

LAND USE ELEMENT

EXISTING LAND USE

Mower County has a total of 708.6 square miles or approximately 453,510 acres of land. Of that, the 14 Cities comprise 18.5 square miles or about 11,800 acres and 2.6% of the County's total land area.

Agriculture is the primary use of land in Mower County. In 1989, 406,668 acres or 90% of its total land area was comprised of farmsteads, cultivated land and agricultural grasslands. Beyond Lansing, Austin and Red Rock Townships, the residential density is very low ranging from one unit per 103 acres in Windom Township to one unit per 374 acres in Clayton Township (see Figure 24). There are no serious urban/rural conflicts within these areas except perhaps in the immediate vicinity of Cities such as Adams where some urban residential development exists outside of the City limits.

The three Townships immediately surrounding Austin (Austin, Red Rock and Lansing) have an entirely different land use pattern in that they contain nonfarm residential concentrations. Clusters exist south of Brownsdale in the vicinity of Interstate 90 and Trunk Highway 56 in Red Rock Township. They are also present south of Austin on County Road 29 and Trunk Highway 218. In Lansing Township north of Austin, residential clusters exist along Trunk Highway 218 and County Road 25.

In areas where nonfarm rural residential development already exists but public sanitary sewer systems are not available, there is an opportunity to provide for larger lot nonfarm residential clusters in areas where urban/rural conflicts can be avoided.

With rare exception, existing commercial and industrial land uses are also located in the three Townships nearest Austin (Lansing, Austin and Red Rock). Some of these are zoned for their respective uses. Others are legal nonconforming uses, which mean that they may continue to be used but they cannot be expanded, enlarged or altered in a way, which would increase their nonconformity. Featherlite Manufacturing is located west of Grand Meadow in the Township.

Two relatively large categories of land use include forest and open shrub grasslands. Though highly scattered, some of the shrub grasslands may qualify as wetlands warranting protection under the Wetland Conservation Act of 1991.

**FIGURE 23
MOWER COUNTY TOWNSHIPS
NUMBER ACRES PER HOUSING UNIT ***

184 Housing Units 36.0 Square Miles UDOLPHO 125 Acres/Unit	160 HU 35.9 SM WALTHAM 144 A/U	104 HU 35.4 SM SARGEANT 218 A/U	111 HU 35.4 SM PLEASANT VALLEY 174 A/U	175 HU 35.9 SM RACINE 131 A/U
514 HU 32.6 SM LANSING 41 A/U	291 HU 35.4 SM RED ROCK 78 A/U	118 HU 34.7 SM DEXTER 188 A/U	124 HU 35.7 SM GRAND MEADOW 184 A/U	129 HU 30.1 SM FRANKFORD 149 A/U
67.3 HU 29.9 SM AUSTIN 28 A/U	224 HU 36.1 SM WINDOM 103 A/U	134 HU 34.6 SM MARSHALL 165 A/U	62 HU 36.2 SM CLAYTON 374 A/U	69 HU 36.1 SM BENNINGTON 335 A/U
151 HU 35.5 SM LYLE 150 A/U	143 HU 36.7 SM NEVADA 164 A/U	150 HU 34.9 SM ADAMS 149 A/U	89 HU 35.6 SM LODI 256 A/U	154 HU 35.4 SM LEROY 147 A/U

