

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Comprehensive Plan is a compilation of effort by many people, organizations and government entities. This document expresses the great civic pride that exists in Hand County. Through the preparation and adoption of this document, the governing officials of Hand County have expressed their desire for orderly and efficient growth and development in the community and surrounding area.

### **County Commission**

Commission Members: Jim Jones, Daniel Jensen, Greg Palmer, Jim Eschenbaum, Luke Wernsmann

Auditor: Doug DeBoer

### **Planning Commission**

Board Members: Jim Jones, Daniel Jensen, Greg Palmer, Jim Eschenbaum, Luke Wernsmann

Zoning Officer: Jaime Russell

The Northeast Council of Governments prepared this document under the direction of the Hand County Planning Commission and the Hand County Commission.

The Northeast Council of Governments assumes no responsibility for the contents of the Comprehensive Plan. Implementation and enforcement of the Plan is the responsibility of the Hand County Commissioners.

**RESOLUTION #2026-1**

**A RESOLUTION ADOPTING A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR HAND COUNTY, AS PROVIDED FOR IN SDCL 11-2**

**Whereas**, Chapter 11-2-11 of South Dakota Codified Law has empowered the Planning Commission and County Commission of Hand County to prepare a Comprehensive Plan for the development of the County; and

**Whereas**, the Hand County Planning Commission has developed a Comprehensive Plan and has held the required Public Hearing, and has made a recommendation for adoption of the Plan to the County Commission; and

**Whereas**, the Hand County Commission received the recommendation of the Planning Commission and has held the required Public Hearing; and

**Whereas**, the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan would enhance the responsible development of Hand County.

**Now therefore**, be it resolved by the Hand County Commission, that the Comprehensive Plan for Hand County be hereby adopted and effective upon 20 days after publication of this resolution.

Adopted this 5<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2026.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNED:  
Jim Jones  
Commission Chairman, Hand County

\_\_\_\_\_  
ATTEST:  
Doug DeBoer  
Auditor, Hand County

Publication Date: May 16, 2026

Effective Date: June 5, 2026

# **PART I INTRODUCTION**

## **A. PURPOSE, AUTHORIZATION AND ADOPTION**

### **1. Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan**

There are three primary purposes of this document:

- 1) To address the planning requirements of state law while also providing a sound and logical basis for county growth management strategies; and
- 2) To provide some predictability about the potential land uses and timing of development so that both public and private sectors can make informed decisions in the area of real estate and capital investments.
- 3) To provide the planning commission and county commission with policies for future planning decisions and the methods and justification to control land use through zoning ordinances, the capital improvements program, and other enforcement controls.

### **2. Authorization Under State Law**

Under 11-2-11 of South Dakota Codified Laws, the planning commission of a county is directed to prepare, or cause to be prepared a comprehensive plan for the county pursuant to South Dakota Codified Laws 11-2-12 which, shall be for the purpose of protecting and guiding the physical, social, economic, and environmental development of the county.

### **3. Development and Adoption**

The Hand County Commission has adopted this document in accordance with state law. In developing this Comprehensive Plan, the Hand County Commissioners, Hand County Planning Commission and the Northeast Council of Governments used background research, detailed inventories and assessments, and discussion sessions at the County Planning meetings and County Commission public hearings. The Comprehensive Plan is a general guideline and neither endorses nor prohibits development of a certain kind in a certain area. It is intended to guide the County in its implementation of zoning ordinances, capital improvement plans and other related policies.

### **4. Area of Planning Jurisdiction**

The governing body of any municipality may adopt the county's planning ordinances pursuant to SDCL 11-2-31, however the plan and ordinances are not binding until zoning or subdivision ordinances have been adopted by the municipality in accordance with the plan. The enforcement of such ordinances shall be determined by subsequent agreements between counties and municipalities.

## **B. APPROPRIATE USE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

South Dakota laws require that zoning districts and regulation must be in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan. It is the intent of this document to show the most appropriate use of land and policies to follow within the study area, based on the potential for growth and development of the county.

## **PART II: DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA**

Hand County is located in east central South Dakota, bounded on the north by Faulk County, on the east by Spink and Beadle County, on the south by Buffalo and Jerauld County and on the west by Hyde County. The county is comprised of three (3) incorporated communities (Miller, Ree Heights, Saint Lawrence) and Miller is the county seat. (The town of Wessington has a small part of their city limits in Hand County, but is primarily located in Beadle)

There are a few major highways that run through Hand County: U.S. Highway 14 and South Dakota Highways 26 and 45. Hand County has a total land area of 1,437 square miles.

As of the 2020 Census, there were 3,145 people, 1,348 households residing in the county. The population density was 2.19 people per square mile. There were 1,705 housing units with 1,348 occupied. The racial makeup of the county was 95.6% White, 1.9% from other races, and 2.5% from two or more races. 1.6% of the population was Hispanic or Latino of any race.

There were 1,348 occupied households out of which 25.4% had children under the age of 18 living with them and 40.5% of households had an individual over the age of 65. 56.5% were married couples living together with or without children, 20.0% had a female householder with no spouse or partner present and 19.7 had a male householder with no spouse or partner present and the average family size was 2.99 (2023 Census ACS).

The 2023 American Community Survey Census lists the median household income for the County at \$72,054. About 6.6% of the population was considered living below the poverty line.

## PART III: POPULATION AND HOUSING

### A. POPULATION

The study of a county's population is an essential component in the development of a comprehensive land use plan. By understanding the makeup of its population, a county is then better prepared to plan for the future needs of its citizenry. The first section examines the population of Hand County with respect to such factors as population growth, migration trends and age structure.

The population of the county is 3,145 (2020 Census). Chart 1 displays information on the population trends for Hand County from 1970 to 2020. Hand County has decreased in population by forty six (46) percent since 1970 (2,738 persons). Although the County has seen decreased population the declines have been smaller in recent decades and based on 2020 census numbers the county has decreased in population by 7% or (286 persons) over the past decade.

