

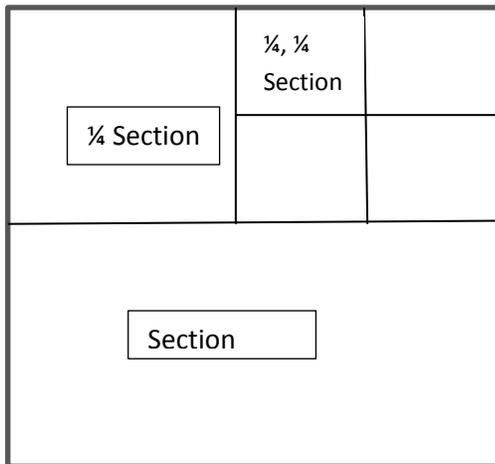
Screening Summary

Goodhue County Urban Fringe District Health Impact Assessment

Background on the Goodhue County Urban Fringe District.

Goodhue County is in the process of changing the land use zone around the incorporated city limits of Red Wing, Goodhue, Zumbrota, Wanamingo, Pine Island, Kenyon, Cannon Falls, and Dennison from an Urban Fringe District to one of two types of Agricultural Districts: A-1 Agricultural Protection District, and A-2, Agricultural District. The differences between the Urban Fringe Zoning District and the Agricultural Districts are housing density, and some conditionally permitted activities. The A-1 district allows for 4 dwellings per section while the A-2 district allows for 12 dwellings per section, one dwelling per quarter of a quarter section (approximately forty acres), see the exhibit below.

Exhibit "A"



Currently the Urban Fringe District surrounds the incorporated areas of the county. Homes are typically built on larger lots of land (minimum of 35 acres). The Goodhue County Zoning Ordinance states that it is preserved for agricultural and open space purposes to allow for the future growth of the adjacent city. If the Urban Fringe District becomes an agricultural zone, the number of homes allowed in the area could be reduced (significantly if zoned) and other uses previously prohibited such as mining or feedlots may be allowed (subject to setbacks). However, there are also conditionally permitted uses that are called out in the Urban Fringe district that are not allowed now in either of the Agricultural districts. By eliminating this zone and not specifically allowing those uses, some forms of development could be discouraged beyond current city limits, but subsequently encouraged within city limits.

Health is currently not being considered as a factor for which agricultural zoning district should replace the Urban Fringe District, even though each type of land use could result in different potential health impacts.

Goodhue County Health and Human Services, in collaboration with Goodhue County Land Use Management, will conduct a health impact assessment (HIA) to inform what, if any, health impacts to

consider when deciding zoning district changes. The HIA could bring to light some of the health impacts of these decisions and help shape the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance to address ways to mitigate potential negative impacts and enhance potential positive impacts.

The results of the HIA may also inform the county, cities and townships to be more specific about their own land use decisions.

Decision-makers and Decision-Making process:

The decision about changing the Urban Fringe District zoning to Agricultural District zoning in Goodhue County will be made by the Goodhue County Commissioners. The Health Impact Assessment will be conducted to inform this decision before it is finalized.

The decision could potentially have the most influence on residents living on the edge of town where mixed-use agriculture and residential uses intersect.

The HIA will assist in informing the Goodhue County Commissioners, city officials and townships of the health opportunities that may be possible with the change in land use.

The decisions that the Goodhue County commissioners will make about zoning changes will affect everyone that the county land borders. Township Boards and City Councils will be affected by the zoning decisions because the future land uses that they may have designated in a long term plan call for housing developments or parks in the locations that border the zoning changes. Therefore, a city may not agree with the county's decision on zoning.

When the county changes zoning districts, zoning ordinance text, or the comprehensive plan, two public hearings are required. The first public hearing is held with the Planning Advisory Commission, which then makes a recommendation to the County Board of Commissioners. Land Use staff are anticipating beginning conversations with the townships and cities regarding the Urban Fringe elimination beginning in the Winter of 2014. Landowners in these sections will be notified of potential changes and invited to meetings regarding what the future zoning district should be. Land Use staff are anticipating receiving the approval of the County Board of Commissioners to officially change the zoning districts in the Winter of 2015, or a year after the dialogues have started with the township cities and landowners.

Feedback from these public meetings can be used to inform the Health Impact Assessment. The HIA will run parallel to the Land Use Management's research into the A-3 District. At the end of the research period Land Use Management expects there to be a decision by the Planning Advisory and the County Board of Commissioners to change the sections currently zoned A-3 to either an A-1 or A-2 zoning district. The HIA will be completed by the end of August 2014, the HIA will be utilized to help inform the A-3 decision that is expected to be completed early 2015. We are not anticipating this to be a controversial issue.

