

### **Applicant's**

Blue Earth County  
204 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Mankato, MN 56001

SRF Consulting Group  
1 Carlson Parkway North  
Minneapolis, MN 55447

### **Request**

Request for review and approval of the Blue Earth County Land Use Plan. The Land Use Plan is an official document that is used as a guide for policy decisions about the physical development of the County. The plan describes the analysis, future projects, goals and strategies that were developed for how decisions will be made over the next 20 years. Specifically, the plan sets broad policies and strategies to direct the future growth and development in the areas of Agriculture, Natural Resources, Community Resilience, Land Use, Development, Housing, and Transportation.

### **History and Scope**

Originally adopted in 1975, the first Blue Earth County Land Use Plan was created to address the issues of the day, protect the vital agricultural industry, and respond to the needs of the public all while incorporating goals and policies that would benefit its residents in the future. When that plan was updated in 1998, it was done as a response to growth pressure, conflicts between existing and new land uses, changing technologies in the agricultural field, and the desire to better guide future development in the County. The 2018 update to the Land Use Plan is designed to be in effect until 2040. It describes the analysis, future projections, goals and strategies that Blue Earth County has developed for how decisions will be made over the next twenty years. The 2040 Land Use Plan is an official document adopted by the County Board as a guide for policy decisions about the physical development of the County. The plan sets broad objectives and strategies to direct the future growth and development in the areas of land use, transportation, water resources, parks, trails and open space, housing, resilience, and the economy. For each topic, the plan identifies issues, sets a goal, establishes objectives to support the goal, and identifies actions needed to accomplish the objectives.

### **Public Participation and Review**

A two-phase approach including the data collection phase and plan review phase were implemented to accomplish the purpose of developing goals and objectives, and crafting implementation strategies. The data collection phase began on March 7, 2017 with a kick-off meeting with the Commissioners of Blue Earth County. This meeting was designed to explain the upcoming process and provide a timeline for completion. In addition, Commissioners were given an opportunity to share their thoughts and any issues that had been raised by their constituents. Below is a list of dates where the public was invited to take part in the data collection phase:

- April 18, 2018 – Public Open House (Maple River West, Good Thunder)
- May 4, 2018 – Region #1 Focus Group (Lake Crystal Rec Center, Lake Crystal)
- May 11, 2018 – Region #2 Focus Group (Eagle Lake City Hall, Eagle Lake)
- May 30, 2018 – Region #4 Focus Group (Maple River Senior High, Mapleton)
- June 8, 2018 – Region #3 Focus Group (Snowbird's Meeting Hall, Amboy)

In addition to the above listed meetings, in March of 2017 a project specific website was launched to provide Study Review Committee members, municipal officials and the public with easy access to the most current information related to the Plan. Initially, the website provided an overview of the planning process and schedule, the functions of the Study Review Committee and public regional meetings. As the Plan evolved, different elements were posted on the website including a link to the online survey via SurveyMonkey and the final survey results. Contact information was also provided on the website so that any member of the public could address Planning and Zoning Staff with questions related to the planning process. Those members of the public that asked to be informed throughout the process and left their contact information, were sent emails or letters at various stages during the plan development. Other components of phase one included the review of other existing local and regional plans, in-depth interviews with the municipalities within Blue Earth County, and in-depth interviews with individuals representing key economic development groups within Blue Earth County.

The plan review phase began on September 14, 2018 when the draft Land Use Plan was posted online for public review. Several emails and letters were sent to officials and members of the public who had previously asked to be contacted when the plan became available. A second Public Open House meeting was held on September 24, 2018 at the Blue Earth County Government Center. An overview of the plan and the development process was given, and County staff members were available to discuss the specific goals, objectives, and implementation actions listed in the draft Land Use Plan. Members of the public were encouraged to complete comments cards and submit them as they exited the meeting. An online survey was also created to give County residents more time to review the draft plan before they submitted their feedback. This online forum was open from September 24, 2018 to October 15, 2018. All the submitted comment cards, online comments, and those comments received through emails and phone calls were reviewed by the Study Review Committee and considered while final revisions were being made.

### **Recommendation**

Staff requests that the Planning Commission forward a recommendation of **APPROVAL** of the updated version of the Blue Earth County Land Use Plan to the County Board.

### **Attachments:**

- A-1 DRAFT Land Use Plan
- A-2 Land Use Plan Appendices

**\*\* PLEASE BE ADVISED \*\***

Due to the file size of Attachment A-1 and Attachment A-2, they cannot be included with the staff report. To view the Plan and its Attachments, please click on or type in the applicable link below:

- The DRAFT Land Use Plan and its Appendices can be viewed here:
  - <http://www.co.blue-earth.mn.us/1369/Land-Use-Plan-Update>

In addition to the above listed link, a physical copy of the DRAFT Land Use Plan can be viewed at the following locations:

- **Blue Earth County Environmental Services Office**
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor of the Government Center, 410 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Mankato
- **Blue Earth County Administration Office**
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of the Historic Courthouse, 204 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Mankato
- **Mankato Branch of the Blue Earth County Public Library**
  - 100 E. Main Street, Mankato
- **Mapleton Branch of the Blue Earth County Public Library**
  - 104 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, Mapleton

The corresponding Appendices are available for review at the following location:

- **Blue Earth County Environmental Services Office**
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor of the Government Center, 410 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Mankato