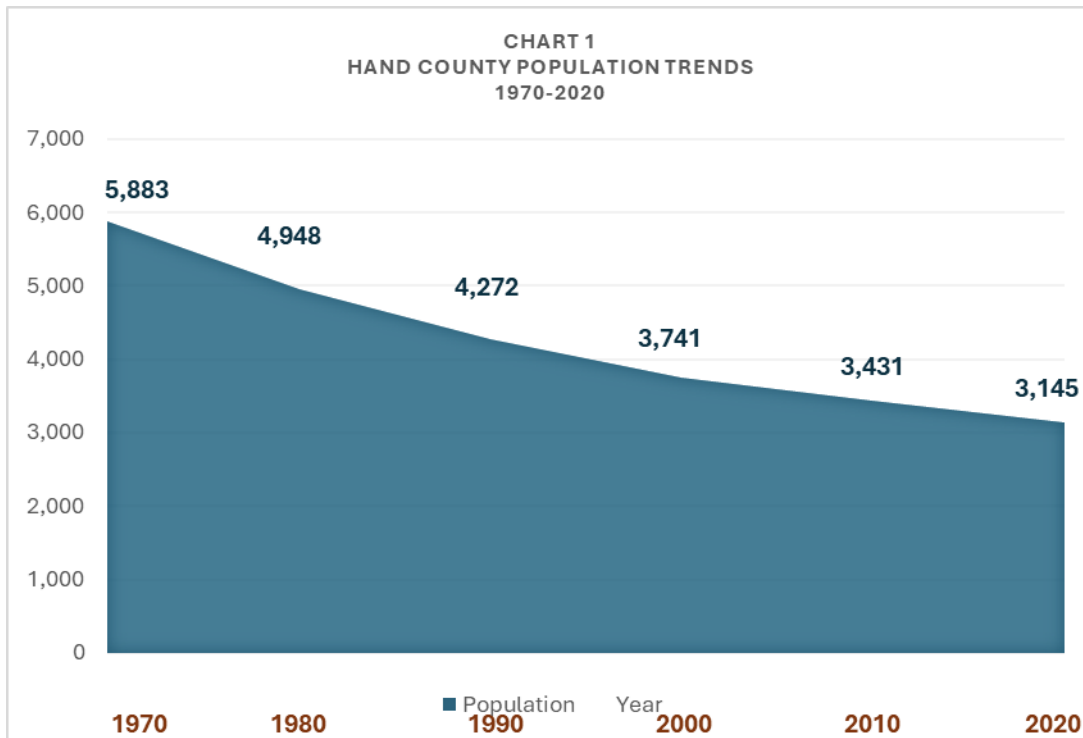
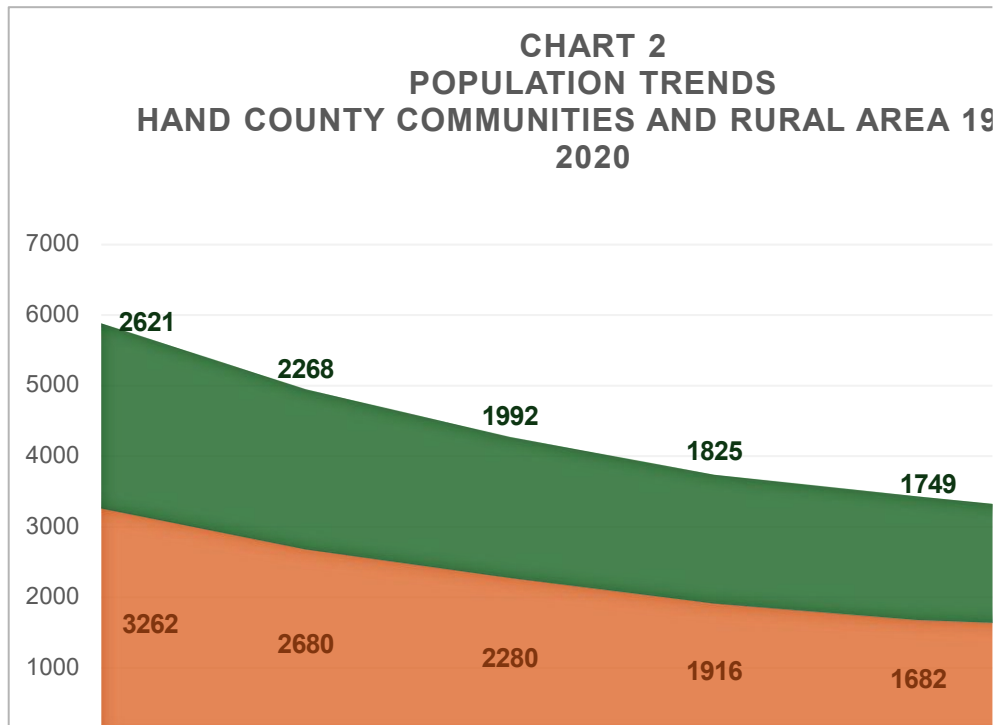


Table 1 and Chart 2 detail Hand County population trends by dividing the county into two (2) data subsets. They include the communities and the rural area. The population of the rural areas within Hand County has declined since 1970 (-52%, 1,688 persons). The decline in rural area population for Hand County is not unique as many counties in South Dakota show a decline in this population base. The decline is directly related to the number of farms and the increase in average farm size in the county. Between 1997 and 2022 the number of farms in the County decreased by eighteen percent (-18%, 89 farms) from 488 to 399. During the same time the average size of a farm increased by thirty eight percent (38%) from 1,662 to 2,289 acres.

