

PREBLE TOWNSHIP

COMPREHENSIVE TOWNSHIP LAND USE PLAN

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PREBLE TOWNSHIP

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Introduction

Preble Township is located in the southeastern area of Fillmore County, Minnesota. Preble Township is bordered by Amherst Township to the west, Norway Township to the north and Newburg Township to the south -- all townships within Fillmore County. To the east is Black Hammer Township in Houston County. A map of Preble Township is attached as Attachment A.

The South Fork Root River stream comes into the township by two branches in the southwest. The two streams wind through portions of the Big Woods after uniting, and then exit the township in the northeast corner in Choice Valley. The south half of the township is gentle, rolling prairie, with occasional small clumps of timber. The northern half is bluffland with more severe rolling hills. The bluffs, streams and rolling hills combine to create a fishing and hunting recreational area intriguing to residents and visitors. Yet, the dominant activity in the township is small family farming. The rolling hills have been farmed for generations since the 1850s by Norwegian settlers and their descendants, with small dairy and beef operations, small hog feedlots and rotating crops of corn, soybeans, wheat and other grains.

Nineteenth Century History of Preble Township

Fillmore County historical records show that Preble Township was named after one of America's oldest naval heroes – Commodore Edward Preble. As a young man, Preble fought during the Revolutionary War as a junior naval officer on several ships. As an older man, Preble commanded the USS Constitution and fought Barbary pirates in the Mediterranean area. When he returned to the United States, he was a hero. He had helped establish the US Navy's fighting tradition, and was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 1805. Six naval vessels have been named after Edward Preble, including the latest in 2002 – the USS Preble, a guided missile destroyer.

The first two settlers in Preble Township were the Nels Johnson (Nessa) and Thore Olsen (Faae) families, who located in section 33 in year 1853. They came from La Salle county, Illinois, and immediately built a double tenement cabin covered with basswood bark. By 1854, the two families split up, with Thore Olsen moving into Newburg Township, and the Nels Johnson family developing a farm in section 22 of Preble. Both families shared the area with a Winnebago band located in section 32. By the end of 1854, other settlers migrated to Preble including Jacob Jacobson, Rasmus Spande, Walter Braden, J.C. Braden, Peter Peterson, Christian Christopherson, Ole Gjermundson, Bjorn Larson and Lars Tarvestad. In 1855, David Weisel migrated from Cattaraugus county, New York, and built the first sawmill in section 19. Nels Johnson built the next sawmill in the township in section 17. By 1870, resident families included Aslak Housker, Anders Halvorsen, Daniel Steeland, Arne Arneson, Jacob Ellefson, Collins Hall, Ole Anderson, Ole Housker, Gulick Olsen, William Sutherland, Norman Sutherland, John Larson, Martin Gudmondson, Thomas Hall, Iver Thompson, Nels Nelson and Isaac Isaccson.

Descendants of many of these early settlers continue to live in Preble Township. Generations of families have lived on the same farmland for 150 years.

The first town meeting to organize the township and elect officers was held on May 11, 1858. Thomas Hall, David Weisel and Iver Thompson were appointed by the county commissioners to serve as judges of the election. J.C. Braden and I.H. Titus were appointed clerks. The total number of votes cast was 27. Thomas Hall, Iver Thompson and Walter Braden were elected supervisors. Also elected to positions were J.C. Braden, clerk; David Weisel, assessor; Nels Nelson, collector; Christian Christopherson, overseer of the poor; David Weisel and A.C. Seelye, justices of the peace; and William Sutherland and Iver Thompson, constables. The house of Nels Nelson was designated by ballot as the place for holding elections. Meetings were held in various homes.

Schools were developed early in Preble. The first school was a log house built near the home of Nels Johnson. The second school was the Nessa School built in 1859 in the Tawney area. Other early schools included the Choice School, the section 21 school, the Scheie School, and the Storlie School in section 26. Most of these schools disappeared with the decrease in Preble population during the 1950s, and students were transported to the school in Mabel. Nevertheless, the Storlie School still survives, having been used as the Preble Community Center until the late 1970s. The Arneson family now owns the old school building and has begun restoring it.

