out of 87 counties in the state, and was 84 percent of the state average, \$31,935, and 91 percent of the national average, \$29,469. In 1990, the PCPI of Wright County was \$16,764 and ranked 25th in the state. The average annual growth rate of PCPI in Wright County over the past 10 years was 6.0 percent. The average annual growth rate for the state was 5.9 percent; and for the nation it was 5.0 percent.

The 2000 report also showed that Wright County had a total personal income (TPI) of \$2,443,700,000. This TPI ranked 10th out of 87 counties in the state and accounted for 1.5 percent of the state total. In 1990, the TPI of Wright County was \$1,158,344,000 and ranked 8th in the state. The average annual growth rate of TPI in Wright County over the past 10 years was 11 percent. The average annual growth rate for the state was 7.9 percent; and for the nation it was 7 percent.

Total Personal Income (TPI) includes the earnings (wages and salaries, other labor income, and proprietor's income); dividends, interest, and rent; and transfer payments received by the residents of Wright County. In 2000, earnings were 75.9 percent of TPI (compared with 73.7 percent in 1990); dividends, interest, and rent were 14.6 percent (compared with 15.9 percent in 1990); and transfer payments were 9.4 percent (compared with 10.2 percent in 1990). From 1990 to 2000, earnings increased on average 11.7 percent each year; dividends, interest, and rent increased on average 9.3 percent; and transfer payments increased on average 9.3 percent.

MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Table 9 shows the major employers in Cokato and the products or services they provide. Cokato Public Schools is Cokato's largest employer followed by Cokato Manor. The major employers in Cokato are diverse; several industries are represented rather than one dominant industry. A diversified employment base is often considered desirable. A community with a diverse range of employment base is more able to weather industry fluctuations.

The Dassel-Cokato School District is the largest employer within the area. The Elementary and Secondary School is the major employer within the city. However, the High School is located outside of the community but employs many Cokato and Wright county residents. Many employees commute from the city for work. Gone are the days of people living, shopping, going to church and working in the same community.

Table 9
Major Employers
City of Cokato
2001

Employer	Product/Service	# of Employees
Dassel-Cokato Public Schools	Elementary, Secondary, High School	300
Cokato Manor	Skilled Nursing Care Facility	165
Fairbault Foods	Food Processing	100
Market Place	Grocery Store	98
AME	Community Service/Disabled Person	68
Holt Motor Company	Auto-Truck Sales and Service	65
Saunatec	Recreation Equipment (Sauna/Steam Rooms)	50
Airtex Consumer Products	Plastic Foam Products	50
Norseman Restaurant	Eating Establishment	41
Paisley Consulting	Software development and sales	41
Raydot LLC.	Ventilation Equipment	33
Advanced Process Technology (APT, Inc.)	Fab-Engineering food products pharmaceutical products & Fabrication of animal trans equipment	44
Forward Technology	Plastic Bonding Equipment	35
State Bank of Cokato	Banking	25
Olson Chain and Cable	Fabrication of wire-rope, machine shop and construction equip sales	17

Source: MN Department of Trade & Economic Development, Community Profile, City Offices

COKATO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Successful economic development is predicated on the availability of land, financial resources, educated employees and the entrepreneurial spirit. Cokato currently lacks a marketing and business plan for economic development, which is essential in expanding industrial operations within the community. This has surfaced as the significant stumbling block to economic development efforts.

The city of Cokato is committed to the goal of economic development. The preservation and creation of jobs, enhancement of tax base and promotion of the general welfare of the people of Cokato are the primary objectives of the city's economic development activities.

To meet these objectives, the Cokato Economic Development Authority (EDA) was established by the City Council in 1982. The Council granted the EDA limited powers available to EDAs under MS Sections 469.090 to 469.108. The Cokato EDA primarily functions as an advisory board while the City Council has all final decision-making authority.

The city also provides business assistance through tax increment financing, tax abatement and the issuance of industrial revenue bonds, and works with local lenders to provide conventional financing. The city also works closely with regional and state agencies, such as the Wright County Economic Development Partnership and the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development, which offer additional economic development programs.

The city also works closely with the Cokato Development Corporation (CDC), which was established by local businesses owners in the early 1960s. The CDC is a local organization currently active in promoting economic development within the community. The CDC currently owns industrial property and is actively seeking tenants and promoting the addition of new workers to the community.

TRANSPORTATION OVERVIEW

As a growing community, there are few things more important to the quality of life in Cokato than transportation. A city's transportation system has a great influence on its future growth and development, as the network of streets in a community determines land use relationships and configurations. The city's traffic patterns will continue to evolve and will be influenced by development and roadway improvements both within the city of Cokato and outside the city's jurisdiction.

Comprehensive Plans typically address transportation issues with regards to general travel patterns and emphasis areas. During visioning sessions and staff interviews, issues of safety, increased traffic volumes and funding became common themes regarding transportation deficiencies.

Transportation planning is a study of the cyclical relationships between land development and the need for transportation facilities. The steps that frequently occur during the "development-improvement-development" cycle are:

- Land development generates vehicle trips
- Additional trips increase roadway needs
- Needs dictate roadway improvements
- Improvements modify access
- Modified access changes land values
- Changed land value attracts intensified development
- Intensified development generates more trips
- (More trips lead back to the second step of the cycle)

Within this cycle, the objective of transportation planning is to provide the information necessary for making decisions on when, where and what type of improvements should be made in the transportation system so as to satisfy current and anticipated travel demands and to promote land development patterns that are in keeping with community goals and objectives.

The land use and transportation planning process seeks to answer a number of important questions concerning existing and forecasted future travel patterns:

- What will be the magnitude of population and economic activities in the future?
- Where will these activities be located?
- How many trips will these activities generate?
- Where will these trips be attracted to?
- Which mode of travel will the trips use?
- What alternatives/strategies are available to relieve demands on the transportation system?
- Which route will be utilized to reach the trip destination?
- What is the best overall transportation system to handle the future trip desires.

With the city of Cokato being an economic hub for the county, federal, state and local agencies, need to be involved in planning the transportation system of Cokato and the surrounding areas. Many of the agencies described within this section have and will continue to play a critical role in developing transportation strategies, approvals and funding at the local and regional level.

Federal Tier. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are all involved in providing funding and review of transportation projects. Generally, the corresponding state agencies are given the primary responsibilities for overseeing the federal programs.

State Tier. Both the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) are involved with assessing state concerns with planned transportation projects. Mn/DOT oversees the Interstate Highway and Trunk Highway system and provides secondary support assistance to cities, metropolitan planning efforts and transit planning activities. Mn/DOT maintains a five-year Capital Improvement Program that prioritizes project needs with a statewide perspective. The MPCA's responsibilities include monitoring developments and projects having potential environmental impacts. The MPCA also becomes involved in large development or roadway projects that require Environmental Assessment Worksheets (EAW), Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) or Indirect Source Permits (ISP).

County Tier. The Cokato area includes Wright County. It is also important to note the proximity of Cokato to Meeker County may impact transportation planning in the future. Collaboration between the city, Wright County and adjacent townships will be crucial as the city expands within these jurisdictions.

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

In an effort to educate decision makers regarding the different types of road designs and systems, this section will define roadways according to the type of service they provide. There are two primary functions of a roadway system: land access and mobility. It is a challenging task for cities to provide access for shoppers and employees to local businesses and industries, while at the same time provide efficient through transportation for regional travelers. These challenges are further complicated by the need to balance the conflicting needs of pedestrians and the automobile.

Arterial roadways primarily serve a mobility function with minimal land access. Interstate Highways and Trunk Highways often are called principal arterials. Interstate Highways have no direct land access. Trunk Highways have almost no access and are generally limited to access via major center driveways.

Arterial streets within the city are usually classified as minor arterials. Major cross streets are typically signalized and arterials are given the right-of-way over all other streets. Channelization is frequently used to limit access.

Collector roadways serve an approximate balance between land access and mobility. Typically, few residential driveways are provided, however full access is usually provided with other collectors and local streets. The collector street's objective is to provide movement from the local street system to the arterial system. Typical traffic controls include signalization with intersecting arterials. Collector street intersections may be signalized or controlled with four-way stop signs. Local streets are usually under stop sign control with collector streets having the right-of-way.

Local streets primary function is to serve local land access with little emphasis on mobility. In a residential setting, numerous driveways are provided. Often intersections between local streets are uncontrolled with the right-of-way assigned by the rules of the road. As traffic volumes increase, stop signs are usually installed in a pattern that limits mobility but avoids the stopping of vehicles at every block.

The following definitions will further define the description of each classification mentioned above:

Principal Arterials. These roadways serve moderate to long trips lengths and provide a system to distribute traffic making external trips. Turning movements are often handled with channelized turn lanes or signal systems. Their very nature causes them to divide neighborhoods and to have negative effects on adjacent residential land uses. Principal Arterials are characterized by an emphasis on traffic mobility rather than land access, typically with traffic counts in excess of 8,000 cars per day. Typical speeds are between 30 and 50 miles per hour. Principal Arterials typically have access to Minor Arterials and Collectors, which are described below. Typically there is no direct land access to these arterials with the exception of major traffic generators.

Minor Arterials. These thoroughfares either augment the arterial system in more densely or intensively developed areas or provide service in lieu of Principal Arterials in less densely or intensively developed areas where trip lengths are relatively short. Minor Arterials provide a somewhat lower level of mobility than that provided by Principal Arterials but should not penetrate identifiable neighborhoods.

They may, however, provide slightly greater direct access to abutting properties than a Principal Arterial. Traffic volumes on Minor Arterials are generally in excess of 3,000 cars per day. Access to these arterials should be limited to Principal and other Minor Arterials and Collectors.

Collectors. These streets serve as connections between local streets and Minor Arterials. Their principal function is to carry short trip lengths and to serve adjacent land. At the same time, they must be capable of moving relatively large volumes for limited distances. They may also carry traffic to and from dispersed major traffic generators. Access to Collectors includes other Collectors, Minor Arterials, Local Streets, and direct access to/from abutting lands.

Local Streets. Residential streets that carry less than 100 cars per day and have average speeds of less than 20 MPH are the best example of Local Streets. They serve almost exclusively to collect and distribute traffic by connecting blocks within neighborhoods and specific activities within similar land uses. Access to local streets is through Collectors, and other Local Streets, and direct access to abutting properties.

From a design perspective, the concept of functional classification is more important than the actual maps that illustrate the details of the designations. The functional classification map shows the desired system and it represents a plan of how certain streets will be emphasized. Often this map is in conflict with the actual existing travel characteristics. Proper design of a street should impart its function to the driver through its consistent use of traffic control, roadway width, development setbacks and the configuration of adjacent land access. It is important for the city to develop its functional classification system to achieve their mobility and accessibility goals.

TRAFFIC COUNTS

The following tables show traffic counts over a period of time through the community. Trunk Highway 12, County Road 3, County Road 53 and other corridors were analyzed. Trunk Highway 12 carries the majority of east-west regional traffic through the community. County Road 53 also carries a significant amount of east-west traffic as it serves a parallel minor arterial to Trunk Highway 12. County Road 3 also functions as a Minor Arterial for the city of Cokato and moves traffic north and south through the community.

Due to land uses, access points and high traffic volumes throughout the community, Cokato is challenged to ensure local pedestrians are safe. The challenge is to ensure pedestrian safety as traffic continues to flow through the community.