**TABLE 1  
HAND COUNTY  
POPULATION HISTORY 1970-2020**

Census Year	Rural		Communities		Total County
	Population	% of Total	Population	% of Total	
1970	3,262	55.45%	2,621	44.55%	5,883
1980	2,680	54.16%	2,268	45.84%	4,948
1990	2,280	53.37%	1,992	46.63%	4,272
2000	1,916	51.22%	1,825	48.78%	3,741
2010	1,682	49.02%	1,749	50.98%	3,431
2020	1,574	50.05%	1,571	49.95%	3,145

\* The community's population for 1970-2020 included Miller, Ree Heights, St. Lawrence.



Sources for Table 1 and Chart 2 – US Bureau of Census of the Population 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020.

The “communities” subset is defined to include Miller, Ree Heights and St. Lawrence. Between 1970 and 2020 the population of the communities in Hand County decreased by forty (40) percent. The decrease in population is from all communities. However, Miller which serves as a regional hub for services within the county accounts for the largest share of the county population.

**TABLE 2  
HAND COUNTY POPULATION ANALYSIS  
HAND COUNTY COMMUNITIES, AND RURAL AREA PROPORTIONS**

	Population 2010	Proportion of Hand County 2010	Population 2020	Proportion of Hand County 2020	Change in Proportion 2010-2020
<b>Miller</b>	1489	43.4%	1349	42.9%	-0.5%
<b>Ree Heights</b>	62	1.8%	59	1.9%	0.1%
<b>St. Lawrence</b>	198	5.8%	163	5.2%	-0.6%
<b>Rural</b>	1,682	49.0%	1,574	50.0%	1.0%
<b>Total</b>	3,431		3,145		

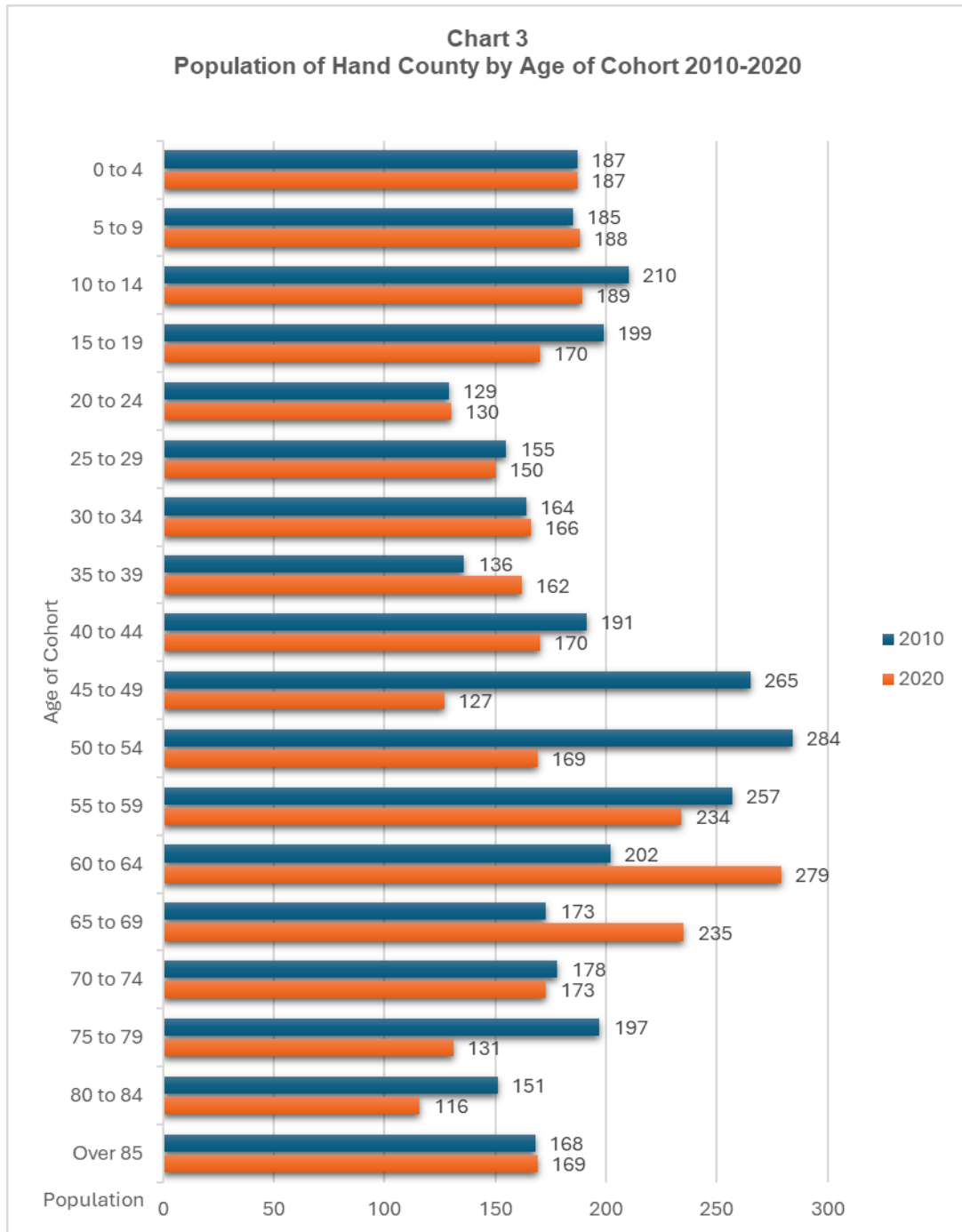
Sources: US Bureau of the Census, Census of Population 2010, 2020.

Chart 3 shows the age distribution of Hand County residents in 2010 and 2020. Several conclusions about the county's age distribution trends become apparent after reviewing the 2010 and 2020 Census age statistics. Analysis of this data exposes numerous trends.

Between 2010 and 2020, the number of Hand County children age 0 to 19 decreased by 6.0 percent (47 individuals) from 781 to 734. For children of this age one statistic to look at is the county fertility ratio. Upon examination of the fertility ratio, (the number of children under the age of five compared to the number of women in their childbearing years, ages 15 to 44) one can see Hand County's potential birthrate. The fertility ratio in 2020 was 5.06 births per 10 women ages 15 to 44 compared to 5.21 births per 10 women in their childbearing years in 2010. The data shows that there were fewer women in their childbearing years in 2020 as opposed to 2010 and those women were proportionally also having less children. With the decrease in fertility rate and women in childbearing years explains the decrease in individuals age 0 to 19.