In 1880, Nels Johnson, Rasmus Spande and 35 other leaders of Preble and Newburg founded a mutual insurance company, which they named *Preble Mutual Fire Insurance Company*. The company started with \$25,000 of insurance in force, and provided fire and casualty coverage to many of the farms and homes in the area. Preble Mutual Fire Insurance Company, headquartered in nearby Lanesboro and celebrating its 125 anniversary, still provides fire and casualty coverage to the farms and homes throughout southeastern Minnesota.

Twentieth Century History of Preble Township

Township resident Jersing Thompson wrote a poem about the area in 1936 entitled "South Fork", which proclaimed:

*Here Sons of Norway paused enchanted
To rear their huts and turn the soil;
With joyful heart and brawny-armed
They builded homes in fearless toil,*

*And here behind the sharpest bend
They reared their kirk for praise and prayer;
And when their toil came to an end
They slept their last sleep there.*

Tollef Halverson built the Tawney Store in 1894 located on the road about 7½ miles north of Mabel. It was named for Minnesota U.S. Senator James A. Tawney, who was traveling in the area as the

store was being built. The store was a general dry goods store selling groceries, milk pails and cans, fabric, small gifts, candy and shoes. A post office was established there for a few years, until the Mabel post office was developed. A pony express route thrived in the area. The store became a gathering place for friends, and the neighborhood around the store became an active community within the township. Tent shows would be set up for weeks at a time. There was a telephone switch at the store by which one would ring someone on the north line and switch together the south line so that neighbors could talk to one another. There were numerous proprietors of the Tawney store, including Julius Spande, Jim Amdahl, Orrin Spande, Ernest Hagen, Myles Hoff, Jerome Stennes, and Clarence Gordon - who ultimately closed the store.

The Tawney store wasn't the only general store in Preble. The Choice store was built in Choice Valley along the south side of Highway 43 in the 1860s. Choice, with its picturesque valley, cabbage rock formations, flowing creek and beautiful trees, became sort of an entertainment center. People came there to fish and picnic. Traveling medicine men would set up tents and furnish entertainment. Choice had a large creamery known for its superb buttermaking. Cyrus and Marian Hanson purchased the property in the center of Choice in 1942. They developed showplace barns and buildings, including a large building in which area events are regularly held. The Hanson's farm is still beautiful, and they still hold regular public events on their farm.

There were several versions of the Choice store over some 50 years, with the final version burning down in 1945. An oil company serviceman overfilled the underground gasoline tank, causing an explosion. Several members of the Larson family were around when the store exploded, but were not injured. Two large storage buildings were moved to the site to create a new store. Finally, in 1964, that store closed. The final building still stands and is used as a storage building by its present owner, David Larson, who today functions as the Preble Township clerk.

Chickentown was a valley community developed in the southwest area of the township through which Weisel Creek runs. During the early 1900s, there were a dozen families occupying the community. The Scheie Church congregation had its start in Chickentown. By the 1970s, the community was reduced to about two families. Today, Chickentown and the area along County Road 18 west are growing and regrouping.

Churches and Cemeteries. From the early development of the township, Preble had several churches – St. Mary's Catholic Church, Scheie Lutheran Church, Choice Methodist Church, and South Fork Lutheran Church. With the population decline in the township during mid-century, only Scheie Lutheran Church survived. Scheie today is a very active congregation having thrived continuously since its founding in the 1860s. The original South Fork Lutheran Church building still exists. It survives in the same location as a restored family residence.

The cemeteries are the markers today of these former congregations. Choice Cemetery, South Fork Lutheran Cemeteries, St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery, and the Scheie Lutheran Cemeteries contain the evidence and remembrance of these township communities. The Weisel cemetery was private burial ground developed by the Weisel and Lerohl families on the western edge of the township to bury their family members.

