

## PREFACE

Illinois Compiled Statutes, Chapter 60, gives townships the right to develop comprehensive plans through township plan commissions. Marengo Township began this process in 1997 by establishing the Marengo Township Planning Commission.

The Land Use Plan is a general guide for development with significant impact in the land use decision-making process. While the Plan is a policy document and does not directly regulate the use of land in the Township, it is generally implemented through the enforcement of ordinances, such as the McHenry County zoning and subdivision ordinances, and the decisions of the County Zoning Board of Appeals and County Board on zoning and planning matters. The McHenry County Zoning Ordinance should be referenced to determine allowable uses and rezoning requirements for property in Marengo Township. The Land Use Plan does not preclude an individual from requesting rezoning. However, a rezoning request which is out of conformity with the Land Use Plan may require an extraordinary majority for ultimate approval by McHenry County. Thus, the Plan should be used to guide requests for zoning changes.

In 1993, McHenry County adopted the McHenry County Land Use Plan: Year 2010 Update ("2010 Plan"). The purpose of the 2010 Plan is to guide development activities and land conversion in the County. The McHenry County 2010 Plan follows the criteria set forth in adopted goals and objectives. In general, the Marengo Land Use Plan adopts the 2010 Plan for Marengo Township but

builds on it.

The Plan is to be used as a whole; no one part is meant to be used alone. The Land Use Plan provides for the orderly development of commercial, industrial, and residential land uses while protecting the resources of Marengo Township. Without the Plan, unrestrained private development could result in a haphazard patchwork of incompatible uses and inappropriate development. Development consistent with the Plan will be in harmony with the character of Marengo Township and enhance the beneficial aspects of its uniqueness.

This plan will be revised as necessary to address issues which were unforeseen during plan development.

## MARENGO TOWNSHIP LAND USE PLAN

This Land Use Plan is a guide for development and preservation and will be updated. The basic assumption of the Plan is that wise use of the land is in the public interest. Except to the extent that this Plan differs from, or excepts portions of the McHenry County Land Use Plan Year 2010 Update ("2010 Plan"), adopted on October 20, 1993, the 2010 Plan is adopted as the Plan for Marengo Township.

### I. GOALS

The Land Use Plan goals are the foundation of the Plan from which policy directives are developed. The directives are then used to implement the goals through ordinances, regulations, laws, and education. The goals recognize the need to obtain a balance between accommodating a broad range of human activities and preserving the environment and natural resources. The main objective of the Land Use Plan is to encourage compact and orderly growth in areas immediately adjacent to subdivisions or village areas, while at the same time preserving contiguous agricultural areas and large open spaces.

1. Agricultural uses. Maintain a wide variety of agricultural uses within the Township and avoid conflicts between agriculture and other potential uses of the land.

2. Natural resources. Protect and restore soils, groundwater, wetlands, woodlands, natural areas, fish and wildlife habitat, threatened and endangered species, and the water quality of the township's rivers, ponds, lakes and streams. Prevent dramatic grade changes and draining or excavation of natural springs and potholes.

3. Historic and cultural features. Protect historic, unique and cultural features in the township, including early settlements, cemeteries, farmsteads, buildings, bridges, native woodlands and other remnants of native vegetation. Encourage creative reuse of existing structures.

4. Economic development. Allow commercial, industrial and recreational development within the Township that maintains the character of the area, diversifies the property tax base, and does not put a burden on township roads or services.

5. Transportation systems. Maintain the smooth flow of traffic on major arterials and township roads, prevent new highways that encourage premature development, and encourage development of alternative forms of transportation such as bicycle trails.

6. Drainage systems. Maintain existing drainage systems and properly manage storm water to avoid damaging, overloading or clogging natural and artificial waterways.

7. Residential development. Protect the character of the Township.
  
8. Fiscal responsibility. Assure that new developments do not place an undue burden on roads, public services, schools, and taxpayers in the Township.
  
9. Intergovernmental cooperation. Pursue intergovernmental coordination and communication with other public and private agencies and organizations involved with planning for the use of land in the Township, including the county, other townships, Municipalities, regional planning commission, and the Illinois Department of Transportation.
  
10. Unique features. Maintain the unique features and special character of Marengo Township. The unique features include the following:
  - a. rural vistas
  
  - b. glacial moraine hills, prairie, river and other natural features
  
  - c. no conspicuous lighted signage
  
  - d. watersheds and ridges

## II. STRATEGY

Marengo is a Primary Rural Center, as defined in the 2010 Plan and described in the goals section. This Plan calls for the maintenance and enhancement of its existing character. The Township does not currently have a Primary Urban Center, or a Secondary Node, as described in the 2010 Plan. This Plan strongly discourages development of or encroachment by a Primary Urban, or a Secondary Node in Marengo Township.

