



BLOOMING PRAIRIE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ABSTRACT

This plan includes goals, recommendations, and objectives to help guide the future of the community. The goals and recommendations in the plan reflect the consensus of the residents on what they envision for the future of Blooming Prairie.



CEDA
Community and Economic
Development Associates

Blooming Prairie
Comprehensive Plan
Executive Summary

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

Minnesota Statute 462.351 – 462.364 is the authority for the City of Blooming Prairie to create a comprehensive plan.

The purpose of Blooming Prairie's Comprehensive Plan is to become an overarching guide for decision-making related to the physical, social, and economic development for the community over the next decade. This document is designed to communicate the vision of the community regarding its future. The Plan will continue to evolve after it is officially adopted. Fine-tuning the Plan through later amendments will ensure that this document remains a reflection of the values of the city's residents.

The goals, objectives and implementation matter measures of Blooming Prairie's Comprehensive Plan are intended to guide City Council, boards and commissions in making these decisions. The plan is intended for use by all those who participate in the city's land-use planning process, including local officials, persons with development interests, state, regional and federal agencies, community groups, and citizens representing all interest.

The following philosophies realized through the community survey and community input meetings were used as a basis for this planning effort:

- Encourage input and participation from the residents
- Maintain community values and character
- Grow and sustain a diversity and housing options
- Provide increased opportunity for business growth and increased jobs
- Blooming Prairie school District is an important asset for the community
- Maintain and utilize the natural beauty of the area

General Trends

Blooming Prairie, the second largest community in Steele County, is advantageously located in relation to surrounding urban centers and markets as well as in proximity to the regional transportation routes. It lies within the fertile agricultural belt of southern and southeastern Minnesota.

While other rural communities are experiencing significant decreases in population, Blooming Prairie has been able to remain stable in its population.

Blooming Prairie doe have a large number of residents over the age of 65, which necessitates the need for increased facilities, senior living, independent living with assistance, transportation needs, caregivers and other needs associated with an aging population.

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

Blooming Prairie households are classified as a middle income bracket. This is characterized by the majority of households having income around \$50,000. Median income in Blooming Prairie, as of 2015, is \$54,417; this is slightly above the national median household income of \$51,939 and slightly below the \$55,764 median household income of Steele County.

A high percentage of Blooming Prairie's population are commuters who are working in the communities of Owatonna, Austin and Rochester. This trend is likely to continue. Blooming Prairie should explore options that would make Blooming Prairie an attractive option to individuals looking to work in places like Owatonna, Austin and Rochester, including bus service running between the communities.

By continuing to capitalize on its strategic advantages, Blooming Prairie has the capacity for growth. One such advantage is a robust manufacturing base and large percentage of the workforce which commutes into Blooming Prairie.

Also, as the Owatonna I-35 continues to grow in the bigger cities' land and business costs continue to rise, communities such as Blooming Prairie are strategically located as more affordable options for residential, commercial, and industrial development. This in turn would increase the amount of jobs and tax base in the community. Blooming Prairie is positioned for growth.

The vast majority of household income for the community does not come from Social Security or retirement. This illustrates the fact that Blooming Prairie has a healthy labor pool from which it could draw if the proper industries were attracted. Understanding that, the people of Blooming Prairie are commuters that carry jobs that pay middle level wages.

Goals and Objectives

Goals, objectives and Recommended Action Measures identify the intent of the City to accomplish certain results.

The goals and objectives are intended to relate to one another. The goals are followed by supportive objectives. The goals and objectives in turn are supported by recommended action measures.

Land Use

The community has been platted in strict grid fashion with generously proportioned street right-of-ways but not overly large blocks. No serious instances of intermixing of various type developments have occurred to date; rather, newer development has tended to add onto older portions of the built up area and therefore has steadily pushed outward from the core area in a controlled manner.

Most all industrial uses have concentrated in the industrial park, located in the North East corner of the city, and along the rail trackage right-of-way. Though not as reliant on rail access as they once were, many industries are still attracted to proximity to rail lines as well as to highways, good soils and utilities.

Green space and parks was one of the areas highlighted by the community survey as an area of focus for the future of Blooming Prairie. These areas help maintain Blooming Prairie's rural character as well as the high quality of life for residents. Preserving and enhancing these areas is in the best interest of the city.

The publicly owned Pine Springs pool and surrounding park is a definite asset to the entire City.