Preble Township Today

History is a lot of who we are, and who we want to be. 150 years later following the earliest development by white settlers, the terrain and the activity is still pretty much the same today as it was in the mid-1850s. Small family farming and hunting/fishing recreational activity. The old stores are all gone, and Preble residents shop further away from home. Descendants of the early Norwegian settlers are still in Preble. Yet, some newer residents of Irish, German, Swedish and other ethnic groups call Preble home. Whatever the ethnic background, Preble residents are uniform in their belief to keep Preble largely the same as it was 150 years ago. Residents value the natural assets of woods, bluffs, streams and rolling hills. Small family farming dominates. While Preble residents would like to see population growth; no one wants population density. Residents want to maintain a rural agricultural lifestyle.

Today, all the stores are gone. You cannot buy a stick of gum in Preble Township. You can buy seed and feed at the only commercial business in the township – Hy View Feeds operated by Gary and Kit Van de Mark, who reside where the business is conducted along the west County Road 18 corridor. This feed business provides livestock and animal feed primarily to farmers in the area. There are no other non-farming retail or wholesale business operations within the township. Residents of Preble Township purchase their groceries, personal and farming supplies from the nearby towns of Mabel, Rushford, Spring Grove and Lanesboro.

Population

Preble Township had a population high of 662 residents in 1930. The township population, and the Fillmore County population, then began a continuous decline over the next 6 decades to a low of 243 residents in the 1990 US Census. Rural residents throughout Preble Township, Fillmore County and outstate Minnesota simply moved to urban areas. Beginning in the 1990s, the population of Preble Township began to increase as family farming and rural lifestyle gained favor over urban lifestyles. The 2000 U.S. Census shows that Preble Township had a population of 272 residents, 97 households, and 76 families residing within the township. The Minnesota State Demographer declared that Preble Township had a population of 280 residents by 2002, and projected a population of 284 residents by 2005. The projected population would increase to 298 residents by 2010, 335 residents by 2020, and 366 residents by 2030. Of the 24 Fillmore County rural townships, the population of Preble Township is one of the lowest.

The township population is also an older one. In the 2000 census, the median age was 41 years. 29.4% of Preble's population was under age 18, 7.7% was from age 18 to 24, 22.8% from age 25 to 44, 26.5% was from age 45 to 64, and 13.6% was from age 65 and older.

Nevertheless, even through the long periods of migration of township residents toward the cities, many Preble Township families stayed on the family farms in the township, raised children and grandchildren and farmed. Generations of Spandes, Peters, Houskers, Larsons, Halvorsens, Sands, Norbys, Blagsvedts, Olsons, Kellys are still residing in Preble Township. There are also a smaller group of more recent residents who moved into the township to live a rural lifestyle but who do not

farm as an occupation.

The communities which families created in the late 1800s still thrive – albeit without commercial stores. Tawney is a tight nucleus of farms located along the Highway 43 corridor near the center of the township. Choice is a beautiful valley of several farms on the north end of the township through which the south fork of the Root River flows with abundance. And, Chickentown and the neighboring farms and homes along the west County Road 18 corridor are growing in population. The Spandes are developing a housing subdivision in this area, and several new families are building homes in this valley through which Weisel Creek flows.

Housing Stock

Most of the current ownership of property within the township is private – dozens of families holding acreage of typically 100 to 300 acres. Yet, on the western side of the township, the State of Minnesota owns and manages over 1,400 acres of hardwood forestland.

A significant portion of the housing stock of the township consists of aged farm houses. The 2000 US Census found that 47.5% of the homes in Preble were built prior to 1940. And, another 21.2% of Preble’s homes were built between 1940 and 1959. Additional 2000 US Census information on housing in Preble can be found in Attachment C.

Over the past five years, at least 10 new houses have been built in various areas of the township. Additionally, numerous recreational cabins have been built among the wooded areas of the township. Real estate transactions over the past five years indicate a significant rise in the number of sales transactions for small parcels of bare land intended to become houses or cabins. The Fillmore County Assessor reported that the estimated market value for Preble Township property totaled \$51,967,200 for year 2005, which is a 15% increase over the estimated market value for year 2004. New construction in Preble Township during year 2004 was valued at \$411,500.