Table 10
City of Cokato
Traffic Volumes
1988-2000

<u>Highway 12</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>2000</u>
West of Johnson	4,800	5,200	6,900
Johnson to CR #3	7,740	8,900	9,800
CR #3 to CR #4	6,015	6,800	9,800
South of CR #4	4,540	5,200	7,100

Source: MN Department of Transportation

Table 11
City of Cokato
Traffic Volumes
1988-2000

<u>County Road #3</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>2000</u>
North of Highway 12	1,900	2,500	2,200
Hwy 12 to 2 nd Street	3,250	5,400	5,000
2 nd Street to 7 th Street	2,890	6,100	6,100
South of 7 th Street	N/A	3,450	3,100

Source: MN Department of Transportation

Table 12
City of Cokato
Traffic Volumes
1988-2000

<u>County Road #53</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>2000</u>
Hwy 12 to 3 rd Street	2,400	2,850	2,800
3 rd Street to CR #3	1,500	2,550	4,100
3 rd Street to Hwy 12	2,400	3,450	3,400

Source: MN Department of Transportation

**Table 13
City of Cokato
Traffic Volumes
1988-2000**

<u>Road</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>2000</u>
County Road #4	1,050	1,200	1,200
County Road #31	780	930	900
Johnson Avenue	N/A	340	300

Source: MN Department of Transportation

COKATO ROAD CLASSIFICATION

The functional classification of roads in Cokato is shown on Figure 4. In summary, Cokato’s street hierarchy is as follows:

<u>Principal Arterial</u>	<u>Minor Arterial</u>	<u>Collector</u>
Trunk Highway 12	County Road 3 County Road 53	County Road 4 Johnson Avenue

The remaining streets within Cokato are classified as local streets. It is important to note that Johnson Avenue does not support the criteria associated with a collector system, but the current function of Johnson Avenue supports the classification of this road corridor as a collector street.

With each step upward in the street hierarchy comes an increase in the size and carrying capacity of the roadway. Large trucks would soon destroy local streets if they were allowed to use them and conversely, it is equally counter-productive to imagine building major thoroughfares in front of every house. Therefore, determining the size, location and timing of construction of roadways is what transportation planning is all about.

One basic principle of land use planning, tied directly to traffic, is that land uses that generate heavy traffic loads and require efficient access to function properly, such as industrial facilities, should be located near major thoroughfares. Conversely, land uses that generate very little traffic and which would not benefit from through-traffic, such as residential neighborhoods, should be located away from the noise, pollution and bustle of busy arterials. Thus, the relationships between streets in a transportation system is hierarchical. Each street type has been designed specifically for a separate and distinct function. Local streets are intended to collect traffic from and distribute traffic to residential areas and other low traffic generators. Local streets channel traffic to collector streets, which in turn channel it to minor arterials, and so on.

While the system can be seen as a hierarchy, the interconnected network of local streets that exists in Cokato serves an important function as well. This network of streets distributes traffic throughout the transportation system and allows multiple access points to the rest of the system, taking the stress off of one or two hierarchical access points.

FUTURE TRAFFIC CHARACTERISTICS

The forecasting of traffic movements is very difficult due to very nature of how trip - making decisions occur. While some travel patterns can change drastically, others have been found to remain stable over a long period of time. For example, the use of Highway 12 for east-west travel through the city has existed for many years.

As traffic volumes increase in the community and new development presents transportation challenges, the city must plan for new collector and possibly new arterial streets to continue an efficient and effective transportation system.

Figure 4 - Existing Functional Classification System Map

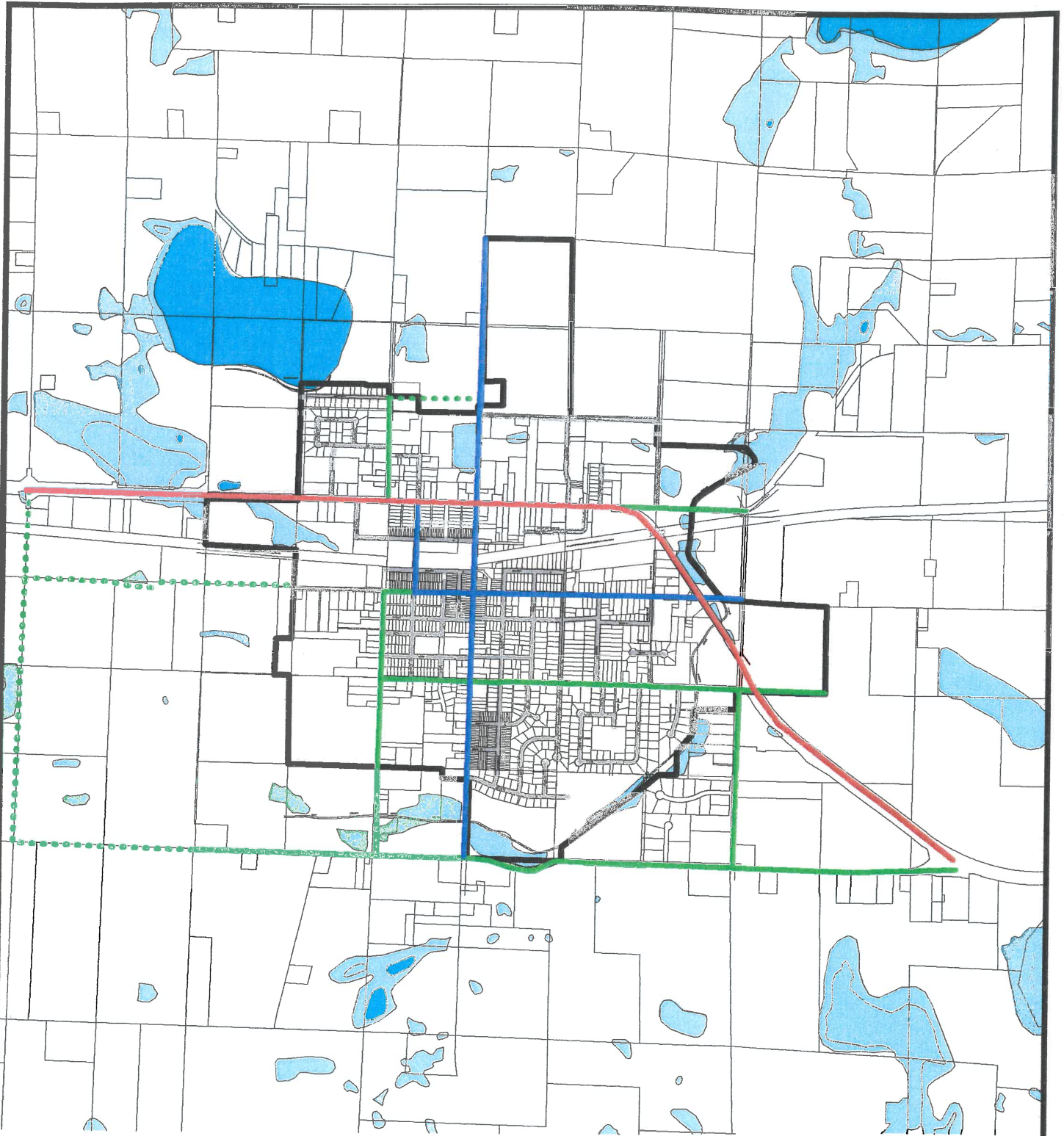











Figure 4
Road Functional Classification System
 2003 Comprehensive Plan
 Cokato, Minnesota



Cokato parcel data provided by BRA, Inc.

1/22/03



	City Boundary		Principal Arterial
	Waterbodies		Minor Arterial
	Wetlands/Marshes		Collector
	Lakes		Local
			Future Collector

PARK AND RECREATION OVERVIEW



The Parks and Recreation section includes all parks and recreational facilities and options open to the public in Cokato. This includes small neighborhood playgrounds, to large regional trail ways, to community festivities. There are currently numerous park and open space areas in the city of Cokato. However, the amount of acres devoted to park and recreation facilities are likely to grow. As the demand on park space increase, so shall the pressure to offer additional recreational facilities within the area.

In addition, parks throughout the nation are currently being reviewed for compliance with the standards of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). To avoid costly lawsuits, the community must improve its facilities so that its parks can be brought up to required standards.

A common method of determining whether a community has enough parkland to meet the needs of its residents is to calculate the acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Although the recreational needs of a community vary depending on its role in the region, the demographic mix of its residents and other factors, a standard of 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents is typically considered adequate. Table 14 below shows that city of Cokato has more than an adequate supply of public parkland with 10 acres per 684 residents. In addition, area residents have ample recreational opportunities with state trails, public waters and an abundance of open space.

**Table 14
Cokato Area
Parkland Ratio**

Acres of Parkland	39.824
2000 Population	2727 *
Parkland Ratio (Per 1,000 Population)	10:684

Source: US Census

Although the city of Cokato feels the amount park space seems to be more than adequate at this time, the growth projected with new developments may increase the ratio of parkland per 1,000 residents. If no additional parks are developed, the ratio will continue to grow and eventually exceed the national average. Again, each community is unique and funding plays a major role in park and open space creation.

If the community wishes to meet public recreational demands, accomplish its desired recreational goals, and reverse unwanted negative park trends, a park and recreational plan must be developed. By developing such a plan, the city can have an advantage in the allocation of resources to meet its desired recreation goals. In addition, Cokato can have a leading park system that provides excellent facilities for the community and region.

One of the first steps in such a plan is creating an inventory of park conditions and usage. The inventory data was collected via a community survey completed by city staff and issues identified at a Planning Advisory Committee meeting. The inventory of each facility is as follows:

COKATO VETERAN'S MEMORIAL PARK (LEGION PARK)



Cokato Veteran's Memorial Park (Legion Park) consists of 27.970 acres and is located on Johnson Avenue North in the North Western portion of the community, adjacent to Brooks Lake. Veteran's Memorial Park is the largest park in the city of Cokato and consists of passive and active recreational opportunities. The amenities include baseball/softball fields, picnic areas with shelters, open play fields, playground equipment and a boat-launching ramp. The park also has a very unique and popular feature: a fishing pier available for all ages to use. The park has ample space for additional uses and does not have water and sewer service available on site.

PRAIRIE PARK



Prairie Park consists of 4.352 acres in the center of a residential development, Builders Park Addition. The entrance to the park is located at Ninth Street South. Prairie Park offers passive and active recreational opportunities consisting of playground equipment, a ball field, picnic areas with shelters, sand volleyball court and ample open space. The park has space available on site for additional activities and/or parking space. Currently, users of the park either walk or park on the residential streets

adjacent to the park.

PETERSON PARK



Peterson Park consists of 3.997 acres and is located in the heart of Cokato, adjacent to the downtown business district and Cokato Elementary School. The amenities at the park are active and passive in nature, including a baseball field and shelter and plenty of open space. The ball field is extensively used during the summer and the open space is used by the recreation program and the Elementary School. The City also holds many community festivals and the Corn Carnival. The park is underutilized and has ample room for additional uses.

COKATO COMMUNITY POOL



Cokato Community Pool consists of .967 acres and is located at the corner of 6th Street and Jackson Avenue. The pool and open space is adjacent to the Cokato Elementary School. On the site, there is an adult pool and a kiddie pool. In addition to the pools, there are picnic shelters and open space available for passive recreation. The pool is in good condition but the lack of size and the need for improvements to the pool are concerns for the city. The pool site has limited off-street parking available across from the facility.

MOOERS PARK



Moore's Park consists of .846 acres and is located at the corner of 8th Street and Mooers Avenue. Even though this area is primarily used for winter activities such as hockey and skating, the area is also used for community education activities. The park also includes a warming house on site. The park is in need of maintenance to the boards and the expansion or reconstruction of the warming house to increase its size, for storage and bathroom facilities. The park lacks on-site parking and expansion of the park site would include the purchase of additional property.

COKATO TENNIS COURTS AND RECREATIONAL AREA



Cokato Tennis Courts and Recreational Area consists of .338 acres and is located at the corner of 5th Street and Jackson Avenue. The park includes two tennis courts and a basketball court. The area also includes a small amount of open space for passive recreation. A small amount of on site parking is located adjacent to the south side of the park. The tennis courts are in excellent shape, however the basketball court is small and not regulation size.

RAILROAD PARK



Railroad Park consists of .456 acres and is located at the corner of 2nd street and Broadway Avenue. The Park is located adjacent to the downtown business district and along the railroad tracks. The park's use is specific with eight horseshoe pits and is lighted for nighttime use. The park is in need of maintenance and improvements. There is a parking lot located on the west side of the park for users.