Land Use Goals:

- Enhance the quality of life for present and future generations of Blooming Prairie residents by providing economic growth for the highest quality of residential, recreational, and business development.
- Encourage the most desirable and efficient use of land while enhancing the physical and economic environment of Blooming Prairie.
- Maintain and enhance the City's local character and aesthetic value to land use planning.
- Identify specific land uses that are needed to serve the citizens of and visitors to Blooming Prairie.
- Modify, adapt, and promote City land use policies that both protect the various districts, and also provide safe, feasible, a cost efficient use of land zoning, subdivision, and building regulations.
- Continue to promote growth through maintained relationships with surrounding townships using orderly annexation agreements.

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- Promote programs to assist with restoration and development in the Central Business District, Main Street area & HWY 218 Corridor when possible

Land Use Objectives:

- Ensure that the regulatory policies within the City's Zoning Ordinance and related map are consistent with current City needs and desires.
- Ensure that Blooming Prairie's land use policies encourage a balance of land uses such that there are adequate areas for non-residential uses that will provide the essential tax base needed for the City to support existing and future residents.
- Review, and if necessary revise, the City's Zoning Ordinance to ensure that high standards are required for new development, both residential and non-residential.
- Ensure that new development enhances the quality of life in Blooming Prairie.
- Ensure that new development, both residential and non-residential, will be compatible with existing land uses in terms of use, density, building heights, scale, and off-site effects.
- Provide flexibility in development options/tools to create win-win outcomes between land owner desires and community interests.
- Ensure an appropriate balance of open space to develop areas is planned for all new residential and commercial development.
- Encourage the development of new commercial uses around sites that offer good access.
- Provide suitable sites in sufficient quantity for each type of proposal proposed use.
- Explore opportunities to rehabilitate and redevelop existing developed areas within the community and in planned growth areas.

Economic Development

The business economy in Blooming Prairie is fairly diverse featuring strong industries, particularly in Rubbers and Plastics Manufacturing and Metal Working, small retail, and professional services.

The City has significant potential for growth in most of those sectors. The proximity to the larger economic generator communities of Owatonna, Austin and to some extent Rochester

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Economic Development Goals:

- Maintain positive relationships with the business community and actively pursue opportunities to improve the local economy.
- Increase job opportunities at all skill levels
- Expand commercial and industrial tax base
- Retain existing businesses and when possible assist their expansion efforts
- Encourage continued job skills training to maintain a strong workforce

Economic Development Objectives:

- Encourage small retail and service businesses that meet local needs to maintain strong quality of life
- Work with the State and other agencies to assist local businesses in accessing programs offering job-skills training to maximize workforce
- Utilize available financial programs both internal and through County, State, and Federal agencies to support business retention and growth when necessary
- Encourage development in areas serviced by adequate infrastructure by supporting contiguous development and orderly annexation
- Explore financial and logistical feasibility of new geographic areas for industrial and commercial growth
- Facilitate meetings with local businesses to discuss retention and expansion opportunities.
- Explore financial programs to encourage rehabilitation and revitalization of downtown
- Explore signage and marketing opportunities to enhance link to Interstate 35 and the significant traffic pattern there
- Utilize City website to provide economic development resources and information to local businesses

Housing

A vast majority (75%) of Blooming Prairie's housing stock was built prior to 1980. For the entire state of Minnesota only 58% of the housing stock was built prior to 1980. With Blooming Prairie's housing stock being older than most of the state, more care will have to be given to maintain that housing stock. Energy efficiency projects and programs which focus on energy efficiency updates of older houses should be considered.

Blooming Prairie has a very low percentage of vacant or available housing options to support continued population growth. In order to continue to grow, the community will have to continue to promote new housing development in all price ranges in order to accommodate both new residents and current resident looking to upgrade their housing.

Housing Goals:

- Provide for adequate housing opportunities for current and future residents of Blooming Prairie while retaining the small-town character of the community.
- Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population and to serve special needs populations, such as the elderly.
- Maintain close positive relationship with the school district
- Improve property maintenance / elimination of substandard housing.
- Improve infrastructure and community development elements such as non-motorized trails and green spaces.
- Promote energy efficient construction and remodeling

Housing Objectives:

- Support housing repair and rehabilitation efforts to preserve and enhance existing housing stock.
- Continue exploring additional opportunities for townhomes, duplexes, small-lot developments, and other multifamily dwelling units that encourage affordable housing
- Encourage housing diversity that maintains the predominantly single family character of the community but also provides options to meet the needs of an economically diverse community
- Support funding programs designed to make housing more affordable.

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- Plan for safe non-motorized transportation routes like sidewalks and bikes trails to connect residential areas to commercial areas, schools, and other residential areas
- Work with federal, state, and local agencies and programs to promote and possibly incent maintenance and rehabilitation of older housing stock to avoid blight and improve energy efficiency
- Continue to meet regularly with school district officials to stay informed on district issues and plans, and to continue to explore ways to partner together.

