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# FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

In any planning area, be it a large urban area which is expanding in population or a small rural county which is declining in population, there will be changes in land uses through time. The purpose of a Future Land Use Plan is to provide a general guide for these changes in land use so that the resulting land uses can coexist with a minimum number of land use and environmental conflicts and maximize economic development opportunities.

A Future Land Use Plan also provides a public statement of the citizens of the County regarding land use development that agricultural, livestock, industrial, commercial and other private sector investors and developers can quickly comprehend and utilize in siting land development projects.

A Future Land Use Plan also provides the legal basis for the formulation of land use (zoning) regulations and the application of zoning districts. For this reason, it is imperative to formulate a Future Land Use Plan that is tailored to the needs and desires of its citizens and environmental limitations of each planning area.

In order to accomplish these purposes, the Future Land Use Plan for Cherry County is based upon the land uses already existing in the rural areas of the County and the citizen's desire and need to protect these land uses, the environment, local property values and the lifestyles and customs of its people while, at the same time, promoting improvements in all components of the local economy with particular emphasis on agricultural production, as the predominant component of the local economy. The following principles and concepts have thus been selected to guide the development of the Cherry County Future Land Use Plan:

## **Principles and Concepts of the Cherry County, Nebraska Future Land Use Plan**

- Private ownership of land is essential to the freedom of individuals, families and communities and to the economic interests of the citizens of the County.
- Existing agricultural uses, methods of agricultural production, property values and the lifestyle and quality of life of the citizens of the County should be protected and preserved while allowing for changes in non-agricultural uses in a manner and in locations which will not be incompatible with such existing uses, which will not damage the environment, which will not negatively impact

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the infrastructure of the County and which will not negatively impact property values or the quality of life in the rural areas of the County.

- Land use regulations, which are to be used to implement this Future Land Use Plan, should be minimized to preserve the freedoms and property rights enjoyed by the citizens of the County while effectively addressing the needs to basic protection of the existing land uses, property values, the local environment and quality of life from development of future land uses which would be inconsistent with these needs.

### **Land Use Concepts**

**Agricultural Uses** - In order to abide by the principles and general land use planning concepts presented above, the future land uses in the unincorporated areas of Cherry County should continue to be dominated by agricultural production, specifically rangeland, cattle production and limited crop production. Aquaculture production could be investigated as a possible expansion of production in the County given its large water resources.



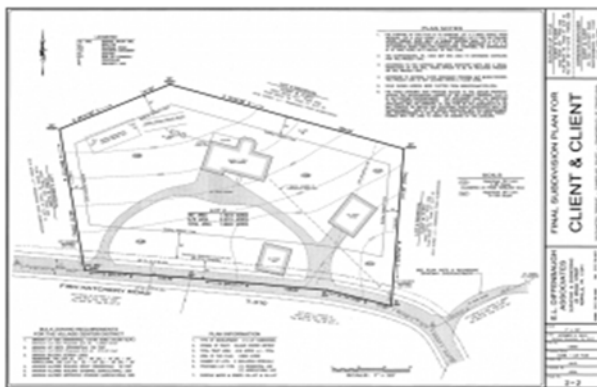
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Given the relatively high potential for groundwater contamination, confined livestock feeding operations in the County should be limited to those areas of the County where soils and water table levels have less potential for groundwater contamination.

Residential uses associated with such agricultural production uses should continue to be supported as accessory uses to such agricultural production. Development of non-agricultural residential uses in the rural areas of the County should be minimized in order to maintain productive grazing and crop land and minimize potential land use conflicts in areas of the County where livestock operations are sited.

**Non-Agricultural Residential Uses** - Development of residential uses not associated with farmstead and ranch operations should be encouraged as one method of encouraging economic and population growth in the County. However, such residential uses should be encouraged only in areas where improved roadways, recreation facilities and emergency services are available at reasonable distances. In the case of Cherry County, such housing should be encouraged only within the municipalities or along the major roadways serving the municipalities in the County.

Non-agricultural residential uses should be limited to individual housing sites to minimize the potential for groundwater contamination from on-site sewage disposal systems and to minimize the impact on local roadways serving such housing. Residential subdivisions should only be located on or near the major highways near the urban areas in the County. Limiting the locations of major residential subdivisions to these areas will minimize the future demands and need for expansion of the County roads and public services while enhancing the local economy and population growth.



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**Commercial and Industrial Uses** - Future commercial and industrial uses which would generate or attract substantial amounts of vehicular traffic, particularly heavy truck traffic, should be encouraged to locate along the major highway corridors near the municipalities in the County as opposed to more rural locations which would require extensive use and higher maintenance levels on County roads.



**Recreational Development** - Future recreational uses should be allowed to develop in the Niobrara River corridor, but only in a manner that is consistent with maintaining the scenic beauty of the River as set forth in the adopted Management Plan for this National Scenic River. Promotion and possible expansion of recreational areas in the corridor and elsewhere in the County including the Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge, Merritt Reservoir, the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, the McKelvie National Forest, the Bowring Ranch, the proposed golf course southwest of Valentine and the many other wildlife protection areas in the County will enhance the local economy as well as enhancing the quality of life for the citizens of the County.



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## **The Future Land Use Plan**

Based upon the above noted land use concepts, the Future Land Use Plan for Cherry County, Nebraska is indicated on Figure 2. This Plan envisions two primary land use categories for the expansion or future development of various land uses. As described below, these land use areas include:

- The land uses proposed in the entirety of the rural areas of the county, except within the designated of the Niobrara National Scenic River include only agricultural uses, consisting of rangeland, cattle production and cropland.
- The land uses proposed in the Niobrara River corridor east of the City of Valentine, again is proposed to remain agricultural in character, but with the potential for development of non-agricultural uses in support of recreation along the River and to a limited extent, non-agricultural housing.

The basic goal of this Plan is the preservation and protection of existing land uses and the environment in the County, including the protection of the urban and suburban areas of the municipalities in the County, while encouraging economic expansion in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors of the local economy. This can be accomplished through development of new or expanded land uses which are compatible with existing land uses, are environmentally acceptable and which respect and support the quality of life of the citizens of Cherry County.

As depicted on Figure 8, the entirety of the County, except for near the urban areas of the municipalities in the County, future commercial and industrial uses of land along the highway corridors should continue to be limited to protect these areas from land use conflicts.

Additional residential uses and commercial uses can best be located either within or near the municipalities in the County. Development of such residential uses should be allowed along the major roadways in close proximity to the municipalities so that the occupants of these uses can have easy access to the goods and services provided in the municipalities and so that public services such as fire protection, law enforcement and medical rescue services and be provided at minimum expense. Similarly, additional recreational and tourist-oriented uses should be encouraged in areas with convenient highway access when possible.

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### **Summary of Future Land Use**

Utilization of these future land use areas as a guide to future land development in the County will result in protection of the existing land uses in the rural areas, as well as, protection for the citizens in and around the urban and suburban areas of the communities in the County.

Adherence to the land use areas depicted on the Future Land Use Plan will also assist the County in avoiding development of land uses in areas where it is not environmentally sound and adherence to the concept of limiting the impact on the public infrastructure in the County, particularly the impact on the County road system, will assist in preserving the financial capacity of the County for years to come.

It is important to note that the Future Land Use Plan represents a generalized “County-wide” view of where future development should be. It is important to utilize the information provided in the Environmental Conditions and Limitations section of this Plan, the delineated flood hazard areas in the County and the Niobrara National Scenic River Management Plan in conjunction with this Future Land Use Plan to properly locate future land uses.