Geology and Soils

All of Preble Township lies in the karst region. The township geology is characterized by shallow soils underlain with limestone and dolomite bedrock fairly close to the surface. The bedrock is often visible in the bluffs that can be seen throughout the township. Other karst features common to Preble Township are sink holes, caves, disappearing streams and underground streams that are created by the dissolving action of groundwater. Because of the fractured bedrock, surface water can quickly become groundwater with little or no filtering by the soil; thereby making the area vulnerable to groundwater contamination from human activity at homes, farms and industry.

The Fillmore County Geologic Atlas contains maps detailing the subsurface geology of Preble Township, showing sinkholes and sinkhole probability, with pollution potential throughout the township.

Since much of Preble is underlain with limestone, much of which is near or above the surface, there

are at least two active limestone quarries, both of which are operated by the Roverud Company.

Preble has primarily six types of soil:

- Fayette, Dubuque, Whalan association comprising most of the southern half of the township. These silty soils occupy mainly the loess-covered gently rounded ridge tops and adjacent slopes. These soils are light color, well to moderately drained and very erodible.
- Tama, Downs, Rockton and Dodgeville association comprising a smaller percentage of the township, mostly in the northwest sections. These silty soils occur on the slopes and are dark colored and well drained.
- Renova and Kasson association comprising the loamy and silty material under forest and grassy areas. These soils are light colored, well drained and low in fertility.
- Steep rocky land and escarpments. There are small areas of this type of soil in the bluff regions.
- Alluvial soils along the bottom lands, especially near the streams.
- Heavy clay soils with poor drainage comprising a good portion of the agricultural area of the township

Utilities and Public Services

Tri-County Electric Cooperative in Rushford is the primary supplier of electricity to all farms and homesteads in Preble Township. Most of the electricity distribution is carried overhead. However, Tri-County Electric has begun to bury most of its electrical cabling in the western and northern areas of the township.

Telephone and internet access service is provided to township residents by Ace Communications Cooperative in Houston and Mabel Telephone in Mabel. Most of the telephone lines are carried overhead. However, both telephone providers are beginning programs to bury telephone cabling in areas of the township.

Township residents receive fire and ambulance service through three responders depending upon the location within the township. Preble Township is a member of three rural fire departments – Lanesboro, Rushford and Mabel. Preble Township also subscribes to ambulance service from Lanesboro, Rushford and Mabel emergency services. Those residents residing in the western and northwestern areas of the township receive fire and ambulance services from Lanesboro; those residents living in the northern and northeastern areas of the township receive fire and ambulance services from Rushford; and the remaining residents of the township receive fire and ambulance services from Mabel.

The primary law enforcement services throughout the township is provided by the Fillmore County Sheriff. Preble Township does not provide any policing service for its residents.

The Preble Townhall is located on Highway 43 in the center of the township, which provides election and meeting space, and houses the township's road maintenance equipment.

Roads in the Township

Preble Township owns and maintains approximately 26 miles of gravel roads in the township. The township owns grading and plowing equipment; and repairs and maintains most of its roads directly, rather than utilizing subcontractors to perform its basic road maintenance services. Preble does engage occasional subcontractors to perform non-regular road repair, bridge and culvert replacement work when required. Many of the township roads are located in hilly and winding areas, and were not originally developed according to recognized road standards. Many of these roads were originally private drives or cartway roadways, which are maintained by periodically adding gravel to the surface and blading out irregularities. Most of these township roads are a challenge to maintain, and should not be used as high traffic roadways. Preble Township owns several 'minimum maintenance' roadways which are not regularly maintained, and are used only as secondary cartway passages to low traffic areas of the township.

Minnesota state highway 43 runs north and south through the center of the township from Rushford on the north to Mabel on the south. Highway 43 is a two-lane paved road that is maintained primarily by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDot).