Public Facilities

The demands for public facilities space at all levels of government usually increase as the population served grows and as the level of service expands. As a general rule, as communities grow in size, its citizens require increased levels of service. It is appropriate to review the status of existing municipal buildings as a basis for determining the future changes and additions that will likely be required.

As indicated in the community survey there is an increasing need and demand for recreational hiking and biking trails and neighborhood trails and connections. In addition to encouraging recreation, the development of a non-motorized trail system can help reduce vehicle trips. The result will be a community resource providing transportation alternatives, recreational opportunities, environmental aesthetics, and preserving open space.

Public Facility Goals:

- Provide high level public facilities and services in the most effective and cost efficient manner possible
- Explore alternative forms of energy that can help provide quality renewable sustainable energy for Blooming Prairie and its residents
- Provide safe and quality water supply
- Manage storm water in an efficient, effective, and environmentally conscious manner
- Create and maintain capital improvement program for large investments in upgrading infrastructure and public facilities to maximize efficiency of investment
- Provide and maintain quality street system within the community

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- Encourage non-motorized transportation within the community
- Aesthetic values and natural environment will be considered when replacing and expanding City utilities
- Create and maintain a quality system of interconnected parks, recreation facilities, and open green spaces throughout the community
- Provide each new housing development or neighborhood with easy and direct access to a park
- Continually explore funding programs from local, state, and federal organizations for improvements to Blooming Prairie's parks

Public Facility Objectives:

- Explore local, state, and federal agency programs for funding for utility improvements
- Require adequate park / green space be incorporated into new residential developments
- Require storm water retention ponding and other run off prevention methods be incorporated into new large scale developments
- Provide adequate funding to maintain existing park and recreational facilities including a balance between maintenance and new capital improvement expenditures
- Continually monitor whether facilities such as the Fire Station and City Maintenance building are sufficient to meet the growing community's needs
- Be active in communications with Steele County and the Department of Transportation regarding the HWY 218 corridor and the other major traffic routes around the city
- Create and adhere to an annual maintenance plan to ensure existing curb, gutter, and road surfaces are well maintained.
- Incorporate large scale street and utility improvements into the City's capital improvement plan
- Work to improve the overall non-motorized connectivity of the community through additional trails and sidewalks. Special attention should be paid to high traffic areas like the school, downtown and Straight River Park.
- Explore local, state, and federal agency programs for funding for parks and trails additions and improvements

Additional Recommended Action Measures

- **Zoning Ordinance.** The City should review its zoning ordinance and official land use map and compare them to the adopted goals and objectives in this plan to identify and reconcile any discrepancies.
- The City should continue to work with developers to develop residential land to serve potential new residents to the community and seniors. Some of the key areas for this development are near the school facilities because the school serves as one of the major draws for potential new residents. The City will also want to work to ensure a variety of property values to accommodate a broad range of housing incomes.
- Space in the current Industrial park is limited. Currently, there are only two lots available. This is a limiting factor in attracting further industrial growth. The city will have to look to other sites for future industrial use areas. These areas must take into consideration the location of infrastructure such as sewage systems and the water treatment plant. Due to the gently sloping terrain it is recommend future industrial growth areas be limited to areas supported by existing infrastructure, such as areas along the rail trackage right of way in the south east.
- The feasibility of expanding to the east into Dodge County should be strongly considered. Areas currently designated as Agricultural south of the city limits are another strong possibility but face the infrastructure challenges of the impact of gently sloping terrain.
- **Annexation.** Blooming Prairie should maintain a policy of Orderly Annexation to contain development allowing for the most efficient use of existing utilities and infrastructure. Regular discussions should continue with the neighboring townships and Dodge County as the community continues to grow in size.
- The City must continue to facilitate a mix of housing types, including less land-consumptive alternatives such as duplexes, small-lot homes,

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

and townhouses in addition to continued single family home development.

- Blooming Prairie should review and amend the Comprehensive Plan as necessary, but at a minimum every seven to ten years, to ensure its usefulness as a practical guide for current and future development.
- The City should work with its financial advisor to put together a formal capital improvements plan. As noted, this would prioritize and schedule large capital projects usually over a five to ten year period. City staff first compiles a list of all public improvements that will be required in the next five to ten years, including things like street upgrades, new equipment and public facilities projects. Then all projects are reviewed, priorities are assigned, cost estimates prepared, and potential funding sources identified.
- The City could work with the County and other agencies to conduct an updated comprehensive housing study to identify gaps in the market. These gaps present opportunities for developers to meet potential demand in the market. Meeting this demand allows the community to continue to grow.
- The City of Blooming Prairie benefits from an active citizenship, involved and aware of issues and concerns throughout the community. The City should continue to use as many media outlets as possible to provide public information. This can be accomplished through the City's website (the web address is www.BloomingPrairieMinnesota.com), Facebook pages of the City, Police and Library, City newsletter, school district newsletter, public service announcements on local radio and local cable access channel, informational brochures, and press release distribution to area newspapers.