GOLF VIEW PARK



Golf View Park consists of .898 acres of passive recreation. The park is located at the corner of Lakeview Drive and Second Street NW. The creation of the neighborhood park provides users a quiet setting along the public golf course located just outside the city limits. The park does not have many amenities other than open space and parking is only available on the street.

UNITY PARK



Unity Park is located within the downtown business district and provides users with a passive recreational opportunity in the heart of the city. In addition, the area adjacent to Peterson Park provides another attractive area to enjoy a causal rest.



In addition to the city park system, many other recreational opportunities exist for the residents of Cokato. The City and County 9-Hole Public Golf Course, Brooks Lake and a bike and pedestrian trail along Highway 12 are all within minutes of the community and used heavily by residents and non-residents alike. However, many deficiencies in the park systems were expressed during the community visioning session and during planning meetings. These deficiencies will be addressed in the Goals and Strategies section of the Comprehensive Plan.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES OVERVIEW

The facilities owned and maintained by the city of Cokato and the other public buildings owned by the county, School District and other agencies vary in age, and condition. Due to the extent and nature of the services that these public facilities must provide to the residents of Cokato, sound and functional structures are a necessity.

The purpose of this section is to inventory the various public buildings in the city, state their condition and function and note any deficiencies or planned upgrades. The listing of the community facilities is broken down into four categories: Government, Medical Facilities, Schools, and Park and Recreation. This information was gathered by the city during the Spring of 2002.

GOVERNMENT

The Government category includes city owned buildings such as City Hall, fire, and public utilities, as well as the Cokato Public Library and Museum, and the United States Post Office. These facilities are found in most cities and are vital to the function of government.

City Hall – 225 Broadway Avenue

Condition: This structure was constructed with funds from the federal WPA program and was built in 1939. The building is a multi-purpose building housing the city offices and community space. The building is a brick structure and underwent renovations in the late 1980's and again in 2001.

Function: This community structure provides space for the city offices, council chambers (lower level) and various meeting spaces. The structure also has a kitchen facility on the upper level, with meeting space with a capacity of 175 persons. The building is equipped with an elevator for compliance with ADA requirements. The third level is primarily used for storage space for civic organizations.

Improvements: The long-term (5-10 year) space needs included additional room for city personnel by moving the Council Chambers to the second level and expanding office space in the lower level. The city is considering moving some existing meeting space to other locations within the downtown.

Fire Station – Jenks Avenue

Condition: The fire station was built in 1968 and consists of 4,000 square feet. The steel structure is in good condition and underwent a renovation in 1982. The current site has no room for expansion of the facility.

Function: This facility provides fire service for the community and 90 square miles, including Stockholm, French Lake and Cokato Townships. Major equipment includes: 1993 Preece Dash Pumper, 1981 Ford Luverne Pumper, 1997 Freightliner, Center State Tanker, 2001 E-one Rescue Van, 1985 Ford f-250 Grass Rig 4x4, and 1977 DNR Dodge 3/4 Ton Grass Rig 4x4.

Improvements: Due to lack of space at the current facility and room to expand, the Fire Department is considering the construction of a 12,000 to 16,000 square foot facility at a new location with parking 24 cars and trucks and meeting space for training.

Cokato Public Library and Museum – 175 Fourth Street West

Condition: The building was originally built in 1975 to replace a facility that was part of the former Cokato High School built in 1928. The facilities are housed in the same building – the library on the upper level and the museum on the lower level. Both levels have their own access and consist of 5,000 square feet. Each level has storage space, restrooms and custodial space. The library also has a 2,000 square foot community meeting room.

Library Function: The library holds approximately 12,800 books, along with magazines, newspapers, videos, cassettes and music CDs. The Cokato Public Library is a part of the Great River Regional Library System, equipped with two Internet terminals available to the public and electronic card catalog providing access to literally thousands of items within the system. The Centennial Room is a community meeting space and is home to several community organizations including the Senior Citizens Center, Scouts, 4-H, and the Viewfinders Camera Club. The room is also available for virtually any public event.

Museum Function: The Cokato Museum is a partnership between the city and the Cokato Historical Society. The city provides funding for staff salaries, insurance, utilities, and maintenance. The Cokato Historical Society raises funds for the exhibits, public programs, publications, vehicle restoration and maintenance, research services, and collections management. The arrangement has been in place since the museum opened in 1976, and is considered to be a model for other municipally run museums in the state.

An additional part of the museum's operations is the Gust Akerlund Photography Studio. The facility is located adjacent to the museum at 390 Broadway Avenue South and has been placed on the National Register of Historical Sites. The building is the only early twentieth century photo studio remaining in the entire Upper Midwest, and one of only a few in the nation.

The museum includes over 9,000 historical items within the facility, and another 3,000 items are located at an off-site storage facility. The museum's vehicle collection is housed at the city's Waster Water Treatment Facility. The photo studio contains 1,500 catalogued objects, with another 20,000 photo image/negatives and 100 linear feet of archival material located within the museum.

Improvements: The structure is in good condition. The only improvement identified is the enhancement of the main entrances with the addition of automatic door openers to improve on ADA requirements.

U.S. Post Office – 190 3rd Street East

Condition: The current structure is being leased and has been leased since 1964. The building consists of 4,000 square feet on a lot of approximately 10,000 square feet. The facility is good condition, but space concerns and parking are issues for the operation.

Function: This facility provides postal services to the community and the surrounding rural area.

Improvements: The Postmaster has identified space and parking as major issues facing the facility as the community continues to grow. With increase deliveries, a new facility consisting of 8,000 to 10,000 square feet may be a reality at a new location. Off-street parking at the current facility continues to be a problem for convenience and safety.

Wastewater Treatment Plant – Northeast of Town

Condition: The plant was built in 1992-93 and consists of two 3.2 acre aerated ponds. Currently, the design capacity of the treatment plant is to treat an average wet weather flow of 726,000 gallons per day, and an average dry weather flow of 296,000 gallons per day and a 5-day 1,3000 loading of 626 pounds per day. This is a Class C facility and in very good condition.

Function: The facility provides sewage distribution to city residents. A drain tile system has been permanently installed at the pond site. The drain tile discharge flows through the pond system outfall pipe and then to the north fork of the Crow River.

Improvements: None were identified due to the newness of the system.

Water Distribution

Condition: The city has three wells at various locations in the community. The towers distribute an average of 1.3 million gallon per day. The North Tower has a capacity of 200,000 gallons, the West Tower has a capacity of 400,000 gallons and the City Hall Tower has a capacity of 55,000 gallons. The city has three wells installed in 1923, 1958 and 1974 respectively.

Function: The water distribution system provides potable water to city residents.

Improvements: The city has identified the need to construct a water treatment facility by 2006 and a new well. Remaining improvements include maintenance of current facilities, and the upgrade of water mains within the city when appropriate and financial feasible, including looping the entire system to eliminate dead ends in the community.

City Maintenance Facility – County Road 4

Condition: This building was constructed in 1974 and is in poor condition. The facility is outdated and has many constraints for the current workings of the department. The city needs to consider the construction of the new facility for current and future growth of the city and to meet city, state and federal codes. In addition, the maintenance garage is outdated and in need of major renovation.

Function: The facility is primarily used for storage and offices of the Water, Sewer, Streets, Parks, Cemetery and Pool Departments.

Improvements: The construction of a new and modern facility.

MEDICAL

The Medical category includes hospitals, clinics, nursing homes and assisted living facilities in the city of Cokato.

Allina Medical Clinic - Cokato – 110 Olsen Boulevard

Condition: The Allina Medical Clinic - Cokato was built in 1996, and is part of the Allina's Hospitals and Clinics Health Care System. The facility consists of 8,200 square feet and is in excellent condition. There are no plans for the expansion of the facility.

Function: The facility is a licensed health care clinic with 28 exam rooms, 14 licensed staff including providers and nursing.

The following facilities are managed under the Cokato Community Trust:

Cokato Manor - 182 Sunset Avenue

Condition: Cokato Manor was built in 1964 and consists of 30,400 square feet. The facility underwent an expansion in 1999 with the addition of the Brookridge Apartments. The facility is in good condition. Needs of the facility consist of additional parking space, larger community areas, and larger resident rooms. The facility is planning remodeling of the bathrooms, resident rooms and exterior improvements. There is also the need to create additional private resident rooms.

Function: Cokato Manor is a 24-hour skilled nursing facility with therapies. The facility consists of 66 beds and has seven RNs and 13 LPNs.

Brookridge Apartments - 182 Sunset Avenue

Condition: The Brookridge Apartments were added to the Cokato Manor complex in 1999. The facility is in excellent condition and consists of 18,049 square feet. There are no immediate plans for expansion or remodeling.

Function: The Brookridge Apartments are a licensed assisted living facility consisting of 16 apartments. There is one RN and one or two care attendants on staff 24 hours a day.

Heritage Place - 182 Sunset Avenue

Condition: Heritage Place was recently added to the Cokato Manor complex and consists of 5,000 square feet. The facility is in excellent condition and there are no immediate plans for expansion or remodeling.

Function: Heritage Place is a special care unit for Dementia. The facility consists of 10 beds and there is one RN and one or two care attendants on staff 24 hours a day.

Edgewood Gables – 600 East 3rd Street

Condition: Edgewood Gables was constructed in 1997 and consists of 36,033 square feet. The facility is in excellent condition and there are no immediate plans for expansion or remodeling.

Function: Edgewood Gables is an independent senior housing complex with full services available. The facility consists of 30 apartment units with one RN and one certified housing manager.

SCHOOLS

The Schools category includes all of the public schools located in the city and surrounding area.

Dassel-Cokato Middle and High School – East on Highway 12

Condition: This school was built in 1971 and has had three additions. The 273,272 square foot building is in good condition and an office remodeling project was completed in 2000. The building meets all ADA requirements. However, the School District has identified the need for additional gym and fine arts space.

Function: This facility provides middle and high school education for students in grades 5-12 with enrollment projected to remain steady for the next 10 years. The facility provides education for “at risk” students, as well as academically advanced students.

Cokato Elementary – 5th Street and Jackson Avenue

Condition: The original structure was built in 1927 consisting of 17,361 square feet. There have been eight (8) additions over the years consisting of an additional 56,440 square feet. The structure is in good condition and meets all ADA requirements.

Function: The facility provides elementary education for students in grades K-4 with an enrollment of 465 in the Spring of 2002. In addition to regular classroom and office space, it has a gymnasium/cafeteria and a media center.

PARKS AND RECREATION

The Parks and Recreation category includes all parks and recreational facilities open to the public in Cokato from small neighborhood playgrounds to large regional parks enjoyed by the entire community. There are currently nine parks in the city of Cokato and the number of acres devoted to park and recreational facilities may grow in the future. As the demand on park space increases, so shall the pressure to offer additional recreational facilities within the city.

In addition, parks throughout the nation are currently being reviewed for compliance with the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To avoid costly lawsuits, the city must improve its facilities so that its parks can be brought up to required standards. If the city wishes to meet public recreational demands, accomplish its desired recreational goals, and reverse unwanted negative park trends, a park and recreational plan should be developed. By developing a parks and recreation plan, Cokato can have an advantage in allocating resources to meet the desired recreation goals. The first step in such a plan is an inventory of park conditions and usage. An inventory of the parks in Cokato can be found in the Parks and Recreation Overview preceding this section of the Comprehensive Plan. Figure 5, *Existing Park Facilities*, provides a visual guide to the city's park facilities.