### III. SPECIFIC LAND USE DIRECTIVES

#### A. General Planning Directives

1. Avoid impairing existing agricultural uses.
2. Adhere to the maximum extent possible with any recommendations provided by the McHenry County Soil & Water Conservation District in any Natural Resource Inventory Report prepared for the subject property.
3. Adhere to any watershed protection recommendations in the Kishwaukee River Watershed Plan.
4. Avoid impacts to existing streams, wetlands, ponds, or prairie remnants which do not result in a demonstrable environmental enhancement of the impacted resource.
5. Avoid development within mature oak or hickory woodlands or require proper forestry management.
6. Provide an ecologically appropriate buffer strip between any portions of a given parcel to be developed and any existing streams, wetlands and ponds.

7. Incorporate any and all "best management practices" related to storm water management, surface and groundwater protection, soil erosion and sediment control, and non-point pollution control.
8. Minimize grading impacts to existing topography.
9. Minimize visual impacts to the rural viewsheds of Marengo Township.
10. Minimize the use of exterior lighting.
11. Maximize functional open space areas.
12. Facilitate the restoration and management of native plant communities.
13. Development in floodplains and environmentally sensitive areas is to be avoided.
14. Development in severe or very severe soils for septic disposal is to be avoided.
15. Intergovernmental discussions and agreements are encouraged.



16. No new development should be permitted to increase water runoff into any developed area which is located in a hollow or similar area which does not have a drainage outlet. Adequate multipurpose water retention areas must be provided.

B. Residential Land Use

1. Substantially all high density residential development is encouraged to occur within or adjacent to the existing city area of Marengo Township.
2. Timely development is promoted by encouraging the infilling of existing potentially buildable platted lots in existing subdivisions.
3. Sufficient acreage should be planned within appropriate density categories to ensure timely and orderly development, to maximize contiguous managed, open space in a well-balanced proportion of open space to private lots, streets and buildings, and to maintain the unique features of Marengo Township.
4. Medium and low density residential development should be planned only in proximity to existing developed areas, in clustered-type patterns and with substantial portion of the total acreage permanently maintained as contiguous open space.

5. Low density residential development of more than three acres/dwelling unit is planned for only in areas of non-prime soils.
  
6. Clustering of residential uses is recommended.

C. Agriculture and Agriculture/Rural Land Use

1. Actively steer inevitable changes in zoning into areas adjacent to present development as opposed to creating new areas of housing, commerce, etc. in any predominantly agricultural area regardless as to whether this property may or may not be farmable nor be prime farmland. Preservation of prime farmland is an important criteria regarding any changes of zoning in the Township but equally important is the idea of not inserting development on non-prime farm land which happens to be in the middle of a prime farm land area just because it is not farmable because the change that this will bring will open a route of nonagricultural use to the area.
2. Consider agriculture as areas of row crops, livestock operations, orchards, nurseries, etc. and ensure that such ventures are protected from harassment from residential or commercial neighbors over offensive odors, slow moving vehicles, seasonal activities that may occur around the clock. Encourage that newcomers to the rural areas are made aware of the above unique character of rural atmospheres as well as the fact that these are private properties and not for unauthorized uses.
3. Consideration for the fact that many farmland owners consider land as their main investment for their future which they may want to sell for a use that may or may not fit in with our Plan.

4. Encourage non-farmers to realize that commercial farming operations are heavily regulated by government agencies regarding plantings, soil erosion, water runoff, pesticide and herbicide use and licensing, and that most are high risk economic ventures which attempt to be good neighbors while facing many obstacles.
5. This Plan Commission wants to be very clear that just because there have been zoning incursions into the agriculture areas in the past through grand fathering or new zoning, this plan will not perpetuate nor compound such errors. The fact that there is a certain type of zoning, other than Agriculture, located within or adjacent to a prime farming area is no reason to expect that additional zoning of the same type would be necessarily recommended if it were deemed to be in any way in conflict with agricultural uses.
6. In estate-zoned areas, the plan encourages the expansion of agricultural production through sustainable methods, and encourages the management of natural areas to increase species diversity.

D. Industrial and Commercial Land Use

1. Clustering of industrial and commercial activities in or adjacent to developed areas is encouraged.

2. Industrial and commercial activities should be accessible to transportation facilities (rail, road or sidewalk, depending on type and needs of activity).

E. Open Space, Environmental and Natural Resource Land Use

1. Protection of environmentally sensitive lands is encouraged.
2. A system of environmental corridors should be established to connect sensitive environmental areas and to allow for the movement of wildlife populations.
3. Open space areas are encouraged within the design of any type of development.

F. Transportation

1. Transportation planning should minimize the impact of transportation improvements on the character of the Township.
2. A bicycle, pedestrian and trail system is encouraged in conjunction with new transportation facilities and existing utility and railroad right-of-ways in accordance with the Countywide Trail Plan.

G. Historic Preservation

1. The preservation of historic buildings, sites and vistas is encouraged.
2. Increase public knowledge of the significance of historic preservation and its impact on the quality of life in the township.
3. Promote maintenance and rehabilitation projects of historic areas and buildings.