Contents

Introduction

Forward	14
What is Comprehensive Planning	15
Goals, objectives and Recommended Action Measures	16
Why is Comprehensive Planning important to Blooming Prairie	17

Demographics

General Trends	18
Location	19
Age Groups	19
Income Distribution	20
Blooming Prairie Labor Shed – Where Blooming Prairie Workers Live	22
Blooming Prairie Commute Shed – Where Residents Work	24
Summary	26

Land Use

Blooming Prairie General Characteristics	27
Neighborhood Residential	29
Commerce and Industry	30
Mixed Use	32
Open Space	32
Land Use Goals	33
Land Use Objectives	34

Economic Development

General	35
Blooming Prairie	36
Employment by Industry	37
Unemployment Rates	38
Economic Development Goals	39
Economic Development Objectives	39

Housing General

Housing Growth	40
Housing Cost	43
Independent School District #756	45
Housing Goals	48
Housing Objectives	48

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

Public Facilities

General	49
Waste Water Treatment	49
Sanitary Sewer Collection and Treatment	50
Water System	50
Storm Water Conveyance and Treatment	50
Street System	51
Traffic Volumes	52
Public Utilities Power Plant	53
Pedestrian System	53
City Hall / Fire Station	54
Trails	54
Public Facility Goals	54
Public Facility Objectives	55

Conclusion	56
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Implementation Tools

Zoning Ordinance	57
Capital Improvements Plan (CIP)	57
Community Involvement and Communication	58

Implementation Strategies Development

Comprehensive Planning	59
Development Ordinances	59
Capital Improvements Plan	59

Appendix

Maps

BP Land Use Planning Draft	61
BP Commercial Corridor North Draft	62
BP Commercial Corridor South Draft_Dodge County	63
BP Commercial Corridor South Draft_Steele County	64
BP North Industrial Park	65
BP South Industrial Park	66
Franke Brothers Land	67

Introduction

Forward

“Blooming Prairie got its name when a railroad official's wife gave it the pretty name. The area was originally called Oak Glen Township, which had become part of Steele County in 1856. The township then also came to be known as Blooming Prairie Township. The first settler was John Blythe (a native of England) in July of 1856 and the first baby born in the township was Walter John Blythe in August of 1858. The first school was taught in 1861 by Hattie Layton. Steele County was named after Franklin Steele who became wealthy as a government contractor during the pioneer era. The City of Blooming Prairie was established in 1867” (Severson, 1980).

Authority

In Accordance with Minnesota Statute 462.351 – 462.364 the City of Blooming Prairie to create a comprehensive plan. This plan includes goals, recommendations, and objectives to help guide the future of the community. The goals and recommendations in the plan should reflect the consensus of the residents and what they envision for the future of Blooming Prairie.

What is Comprehensive Planning?

Comprehensive planning is as much a process to engage the public in local decisions as it is to create a document to guide development. The planning process is, at its core, a way to gather information from people with different perspectives on the type of community they would like it to be. Planning can also create stable ground rules and a fair set of practices by which development and quality of life can flourish. In the end, it is about making communities better.

Land-use planning involves the consideration and balancing of many different factors and issues to guide the best decisions for the community both for the short and long-term. The goals, objectives and implementation matter measures of Blooming Prairie's Comprehensive Plan are intended to guide City Council, boards and commissions in making these decisions. The plan is intended for use by all those who participate in the city's land-use planning process, including local officials, persons with development interests, state, regional and federal agencies, community groups, and citizens representing all interest.

Change is an inherent part of any community and it is necessary for the Plan to be responsive to changing conditions. Thus, it needs to be updated periodically. It is anticipated that the plan should be updated every 7 to 10 years to comply with state requirements, address changed circumstances and respond to changing community values and needs. Updates to the Plan should be made as amendments to the plan and ratified by the City Council.

It is essential to recognize that the Plan is "comprehensive." There are no parts that can be considered independently. Plan goals and objectives are intended to be supportive of one another. However, when using the plan to make decisions, if conflicts arise between goals and objectives, the City has an obligation to make findings indicating why the goal or policy being supported takes precedence over other goals or objectives found to be in conflict. This involves a decision-making process on the part of the City that balances and weighs the applicability and merits of the Plan's many goals and objectives against one another.