ENVIRONMENT

The Cokato area is fortunate to have an abundance of natural beauty and environmentally sensitive and valuable areas. Many times these features will determine what kind of adjacent land use may occur and the intensity of any given use. While there is a substantial portion of the Cokato area that is inherently suitable for urban development, other areas have intrinsic natural value. These areas function best left in a natural state, or are projected from urban development. Preservation of significant natural resources is a legitimate goal for any local government and through responsible preservation, a high level of quality of life can be maintained for the Cokato residents. The use of soils maps, topography data and assistance from state and local agencies will ensure the protection of natural areas from incompatible development and encroachment. Areas of specific significance are Brooks Lake, Sucker Creek Area and the proposed regional park area northeast of the community. Figure 6, *Environmental Features*, will assist the city in determining areas of significance.

Figure 5 - Existing Park Facilities Map

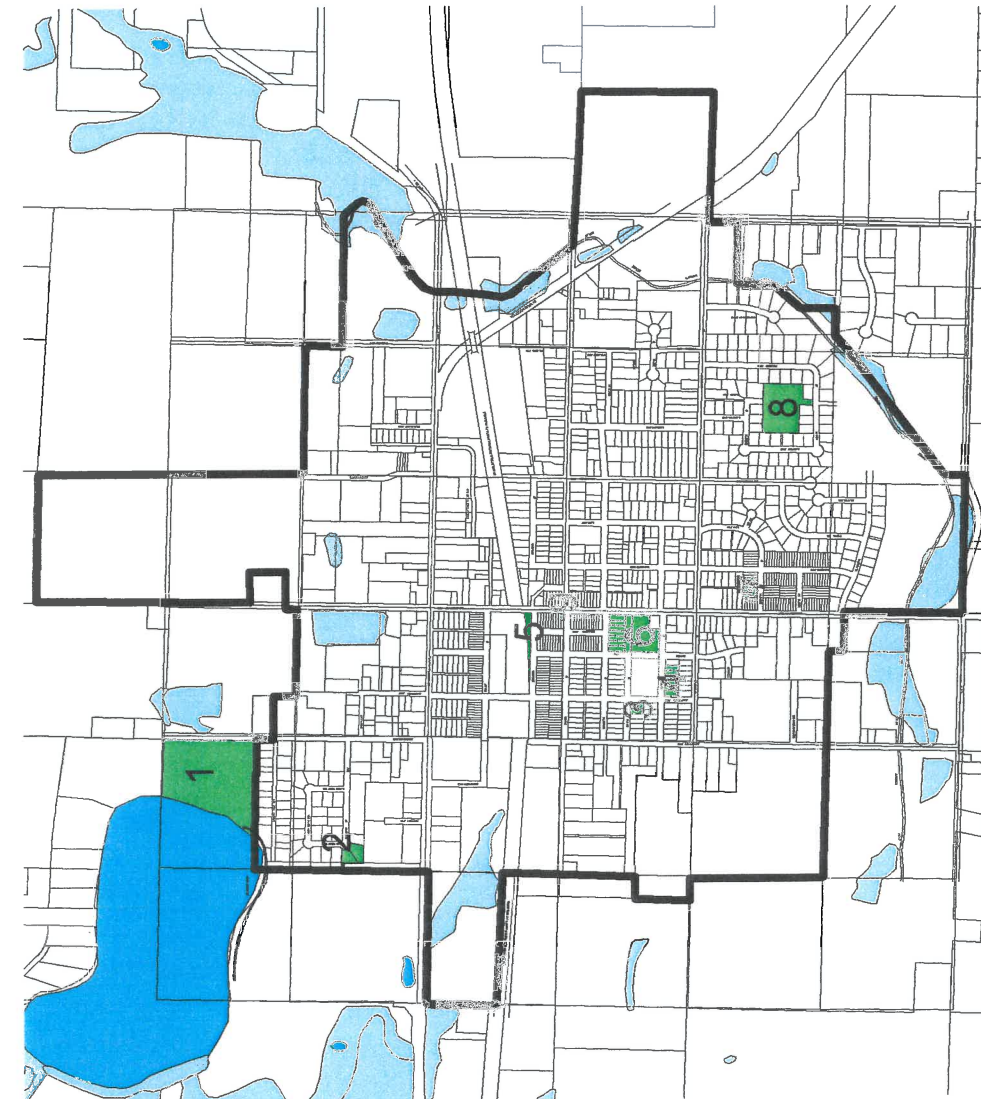
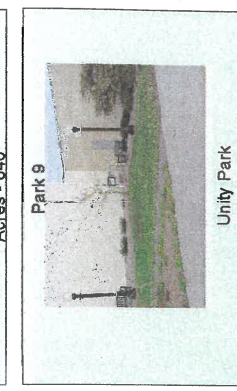
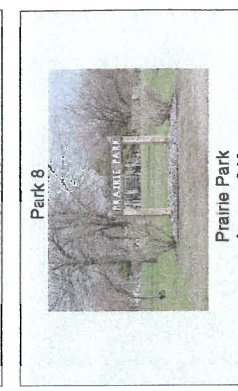
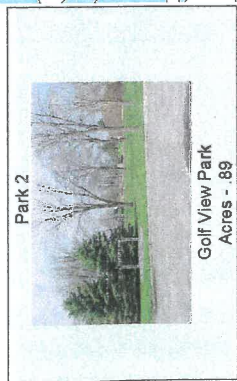
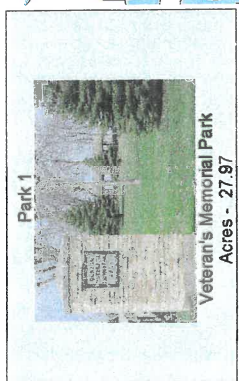


Figure 5
Existing Park Facilities
2003 Comprehensive Plan
Cokato, Minnesota



GIS data provided by BSA, Inc.

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Figure 6 - Environmental Features Map

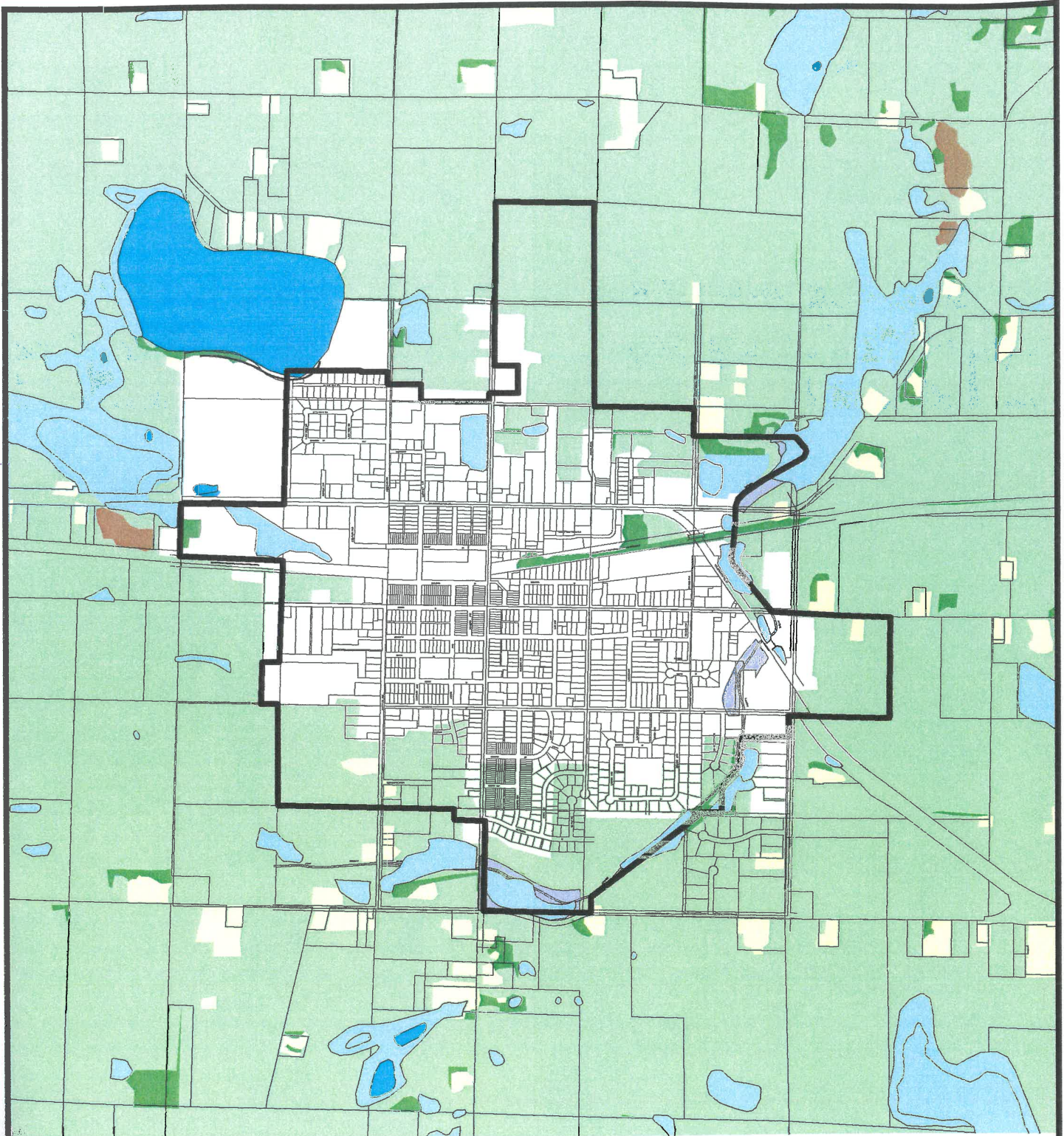
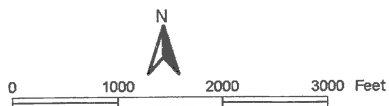


Figure 6
Environmental Features
 2003 Comprehensive Plan
 Cokato, Minnesota



Environmental Features data was collected by the DNR during the period of June 18, 1995 to June 13, 1996.
 Cokato parcel data provided by BRA, Inc.

1/22/03



Environmental Features	
	Rural Development
	Grass Lands/Cultivated
	Forested Areas
	Open Water
	Wetlands
	Gravel Pits
	Urban Areas
FEMA	
	100 Year Flood Event
	500 Year Flood Event
	City Boundary

LAND USE OVERVIEW

The purpose of a land use inventory is to quantify and analyze existing development in the city and the surrounding area. An examination of current land uses should reveal development patterns, densities and other land use scenarios that can provide direction for future development and redevelopment. This inventory, combined with other background information, is used to suggest where, at what intensity and in some cases, when, growth should occur. The inventory can also help to classify areas that should remain undeveloped or preserved. The kind of development and how that development is allowed to progress should be a reflection of the community's needs and desires.

Cokato's urban amenities and small town character along with its direct access to Highway 12 make it an attractive place to live and work. The numerous lakes, including Brooks Lake, provide the Cokato area with a unique scenic and recreational amenity as well. The city of Cokato has experienced steady growth over the past several decades. This makes careful consideration of the city's future land use very important.

Continued growth will pose many land use challenges. The strain between the demands of an urban community and the agricultural character of the surrounding townships will be at the forefront of this struggle. Although the area surrounding the city is predominantly agricultural, as vacant developable land in the city decreases, urban land uses will continue to extend into the neighboring townships, putting development pressure on the surrounding areas. As residential, industrial and commercial development expands, there will be increased pressure on the city to closely scrutinize land for development. Annexation dynamics will also become increasingly important.

Table 15 is a summary the Cokato's existing land use as of June 2002. This table shows that vacant land, including wetlands, Sucker Creek, railroad right-of-way, road right-of-way and easements is the largest major land use category in the city with single family residential uses being the next highest. Agricultural uses also make up a large part of the city. Figure 7, *Cokato Existing Land Use*, maps the current land uses in the city of Cokato. Following Table 7, a detailed analysis of each land use category is provided for future background data.