Numerous push-pull factors may have led to a slight increase in individuals between the ages of 20 and 44. This age group gained 3 individuals from 775 to 778. The City of Miller continues to serve as a job center for Hand County, however from a regional perspective the 20-24 age group usually is pulled to a larger regional hub. This pull is generally for access to post-secondary educational options or job opportunities and this age group appears to be staying in place at past rates. The County experienced it's largest increase in this group between 35 to 39 year olds (26 individuals) and its largest decrease in this group between 40 to 44 year olds (21 individuals).

The population of individuals over the age of 55 remained nearly the same over the past decade. This suggests that residents that are retiring are remaining in place rather than leaving the County. The overall population of residents in Hand County over the age of 55 increased by eleven (11 individuals) between 2010 and 2020.

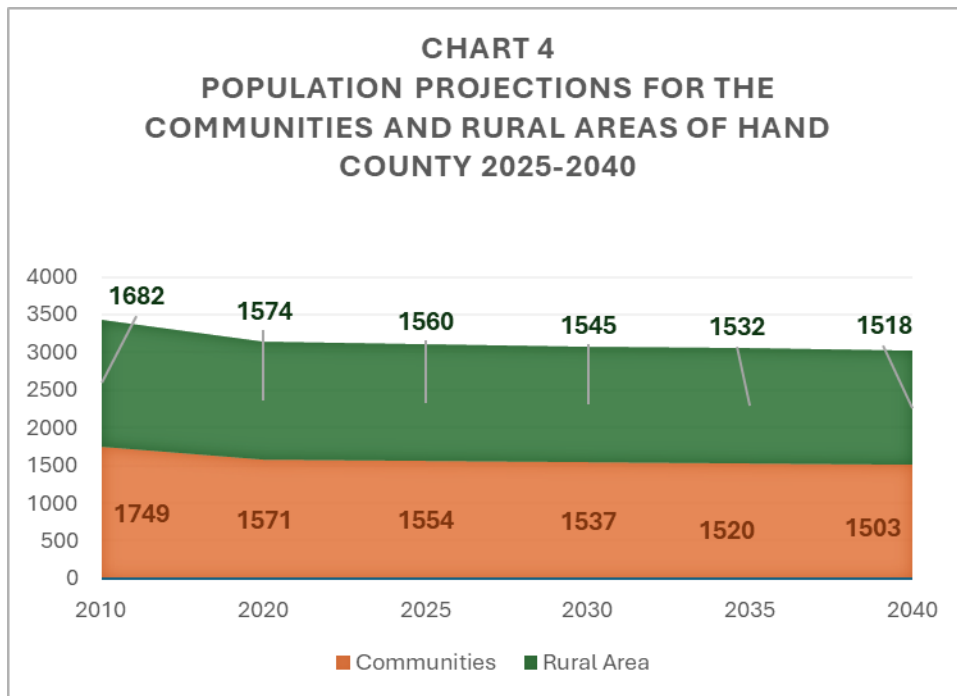


Source: US Bureau of the Census, Census of the Population 2010, 2020

All of the communities and rural area have the potential to contribute to the county's future population base. Table 3 and Chart 4 exhibit population projections for Hand County. The population projections were based on past decennial census numbers, current census bureau estimates and local observations. It should be noted that the population projections set forth here are not definite statements of the future but are dependent upon the actions taken by the local citizens and government.

**TABLE 3  
HAND COUNTY POPULATION PROJECTIONS  
MUNICIPALITIES AND RURAL AREA 2010 – 2040**

	2010	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
<b>Miller</b>	1489	1349	1335	1321	1307	1293
<b>Ree Heights</b>	62	59	58	57	56	55
<b>St Lawrence</b>	198	163	161	159	157	155
<b>Rural</b>	1,682	1,574	1,560	1,545	1,532	1,518
<b>Total Population</b>	3,431	3,145	3,114	3,082	3,052	3,021



**B. HOUSING**

The number of housing units in the unincorporated areas of Hand County totaled seven hundred and eighty-three (783) in 2020. Between 2010 and 2025 there were ninety (90) residences either constructed or moved-in into the rural area of the county (Table 5). The rural housing stock is comprised almost entirely of single-family residences. Seventy-three (73) percent (66 residences) of new residential units in the county were stick built homes while the rest were manufactured or mobile homes. There was no specific location that accounted for these numbers as the permits were located throughout the County.

Vacant/other housing units include units for sale, for rent and other vacant status.

**TABLE 4  
HAND COUNTY HOUSING UNITS  
MUNICIPALITIES AND RURAL AREA 2010-2020**

	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2020 Occupied</b>	<b>2020 Seasonal or Recreational</b>	<b>2020 Vacant/Other</b>
<b>Miller</b>	839	782	627	28	127
<b>Ree Heights</b>	52	56	32	3	21
<b>St Lawrence</b>	90	84	71	6	7
<b>Rural</b>	834	783	618	31	134
<b>Hand</b>	1,815	1,705	1,348	68	289

**TABLE 5  
RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS BY TYPE  
RURAL HAND COUNTY 2010-2025**

	<b>Units Constructed 2010 through 2025</b>
<b>Stick built</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Manufactured, Mobile Home or Other</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>

Residential construction is expected to continue at a pace consistent with recent trends. Since 2010 Hand County has, on average, issued nearly six (6) building permits for residences per year. Residential development is often related to regional economic conditions, mortgage interest rates, zoning requirements and/or lack of supply of developable lots. Based upon the future land use policies within this plan, county residents will still continue to have the choice of either an urban, small town, or rural lifestyle.