Goals, objectives and Recommended Action Measures

Goals, objectives and Recommended Action Measures identify the intent of the City to accomplish certain results. The different types of Plan statements vary in specificity. Usually, goals are the most general, and objectives and recommended action measures are the most specific. The City's obligations under the statements vary according to the type of statement.

The goals and objectives are intended to relate to one another. The goals are followed by supportive objectives. The goals and objectives in turn are supported by recommended action measures. However, each plan statement can stand alone, either as a goal or objective which are obligations the City wishes to assume, or as a recommended action measure which is a recommendation to achieve a desired end, but does not signify an obligation.

Goal - General Idea or Concept

Objective – More Specific – supports accomplishing the Goal / Concept

Recommended Action Measure – Most specific. Specifics methods for how to accomplish Goals & Objectives

Why is Comprehensive Planning important to Blooming Prairie?

Blooming Prairie must take full advantage of its dynamic growth opportunities while preserving its distinctive quality of as a small town. This document is designed to communicate the vision of the community regarding its future. It is a future that is based on taking actions that will position the city to take full advantage of its growth prospects.

This plan builds upon the Comprehensive Plan originally completed in 1970. The goal of all of these continuing efforts is to compile recommendations for the development of the physical form of Blooming Prairie and also provide recommendations for the social and economic development of the city.

The following philosophies realized through the community survey and community input meetings were used as a basis for this planning effort:

- Encourage input and participation from the residents
- Maintain community values and character
- Grow and sustain a diversity and housing options
- Provide increased opportunity for business growth and increased jobs
- Blooming Prairie school District is an important asset for the community
- Maintain and utilize the natural beauty of the area

The city's planning process does not end with the adoption of this document. Planning is an ongoing process used to promote orderly growth and development through objectives established in this plan. The Plan will continue to evolve after it is officially adopted. Fine-tuning the Plan through later amendments will ensure that this document remains a reflection of the values of the city's residents.

The community should review this Plan as an advisory document, not only for planning and zoning, but also to all other boards, commissions, City Council and citizens. The purpose of the plan is to become an over-arching guide for decision-making related to the physical, social, and economic development for the community over the next decade. The value of this plan can only be realized to the diligent efforts of city officials and residents.

Demographics

General Trends

It is important for planning purposes to have an understanding of population and demographic trends, as this allows the community to ascertain the types of services in amount of infrastructure needed. For example, student enrollment numbers have remained constant for the last several years. However, if it is shown that there is an incoming class of kindergartners is going to be larger than the capacity allowed by the current teaching staff, it would seem to indicate that even though an adequate facility is available, more staff could soon be necessary.

Blooming Prairie's current population estimates vary based on sources. The most comprehensive data used in this comprehensive plan uses the 2015 American Community Survey Data combined with Data from the 2010 US Census, indicating Blooming Prairie's population is 1,993 and 1,995 respectively. The latest information released from the State of Minnesota in July 2016 indicates that the population is 2,000 (<http://mn.gov/admin/demography/data-by-topic/population-data/our-estimates/>).

Analysis of data indicates that over the last five years we have seen the population dip and then come back up (Fig 1). According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey, it is estimated that Blooming Prairie's population has increased approximately 1.3% in the last three years. From 2010 the population continued to decrease until approximately 2014 when the population began to increase (Fig. 1). Steele County's population as a whole mirrored this trend of seeing a population decrease then a recent increase (Fig 2.). The State of Minnesota's population grew 3.4% between 2010 and 2015, adding 181,313 residents (net).

Fig. 1 Blooming Prairie Current Population Estimate

Geography	April 1, 2016		Population Estimate (as of 1 July)					
	Census	Estimate Base	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Blooming Prairie, MN	1,996	1,996	1,992	1,990	1,968	1,967	1,978	1,993

Data Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey Office, Washington, D.C

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

Fig. 2. Steele County Current Population Estimate

Geography	April 1, 2016		Population Estimate (as of 1 July)					
	Census	Estimate Base	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Steele County, MN	36,576	36,576	36,507	36,554	36,302	36,406	36,606	36,755

[Disclaimer: Estimates of Blooming Prairie's population vary within the US Census Bureau, US Census Bureau's American Community Survey and the Minnesota State Demographic Center]