**Table 15
Existing Land Use
City of Cokato
2002**

Land Use Category	Gross Acres	Percent of Total City
Developed Area:		
Agricultural	158.9	16.4%
Residential	265.5	27.4%
Multi- Family Residential	30.6	3.2%
Mobile Home Residential	23.7	2.4%
Downtown Commercial	6.8	.7%
General Commercial	72.0	7.4%
Industrial	42.6	4.4%
Park	11.9	1.2%
Public	18.4	1.9%
Total Developed	630.4	65%
Vacant Area:	168.2	17.4%
Other Vacant Area:	170.8	17.6%
Total Vacant	339	34.9%
Total Acres:	969.4	100%

AGRICULTURAL

Agricultural land uses include property that is currently utilized for agricultural purposes and within the city limits of Cokato. Although currently agricultural, this land is in the likely path of urban development and may be suitable for residential, commercial or industrial uses in the future when city sewer and water are available. The majority of this land use can be found in the north, east and southern portions of the city and consists of 16.4% of the city's landmass.

RESIDENTIAL

Residential development (single-family homes) comprises of 27.4% of the city's total area. The City's 265.5 acres of single-family residential development is located primarily south of Trunk Highway 12 and other small developments in the northwest quadrant of the community. Single-family homes consume the vast majority of the City's residential land.

MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

Multi-Family Residential development includes duplexes and town-homes, apartments and other multiple-unit residences. This land use comprises 3.2% of the city's total area. The city's 30.6 acres of multi-family residential land is located throughout the community, with a large complex located in the northwest section of the community and others sparsely located south of Truck Highway 12.

MOBILE HOME RESIDENTIAL

The city has two large mobile/manufactured home parks within its corporate limits. They comprise 23.7 acres and 2.4% of the city's total area. The parks are located west of 6th Street and south of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad line from Second Street.

DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL

The Downtown Commercial area is centrally located in the community and comprises the smallest land use category in the community: .7%, or 6.8 acres. The downtown area consists largely of older one to two-story buildings with commercial establishments facing the street. There are very few new commercial structures in the downtown area and there are some vacant spaces. The downtown consists predominantly of smaller retail and service-oriented establishments.

COMMERCIAL

Commercial areas make up a moderate portion of Cokato's total land area. There are approximately 72 acres of commercial development (retail and wholesale trade, services and entertainment), which accounts for 7.4% of the city's total area. Commercial uses are concentrated along Trunk Highway 12 and County Road #3. The commercial establishments in this area are newer, larger retailers and include highway-oriented businesses such as restaurants, convenience stores, gas stations and other auto-oriented businesses.

INDUSTRIAL

The city has a moderate industrial land base consisting of 42.6 acres, or approximately 4.4% of the city's total area. There is an established industrial park located on the east end of the community with easy access to Trunk Highway 12. A new business park has been established east of County Road #3, north of Trunk Highway 12.

PARKS

Parks consist of public and semi-public recreational facilities, such as neighborhood tot-lots, community parks, pools and other regional facilities. Within the city limits, the park grounds consist of 11.9 acres or 1.2% of the city's total area. A detailed description of each park can be found in the previous section. It is important to note the existence of Veteran's Memorial Park located north of the community and adjacent to Birch Lake. This facility provides 27.98 acres of passive and recreational opportunities for the community and region.

PUBLIC

Comprising 18.4% of the city's total area, public and semi-public land use makes up an important portion of the city's land. This category includes educational, religious, health care, cemetery, government, utility and other public uses. A large area devoted to public land uses is located in the center of the community and other small areas throughout the community.

The Cokato Elementary School and the cemetery consume a considerable portion of the city's public land.

VACANT AREA

This includes all vacant land with no actively used buildings, but which could be available for development. This area also can include former farmland that has not been cultivated for many years and is now sitting idle. It can also include land that had been actively used for some purpose, but which has been abandoned. If there were buildings on the site associated with the former land use, these could be still standing but vacant, or they could be already torn down. This does not include temporarily vacant buildings, storefronts or office spaces that are likely to be filed within a year. It also does not include land owned or controlled by a government agency, such as municipal, county or state lands including parks and open spaces and it does not include large yards or spacious grounds around and owned by another use, such as a playground or vacant cemetery plots, these are included with the primary use. There are 168.2 acres of vacant, developable land throughout the city of Cokato. The amount of vacant developable land amounts to 17.4% of the city.

OTHER VACANT AREAS

This includes all vacant property that is not available for development, such as public right-of-way, county, state or federal owned property, Burlington Northern Santa Fe property, water, wetlands and Sucker Creek. The amount of vacant non-developable land amounts to 17.6% of the city. A majority of this category is dedicated to public right-of-way. This percentage is due largely to the city's grid-like street pattern in the residential districts that make up the bulk of the city, and is not unlike that found in other similarly sized communities. Although a grid network of streets occupies more land than a contemporary suburban pattern, it does distribute and handle traffic more efficiently. Major highways in Cokato include Trunk Highway 12, which goes east and west through the city. Another significant contributor to this large percentage is the property owned by Burlington Northern Santa Fe. Sucker Creek meanders through the city and Brooks Lake borders the northern portion of the city. They are some of the prime scenic and recreational facilities of the city and efforts to preserve them should be continued and enhanced where appropriate.

Figure 7: Cokato Existing Land Use Map

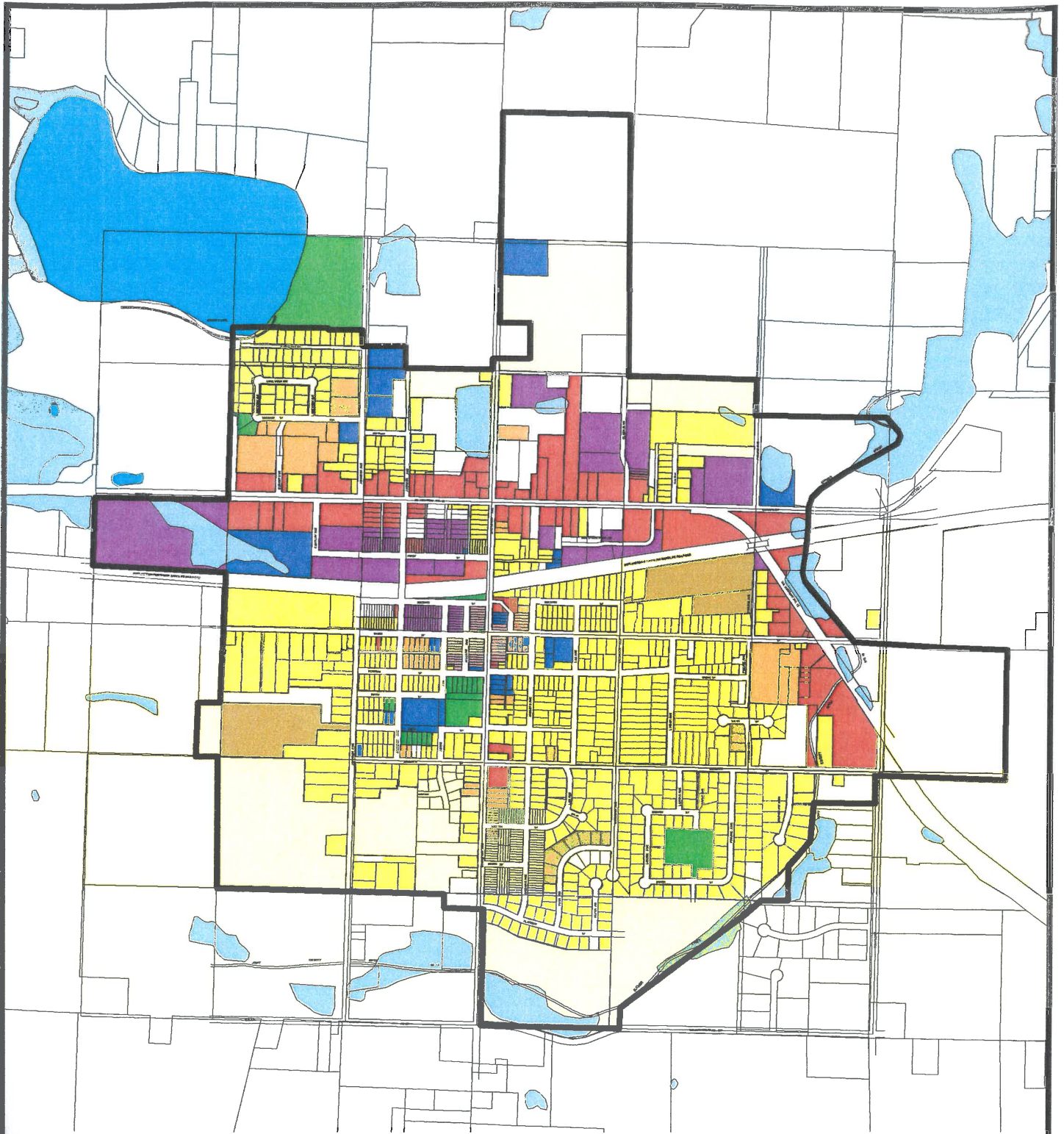
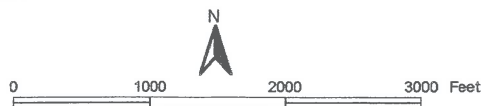


Figure 7
Existing Land Use
 2003 Comprehensive Plan
 Cokato, Minnesota



1/22/03

Cokato parcel data provided by BRA, Inc.



Existing Land Use		Waterbodies	
	Commercial		Public
	Downtown Commercial		Wetlands/Marshes
	Industrial		Lakes
	Low Density Residential		City Boundary
	High Density Residential		Agricultural
	Home Park		Vacant
	Park		

**City of Cokato
Comprehensive Plan
Goals and Strategies**

The Goals and Strategies chapter is the heart of the Comprehensive Plan, expressing in detail the community's aspirations for the future. It serves as the bridge between the background chapters, which are used in the formulation of the Goals and Strategies, and the actual Plan, which describes the city's strategy to implement those policies and thereby achieve its goals.

FORMULATION OF GOALS AND STRATEGIES

As part of the Comprehensive Planning process, the city hosted a kick-off session to elicit resident views on the issues, opportunities and threats facing the city, as well as its strengths and weaknesses. To help guide the background studies and to formulate community Goals and Strategies, participants at the workshop listed and then ranked the issues in order of importance. Ultimately, these issues and the subsequent goals and strategies will be used to draft a land use plan and related strategies for the community. It should be noted that the listed strengths, weaknesses and other ideas are only the opinions and perceptions of the residents who chose to participate in the workshop.

ISSUES

Although the issues listed here cover a broad spectrum, recurring issues, along with those that elicited the most consensus, can be thematically grouped into five categories.

Transportation. Traffic, specifically Highway 12, was expressed as a major obstacle for the city regarding cohesiveness and connectivity. Many communities in Central Minnesota have major transportation corridors through their community. Cokato is no exception. Residents cited concerns with sprawl commercial development along Highway 12 and little connection with the downtown. However, the residents also saw this corridor as a future commercial development opportunity. The residents were also concerned with safe pedestrian and bike traffic across the highway, and the connection with north and south side neighborhoods.

Economic. The community viewed its local economy as healthy, but had some concerns with the slow growth of its economic base. Specifically, the city's employment base is concentrated in a few large employers, creating the concern that the city's economy needs to diversify in order to protect Cokato from severe downturns that can result from dependence on one or two large industries. In addition, the residents felt that lack of state of the art telecommunication infrastructure was impeding the opportunity to attract high tech businesses.

City Infrastructure. As with many small, growing communities, city government and infrastructure tends to slow processes down until appropriate strategies and funding are in place. The residents recognized the need for additional services, staffing and infrastructure to support the growth, but it does come at a cost.

Community Spirit. Many residents believe that the sense of community in the Cokato area is a vital link to its success. The community is defined in many ways by its residents, community groups, the religious community, work ethic, and community amenities such as housing, transportation, recreation and economic opportunity— all of which Cokato enjoys in great abundance.