## **PART IV: TRANSPORTATION**

### **A. Transportation**

A well-conceived transportation system is one of the most important features of a comprehensive land use plan. The transportation plan attempts to program road and street use to prevent congested and unsafe street design. Through long-term planning of designated street types, new developments can be coordinated and potential problems minimized.

#### **County Transportation System**

Hand County's transportation system is generally laid in a one-mile rectilinear grid system with a majority of the roads having sixty-six (66) foot right-of-ways. The public right-of-ways for County, State and Federal Highways with a bituminous or concrete surface generally exceed sixty-six (66) feet in right-of-way. The County highway system represents the largest road system within the county.

#### **Street Classification**

Roads within the county support diverse volumes of traffic. Thus, before a transportation plan can be implemented, the determination and development of the County's existing road system according to classification must be undertaken. The development of these classifications will be specifically related to the function that the road is expected to perform. Developmental expectations are dependent upon the varying amount and type of traffic.

The following generally recognized hierarchy of road classifications would be used to assist in the development of intermediate and long range transportation needs.

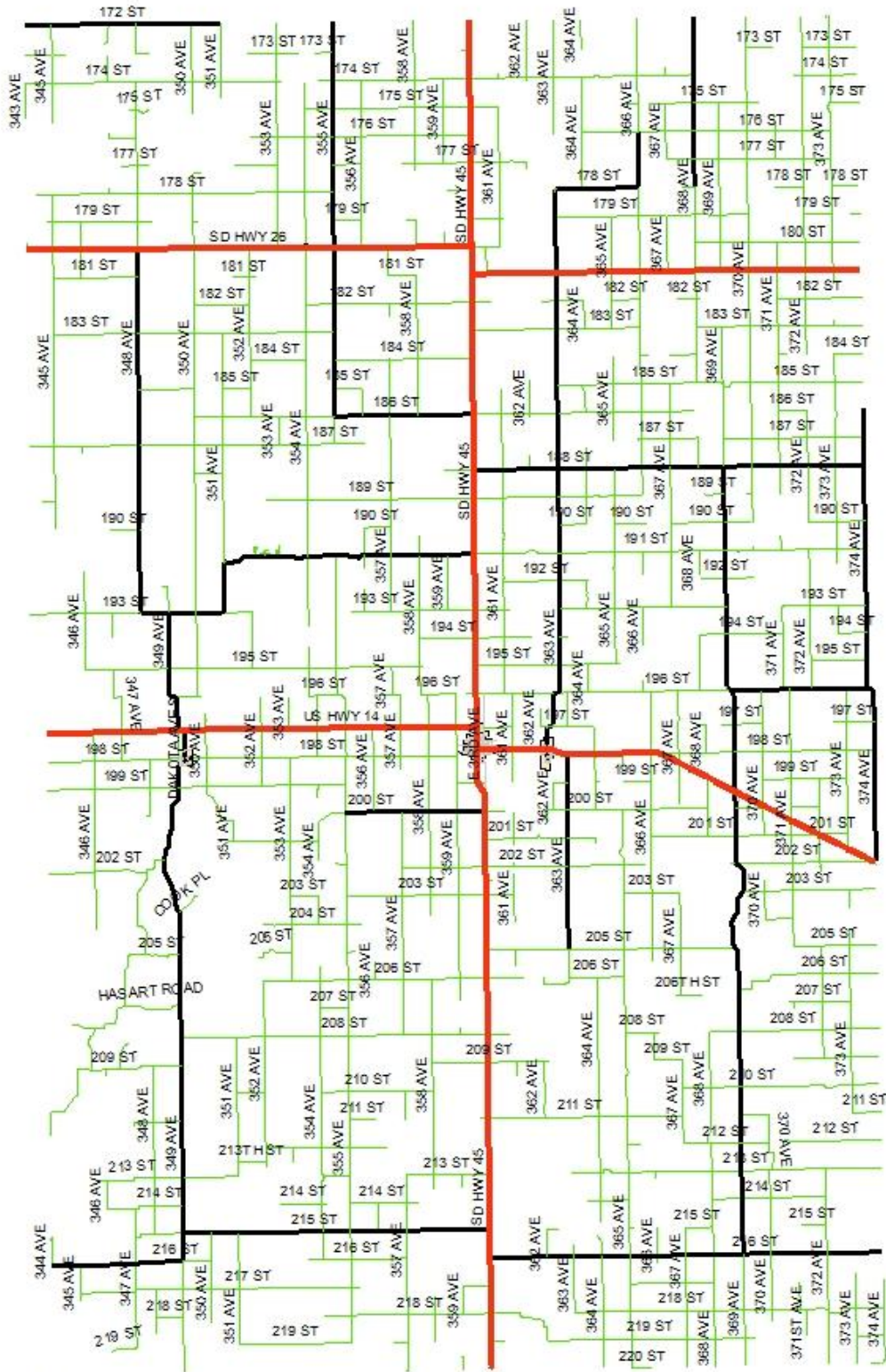
**Arterials** – Arterial streets serve as primary circulation routes. These roads generally carry the majority of traffic volume within the county. Their basic function is to facilitate movement of medium and long distance, high-speed traffic between regions and communities with a minimum of impediments. Since arterials serve for traffic movement between regions and sub areas, all direct access to abutting property should be restricted. Further, parallel service roads should be added, where appropriate, to maintain traffic carrying capabilities of the thoroughfare. U.S. Highway 14 and South Dakota Highways 26 and 45 are considered arterials.

**Collectors** - form an intermediate category between arterial and local roads. Collectors serve as a link between arterial and local roads by "collecting" traffic from local roads and transferring it to arterial roads. Collectors may further be classified into major and minor collector categories. Presently, the Hand County paved road system serves as the collector roads. Some County gravel roads may serve as minor collectors, but have been classified as local streets on the Major Street Plan.

