

# INTRODUCTION

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## **AUTHORITY TO PLAN**

Mower County is authorized to prepare and implement a Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Chapter 394 of Minnesota Statutes, Planning Development, and Zoning. The County Board has the power and authority to adopt the plan by ordinance upon recommendation by the Planning Commission. When so adopted, the Comprehensive Plan is required to be the basis for such official controls as the zoning and subdivision ordinances.

## **PURPOSE OF THE PLAN**

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to identify problems, opportunities, issues and needs and organize public policy to deal with them in a manner that serves the best interests of the greatest number of people.

The Comprehensive Plan is generally acknowledged as an instrument with which to guide urban growth. In rural Minnesota, its purpose must necessarily be to provide guidance for rational decision-making in the face of limited resources and the near absence of growth.

The Comprehensive Plan is no more or less than a statement of public policy based on a common vision, embodied in its goals, of where the County wants to go and how it intends to get there. It is a general plan, which is intended to portray policies, objectives, concepts and relationships. It must have a degree of flexibility to be helpful in making decisions. If it is interpreted too literally it serves no purpose greater than that of a zoning ordinance.

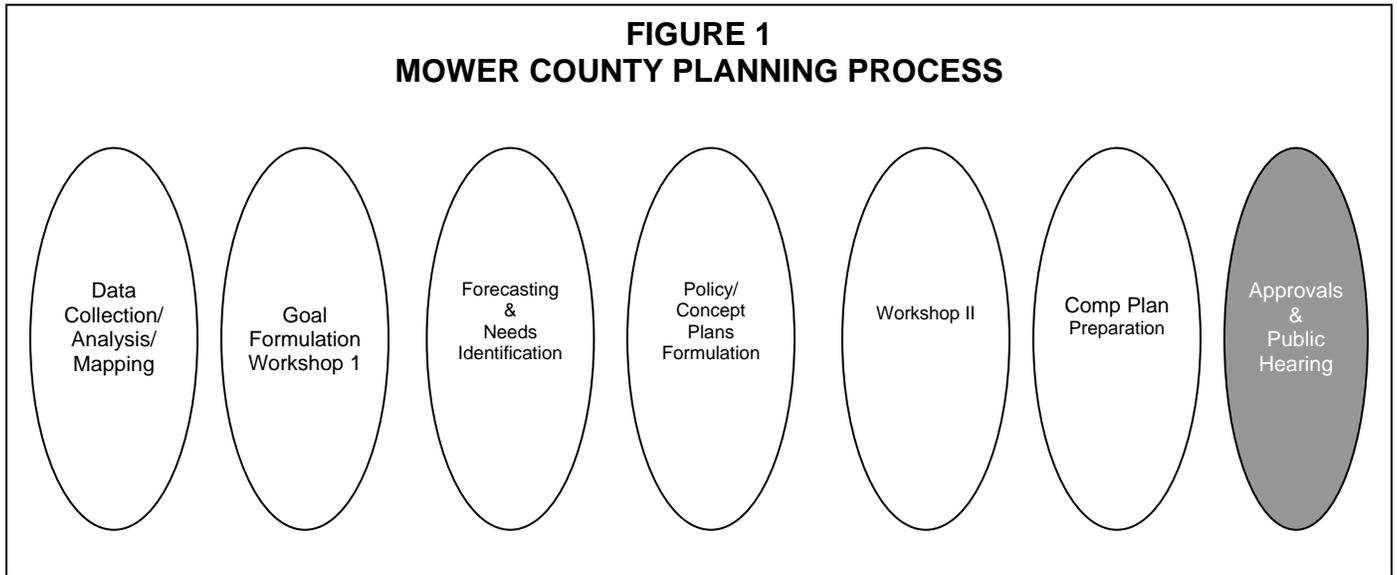
The Comprehensive Plan is different than zoning in many ways. It is futuristic, positive, dynamic and comprehensive, dealing with land use, transportation, community facilities, environmental, economic development and spending policy. Zoning is static, narrow (primarily land use), negative and has no time dimension. Zoning portrays only what is, while the Comprehensive Plan represents what can be.

The Comprehensive Plan is not infallible. Circumstances change and the plan must both lead and keep pace with change. It will, therefore, need to be reevaluated periodically and amended occasionally. If an amendment is proposed, it should be considered in light of its potential impacts on the environment, the neighborhood, the County and public services/costs. Where the public health and welfare is served as well by an alternative approach, amendments may be warranted.

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## **THE PLANNING PROCESS**

Planning is a process consisting of ongoing plan formation and continuing reevaluation. Figure 1 portrays just that part of the process that was used to prepare the Mower County Comprehensive Plan. Continuing feedback, reevaluation and fine-tuning will be required to keep it fresh and current in an ever-changing world.



From 2001 to 2002, Mower County underwent a process to update this Comprehensive Plan. The process was similar to that shown in Figure 1. It began with four issues identification workshops held throughout the County. The Plan's goals, objectives, and recommendations were modified to reflect new opinions, issues and concerns identified by the public at the workshops as well as new background data available. A planning task force was also established to oversee the plan update.