Growth Management. Indiscriminate growth; the need to coordinate planning with surrounding jurisdictions; and balancing growth with the other economic, housing, environmental and cultural needs were identified by residents participating in forum.

Other. Other positive attributes of the community identified by residents were the local amenities created by the parks and open space system within and near the community. Other concerns include social changes caused by growth, and the struggling downtown area and industrial growth.

GENERAL GOALS AND STRATEGIES

General Goal #1

Maximize Cokato's potential as a thriving center for business, health care, industry, education and recreation, while maintaining and enhancing its livability.

Strategies

1. Promote the development and implementation of a Comprehensive Plan that effectively and efficiently plans for land use, community facilities, transportation, housing, economic development and environmental protection for Cokato and the immediately surrounding area.
2. Review and amend the Comprehensive Plan as necessary to ensure its usefulness as a practical guide for current and future development. Adhere to this Plan, which shall guide all zoning changes, as closely as possible to ensure consistent development policy.
3. Formulate and enforce city ordinances to ensure development in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan, including downtown development guidelines, and general commercial development requirements.
4. Continue to plan for land uses to support and enhance Cokato's ability to attract quality development, by providing adequate quality areas for new business development.
5. Participate in the state and federal legislative activities and work with Wright County and surrounding townships' governmental processes regarding issues important to the city.

6. Protect both the general welfare and the individual choices of Cokato residents. Insure that decisions that are made by the community reflect the needs of current residents and business owners.

General Goal #2

Support a strong, ongoing working relationship between the city, Wright County, and the adjacent townships in all matters related to planning and the provision of public services.

Strategies

1. Recognize the legitimate issues and concerns regarding jurisdictional issues by working and cooperating with surrounding governmental units through this planning process and outside this process.
2. Continue to monitor its effectiveness in providing balanced growth to the area and recognize the need for cooperation between jurisdictions.
3. Continue to re-examine joint planning efforts. Identify areas where the line should be expanded (or contracted).

General Goal #3

Promote community spirit and unity and enhance the city's character and identity.

Strategies

1. Encourage volunteerism, participation in community activities and acceptance of community leadership positions.
2. Seek partnerships with coalitions and interest groups to share resources and energies in order to address community problems and opportunities.
3. Actively encourage and utilize resident participation in the local decision-making process.
4. Encourage increased interaction and communication between citizens of all ages, cultural heritages and incomes.
5. Continue to improve and enhance communication among the city, residents, businesses, civic groups and public agencies utilizing various media such as a city newsletter, newspaper, cable access and a community web page.
6. Continue to improve connections between the city, EDA and its business community through active participation in the local Chamber and civic groups.
7. Encourage a variety of experiences and opportunities in terms of living, working and social activities within the community.

8. Protect and enhance important historical, cultural and natural resources as a means to maintain the integrity, heritage and local character of Cokato's natural and built environment.

LAND USE GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Land Use Issues

- ALL LAND USES SHOULD BE CONNECTED TO MUNICIPAL SERVICES WHERE AVAILABLE.
- HAPHAZARD ANNEXATIONS.
- THE CITY MUST PLAN GROWTH AREAS OUTSIDE THE CURRENT MUNICIPAL BOUNDARIES.
- INCOMPATIBLE LAND USES ADJACENT TO EACH OTHER.
- DEVELOPMENT OF VACANT PROPERTY IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA.
- PRESERVE NATURAL RESOURCES AS DEVELOPMENT OCCURS.
- STAY SMALL TOWN.
- LOCATION OF SUCKER CREEK AS A DEVELOPMENT BARRIER.

Land Use Goal #1

Support the compact and orderly growth of all urban development, including residential, commercial and industrial areas.

Strategies

1. Continue to monitor the planned growth areas outside the city that have the potential to be served with an appropriate range of public services in a cost effective manner.
2. Work with Wright County and adjacent townships to discourage urbanization of lands outside of the planned growth areas where urban services will likely be needed.
3. Work with surrounding townships to annex existing and planned urban development located within the city's planned growth areas, as services can be provided to those properties.
4. Work with the county and adjacent townships to facilitate orderly growth within the city and direct development to the city's planned growth areas through the use of orderly annexation agreements. Discourage premature urbanization of lands not within the planned growth areas.
5. Continue to guide residential growth in an orderly pattern so that new development can be effectively served by public facilities and the character of existing neighborhoods can be maintained and enhanced.

6. Encourage a balanced strategy of “infilling”, or developing vacant land, within the city.
7. Actively plan and zone an adequate supply of multiple family housing units in appropriate area.

Land Use Goal #2

Plan land uses and implement standards to minimize land use conflicts.

Strategies

1. Prepare and adopt a land use plan that designates land use areas and guide development to appropriate areas in order to ensure desirable land use patterns and minimize conflicts.
2. Require adequate transitions between different land uses through appropriate land use planning and zoning standards. Improve buffering standards between uses considered incompatible.
3. Encourage the location of commercial and industrial development in areas that avoid adverse impacts on residential areas to avoid routing truck traffic through those areas.

Land Use Goal #3

Strengthen the distinction between the urban city and the rural countryside with well planned and carefully coordinated services appropriate to the distinct needs of each.

Strategies

1. Encourage new development to occur in those areas that have available public utilities.
2. Require properties served by public utilities to be located within the city.
3. Support existing agricultural uses until such time as other uses are planned for the area and the agricultural use is converted to urban uses.
4. Support efforts by all adjacent jurisdictions to maintain very low residential densities outside of the city’s planned growth areas.

Land Use Goal #4

Enhance community character and identity.

Strategies

1. Work to strengthen and maintain the appearance of the Highway 12, County Road 3 and 4 corridors through design standards, trails, lighting, sidewalks, signage and other tools.
2. Develop and enforce architectural/site-planning standards in both the downtown and general commercial areas that support and promote community aesthetic standards.
3. Continue to plan for land uses in order to support and enhance Cokato's ability to attract quality development by providing adequate quality land area within planned growth areas.
4. Support the redevelopment of vacant and abandoned sites within the urban core.
5. Ensure that high quality developments are well planned and connected to existing development through the efficient use of streets, utilities and infrastructure.
6. Identify unique environmental, cultural, architectural sites within the community. Establish preservation guidelines that allow for adaptive re-use, or redevelopment.
7. Incorporate trail systems, with regional connection, with residential and commercial developments to create a connection and alternative travel opportunities.

HOUSING GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Housing Issues

- PROVIDING THE APPROPRIATE MIX OF OWNER-OCCUPIED AND RENTAL UNITS IS CHALLENGING BECAUSE OF THE DIVERSE LOCAL NEEDS.
- THE CITY NEEDS TO SUPPORT PRESERVATION OF EXISTING RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS.
- THE CITY NEEDS TO CONTINUE TO IDENTIFY AND REACT TO CHANGING COMMUNITY HOUSING NEEDS.
- THE CITY NEEDS TO SUPPORT CREATIVE AND COMPACT NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN
- THE CITY NEEDS TO PRESERVE GROWTH AREAS AROUND THE CITY FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT.

Housing Goal #1

Ensure an affordable and diverse housing stock to meet a wide-range of community needs.

Strategies

1. Continue to study housing goals, needs and resources.
2. Support the findings and goals within the 2001 Housing Study for the city of Cokato.
3. Support relationships with HUD, Rural Development, FHA, VA, DTED, Greater Minnesota Housing Fund, Initiative Foundation, Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, local lenders, builders, and other organizations that can help Cokato meet its housing goals.
4. Encourage public-private partnerships to expand affordable housing opportunities.
5. Continue to support the concept of life cycle housing to ensure an adequate supply of entry level and senior housing within the community and the surrounding area.
6. Encourage the appropriate dispersion of housing types throughout the city.
7. Encourage cost effective housing developments.
8. Update the housing market study periodically to monitor changing housing market conditions.

Housing Goal #2

Create a high-quality environment in all residential neighborhoods.

Strategies

1. Ensure additional housing opportunities are available within the city and in growth area with access to municipal services and transportation.
2. Enforce necessary codes to ensure the continued maintenance of the housing stock.
3. Explore methods and funding options to promote the improvement of the existing housing stock, including retrofitting existing homes to better serve today's families.

4. Explore methods and funding options to encourage the rehabilitation or redevelopment of substandard housing.
5. Encourage infill housing where appropriate.
6. Examine zoning and other regulations to ensure they allow the upgrading of older homes, neighborhoods, and small, irregularly shaped lots.
7. Work with the cities public works and engineering departments to ensure adequate infrastructure for future developments.
8. Develop minimum landscaping and design standards for new development, including the use of boulevards, tree plantings and entrance monuments.

TRANSPORTATION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Transportation Issues

- THE CITY HAS AN EXCELLENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM
- THE CITY NEEDS TO CREATE CONSISTENCY THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY FOR HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBILITY.
- THE CITY IS CONCERNED WITH THE VASTNESS OF HIGHWAY 12 AND PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS.
- THE LACK OF ADEQUATE ROAD TONAGES ON 7TH STREET AND INDUSTRIAL PARK ROAD.
- THE LACK OF A NORTH AND SOUTH ROAD CORRIDOR FOR THE MOVEMENT OF TRAFFIC THROUGH THE COMMUNITY.
- THE CITY'S LACK OF FUNDING FOR ROAD IMPROVEMENTS AND THE REDUCED FUNDING AVAILABLE THROUGH FEDERAL AND STATE PROGRAMS.
- LARGE TRAFFIC VOLUMES ON HIGHWAY 12, COUNTY ROAD 53 AND COUNTY ROAD 3 ALL WHICH DISECT THE COMMUNITY.

Based on the current transportation system and a discussion that identified issues, enhancements and opportunities in the community, the following list of goals and policies has been generated:

Transportation Goal #1:

Provide and maintain a safe, convenient, and efficient local transportation system for the movement of people and goods.

Strategies

1. Explore the implementation of crosswalks and crosswalk signs in strategic locations along the Highway 12 corridor.

2. Draft and implement a comprehensive sidewalk systems plan requiring installation, maintenance and meeting the standards for handicap accessibility.
3. Promote an access management program along the Highway 12 corridor with new residential, commercial and industrial development to divert traffic volumes to Collector Streets.
4. Continue to cooperate with Wright County and adjacent jurisdictions, MnDOT, and other agencies involved in transportation planning, to provide the most safe, efficient and financially feasible transportation system.

Transportation Goal #2:

Enhance the aesthetic character and functional qualities of the transportation networks within the city.

Strategies

1. Support and implement the work program identified in the Cokato Capital Improvements Program and continue a strong maintenance program to ensure an efficient local transportation system.
2. Provide for a local transportation system that supports economic development by strategically constructing roads with tonnage capacity to handle truck traffic.
3. Identify new transportation corridors within the city and within growth areas to provide an efficient transportation system.
4. Enhance major intersection and corridors within the community by upgrading unsightly areas and by adding lighting, landscaping, signage, parking and a street painting program.
5. Increase the visibility of the Business District and Main Street Area via additional signage access points off of Highway 12.
6. Develop zoning regulations that require building, setback and landscaping requirements for residential, commercial and industrial development along major transportation systems.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Economic Development Issues

- LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR WORK FORCE
- NO POINT OF CONTACT AND MARKETING THEME FOR THE COMMUNITY
- COMPETITION OF METRO AREA AND SURROUNDING ECONOMIC HUBS
- MOBILITY OF WORK FORCE
- UNSTABLE ECONOMY
- EVER CHANGING FUNDING PROGRAMS AND DIMINISHING FUNDING OPTIONS
- LACK OF A “COKATO BUSINESS PLAN”
- LACK OF “STATE OF THE ART” TELECOMMUNICATIONS
- LACK OF DISTRIBUTION SERVICE FOR AREA GOODS
- COST TO THE CITY FOR INDUSTRIAL WATER AND SEWER OVER-SIZING
- TOPOGRAPHY OF THE COKATO AREA AND STORM WATER RUNOFF

Based on the economic health indicators, small group discussion and issues that were identified as barriers to development, the following list of goals and policies has been generated.