Potential Impact of Eliminating the Urban Fringe District on Health

Vulnerable populations that are more likely to be affected may be those who have lower incomes, children and elderly, and those with existing health problems. The reason these people might be more

affected by these zoning changes could be because they may not have the resources to mitigate negative impacts, because of existing health challenges, or because of age-related vulnerabilities.

The main health issues considered for analysis during the HIA were: housing; living conditions; potential for air, water, and soil quality changes; access to parks, exercise, and health care; transportation needs; and economic health.

Input from stakeholders at the HIA workshops January 13 and 14 helped determine what health issues might be affected by a zoning change. For example, if a campground was already approved in the Urban Fringe District, would the air and water quality change if it were rezoned to an Agricultural District? Stakeholders also indicated (pathway two) that the current minimum lot size of 35 acres is a factor considered in banks' lending criteria for those looking to purchase, build, renovate, or refinance a home in the A-3 district. If it were rezoned to an Agricultural District, and the minimum lot size changed, how would that affect farmers' succession planning and subsequently their stress and mental health? Another issue (pathway three) relates to the dwelling density allowed for future homes developed in the study area, outside of city infrastructure like city sewer and water. How might the zoning change increase or decrease the number of homes relying on private septic systems and private wells in agricultural areas, and would the water quality change?

Stakeholder Engagement during the Screening Phase

Engagement of key stakeholders during the screening step of the HIA was critical to assess whether an HIA was feasible and whether an HIA would add value to the decision-making process. The following stakeholder groups were identified.

- Goodhue County Board of Commissioners (County Board) – The County Board is the decision maker for the County.
- Goodhue County Planning Advisory Commission – The Goodhue County Planning Advisory Commission is comprised of 8 members appointed by the Goodhue County Board and one representative from the County Board. The Planning Commission will host public hearings for applicants. They also are the first of two public hearings for zoning changes. Their role in the HIA is that of the decision makers.
- Goodhue County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) – The SWCD comprises of a Soil and Water Conservation District Board and staff. The Board is comprised of citizens of the area. They are not decision makers regarding the Urban Fringe District. They represent the people of the County affected by the zoning change. Also the staff can bring the perspective of changes to the agricultural opportunities such as feedlots.
- County Health Board – The Health Board would be interested in the findings of the HIA, but have little influence over the decision of the Urban Fringe District itself.
- Township Boards– The Township boards represent the citizens of the townships. Based on the rural character of the Urban Fringe Districts, there are no clear advocacy groups that represent the people. Therefore we felt that the Township Boards could bring the citizen representatives we are looking for.
- City staff- City staff bring a unique perspective of the plan of the city for the area of the Urban Fringe District. They will represent the perspective of the city throughout the process.

- Land Use Management (LUM) & Health and Human Services (HHS) Supervisors and select staff- The partnership of the LUM and HHS departments are a building block for future HIA endeavors. The purpose of the involvement of those outside of the HIA support staff is for training on the process so it could be brought forward again in the future. These departments will offer support throughout the HIA.
- Farmers/Landowners/Residents – This group is the impacted residents. These people will be a resource group for information necessary to conduct the HIA. We also plan to host public sessions to disseminate the findings of the HIA to.

A training session for the HIA was held on January 13th and 14th, 2014. Training attendees were invited based on the categories listed above. We felt the landowners involved were the largest group, and felt they were best represented by the Township Boards and the SWCD, both boards are elected positions viewed to be representatives of the citizens. The first day of training was to introduce the decision makers about the HIA and to review the screening with them. The second day was a more advanced training to review the screening and begin to define the scope of the project. The steering committee was formed from those who attended the training sessions.

Reasons for selecting the Urban Fringe District

We chose to conduct the HIA on the Urban Fringe District because of the timing. We had an understanding that the County would be studying the Urban Fringe District for some time before making a decision on what should happen to it. The potential outcomes of what could happen to the Urban Fringe District are fairly clear - either the zone will remain unchanged or it will change to either A-1 or A-2. Furthermore the Urban Fringe District affects a large area: 18 of 21 townships contain urban fringe districts, and 9 of 10 cities have an Urban Fringe District in some form. We also determined that the decision to change the Urban Fringe District could have an impact on health. There is national push to have health considered in all policies. Over more venues planners and health professionals are teaming up to see what if any health impacts are in planning endeavors. It is our hope with this exercise to build a capacity between the Land Use Management Department and the Health and Human Services Department to conduct more Health Impact Assessments in the future.