**Local Streets** – are primarily comprised of township roads and provide access to abutting properties. They are not designed to carry large amounts of through traffic and are primarily characterized by short trip length and low traffic flow.

## **Major Street Plan**

The Major Street Plan shown on Map 1 (page 14) classifies roads as arterial, collector, or local. The plan is designed to effectively move traffic through the county and between major attraction points.



**Map 1 Hand County  
Major Street Plan**

— Highways — Collectors — Local — City Streets — City Boundary

## **PART V: PARKS AND OPEN SPACES**

Hand County has one State Recreation Area located within the County: Lake Louise Recreation Area Lake (14 miles NW of Miller). This State Recreation Area offers a variety of amenities that include campsites, boat access, walking trails, playgrounds, cabins and toilets/showers.

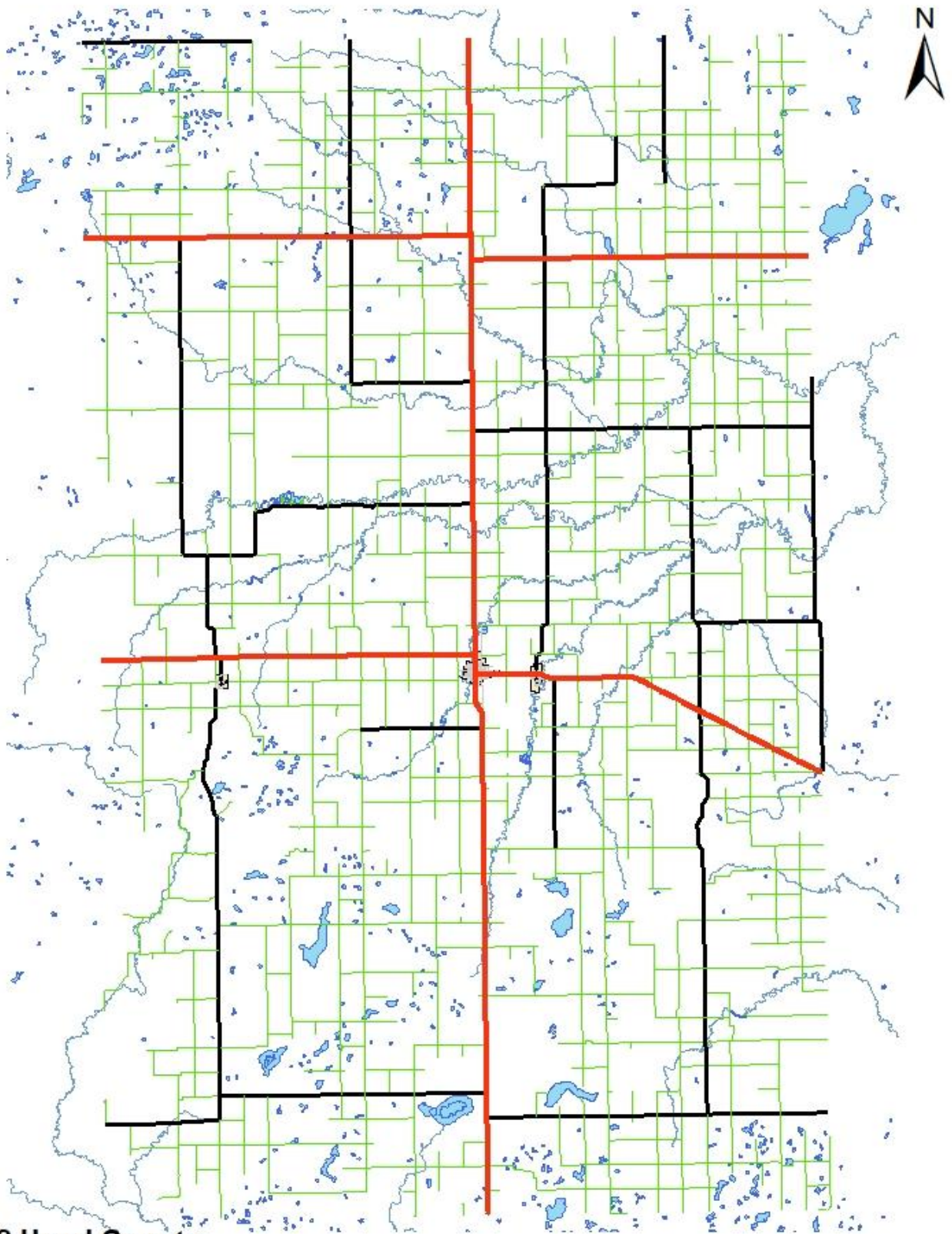
There are currently no county parks located in Hand County and no parks are planned. All future parks should be planned as a part of each Community Park and open space plan. All incorporated communities located in Hand County have a park within city limits that provides for various recreational opportunities and open space.

Hand County also has many federal and state game production areas. Open space is an important aspect in Hand County. To maintain the environmental balance in the county, certain areas should be preserved to their natural state. Such areas include waterfowl protection areas, state game production areas, aquifer protection areas, floodplain protection areas and agricultural areas.

## **PART VI: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS**

Some soil in Hand County has severe limitations for development. Development should be limited to areas that are suitable due to the environmental constraints such as high water, poor drainage, and unstable soils. Poor surface drainage causes storm drainage and road maintenance problems, while the high water creates problems with basement sumps and septic tank drain fields.

A map showing water cover in Hand County is shown on Map 2 (see page 17) Environmental Constraints. This map is designed to act as a planning reference tool; it is not designed to act as a site specific resource. It is primarily meant to illustrate the aforementioned features and in no way eliminates the need for onsite investigation.



**Map 2 Hand County  
Environmental Constraints**

 Water Cover

## **PART VII: EXISTING LAND USE**

### **Existing Land Use**

Where and how a county will develop is influenced by the usage of the county's existing land resources. In order for a future plan to properly develop, an understanding of the existing types of land use within the county is necessary. Existing land development was categorized into one (1) of two (2) general classifications.