Fillmore County owns and maintains four primary roads in the township. County Road 12 is a paved two-lane road running west and east in the center of the township. County Road 18 is located in the southern area of the township, where it is a paved two-lane road east of Highway 43, and an unpaved gravel two-lane road west of Highway 43. County Road 13 is a paved two-lane road in the Choice Valley area of the township running easterly from Highway 43. Finally, County Road 112 is a paved two-lane road running north to south at the east end of the township.

Wildlife Habitat

The numerous forested areas, natural grasslands, streams, field borders and private property set aside from crop production, offers an ample wildlife habitat throughout the township. Preble has an abundance of game animals, including white-tailed deer, turkey, pheasant, coyote, fox, and grouse, to provide resident and visitor hunters with game opportunities. Anglers can fish for trout and bass in the Weisel and South Fork streams. Plentiful non-game wildlife include eagles, hawk, vultures, owls and other raptors.

Current Zoning and Land Use Control for Preble Township

Preble Township has never engaged in its own land use planning and zoning supervision. All zoning for Preble has been managed by Fillmore County, pursuant to the Fillmore County Zoning Ordinance. Currently, the entire township is zoned as an agricultural district, except for a small Highway 43 corridor through Choice, which is zoned for rural residential uses.

The agricultural district allows any agricultural uses, but excludes general commercial and industrial uses. Rural home-based businesses and commercial businesses that supply agricultural uses are allowed. In the agricultural district, Fillmore County zoning restricts new housing to 2 houses within

each quarter/quarter of a section. No additional housing is allowed if there are already 2 houses existing in a quarter/quarter of a section. The minimum buildable lot size is 2.5 acres. There are no minimum standards for housing, except that no mobile home parks or housing is allowed. No apartment or multiple unit housing is allowed. Recreational cabins, which are treated by Fillmore County the same as permanent housing, are allowed, even though many cabins do not have water running into the structures or septic systems to handle waste effluent. The Fillmore County Zoning Office also has housing setback restrictions imposing required distances of new housing from quarries, animal feedlots, public roads, adjacent lot lines, bluffs and protected waters. Finally, new housing is not allowed in the agricultural district, except on pastureland, woodland or agricultural land containing a low soil rating.

Within the agricultural district, housing subdivisions would be allowed if a conditional use permit is obtained for each such subdivision project. However, under the terms of a recent amendment to Fillmore County's Subdivision Ordinance, housing subdivisions are allowed only in locations accessing a hard-surface road. Housing subdivisions could not be developed adjacent to gravel roads.

Fillmore County regulates the construction of new, and the expansion of existing, animal feedlots in the agricultural district. New, upgraded or expanded animal feedlots intended to hold more than 500 animal units must obtain a conditional use permit from the Fillmore County Zoning Office. Typically, Fillmore County will require a feedlot applicant to provide a manure management plan and a site plan showing setbacks to nearby housing and streams and adjacent lots. All animal feedlots holding more than 50 animal units require a permit from the county, which are usually granted. New, upgraded or expanded animal feedlots intended to hold more than 1000 animal units must obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Although Fillmore County currently has 6 animal feedlots intended to hold more than 1000 animal units, none of these animal feedlots are located in Preble Township.

In 2003, Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty created a Livestock Advisory Task Force (LTF), at the urging of agricultural industry interests, to study the perceived need to encourage more livestock production in Minnesota. The agricultural industry had complained to Governor Pawlenty that livestock feedlot siting ordinances at the local government level were preventing the development of new and expanded animal feedlots. In June 2004, the LTF issued a report, including a recommendation on local government siting impediments of animal feedlots, which states:

The LTF believes a significant impediment to modernization and new investment in Minnesota livestock operations is the lack of predictability and uniformity in the siting process at the local level. In recent months, the LTF received input on this issue from representatives of the Minnesota Association of Townships (MAT) and the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC). Although the LTF hoped to make specific recommendations related to the role of local governments in the siting of livestock operations, task force members believe this issue requires further discussion with MAT and AMC representatives to gain additional input and support for recommendations in this area. Therefore, the LTF recommends the continuation of the current task force for the purpose of developing recommendations on ways to increase predictability and uniformity for livestock producers in siting operations while at the same time recognizing the role of local land use planning.