* Excluding Municipalities

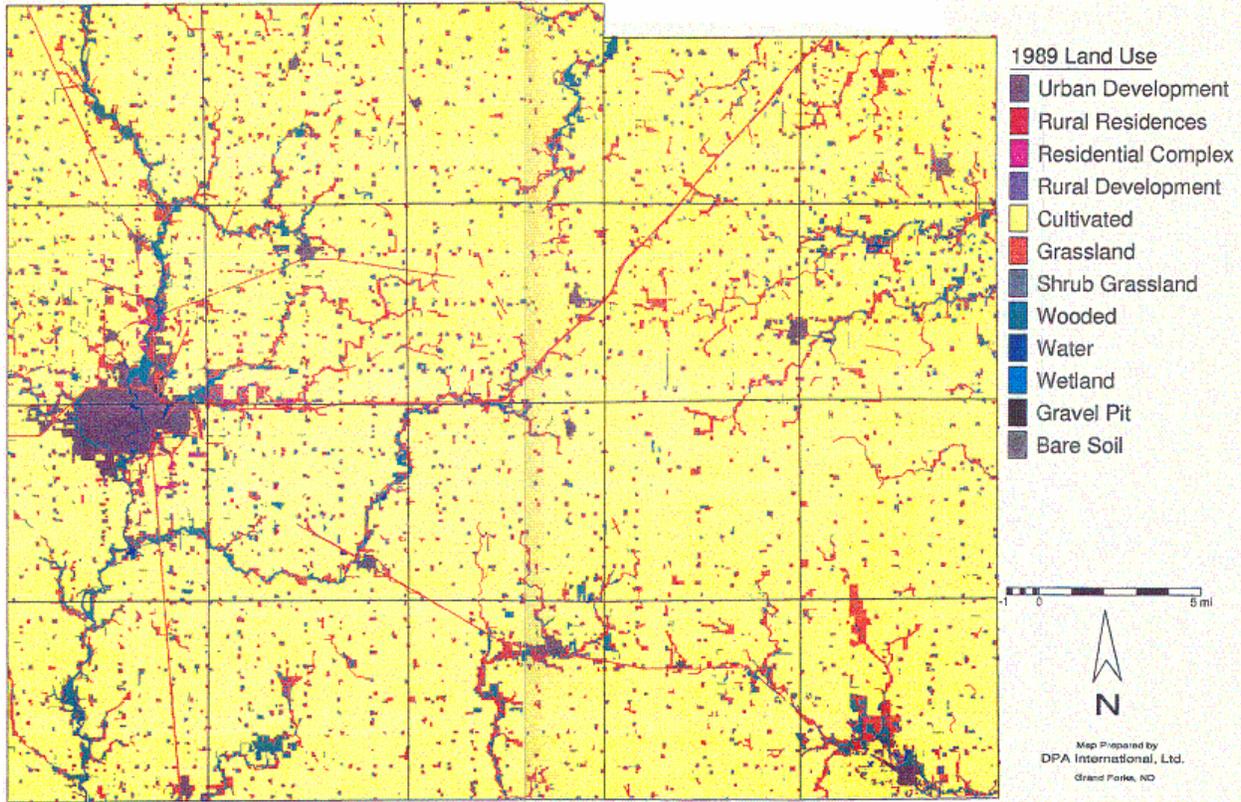
There have continued to be pressures for limited new development, especially housing, in the vicinity of Austin. Increased growth is also emerging in the northeast portion of the County due largely to the influence of the Rochester area. Limited growth may be expected to occur in the vicinity of the County's other small cities and rural areas.

The City of Austin has two primary retail centers, Downtown and the Oak Park Mall, which together are unable to meet the needs of their collective market area. These existing centers have more than ample capacity to serve the County's population but they will have to be substantially improved and their roles clarified for them to survive and thrive. There will be no need for urban expansion to accommodate new commercial development in the County.

Overall, land use has not changed appreciably over the past ten years other than in the immediate vicinity of Austin and some emerging growth in the County's northeast area. Some continued change is expected over the next decade based on population projections.

LAND USE UNIT	ACRES	% TOTAL COUNTY
Urban	6,442	1.42
Rural Residential	489	0.11
Other Rural Development	610	0.13
Cultivated Land	398,855	87.95
Farmsteads	7,769	1.71
Agricultural Grasslands	44	0.01
Open Shrub Grasslands	22,610	4.99
Closed Shrub Grasslands	348	0.08
Deciduous Forest	14,794	3.26
Coniferous Forest	2	0.00
Mixed Forest	2	0.00
Water	650	0.14
Wetlands	67	0.01
Gravel Pits/Mines	319	0.07
Exposed Soil	15	0.00
TOTALS	453,510	99.88%
Source: DPA International, 1992		

MOWER COUNTY 1989 LAND USE MAP



LAND USE PLAN

The land use plan is comprised of eight land use categories as follows:

Urban Service Management Areas. Urban Service Management Areas are inside the boundaries of municipalities and all urban development (housing at densities greater than one unit per gross acre, commercial and industrial) is intended to be located in urban service areas and serviced by public utilities (sewer and water). Any urban development that is not within a municipality is, nonetheless, intended to be served by public utilities.