Location

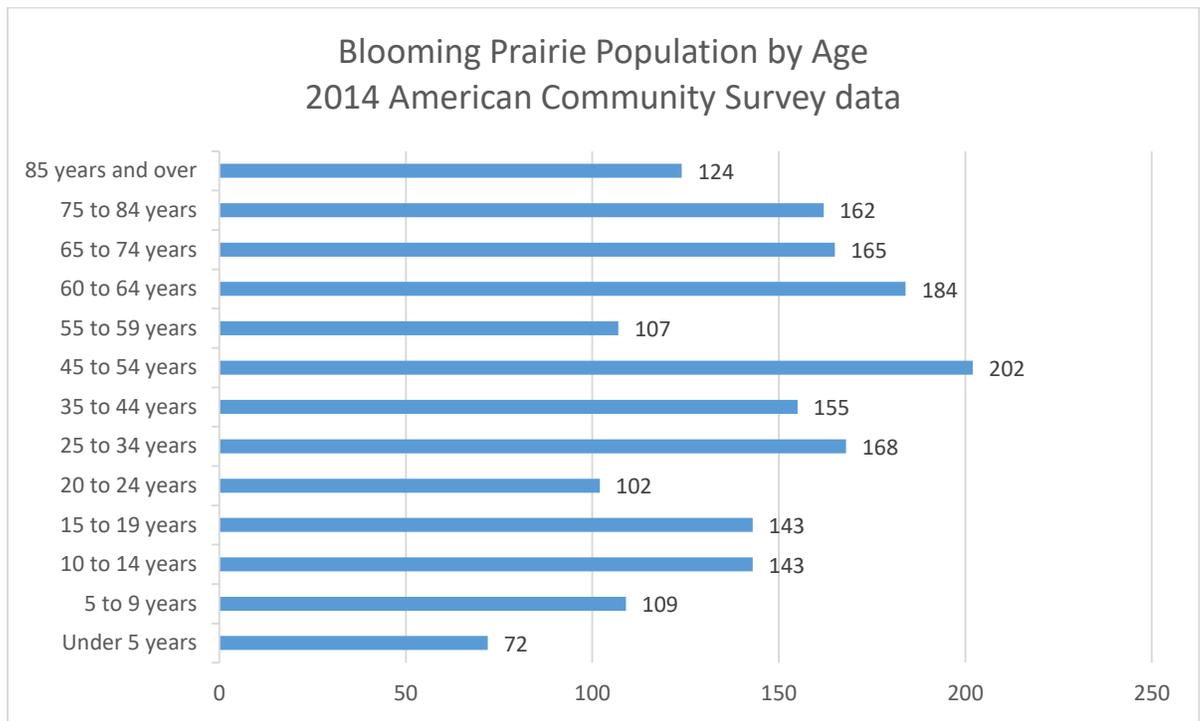
The city of Blooming Prairie is located in the extreme southeast corner of Steele County and borders Dodge County, Mower County and Freeborn County some 14 miles north of Austin and approximately 18 miles southeast of Owatonna – the largest community in Steele County and the seat of County government. The community is situated on US Highway 218, a major north-south thoroughfare between Owatonna and Austin (where access with the east-west I-90 is obtained), and on State Highway 30, the principal east-west route through the southern sectors of the county and a point of access with I-35 some 9 miles to the west near Ellendale.

Blooming Prairie, the second largest community in the county, is advantageously located in relation to surrounding urban centers and markets as well as in proximity to the regional transportation routes as noted above. It lies within the fertile agricultural belt of southern and southeastern Minnesota.

Age Groups

The distribution of age in a community can have a multitude of effects on the community. For example, BP has a large number of residents over the age of 65, may lead to a community meeting increased facilities, senior living, independent living with assistance, transportation needs and caregivers.