The Minnesota Association of Townships, on behalf of townships, has begun a lobbying effort to prevent the Minnesota Legislature from weakening the legal ability of township governments to engage in township zoning and land use regulation.

The Need For A Comprehensive Township Land Use Plan

Over the past few years, members of the Preble Township board of supervisors have heard land use concerns from residents and property owners. Some people complained that too many recreational cabins were being built on too many small parcels of land. Other people feared that residential housing subdivisions would be built on good quality farmland, thereby diminishing the dominant agricultural industry in the area.

And still other people were concerned that large animal feedlots and their accompanying manure management problems might be developed on farmland intended for small family farms, feedlots and dairies. Residents are mindful that animal manure provides beneficial and replenishing qualities to the soil and aids in the production of agricultural crops. However, when animal manure is improperly stored, transported or disposed of, in large quantities, it may negatively affect the township's environment and residential lifestyle. Large accumulations of manure emit hydrogen sulfide, methane and ammonia, which may negatively affect the health and safety of township residents.

Responding to these varied concerns, the township board of supervisors, on January 20, 2004, approved a plan to study land use controls and zoning regulation with Preble Township. Minnesota Statutes Chapter 462 authorizes the township board of supervisors to develop and adopt a comprehensive land use plan and system of ordinances to govern, control and regulate land use within the boundaries of Preble Township. The township board of supervisors created a planning committee to study the concerns, interests and feasibility of Preble Township developing its own comprehensive land use plan and system of zoning ordinances. This planning committee is comprised of volunteer residents of Preble Township.

Members of the planning committee met monthly throughout 2004 to discuss the various land use concerns presented by residents and property owners. In February 2004, the planning committee prepared and mailed a land use survey to all residents and property owners of Preble Township. Almost 50% of all township residents and property owners responded showing considerable interest and concern with land use issues. The responses from residents and property owners were discussed by the planning committee and the township board of supervisors. Again, in October 2004, the planning committee prepared and mailed a second land use survey to all residents and property owners of Preble Township. This second land use survey focused more on the specific land use concerns that had been raised and discussed during 2004 by members of the planning committee, residents and property owners. This second land use survey also asked the question "Should your Preble Township board get involved in land use planning issues within the township?"

Like the first survey, almost 50% of the township residents and property owners responded to the second survey. An overwhelming number of people responding stated their belief that the Preble Township board should get involved in land use planning issues and regulation. A copy of the

second survey results is attached as Attachment B.

In their survey responses, the majority of township residents and property owners prefer no non-farming retail or wholesale commercial activity within the township. A strong preference was voiced for keeping the township rural agricultural and free of commercial activity.

Preble Township seeks to develop its first township comprehensive land use plan that will look forward for some 10 years. This is a time of modest population growth and change for the township. Yet, it is also a time of considerable population growth and change in the region. That considerable growth and change will affect Preble Township. This comprehensive plan should anticipate the consequences of this growth and change. The plan's goals and policies must be flexible – to shift into different directions as change occurs within the township and region. Preble Township cannot now project out to 25 years with any accuracy. Therefore, Preble Township looks forward a modest 10 years, with the hope that Preble Township reviews and revises this plan in 10 years.

Comprehensive Township Land Use Goals

It is the goal of Preble Township to manage growth and change in the community in a manner consistent with the preservation of natural and environmental features, the preservation of the rural quality of the township, and the protection of public health, safety and welfare for existing and future residents. Specifically, Preble Township seeks to:

- Protect the rural character of the township through growth management strategies
- Protect the Weisel and South Fork Root River stream corridors
- Protect a base of long-term agricultural land, as a source of economic livelihood, open space and rural character
- Encourage the continuation of commercial farming as a viable land use and significant economic activity
- Encourage sound agricultural management practices which protect groundwater and surface water from contamination
- Provide opportunities for new residential development that are consistent with the township's land use goals
- Maintain and enhance the value of agricultural and residential property
- Establish land use patterns that preserve and protect the natural qualities and existing character of the township's landscape
- Educate residents on the potential conflicts or incompatibilities that can arise between residential and agricultural uses
- Retain the low-density, single-family residential and rural character of the township
- Encourage younger generations of existing farm families to stay in or return to the township to live and farm
- Deter industrial and commercial development which would be inconsistent with the township's land use goals
- Maintain a safe, cost-effective, efficient and environmentally sensitive rural road transportation system

- Enhancement of the township's property tax base and property values
- Maintain an adequate rural road transportation system to enable farmers to efficiently receive supplies and transport agricultural products to market
- Protect surface waters and wetlands to protect natural habitats, ground water quality and aesthetic qualities
- Provide recreational opportunities for residents of and visitors to the township
- Work cooperatively with other groups and government agencies to identify and develop potential recreational trails

Areas of Potential Land Use Challenges and Problems

During the past several years, residents and property owners in Preble Township have identified the following areas of potential land use challenges and problems for the future, which could be inconsistent with the township's goals:

- Depletion and reduction of commercial farming acreage from increased housing or cabin development, and declining farming income
- Introduction of large animal feedlots with accompanying manure management, heavier traffic and road maintenance problems
- New housing being built too close to existing housing
- New housing being built too close to animal feedlots
- Housing subdivision development with the potential for housing density, eroded rural lifestyle and road damage
- Deterioration of existing older housing stock
- High density and proliferation of recreational cabin development in wooded areas with access easements across good farmland
- Decreased local stream viability caused by land erosion and agricultural contamination
- Decreased watertable quality caused by land erosion and agricultural contamination
- Accumulated junk and waste piles from residents discarding appliances, equipment, tires, farm and construction debris, and trash
- Residential septic and waste contamination from older, poorly maintained septic systems and lack of septic systems in recreational cabins
- While appreciation of township property values is desired, too rapid or too high an increase will bring high property taxes which many farmers, residents and property owners will find too costly.

Some of these potential land use problems pose conflicting priorities. These potential conflicting priorities include the following:

- The township's recognition that there is a declining inventory of housing stock that should be replaced, conflicts with the fear that potential housing subdivision development will bring housing density, road damage and an eroded rural lifestyle. Preble residents want added new housing, but not in close proximity to existing housing.
- Preble residents want to encourage hunting and fishing recreational activity, but do not want

to encourage too many cabins being built on small parcels requiring easement access across farm acreage. The easement access to cabins reduces farmable acreage. Too many clustered cabins can cause crowding of hunting and fishing recreational activity, and reduce the value for developing permanent housing.

- Preble residents want to encourage family farming, but do not want to encourage the introduction of new or expanded large animal feedlots and confinement facilities.
- While Preble residents want to place a ceiling on the number of livestock in feedlots, residents also want to encourage existing and new livestock feedlots of reduced size. Residents want to use setback requirements to prevent new residents from complaining about odor and other feedlot attributes that would discourage feedlot operation.

A balance must be struck when weighing potential solutions to these conflicting problems. Therefore, the perceived township solutions to these potential problems are moderate solutions, not radical solutions.

Township Land Use Policies

To achieve the goals identified above, and to prevent some of the problems identified above, the Preble Township government adopts the following land use policies:

1. Preble Township should engage in land use planning and zoning regulation, and should adopt this comprehensive township land use plan.
2. Family farms should be supported. Encouragement and incentives should be given for the upgrading, continuation and expansion of family farms. Existing farmers should be encouraged to provide housing and farming opportunities on their farms for younger members of their families. Existing, expanded and new livestock feedlots, under 500 animal units in size, should be supported.
3. Crop management education and incentives should be encouraged for township farmers to enhance soil rating and crop production, and to reduce soil erosion and stream pollution. Township property owners who rent their cropland to outside farmers should be encouraged to require their farmers to engage in best practices crop management. The Preble Township government should cooperate and work with Fillmore County agencies, University of Minnesota extension, the US Department of Agriculture, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and other agencies to encourage best practices crop management techniques in the township.
4. Education should be encouraged for township farmers to engage in best practices livestock production and manure management control. The Preble Township government should cooperate and work with Fillmore County agencies, University of Minnesota extension, the US Department of Agriculture, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and other agencies to encourage best practices livestock management techniques in the township.