Objectives

1. Strong cities that are financially viable, capable of delivering urban public services and able to satisfy the retail and employment needs of the County.
2. Urban centers that is compatible with the rural lifestyle and supportive of commercial agriculture.

Policies

The following are the County's policies for Urban Service Areas:

1. To support the strengthening and improvement of existing retail centers within cities to improve their drawing power and increase their capacity to service the needs of all County residents.
2. To promote the growth of commerce, industry and urban housing in cities where such developments can be provided with the full-range of urban public services at minimum cost where they will not interfere with commercial agriculture.

Rural Service Areas. Rural Service Areas include established, unincorporated rural centers. These areas may be appropriate for additional residential development on smaller lots as well as commercial establishments that serve the local market. However, these areas should remain relatively small and low-density so that they do not require public sewer service or County Road improvements beyond normal maintenance. Any new development should maintain the Rural Service Center's small-scale character. Any commercial uses in these areas shall produce only a relatively low volume of wastewater that is capable of being serviced by an on-site well and waste water disposal system. Actual lot sizes are intended to be based on the capability of soils to accommodate on-site utilities. In larger residential subdivisions, community, on-site systems should be considered to allow for smaller lots sizes.

New dwellings must be sited with consideration for the following:

- Wetlands, floodways, and peat and muck areas.
- Soil suitability for on-site sewage treatment systems.
- Distance from existing feedlots.

Objectives

1. To maintain the viability of existing unincorporated rural service centers to serve the local surrounding agricultural areas.
2. Protection of the County's groundwater resources.

Policies

The following are the County's policies for Rural Service Centers:

1. Allow limited residential expansion within and immediately adjacent to existing rural service centers.
2. Allow limited expansion of commercial uses that serve the local market within and immediately adjacent to existing rural service centers.
3. To establish lot sizes on the basis of the soils capabilities to support on-site utilities, with a minimum of 1.5 acres unless clustered and serviced by an on-site community system.
4. Require the identification of any wells of record and sealing of abandoned ones whenever any property is sold or ownership is otherwise transferred.
5. Require inspection and upgrading of on-site sewer systems to conform with MPCA standards whenever any property is sold or ownership is otherwise transferred. Inspections must be conducted by a state certified inspector. Inspections can be waived if a new system has been installed in the past 5 years or an existing system has been inspected in the past 3 years.

Urban Expansion Areas. These areas are intended to be protected for urban expansion over the next 20 years and should be the subject of orderly annexation agreements. No new commercial or industrial uses except those which already exist and home occupations, are intended to be accommodated and no utilities should be extended to these areas until they are annexed. New agricultural operations or expansions should be limited to 50 animal units. New residential development in advance of annexation is intended to be at densities lower than one unit per 20 acres to protect these areas for future urban development. Actual lot sizes are intended to be based on the capability of soils to accommodate on-site utilities. Density transfer and clustering are intended to be allowed only in areas designated for residential development in the future land use plan of the adjacent city. In larger residential subdivisions, community, on-site systems are encouraged to allow for smaller lot sizes while maintaining open space or agricultural land.

New dwellings must be sited with consideration for the following:

- Wetlands, floodways, and peat and muck areas.
- Soil suitability for on-site sewage treatment systems.
- Distance from existing feedlots.

These are intended to be holding zones to allow for the phased, orderly and contiguous growth of urban areas. Agricultural preserves are not intended to be permitted in Urban Expansion areas. Cities are strongly encouraged to develop land use plans for these areas. Any new development in these areas should be consistent with the adjacent City's land use, transportation, sewer, water and other plans.

Small city growth is expected to be minimal, therefore not warranting the establishment of Urban Expansion areas. Nonetheless, contiguous urban expansion is intended to be accommodated adjacent to small cities in situations where growth is occurring or imminent, where existing urban development outside the City is in need of public utilities and where public utilities can be made available.