Fig. 3. Blooming Prairie Population by Age



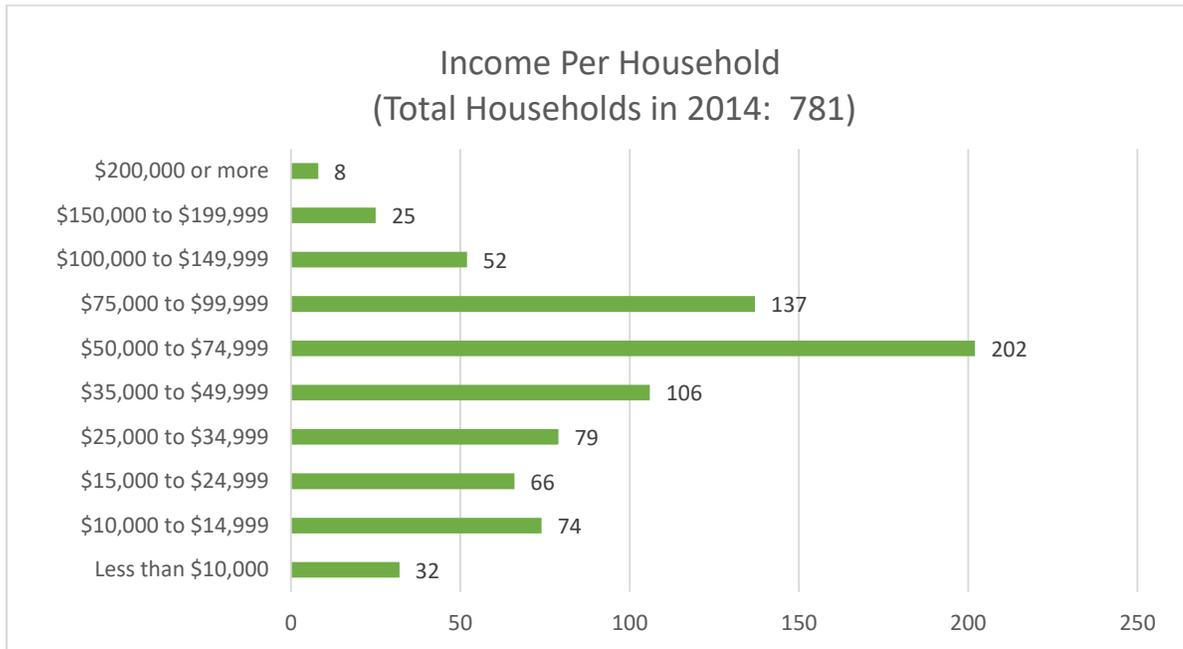
Data Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey Office, Washington, D.C.

Income Distribution

Blooming Prairie households are classified as a middle income bracket. This is characterized by the majority of households having income around \$50,000. Median income in Blooming Prairie, as of 2015, is \$54,417; this is slightly above the national median household income of \$51,939 and slightly below the \$55,764 median household income of Steele County.

The vast majority of household income for the community does not come from Social Security or retirement. This illustrates the fact that Blooming Prairie has a healthy labor pool from which it could draw if the proper industries were attracted. Understanding that, the people of Blooming Prairie are commuters that carry jobs that pay middle level wages.

Fig. 4. Blooming Prairie Household Income



Data Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey Office, Washington, D.C.

Blooming Prairie Labor Shed – Where Blooming Prairie Workers Live

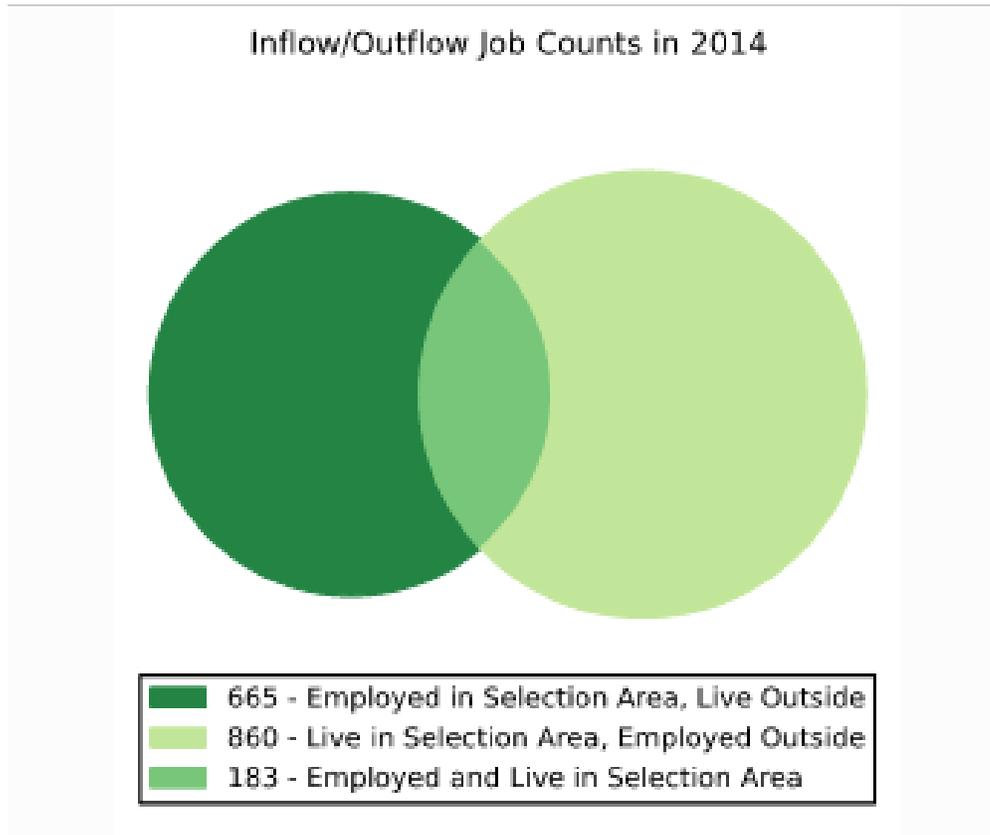


Fig. 5.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application,
<http://onthemap.ces.census.gov>

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

Home Destination Report – Where Workers Live Who are Employed in the Selection Area – by County Subdivisions. Fig. 6.