Economic Development Goal #1:

Cooperatively utilize existing and new resources for economic growth in Cokato.

Strategies

1. Promote an on-going cooperative effort among Wright County, and surrounding jurisdictions, the county Economic Development Partnership, the Cokato EDA, Chamber of Commerce, state agencies, local builders, business owners and residents to pursue a wide range of economic development opportunities.
2. Continue to support efforts to retain existing business and industry and facilitate their expansion as well as recruit additional business.
3. Promote and market the area’s characteristics to attract and expand diversified businesses as well as attract consumers, tourists and new residents.
4. Recognize the need to upgrade and expand existing city infrastructure to support and promote continued development.
5. Promote the city of Cokato by maintaining a low cost of doing business in the community by offering affordable buildings and land costs, and efficient access to the Metro Area and other economic centers.
6. Encourage the utilization of the existing railroad facilities available to the community to enhance the distribution of goods, an added value to the community and to decrease the dependence on over the road distribution.

7. Ensure that the city of Cokato has access to state-of-the-art telecommunication infrastructure.

Economic Development Goal #2:

Ensure a strong, skilled and available labor force for the city of Cokato.

Strategies

1. Work with the Dassel-Cokato School District to ensure that students gain the job skills they need to enter the labor force.
2. Promote appreciation of age differences by enabling effective integration of diverse age populations into the workforce.
3. Provide local access for continuing education. Actively seek out institutions to offer programs/services through the use of all available technology.
4. Address the mobility of workers by providing skilled job opportunities at a competitive wage that will encourage employees to live and work in the community.
5. Encourage the availability of a range of housing types and values to accommodate and ensure an ample labor force.
6. Promote coordination of the educational system and the business community to ensure the availability of qualified workers.

Economic Development Goal#3:

Recognize and support the economic development commitment and activities provided by area organizations (both private and public).

Strategies

1. Promote and encourage the continued role of the Economic Development Partnership of Wight County, Cokato EDA, Cokato Development Corporation, and Chamber of Commerce in economic development activities.
2. Develop a strong marketing plan to promote the community as a place to do business and where employees will enjoy living by recognizing the city's strengths such as the low cost of living, good workforce, and attractive community amenities.
3. Develop strong promotional material, with public and private input, that outlines the community's strengths and the availability for economic growth in an effort to effectively compete for economic development with surrounding economic centers.

4. Create a “Point of Contact” within the community to serve as a clearinghouse for business recruitment and retention efforts.

Economic Development Goal #4:

Maintain a favorable climate for ongoing business activities and continue the development of a strong, diversified and balanced economic base.

Strategies

1. Recognize and promote the goals and policies of the Cokato Economic Development section in the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Aggressively promote and market the city of Cokato to attract commercial and industrial development and redevelopment within the city, including the use of financial incentives, with particular emphasis on attracting businesses that provide livable wage jobs.
3. Encourage the increased use of telecommunications in order to compete for information-driven jobs.
4. Encourage both public and private investment in facilities and infrastructure.
5. Recognize the fundamental linkage between housing and economic development and work to match housing availability with community employment.

Economic Development Goal #5:

Recognize the need to upgrade and expand existing city infrastructure in order to promote and support continued residential, commercial and industrial development.

Strategies

1. Encourage the county to give funding priority to city and county state aid roads that serve commercial and industrial properties.
2. Develop and follow a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan to ensure improvement of the city’s infrastructure in a timely and cost effective manner.
3. Work with downtown businesses to prioritize needs for downtown infrastructure.

Economic Development Goal #6:

Support downtown and “in-town” development activities to enhance and complement the service and retail businesses already located there.

Strategies

1. Promote an effective mix of downtown and “in-town” businesses to increase retail trade.
2. Encourage the compact development of the downtown/in-town area to accommodate and encourage pedestrian traffic.
3. Assist businesses in finding financial aid from appropriate agencies to rehabilitate structures, expansion, renovations, and other business financing needs within the downtown area.
4. Develop marketing “niches” to attract new retail businesses and attract consumers to the downtown area.
5. Assess the impact of the Highway 12 corridor, and ensure a transportation and economic corridor exists to link the downtown to this major transportation system.

Economic Development Goal #7:

Support the continued growth of appropriate commercial and industrial areas outside of the central business district.

Strategies

1. Work to establish and maintain a fully serviced industrial park with suitable transportation access.
2. Identify a general commercial area to accommodate those commercial uses not suited to the downtown/in-town area.
3. Identify a highway-related commercial area to accommodate those commercial uses which serve the traveling public or are not suited to the downtown/in-town area.

PARK, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Parks and Open Space Issues

- THE CITY HAS AN EXTENSIVE PARKS SYSTEM
- THE CITY NEEDS TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE PARK AND OPEN SPACE LANDS TO SERVE A GROWING POPULATION
- THE CITY MUST CONSIDER FUTURE MAINTENANCE WHEN ACCEPTING OR REJECTING PARK DEDICATION LANDS
- THE CITY IS CURRENTLY DEVELOPING PARK DEDICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENTS
- THE CITY'S PARK SYSTEMS HAS AN EXTENSIVE AMOUNT OF OPEN SPACE WHICH MAY BE VIEWED AS UNDERUTILIZED
- EQUIPMENT IN MANY OF THE PARKS IS IN NEED OF MAINTENANCE OR REPLACEMENT OVER THE NEXT 0-5 YEARS
- MANY OF THE PARKS HAVE NONE TO VERY LITTLE ON-SITE PARKING AND POOR ACCESSIBILITY
- CONNECTIVITY WITHIN THE PARK SYSTEM VIA PEDESTRIAN WALKING TRAILS AND ACCESS ACROSS HIGHWAY 12.

Parks and Recreation Goal #1

Provide and maintain adequate community parks and open space to meet the future needs of the community.

Strategies

1. Develop a city of Cokato parks plan to plan for improvements and maintenance of existing and new parks to ensure funding is available in a timely manner and parks are used to their full potential.
2. Support the expansion of parks and open space along Sucker Creek Area and Brooks Lake.
3. Improve connections between existing community parks and provide safe access across Highway 12.
4. Prioritize valuable water resources - streams, lakes, and wetlands - and woodlands for preservation in public and private open space.
5. Accept parkland dedication only if it is consistent with the city's development plans and the city's Subdivision Ordinance. Focus development efforts on area-wide community parks serving larger populations.
6. Carefully incorporate city infrastructure needs into park and open space acquisition and improvements.

7. Create connections to community parks from neighborhoods and the elementary school via pedestrian and bicycle trails.

Parks and Recreational Goal #2

Evaluate existing parks on a yearly basis to ensure the parks are safe, well-maintained and accessible to all residents; Identify upgrade needs; evaluate current park and trail needs.

Strategies

1. Determine the current conditions of parks and trails in the community and perform a needs assessment and timetable for upgrading equipment and facilities for existing parks and trails.

Parks and Recreational Goal#3

Assess current park development trends and develop a variety of park facilities.

Strategies

1. The city of Cokato will continually research current park trends and assess the demand for types of facilities to be located in parklands in order to meet the level of service expectations from the community and ensure that the facilities are barrier-free and accessible to all residents and age groups.
2. The city of Cokato area will assess the demand for types of facilities desired by the community by utilizing park visitor surveys, public surveys and narratives from the residents at Council meetings.
3. The city of Cokato will utilize information from surrounding communities concerning park use demand and types of facilities provided in area parks.

Parks and Recreational Goal #4

Evaluate the need for the future expansion of the Cokato Senior Center.

Strategies

1. The city of Cokato should assess the feasibility of the expansion of the existing Senior Center by monitoring population and demographic trends in an effort to study and determine the need for additional Senior Center space.
2. Review existing events and activities at the center to determine if the needs of the community are being met and if space is adequate for those activities.

Parks and Recreational Goal #5

Work with Wright and adjoining counties, the School District, surrounding townships and communities, and private and/or non-profit organizations on developing joint ventures for recreational parks, open spaces, facilities and trail systems.

Strategies

1. Coordinate annual meetings with the above-mentioned organizations to encourage the continuing development and future development of interconnecting trails, open spaces, recreational activities, linkages to historical sites and cost effective joint ventures. This can be accomplished by making contacts from various groups who are interested in creating a regional/recreational-planning workshop.

Parks and Recreational Goal #6

Explore alternative revenue sources to generate additional funds for park improvements.

Strategies

1. The city of Cokato may assess the need and feasibility for creating park dedication fees and investigating alternative revenue sources such as grants and gift programs in order to meet the needs of a growing population
2. Investigate alternative revenue sources such as grants and gifts in order to meet the needs of a population and park system.
3. Continue to work cooperatively with all adjacent jurisdictions on joint ventures that will encourage cost sharing opportunities.

**City of Cokato
Comprehensive Plan
Implementation**

Future Land Use

The planning process has just begun for the city of Cokato and the surrounding townships. In many ways, formal adoption of the Comprehensive Plan is the first step, not the last. Formal adoption of the Comprehensive Plan establishes the policy direction for the community, including both a description of what the objectives are and how they are to be achieved. Without continuing action to the implement and update the Plan, city efforts up to this point will have minimal lasting impact. This implementation section outlines the steps that need to be taken to put the Comprehensive Plan into action.

LAND USE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Land use districts in this Plan have been created to accommodate all of the existing and desired land uses within the city. Recommended Goals and Strategies established by participants in the planning process have been used to determine what type of land uses should continue and/or should be developed in the future. Locations for the different future land uses are shown on the Future Land Use map. These areas represent the optimal and reasonable range of land uses for the city and surrounding area. The city, county and the surrounding townships should use this map to make land use decisions as the community grows and develops. The future land use map is a concept of what the city of Cokato and the surrounding areas would look like in the future as it relates to land uses and the desires of the residents and officials who participated in the planning process.

Neighborhood Residential

Neighborhood Residential is intended to allow space for low-density, residential living with full provision of necessary urban service facilities. It is also intended to prevent the establishment of various commercial, industrial and higher density residential developments in these areas that will cause conflicts or problems for single-family homes. Other permitted uses within the Neighborhood Residential Category include public parks and playgrounds, schools and churches. The overall density of these areas should be maintained at or between three (3) and five (5) units per acre.

Mixed Use Residential

Mixed Use Residential is intended to provide space for higher density residential uses such as town-homes, twin-homes and apartment buildings with full provision of necessary urban service facilities. The purpose is to provide the city with a variety of housing options while still promoting a neighborhood atmosphere. Other permitted uses within the Mix Use Residential category include public parks and playgrounds, schools and churches, as well as single-family homes. The overall density of these areas should generally be maintained at densities between 5-18+ units per acre.

Industrial

The Industrial area is intended to allow for a variety of high-tech, light and some heavy industrial uses such as assembly, warehousing, research and development, wholesale distribution, manufacturing and related office activities.

The city should establish review procedures for such types of development to ensure that the impacts of such development do not exceed the existing or planned public service capacities of the community. Residential or commercial uses should not be allowed in the Industrial areas.

General Commercial

General Commercial includes various types of retail commercial uses, generally adjacent to the highway system. General Commercial is intended to enhance the community by providing for a broad range of goods and services and one-stop shopping trips. Examples of these could include highway-oriented businesses such as fast food restaurants, convenience stores, gas stations and other auto-oriented businesses and larger retailers.

Downtown Commercial

The purpose of this category is to identify portions of Cokato that contain businesses arranged in a pattern that is pedestrian oriented. The downtown consists of predominantly retail, service, office and public uses.

Public Uses

These include various land uses that benefit the public. These include publicly-owned uses, such as schools and city/township buildings, churches and cemeteries. Other public uses include parks, as well as public and private open spaces. Examples of open spaces could include local and state parks, golf courses, campgrounds, wildlife areas and other outdoor recreation facilities.