Objectives

1. Protection of areas for the logical and orderly expansion of cities.
2. Continuation of existing agricultural activities until urbanization is imminent.
3. Minimization of premature urban impacts on commercial agriculture.
4. Protection of the County's groundwater resources.

Policies

The following are the County's policies for Urban Expansion Areas.

1. To support phased city growth that is compatible with the rural lifestyle.
2. To support orderly annexation agreements and phased annexation within Urban Expansion Areas.
3. To support the contiguous expansion of all cities but only in areas that can be serviced by urban public utilities.
4. To limit residential density to one unit per 20 acres until such time as annexation is initiated. Higher density may be allowed through a Planned Unit Development or in woodland areas or areas that are unsuitable for economical agricultural uses because of poor soils, rough or step topography, or other natural features.
5. To provide opportunities for housing clusters and density transfer in areas planned for future residential development by the adjacent city as a means to encourage subdivision design that will fit into urban development patterns when these areas urbanize in the future. It can also be used as a means to site dwellings in less environmentally sensitive or less agriculturally productive areas.
6. To establish lot sizes on the basis of the soils capabilities to support on-site utilities, with a minimum of 1.5 acres unless clustered and serviced by an on-site community system.

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7. To notify the adjacent City whenever development is proposed within these areas in advance of annexation, and solicit their comment on the consistency of such development with future City plans for land use, transportation, sewer, water, etc.
 8. To oppose the certification of agricultural preserves in areas adjacent to a municipality where city plans have been adopted which justify urban expansion.
 9. Require the identification of any wells of record and sealing of abandoned ones whenever any property is sold or ownership is otherwise transferred.
 10. Require inspection and upgrading of on-site sewer systems to conform with MPCA standards whenever any property is sold or ownership is otherwise transferred. Inspections must be conducted by a state certified inspector. Inspections can be waived if a new system has been installed in the past 5 years or an existing system has been inspected in the past 3 years.

Rural Management Areas. These areas are primarily intended to maintain agriculture and the rural lifestyle however, they also encompass existing non-farm rural residential development. In addition, these areas are intended to allow for limited residential opportunities in higher growth areas of the County outside of cities and their Urban Expansion areas. Since public utilities will not be available for many years and soils conditions are generally not conducive to the use of on-site utilities, gross residential densities are intended to be one unit per 40 acres or less. Density transfer and clustering are intended to be allowed and encouraged as a means to site dwellings in less environmentally sensitive or less agriculturally productive areas.

New dwellings must be sited with consideration for the following:

- Wetlands, floodways, and peat and muck areas.
- Soil suitability for on-site sewage treatment systems.
- Distance from existing feedlots.

Actual lot sizes for housing clusters are intended to be based on the capability of soils to accommodate on-site utilities. In larger residential subdivisions, community, on-site systems are encouraged to allow for smaller lot sizes while maintaining open space or agricultural land. No new housing is intended to be permitted in close proximity to an existing livestock farm or feed lot. No commercial or industrial development is intended to be accommodated except as may be permitted as home occupations. Agricultural preserves are intended to be permitted.

Objectives

1. Provision of opportunities for non-farm housing alternatives.
2. Protection of prime agricultural lands and the continuation of commercial agriculture.
3. Minimization of urban/rural conflicts.
4. Protection of the County's groundwater resources.

Policies

The following are the policies for Rural Management Areas:

1. To provide opportunities for housing clusters and density transfer as a means to site dwellings in less environmentally sensitive or less agriculturally productive areas.
2. To separate non-compatible urban and rural uses to minimize conflicts.
3. To establish lot sizes on the basis of the soils capabilities to support on-site utilities, with a minimum of 1.5 acres, unless clustered and serviced by an on-site community septic system.
4. To prohibit uses which are not compatible with non-farm residential uses.
5. To limit residential densities to one unit per 40 acres. Higher density may be allowed through a Planned Unit Development or in woodland areas or areas that are unsuitable for economical agricultural uses because of poor soils, rough or step topography, or other natural features.
6. To permit the clustering of nonfarm dwellings subject to the meeting of clustering criteria.
7. To encourage the employment of sustainable agricultural practices as a means to maintain adequate yields, conserve soil and protect ground and surface waters quality.
8. Require the identification of any wells of record and sealing of abandoned ones whenever any property is sold or ownership is otherwise transferred.
9. Require inspection and upgrading of on-site sewer systems to conform with MPCA standards whenever any property is sold or ownership is otherwise transferred. Inspections must be conducted by a state certified inspector. Inspections can be waived if a new system has been installed in the past 5 years or an existing system has been inspected in the past 3 years.