The first land use category consists of incorporated municipalities. Within Hand County there are three (3) incorporated communities and a small part of a fourth. They include Miller, Ree Heights and St. Lawrence, with a small part of Wessington that primarily resides in Beadle County. For the purpose of this Plan, individual land uses and available infrastructure within these communities will not be reviewed.

The second land use category includes the unincorporated areas of the county. By area, this is the largest land use category within the county. Agricultural activities are the primary uses in this category. Also within this category there are individual farm and non-farm residences, public/quasi-public uses, conservation/recreation areas, commercial and industrial uses, and aggregate mining.

The primary focus of this plan will deal with the management of development within the second land use categories.

## **PART VIII: PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Hand County has adopted this Comprehensive Plan to provide a framework for specific future land-use and growth management policies and recommendations. It is designed to be a dynamic and flexible process to accommodate the changing needs of a rural and urban population, yet steady enough to allow for reasonable, long-term investment strategies by both public and private sectors.

### **A. GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The following goals and guiding policies should provide direction to Hand County's decision-making process on an ongoing basis. These Objectives and Policy Guidelines together with the current Zoning Map and Major Street Plan, form the Comprehensive Plan for Hand County. Hand County Future Land Use includes the following planned areas as described in the Planning Policy Framework:

1. Transition Area
2. Rural Area

Within each area, specific future land uses are identified to be followed as a part of the implementation process of Hand County.

### **B. TRANSITION AREA GUIDELINES**

The area of urban development consists of lands along the urban fringe where new development is most likely to occur and the area where there is greatest potential for rural and urban conflicts. The area within one half mile of an incorporated municipality is designated for Future Land Use as a "Transition Area." Development is expected to occur in this area during the planning period. The intent is to maintain clearly defined urban areas within the county. The following are policy guidelines through which the cities of Miller, Ree Heights and St. Lawrence and Hand County can promote orderly and attractive growth of their future urban area.

No incorporated communities in Hand County exercise any territorial extent of powers beyond their city limits.

**Guiding policy: Allow municipalities to plan for expansion within a clearly defined urban area.**

1. Each community will decide land use issues.
2. Encourage annexation and municipal utility extensions of all new development.
3. To provide for orderly, efficient and economical development.

4. Discourage leapfrog development on land which cannot be economically provided with public services and facilities.
5. To maintain a distinction between rural areas and the cities and to preserve and enhance community identity.
6. To support and encourage growth of the county's economic base and promote the expansion of job opportunities.
7. Encourage a pattern of development in transition areas which can be integrated into municipal planning areas without the need for costly and inefficient post development construction of public infrastructure expenditures.
8. Encourage new residential construction to locate on previously platted lots and other parcels which already qualify as building sites.

### **C. RURAL AREA GUIDING POLICIES**

All areas located outside one half mile of a municipality is designated a "Rural Area" for Future Land Use and is projected to continue as an agriculturally dominated area. Both city residents and the farming community have a fundamental interest in preventing scattered and haphazard development patterns in this area. The limitation of future urban and rural conflicts is important to all citizens quality of life. Conflicts to be mitigated include increased noise, traffic, flooding and erosion from storm drainage, road maintenance concerns, odors and groundwater pollution from septic systems.

The future land use plan encourages the majority of commercial and industrial development to locate within cities. However, it is recognized that convenience goods and services as well as some industrial uses could be appropriately sited within the rural area. These locations include existing service areas where some reasonable expansion is appropriate and at major highway intersections.

In addition, Religious farming communities present unique challenges to the zoning ordinance. These communities rely on agricultural activities as the primary economic driver, and thus the use is compatible with most agricultural uses. In many cases religious farming communities include Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO's) as a component of the agricultural operation. The county has adopted policies and regulations specifically regulating CAFO's, there for application for CAFO's at the location of a religious farming community are to be separate from the application to operate a religious farming community.

Based upon constraints in providing adequate services (emergency and public utility) to high densities of rural populations and stress on rural roads, Hand County has an interest in regulating the density of development in the unincorporated areas of the county. However, religious farming communities are characterized by numerous farm owners, workers, their families, and some that provide ancillary services to live on site. The number of dwellings required on the same legal description directly conflicts with the density requirements of the unincorporated areas of Hand County.

It is important to note that Hand County does not discourage religious farming communities. At the same time, the county has adopted regulations for high density development not associated with agricultural activities. A case by case review of applications for religious farming communities will reveal whether those rules for higher density residential development apply in the case of each individual application for a religious farming community.

**GUIDING POLICIES: Preserve the rural area for agricultural production and open space.**

1. Every effort should be made to cluster the residential uses and preserve the remaining area to agricultural activities and open space.
2. Allow higher density residential (2-acre) development if the following standards are complied with:
  - a) Septic tank installation
  - b) Private road agreements
  - c) Rural water system agreements
  - d) Low public road impacts (located adjacent to paved roads)
  - e) No adverse environmental impacts
  - f) No impacts to farming community (i.e. location to animal confinements)
  - g) Agreements to right-to-farm of all residents
3. Limit commercial and industrial development in rural area. Allow the siting of agri-business activities at appropriate locations in rural area.
4. Limit construction on sites, which are environmentally unsuited for buildings or septic systems, limiting residential re-zonings, or providing a sewage treatment system.
5. Require that all septic tank installers show proof of licensure and certification through the State of South Dakota to ensure proper installation of on-site septic tanks.
6. Provide public services and facilities at a level sufficient to meet the needs of low-density agricultural population only.
7. Maintain an addressing system to create consistency for safety and convenience of businesses, visitors and local citizens.
8. Locate commercial uses for major highway interchanges. Such uses should be developed in a nodal pattern and geared to the support of highway users.
9. Discourage strip development along transportation arteries, particularly those that serve as gateways to the cities and major activity centers.
10. Promote development patterns, which maintain the safety and carrying capacity of major roads. Discourage strip development patterns.

