

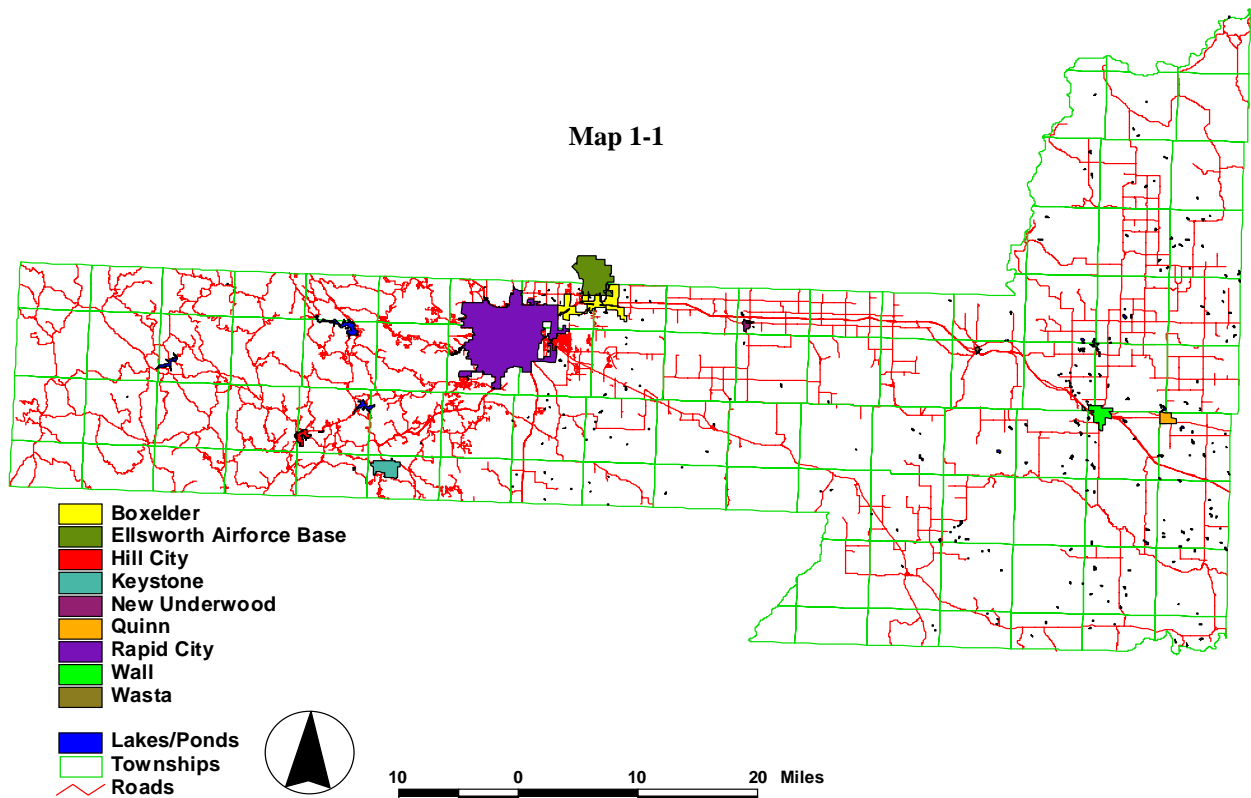
Chapter One

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Setting and Location

Pennington County is located in the western portion of South Dakota. The terrain of the County varies considerably depending on location. The western portion of Pennington County consists of the Black Hills. The highest point in South Dakota, Harney Peak, with an elevation of 7298 feet above mean sea level, is located in Pennington County. The eastern portion of the County consists of rolling prairie, the Badlands, and major wooded river draws. Pennington County has an area of approximately 2,775 square miles or 1,776,000 acres.

There are eight (8) incorporated municipalities located within Pennington County. They are Rapid City, Box Elder, Wall, New Underwood, Wasta, Hill City, Keystone and Quinn. A map showing the location of each municipality has been provided. In addition to these incorporated towns and municipalities, there are other unincorporated urban areas, such as Rapid Valley, Rockerville and Hisega. All unincorporated areas fall under the jurisdiction of Pennington County. The estimated 2000 population of Pennington County was 88,565.



1.2 Local Planning History

Pennington County began land use planning in 1967. As a result of a legal challenge in 1994, the South Dakota Supreme Court ruled that the Pennington County Comprehensive Plan had not been adopted properly and was invalid. On February 1, 1994, Pennington County adopted temporary zoning control and, subsequently, on February 1, 1996, adopted a new, abbreviated Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. As a result, all existing uses, which did not comply with the Zoning Ordinance as adopted in 1994, are considered legal nonconforming uses. The relatively short existence of the Zoning Ordinance has resulted in a significant number of legal nonconforming uses and previously approved actions by the Planning Commission, County Board, and Zoning Board of Adjustment, which are no longer effective.

1.3 Purpose and Meaning of Comprehensive Planning

A comprehensive plan is a document adopted by the Planning Commission and County Board of Commissioners that outlines a general approach for the development of the County. This comprehensive plan will examine a number of concerns that affect the quality of life, current development and future growth of Pennington County. This comprehensive plan will examine the history and demographics of the area, economic factors, geographic descriptions, transportation issues, a drainage plan will be identified and current Flood Plain Management policies examined, and finally, a future land-use section will guide future growth and development in Pennington County. A set of goals and policies will be provided for each section of the plan. A comprehensive plan can provide valuable information and guidance to those making important economic decisions such as local officials, land developers, existing and prospective residents, employees and business owners and operators.

A comprehensive plan is a general guideline used by the County in decision-making. It also serves as a source of public information. A comprehensive plan looks beyond today into issues and opportunities for the future. A comprehensive plan should be used as a technical guide by staff, local appointed and elected officials in making land use decisions. A comprehensive plan serves as an instrument that establishes long-range policies, which can be referred to in the decision-making process.

A comprehensive plan is not set in stone. It should serve as a fluid document, which outlines the general planning intent for the County. Other documents such as the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, and Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance are specific documents that are intended to implement a unified land-use policy for the County and are adopted as adjuncts to the Comprehensive Plan.