Limited Development

Limited Development areas as indicated on the Future Land Use Map are located outside the current corporate limits and in the south/southwestern quadrant of the community. The area has some limited development potential due to environmental constraints associated with Sucker Creek and the flood plain. In addition, the availability of municipal services is impeded and will be difficult to provide in the near future. It is anticipated that these areas will develop slowly at low densities and the City should continue to communicate with the Township to coordinate development and services.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

The Growth Management Areas are likely annexation areas. Until annexation occurs, the Growth Management Areas should be protected by cities, county and townships from mixed uses and/or development without proper supporting infrastructure. These areas are currently experiencing development activity or are likely to be developed over the next 20 years.

Development in these areas will be staged to meet the demand for land, while being able to provide services in a cost-efficient manner. Future development in these districts should be at urban densities and occur in as orderly and contiguous a manner as possible.

Appropriate residential, commercial and industrial development would be allowed at urban densities if and when the provision of adequate infrastructure and services are available. These categories are defined as Township Industrial, Township Residential and Township Commercial.

Growth Management Areas

Table 15 shown in the previous section indicates that there is limited land for additional development within the current corporate limits of Cokato. If the city anticipates further residential, commercial and industrial growth, it may have to annex land in order to provide adequate space for that growth.

There are a number of areas adjacent to the city that may be appropriate for additional growth and annexation. These areas should be properly planned so that the logical extension of future urban services can occur in an efficient and cost effective manner. These areas are shown on Figure 8, *Future Land Use Map*, and are outlined below.

Northeast of the City. This area is east of County Road 3 and north of Swendra Boulevard to the western edge of Sucker Creek. This area was identified as a primary growth area for the community. The city recently annexed a large portion of this area adjacent to County Road 3. Areas along County Road 3 may be suited for commercial development due to the roadway access and visibility of these parcels. In addition, mixed residential use is an appropriate land use transition in this area. In an effort to identify addition light industrial development, the city has identified a large parcel for industrial growth north of the existing business park and commercial area. Finally, the transition to residential and open space development continues as the city approaches the western edge of Sucker Creek

East of the City. The natural outward growth pressure along Highway 12 will present a challenge to maintaining an orderly and compact form to the city. However, this challenge can be overcome by zoning land along Highway 12 for commercial uses and by facilitating residential and mixed residential development behind the existing and future businesses along the northeast side of Highway 12. The land to the east and southeast of Highway 12 is also well suited for commercial development due to its proximity to transportation infrastructure. In addition, land east of County Road 4 has been identified for expansion of industrial development.

Northwest of the City. This includes land northwest of the of Cokato's current boundary. Most of this land is best suited for neighborhood residential and park development due to its proximity to Brooks Lake, Veteran's Memorial Park and the golf course.

Figure 8 - Future Land Use Map

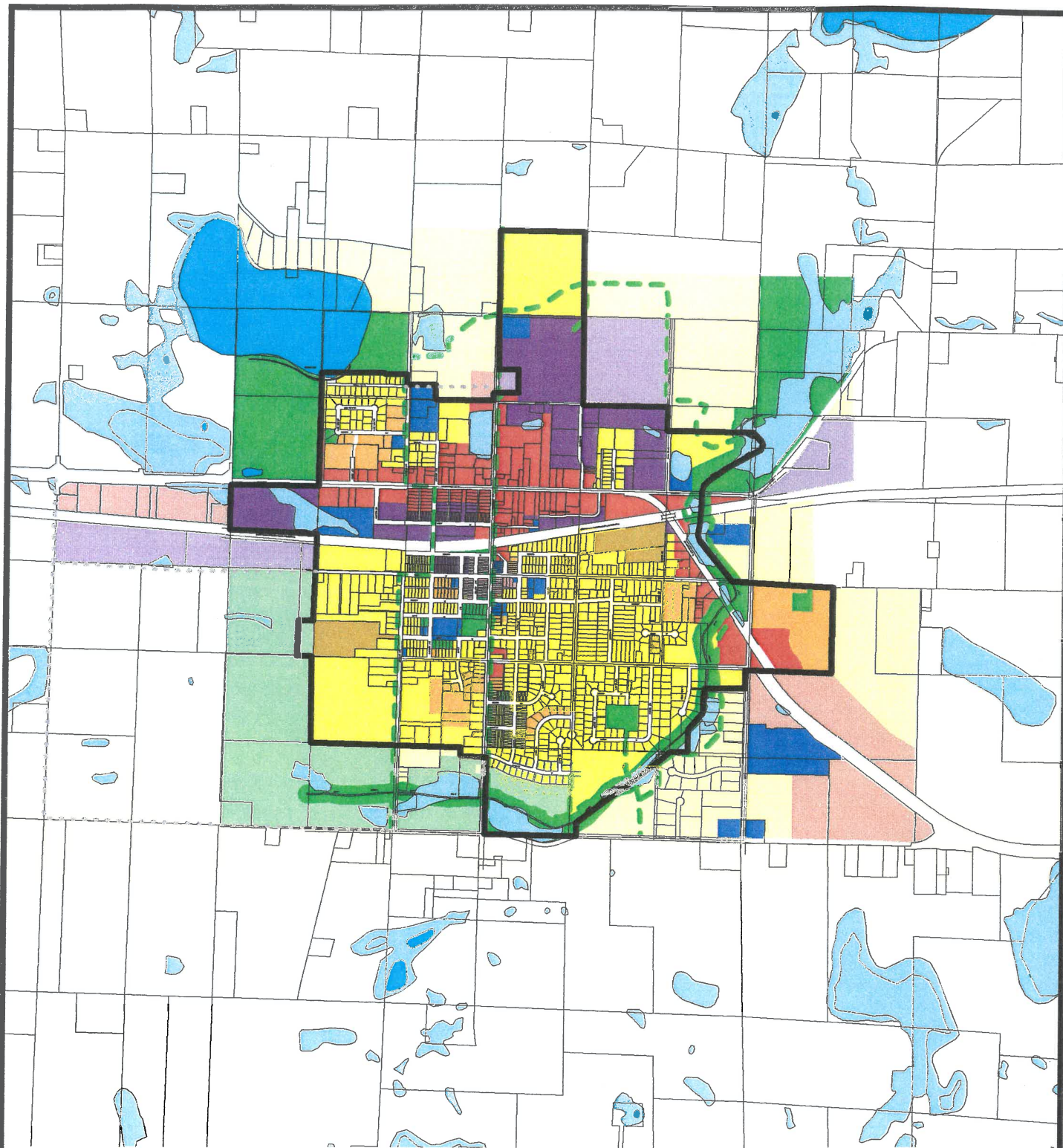
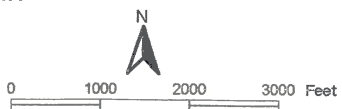


Figure 8
Future Land Use
 2003 Comprehensive Plan
 Cokato, Minnesota



Cokato parcel data provided by BRA, Inc.

1/22/03



Future Land Use		Waterbodies	
	Limited Development		Wetlands/Marshes
	Neighborhood Residential		Lakes
	Mixed Use Residential		Future Roads
	Manufactured Home Park		Trail System
	General Commercial		City Boundary
	Downtown Commercial		
	Industrial		
	Parks/Open Space		
	Public		
	Township Commercial		
	Township Industrial		
	Township Residential		

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The plan recommendations are to be implemented by the City Council, Planning Commission and City Administration. In addition, the Park Board, Economic Development Authority and other City commissions should use the recommendations as they go through their planning activities. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the citizens of Cokato to ensure that the plan's recommendations are followed and implemented.

General Land Use

1. Complete a community re-evaluation and updating of the city's Official Zoning Map and Ordinances to ensure consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and the new opportunities and challenges facing the city.
2. Improve communication and cooperation between the 1) city; 2) surrounding townships; 3) Wright County and 4) other public agencies and residents.
3. Recognize legitimate issues and concerns regarding jurisdictions and collaborate with the surrounding townships and Wright County through joint planning and other cooperative measures to efficiently address community needs.
4. Review the Comprehensive Plan annually and amend as necessary to ensure its usefulness as a practical guide for current and future development. Adhere to this Plan as closely as possible to ensure a consistent development policy.

Residential Land Use

1. Continue to guide residential growth in an orderly manner so that new development can be effectively served by public improvements and that the character and quality of the city's existing neighborhoods can be maintained and enhanced.
2. Pursue the development of annexation and joint-planning agreements to ensure the development of residential property is efficient and new neighborhoods create a sense of place.
3. Recognize environmentally sensitive areas and promote development that is cohesive with development and environmental standards.
4. Encourage the best possible use of existing sites within the city through development and redevelopment efforts. When sites do not exist within the city limits, the city must contact the appropriate township to discuss annexation opportunities.

Commercial Land Use

1. Promote commercial development along designated areas adjacent to Highway 12 and County Road 3, while creating connections to the downtown commercial area.
2. Encourage the best possible use of existing sites within the city through development and redevelopment efforts. When sites do not exist within the city limits, the city must contact the appropriate township to discuss annexation opportunities.

Industrial Land Use

1. Design and locate industrial developments that are sensitive to existing commercial and residential development. Ensure truck traffic is not routed through residential developments and they have access to major transportation systems.
2. Recognize the need to upgrade and expand existing city infrastructure to support future industrial development.
3. Recognize environmentally sensitive areas and promote industrial development that is cohesive with development and environmental standards.
4. Encourage the best possible use of existing sites within the city through development and redevelopment efforts. When sites do not exist within the city limits, the city must contact the appropriate township to discuss annexation opportunities.

Public Land Use

1. Ensure that there are adequate community park facilities to meet the needs of all residential neighborhoods, new developments in growth areas and to accommodate the young and aging population of the city.

Urban Growth Areas

1. Work with Wright County and the surrounding townships to plan for orderly growth outside the city, which may be annexed or governed under a joint planning agreement.
2. Work with adjacent jurisdictions to prevent development at urban densities located beyond the community's long-term ability to provide municipal services such as street, sanitary sewer and water.
3. Require that properties serviced by city water and sewer be located within the city.

Other Areas for Implementation

1. Encourage developers to build a diverse mix of residential buildings styles and sizes.
2. Ensure developments are consistent with regulations regarding environmentally sensitive areas and also ensure that communication occurs with federal, state and county agencies.
3. Develop residential, commercial and industrial development strategies. The provision of additional opportunities for residential development is key to the city's goals of increasing commercial and industrial development. The city could assist residential developers with land consolidations, marketing, permitting and other issues.

OFFICIAL CONTROLS

The city of Cokato should review and revise several of its regulatory measures such as the zoning ordinances in order to enforce the Plan's recommendations.

ZONING ORDINANCE

Zoning is the primary regulatory tool used by local governments to implement land use planning policies. It consists of the official zoning map and the supporting ordinance text. The official map divides the community into zoning districts and the text describes regulations within those districts, including permitted uses, lots sizes, setbacks, density standards, etc. The following steps should be taken to update the zoning ordinance:

1. An important first step is to compare the current zoning map with the adopted land use plan map and reconcile discrepancies. There may be valid reasons why the two documents are not identical, but these reasons should be clear. These areas should be properly zoned prior to development.
2. The second step is to review, update and refine the zoning ordinance to implement and enforce the goals, policies and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

REVIEW AND REVISION

The Comprehensive Plan is not a static document. The planning process must be continuous and the Plan should be monitored and updated when necessary. If community attitudes change or new issues arise that are beyond the scope of the current Plan, the document should be reviewed and updated. If changes are found to be appropriate, they should be formally added by amending the Plan.

All proposed Plan amendments should be submitted to the Planning Commission for review. After a public hearing, the City Council should make a final decision on whether or not the amendment is warranted. Criteria to use when deciding upon the acceptability of a Plan amendment shall include:

- A mistake in the Plan;
- A change in the community or issues not anticipated by the Plan.

Also, at three or five year intervals, the entire Plan should be reviewed and modified to ensure that it continues to be an up-to-date expression of the community's goals and intentions.