11. Preserve the environmental quality of the county with respect to economic development.
12. Sites of light commercial and industrial developments should address the construction of access roads and future maintenance and repair of such roads.

## **PLANNING STRATEGY:**

Hand County has committed to shape the future of the community to enhance economic development and maintain a high quality of life for all citizens of the county. The following goals, objectives and policies will guide the county commission and are the basis for regulations contained within Hand County's zoning and subdivision ordinances.

### **Goal 1: Ensure the Health and Safety of Citizens**

Objective 1: Separate structures for health and safety.

Policy 1: All setbacks will be beyond requirements for fire code.

Policy 2: Ensure buildings and structures do not encroach on residential building air space.

Policy 3: Create major setbacks from animal confinement operations to mitigate smell concerns as well as other environmental concerns.

Policy 4: Allow adjustments to setbacks for additions to existing nonconforming structures that do not encroach closer to the lot line than the existing building.

**Policy 5: Protect airport runways from obstructions.**

Objective 2: Design lots and blocks to emphasize cost efficiency and community values.

Policy 1: Review the lot and block designs based upon subdivision design standards.

Objective 3: All streets need adequate visibility at intersections and driveways.

Policy 1: Ensure adequate visibility at intersections by ensuring structures, fences, and crops do not obstruct the view of intersecting traffic.

Policy 2: For shelterbelts provide for adequate setbacks to ensure visibility and safety.

Objective 4: Design local streets to emphasize land access and safety.

Policy 1: All non-section line roads will be managed and maintained by a private road association, however should be public highways providing for enforcement of state traffic laws.

Policy 2: All public roads shall follow secondary roads manual as determined by local transportation within South Dakota Department of Transportation.

Objective 5: Design major streets to emphasize mobility and safety.

Policy 1: Preserve adequate right-of-way for future arterial traffic routes and collectors.

## **Goal 2: Protect Natural Resources**

Objective 1: Retain runoff with open natural drainage systems.

Policy 1: Any development should be platted to incorporate as much natural drainage as possible.

Objective 2: Create greenways and linear open spaces within floodplain areas.

Policy 1: Do not allow residential, commercial, industrial or animal confinements within floodplain areas.

Objective 3: Design around significant wetlands.

Policy 1: Encourage development to utilize and maintain wetlands as a part of the natural drainage basin.

Objective 4: Limit development in areas with poor soils and high water table.

Policy 1: Limit development on soils with severe limitations for septic tanks.

## **Goal 3: Enhance the Visual Quality of the County**

Objective 1: Separate heavy industrial and residential uses.

Policy 1: Do not allow industrial development near residential developments.

Policy 2: Encourage siting of industrial uses in incorporated areas.

Objective 2: Soften the look of all uses to enhance the community's image as an attractive place.

Policy 1: Setbacks will provide reasonable separation for rural living in agricultural areas.

Policy 2: Update all utilities and keep services available to all customers.

Policy 3: Add new equipment to parks, ball fields, and recreational areas encouraging growth within communities.

Objective 3: Create a transition from commercial to residential areas.

Policy 1: Add additional setback for separation.

Policy 2: Encourage the site of most commercial businesses in cities landscape.

Policy 3: Allow manufactured homes to be placed in residential areas that are consistent with site-built homes.

Policy 4: Allow manufactured homes only to be placed in parks that are single sections or do not resemble a site-built home.

Policy 5: Place off-site signs at distances to that are appropriate for the location and limit the size of residential on-site signs.

Policy 6: Require the operation of animal confinements to be consistent with state and local laws and minimize odor from operations and manure application.

Policy 7: Require telecommunication towers to be separated from a residential area and provide spacing between towers.

Policy 8: Wind energy conversion systems should be placed away from other structures and utility lines.

Policy 9: Solar Energy systems should be separated from residential areas.

Policy 10: Home occupations will be allowed as long as there is no substantial change in the residential nature of the home.

Policy 11: Mitigate the adverse impacts of rock, sand and gravel operations by requiring a buffer area, berms, and limiting hours of operation.

Policy 12 Data Centers should be separated from residential areas.

## **PART IX: PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

The preceding chapters have presented the fundamental elements of the comprehensive planning process including demographic and economic data, past and present development trends, transportation systems, public facilities and environmental resources. An analysis of these elements provided a framework for preparing a plan consisting of goals and policies to assist in shaping the physical development of the county.

The Comprehensive Plan is a policy guide to decisions about the future spatial distribution of rural land uses and a visualization of how these land use patterns should occur. The plan is the foundation or basis under which legislative documents operate. Zoning and subdivision regulations are specific and detailed legislative measures intended to carry out the policies and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. These and other implementation tools are discussed in the following sections.

The best possible way to implement a comprehensive plan is to utilize all of the administrative tools available in order to influence development in a positive manner. There are many tools which can be utilized, including zoning regulations, policy plans, capital improvements plans, and well rounded community involvement.

**Local Governing and Advisory Boards.** The key players in the implementation of a Comprehensive Plan are the Planning Commission and the County Commission. It is the duty of the governing bodies of Hand County and its municipalities to encourage progress by utilizing all of the tools available, so that orderly growth and development can take place. With public input, the Planning Commission and the County Commission can create a balance between industry, commerce, and housing, and can utilize all of the resources available to facilitate civic improvement.

**Zoning Regulations.** Zoning is the most commonly used legal mechanism to achieve the goals and policies of a comprehensive plan. The county's zoning ordinance regulates land use activities in the unincorporated area. The Comprehensive Plan stresses the importance of avoiding scattered and sprawl development in the rural area.

**Capital Improvements Planning.** The purpose of capital improvements planning is to provide local government officials with a guide for budgeting for major improvements which will benefit the community. Before future development can be considered, the County must review current infrastructure and identify any deficiencies which need to be corrected prior to the development. It is the intention of the County to upgrade a portion of existing utilities and transportation routes on an annual, ongoing basis.