IV. TOWNSHIP PROFILE

Marengo Township is approximately 36 square miles in area with a 1990 census of over 5723 people. The major north south road is Illinois Highway 23 and the major east-west road is U.S. Highway Route 20. Two other important east-west roads are Kishwaukee Valley Road (a county highway) and River Road (a township road). It is primarily rural with the City of Marengo at the crossroads of Highways 20 and 23, the southeast corner of the township. The Kishwaukee River traverses through the southern portion of Marengo Township, from its' eastern boundary to the western boundary.

A. Agricultural Land Use

Agriculture is a major factor in Marengo Township's economy and its agricultural land is a valuable resource. Agricultural land and rural landscapes also define the environment and character of the Township. The same factors make it desirable for development, especially rural estates. This residential development has broken the continuity of agricultural land uses. This aggravates the conflict between uses. Higher density development contiguous to existing developed areas minimizes this conflict. Such development is also more conveniently located for the provision of services and is, therefore, more cost efficient.

In some cases, land is less suitable for agriculture because of tree cover, less productive soils, more severe slopes, and other factors. Prudent use of these less economically viable farmlands can provide a significant number of appropriate rural home sites without adversely affecting the agricultural uses.

B. Residential Land Use

The vast majority of households in the Township are single family units. The only high density development (less than one acre/dwelling unit) occurs in the City of Marengo area. According to the 2010 Plan Update, as of 1993, Marengo Township had 49 undeveloped 5-10 acre parcels in the Township which could potentially be used for individual residences. In addition, there were 79 vacant, platted subdivision lots in the Township.

If significant additional residential development is allowed in the Township, the costs of services (such as police protection, fire protection, road maintenance, school transportation, etc.) will increase. An increase in development of this type on or near the most productive farmland could also set a precedent which would, in time, diminish the resource value of the Township's agricultural lands.

C. Industrial and Commercial Land Use

According to the 2010 Plan Update, as of 1993, Marengo Township has 143 acres designated as commercial, 92 acres as industrial, and 51 acres as earth extraction land uses. Marengo Township has zoned 79 acres as commercial, with 42 acres being undeveloped. Marengo Township has zoned 739 acres as industrial, with 511 acres being undeveloped.

D. Recreational and Conservation Land Use

The McHenry County Conservation District owns approximately 880 acres in Marengo Township and has indicated an interest in acquiring more land in the Township. The Township has no public land dedicated to recreational use. Dedication of land to conservation, greenbelt and outdoor, non-motorized and primarily daytime recreational uses is encouraged, including through Township-owned facilities.



## V. STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING LAND RESOURCES

Marengo Township is a unique area in which development is expected. Development that occurs must conform to the character of the Township, including but not limited to its rural landscape and natural features. New developments and uses should enhance or improve on the character of the Township by preserving contiguous open space for agricultural and conservation uses. Intensive development for any use is discouraged. However, so-called neo-traditional, clustered developments contiguous with developed areas, along with appropriate commercial uses, would not be inconsistent with the goals of this Plan.

## VI. CHECKLIST ANALYSIS FOR PROPOSED LAND USE CHANGES

Prior to making an application to the County for a land use or zoning change, any person or entity (hereinafter referred to as the “applicant”) shall request a meeting with the Marengo Township Planning Commission. The 1994 McHenry County Zoning Ordinance provides that any amendment to the County’s zoning map must be passed three-fourth (3/4) of the members of the County Board, *“If a township plan commission objects to a text or map amendment affecting an unincorporated area of the township and the township board of trustees submits its written objection to the County Board within thirty days after the Zoning Board of Appeals hearing.”* If an applicant chooses not to request a meeting with the Marengo Township Planning Commission, the Marengo Township Planning Commission may automatically recommend that a written objection to the County Board

be made.

The following includes, but is not limited to, a point analysis that should be used to ensure a consistent evaluation of land use changes and an ongoing review of the basic criteria in the Plan.

1. Does the land use change fulfill a significant need in the Township?
2. Will the land use change be beneficial to the general welfare, safety, and health of the residents of the immediate area and the general population of the Township?
3. Will the land use change constitute an "entering wedge" of incompatible use and be a detriment to adjacent property?
4. Will the land use change create an isolation of the specific land use?
5. Will the land use change adversely influence living conditions due to a type of pollution'?
6. Will the land use change adversely influence adjacent property values?
7. Will the land use change contribute to unsafe traffic patterns or undue congestion?

8. Will the land use change alter the population density pattern and increase the load on public facilities?
9. Will the land use change adversely affect a valuable natural resource of the Township'?
10. Will the land use change conflict with existing commitments or planned public improvements?
11. Will the land use change create additional environmental problems due to soils, vegetation, slope, or floodplain?
12. Will the land use change result in Private investment which would be beneficial to the redevelopment of a deteriorated area?
13. Is the land use change located where the needed services and commercial establishments are available?
14. Is the subject property physically suitable for the purpose of the land use change?
15. Will the relief of a hardship for an individual property owner create a detriment to public welfare?

16. Will the land use diminish the rural and wooded vistas in the Township?