Agricultural Management Areas. These generally correlate with prime agricultural lands (CER greater than 60) and all but a small amount of the County's land is intended to be so designated and used for long-term commercial agriculture and ancillary uses. Residential densities are intended to be no greater than one unit per 160 acres. Density transfer and clustering are intended to be allowed and encouraged as a means to site dwellings in less environmentally sensitive or less agriculturally productive areas.

New dwellings must be sited with consideration for the following:

- Wetlands, floodways, and peat and muck areas.
- Soil suitability for on-site sewage treatment systems.
- Distance from existing feedlots.

Actual lot sizes are intended to be based on the capability of soils to accommodate on-site utilities. In larger residential subdivisions, community, on-site septic systems are encouraged to allow for smaller lot sizes while maintaining open space or agricultural land.

Agricultural land preserves, per state statute, are encouraged anywhere within agricultural management areas. While being primarily for commercial agriculture, essential service uses such as public parks, utilities and landfills are intended to be permitted provided they meet minimum waste disposal standards.

Objectives

1. Continuation of long-term commercial agriculture.
2. Preservation of the maximum amount of agricultural land.
3. Preservation of the rural lifestyle and values.
4. Encourage the practice of environmentally acceptable agricultural practices.
5. Protection of the County's groundwater resources.

Policies

The following are the County's policies for Agricultural Management Areas:

1. To discourage urban development in areas that are not designated for urban expansion.
2. To avoid the siting of major public facilities (sewage lagoons, landfills, etc.) on prime agricultural lands, wherever possible.
3. To provide farmers with economic incentives to conserve the maximum amount possible of agricultural land and encourage the continuation of long-term commercial agriculture.
4. To encourage the employment of sustainable agricultural practices as a means to maintain adequate yields, conserve soil and protect ground and surface waters quality.
5. To limit residential density to one unit per 160 acres. Higher density may be allowed through a Planned Unit Development or in woodland areas or areas that are unsuitable for economical agricultural uses because of poor soils, rough or step topography, or other natural features.
6. To provide opportunities for housing clusters and density transfer as a means to site dwellings in less environmentally sensitive or less agriculturally productive areas.
7. To establish lot sizes on the soils capabilities to support on-site utilities, with a minimum of 1.5 acres unless clustered and serviced by an on-site community system.
8. To encourage compliance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and Mower County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) soil erosion standards.

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9. To oppose the certification of agricultural preserves within one-eighth mile of a municipal boundary for one year following the adoption of Agriculture Preservation Ordinance provisions.
 10. Require the identification of any wells of record and sealing of abandoned ones whenever any property is sold or ownership is otherwise transferred.
 11. Require inspection and upgrading of on-site sewer systems to conform with MPCA standards whenever any property is sold or ownership is otherwise transferred. Inspections must be conducted by a state certified inspector. Inspections can be waived if a new system has been installed in the past 5 years or an existing system has been inspected in the past 3 years.

Freeway Interchange Management Areas. These areas are defined as the land area within a radius of one-quarter mile of the center point of a designated Interstate 90 interchange, which offers all direction vehicular access. Within these areas only commercial uses that depend on larger volumes of traffic or those that provide services to the motoring public are intended to be allowed. New development must be sited with consideration for the following

- Wetlands, shorelands, floodways, and peat and muck areas.
- Soil suitability for on-site sewage treatment systems.

Typical uses include hotels, motels, fuel stations and restaurants. Approvals required include rezoning and site plan review.

