

Gnesen Township Comprehensive Plan Update

Public Visioning Session
October 21st, 2019

ARDC Principal Planner Josh Bergstad led participants in an exercise to identify Assets (Current Strengths), Opportunities (Future Strengths), and Issues (Weaknesses and Threats) for the Township. Participants broke into two groups, each with a map of the Township, and engaged in a conversation for approximately 40 minutes. Each group shared their ideas with everyone with Bergstad recording the ideas on a flip chart while discussion occurred.

ASSETS

- Lakes, beaches, rivers, natural areas
- Outdoor opportunities
- Balance between farmland/rural and lakes
- Churches
- Childcare
- Boat launches
- Fire Hall
- Restaurants
- Helicopter pad
- EMT services
- Gnesen Store
- Local government
- Community center
- Manageable growth rate
- Gravel pit regulations and management
- Residents (abilities, community mindedness, strong community ties)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Residential development
- Commercial growth
- Ability to shape future
- Grocery and convenience store

- Support and leverage forest lands
- Need to understand traffic patterns
- Why do we have Rural Residential and Suburban Residential zoning districts
- Work with Minnesota Power (major landowner)
- New partnerships with non-profits around forests
- Community center
- Expanded recreational opportunities (camps)
- Work with Hartley, Folk School, Boulder Lake Environmental Learning Center, Boy Scouts to share our great outdoors

ISSUES

- Lack of commercial growth
- No marina
- No restaurant with lake access
- Lot sizes and subdivision process
- Aging population with lack of services or housing for their needs
- Lack of broadband
- ATV damage to trails and roads
- Trash dumping
- Loss of businesses
- Lack of reinvestment in businesses
- Lack of participation from big business
- Lack of lodging (rentals and resorts)
- Family restaurants
- Platted/private roads (ownership, maintenance, lack of road associations)
- Infrastructure limits opportunities
- Childcare
- Gas and convenience store
- Caregiving for adults

VISIONING EXERCISE

Participants were asked to provide responses to the following question: "In the future, Gnesen Township is (or has) ..."

Each item is an individual response. ARDC staff grouped and named each category following the meeting.

Expand Commercial Areas

- a marina and bar on Island Lake.
- marina restaurant combo.
- restaurant with a dock.
- a good local restaurant.
- better restaurants.
- family restaurants.
- provides support for small businesses and small local commercial development.
- supports thoughtful expansion of commercial zoning areas.
- grocery services.
- business and services serving the community.
- commercial along #4 and major highways.
- businesses that allow residents to stay in the community for their needs.
- welcoming approach to residents and businesses.
- a planned development of commercial use of space.
- provide a commercial area on Rice Lake Rd.

Maintain Rural Character

- should remain rural.
- Limit development and large housing complexes.
- rural neighborhood.
- maintains acreage minimums on lot size.

- larger minimum lot size requirements.
- will remain peaceful, quiet, clean air, and privacy.
- rural feel.
- still rural.
- continues to maintain a rural, controlled residential character.
- maintain 1.5 acre lots.
- will still be a rural township.
- will not be the City of Gnesen but still be the Town of Gnesen.

Strong, Safe, Family Friendly Community

- a sense of community.
- family oriented.
- community of choice.
- strong roots/a community.
- safe for raising a family.
- low crime rates.
- will be a good, safe place to raise a family.
- community events/activities.
- more community activities.
- creates multiple programming
- will have good daycare centers
- offers more childcare options

Sustainable Housing and Services Growth

- a sustainable growth rate.
- a mixture of well planned, denser populated neighborhood communities interspersed with larger lot sizes.
- assisted living/Co-Op style housing to allow aging residents a low maintenance style housing option.
- more residential developments.
- services that allow individual to age in place.
- some type of mass transit to Duluth park and ride.
- competitively priced against its peers.

Well Managed Govt. Services

- a larger tax base that generates revenue to provide services.
- limits subdivisions of land to prevent demands on limited infrastructure.
- identifies priorities for township infrastructure.
- no rough roads.
- self-sufficient.
- a strategic plan to manage growth and investment.

Increase Recreational Opportunities

- More recreational opportunities – trails, camping.
- Open up more swimming beaches.
- partners with other organizations to offer outdoor recreation opportunities.
- will provide more out-door recreational activities.
- remains recreational friendly.

Conservation

- partners with government agencies to protect water resources.
- more focus on green ecology harmony.
- will value less light pollution.
- focused on preserving its natural areas.
- promoting agriculture areas.

Useful Zoning and Ordinances

- flexible, well thought out zoning.
- creates some development of nuisance ordinance to provide neighbors with recourse to problems.
- a manageable plan for surveillance of township ordinances.
- will review zoning and space use requirements/regulations.
- sets criteria for vacation rentals.

Active Community Center

- an active Community Center.
- opportunities at Community Center.
- centered around the Gnesen Community Center.
- growth in use of Community Center.

Regulated Gravel Pits

- Limit logging, gravel pits.
- reduced gravel truck traffic.
- maintains control and limits on gravel pits.
- less truck traffic.

High Speed Internet

- high speed internet.
- highspeed internet for all.
- high speed internet.

Responsive Government

- actively collaborates with township influencers and stakeholders.
- a plan for engaging the citizenship.
- will proactively relate to/with M.P. on lake shore usage.

Uncategorized

- pedestrian friendly (loose dog issue)
- will not have PUDs.
- opportunities of residents.
- not over commercial.
- develop folk school.
- small lot sizes.
- schools?
- plan for honoring the past and welcomes the future.
- will maintain an independent governmental unit status.