5. Large livestock feedlots holding over 500 animal units and requiring manure management facilities should be discouraged as inappropriate for the township's terrain, geology, housing proximity and road maintenance. The Preble Township government should regulate large livestock feedlots to the fullest extent allowed under Minnesota law. Further, the Preble Township government should work closely with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and the Fillmore County Zoning Office to discourage large livestock feedlot siting within the township. A ceiling on the number of livestock in feedlots is an appropriate tool. Setbacks on the distances between feedlots and housing are another appropriate planning tool.
6. New permanent housing development should be encouraged in the township. However, housing density should be discouraged to (i) maintain the township's rural character and lifestyle, (ii) preserve productive farmland, (iii) preserve a viable and unpolluted South Fork Root River stream corridor, and (iv) minimize the need for excessive road maintenance. New housing should be scattered, and not be built in close proximity to existing housing. Existing rural residents have an expectation of privacy, greenspace and distance around their homes, and would be repelled by new housing being built too close. Setbacks could be used as zoning tools to restrict new housing from being built too close to existing housing.
7. Siting of new cabins should be regulated to prevent excessive cabin proliferation. Setbacks and other planning tools should be used to prevent too many recreational cabins from being built in the township. Construction of new recreational cabins should be discouraged in the woods where hunting occurs. The township government should encourage the development of a recreational cabin 'subdivision' sited away from the woods to provide housing for hunters and part-time recreational residents.
8. The township should continue studying opportunities for housing subdivision development, including tightly managed subdivision zones.
9. Preble Township should support rural home-based commercial activity, especially home-based businesses, such as Hy View Feed, which provide supplies to farmers. However, the definition of 'home-based commercial activity' should be limited to prevent general commercial or industrial projects from being sited within the township.
10. Discourage and prohibit general commercial and industrial uses throughout the township.
11. The Preble Township government should cooperate and work closely with Fillmore County and the appropriate Minnesota agencies to clean up older junk and waste sites in the township.
12. The Preble Township government should work closely with the Fillmore County Zoning Office to develop flexible, not rigid, septic system regulations and standards for new and existing housing that will reduce soil, watertable and stream pollution in the township.

13. While the township supports gradual and flexible upgrading of existing septic systems, the Preble Township government should work closely with the Fillmore County Zoning Office on the standards and practices for upgrading existing septic systems to assure that township residents are not burdened with excessive costs for mandated upgrading of their septic systems. State and county incentives, grants and loans to township residents for septic system upgrading, should be supported and encouraged by the township government.
14. The Preble Township government should work closely with the Fillmore County Board of Commissioners, Planning Commission, and Zoning Administrator, to develop county ordinances, policies and enforcement remedies that will help our township land use planning efforts.
15. The Preble Township government should work closely with the State of Minnesota, including the MPCA, Department of Agriculture and other appropriate agencies to develop state laws, rules, policies and enforcement remedies that will help our township land use planning efforts.
16. The Preble Township government should work closely with the Minnesota State Legislature and the Minnesota Association of Townships to (i) develop state laws and remedies that will help our township land use planning efforts, and (ii) defend the ability of Preble Township and other Minnesota townships to engage in meaningful land use planning and zoning.

Following discussion at a public hearing of the Preble Township Board of Supervisors, this Comprehensive Township Land Use Plan was unanimously approved and adopted as the comprehensive plan for Preble Township, effective immediately.

Dated: September 20, 2005

Gerald Peter

GERALD PETER, Supervisor

Brad Kelly

BRAD KELLY, Supervisor

David Williams

DAVID WILLIAMS, Supervisor

Attest:

David Larson

DAVID LARSON, Clerk