Objectives

1. Provide economic development opportunities for freeway/traffic related commercial uses.
2. Insure aesthetically pleasing developments in prominent locations.
3. Protection of the County's groundwater resources.

Policies

The following are the County's policies for Freeway Interchange Management Areas:

1. To carefully plan and control highway service uses to satisfy the needs of motorists while minimizing negative aesthetic and environmental impacts.
2. To prohibit commercial uses which compete with established retail areas and businesses within municipalities.
3. To maintain Freeway Interchange Management Areas in agricultural use for as long as possible and avoid rezoning until a specific and real project is proposed.

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4. To establish lot sizes on the soils capabilities to support on-site utilities, with a minimum of 1.5 acres unless clustered and serviced by an on-site community system.
 5. Require the identification of any wells of record and sealing of abandoned ones whenever any property is sold or ownership is otherwise transferred.
 6. Require inspection and upgrading of on-site sewer systems to conform with MPCA standards whenever any property is sold or ownership is otherwise transferred. Inspections must be conducted by a state certified inspector. Inspections can be waived if a new system has been installed in the past 5 years or an existing system has been inspected in the past 3 years.

Conservation Management Areas. Conservation Management Areas generally correlate with shorelands as defined by the DNR's Shoreland Management Program. They include all lands within 30 feet of protected waters (including rivers, creeks and ditches) and areas that are subject to flooding (within a 100 year flood frequency boundary) plus protected wetland areas and forested areas. Within these areas special overlay restrictions are intended to apply which deal with the protection of surface waters and natural environmental values and the protection of people and property from hazard.

Objectives

1. Conservation of natural resources and the enhancement of ground surface waters quality.
2. Protection of people and property from flood hazard.

Policies

The following are the County's policies for Conservation management Areas:

1. To prohibit the development of habitable structures within the 100 year floodplain and alterations that will obstruct flood flows or cause the displacement of flood capacity.
2. To require large residential lot sizes and significant structural setbacks from protected waters.
3. To provide, through the regulatory process, undisturbed buffers along the edges of protected waters to allow such areas to serve as filters for surface runoff into public waters.
4. To allow no new feedlots or manure storage within Conservation Management Areas.
5. To encourage minimum loss of significant trees within Conservation Management Areas.
6. To require measures (vegetation and/or berming) to minimize the runoff of chemical and organic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides into shore impact zones of protected waters.

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7. To encourage farmers to apply set asides to shore impact zones.
 8. To formulate an educational program designed to inform property owners of the need to evaluate and upgrade on-site sewage treatment systems and maintain shore impact zones in permanent vegetation.
 9. Require the identification of any wells of record and sealing of abandoned ones whenever any property is sold or ownership is otherwise transferred.
 10. Require inspection and upgrading of on-site sewer systems to conform with MPCA standards whenever any property is sold or ownership is otherwise transferred. Inspections must be conducted by a state certified inspector. Inspections can be waived if a new system has been installed in the past 5 years or an existing system has been inspected in the past 3 years.

Ground Water Quality Management Areas. Ground Water Quality Management Areas generally correlate with areas identified in the Geologic Atlas as being susceptible to ground water contamination due to the geologic features of the areas. These areas may not currently have special regulations placed on them through the County's zoning ordinance, but should be examined more carefully when development or a change in land use is proposed within them.

Objectives

1. Protection of ground water quality in areas particularly susceptible to contamination.

Policies

The following are the County's policies for Ground Water Quality Management Areas:

1. Minimize ground water pollution by requiring mitigative measures or prohibiting certain land uses within areas containing karst features and areas sensitive to ground water pollution.
2. Require all development to be subject to special review in the Ground Water Quality Management Areas.
3. Require the identification of any wells of record and sealing of abandoned ones whenever any property is sold or ownership is otherwise transferred.
4. Require inspection and upgrading of on-site sewer systems to conform with MPCA standards whenever any property is sold or ownership is otherwise transferred. Inspections must be conducted by a state certified inspector. Inspections can be waived if a new system has been installed in the past 5 years or an existing system has been inspected in the past 3 years.
5. Educate owners of on-site sewer system regarding safety and proper maintenance.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