	2014	
	Count	Share
<u>Employed in the Selection Area</u>	848	100.0%
<u>Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside</u>	665	78.4%
<u>Employed and Living in the Selection Area</u>	183	21.6%
<u>Living in the Selection Area</u>	1,043	100.0%
<u>Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside</u>	860	82.5%
<u>Living and Employed in the Selection Area</u>	183	17.5%

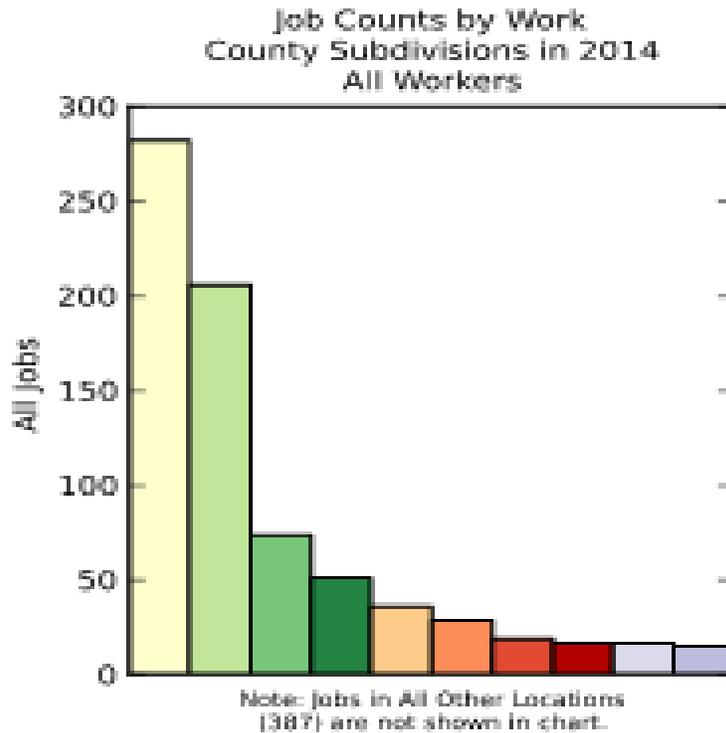
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application,
<http://onthemap.ces.census.gov>

While Blooming Prairie has a large percentage of its labor pool that commute out, there are 665 people, who as of 2014, commute into the community.

The majority of these commuters are coming in via the HWY 218 corridor. These individuals are all potential customers for goods and services in Blooming Prairie. The workers' proximity to restaurants, grocery stores, convenience stores, and gas stations will serve as a stimulus to use the services and so increasing income. As Blooming Prairie continues to grow, it can leverage marketing of these services to increase the traffic. Types of jobs associated with these industries can also be filled by the large high school age demographic, further serving to distribute money locally.

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

Fig. 7.



Blooming Prairie Commute Shed – Where Residents Work

Fig 8.

**Jobs Counts by County Subdivisions Where
Workers are Employed - All Jobs
2014**

	Count	Share
All County Subdivisions	1,133	100.0%
Owatonna city (Steele, MN)	282	24.9%
Blooming Prairie city (Steele, MN)	206	18.2%
Rochester city (Olmsted, MN)	74	6.5%
Austin city (Mower, MN)	51	4.5%
Albert Lea city (Freeborn, MN)	36	3.2%
Ellendale city (Steele, MN)	29	2.6%
Bloomington city (Hennepin, MN)	19	1.7%
Mankato city (Blue Earth, MN)	17	1.5%
Faribault city (Rice, MN)	17	1.5%
Minneapolis city (Hennepin, MN)	15	1.3%
All Other Locations	387	34.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application,
<http://onthemap.ces.census.gov>

Jobs by Distance - Home Census Block to Work Census Block		
2014		
	Count	Share
Total All Jobs	1,133	100.0%
■ <u>Less than 10 miles</u>	236	20.8%
■ <u>10 to 24 miles</u>	491	43.3%
■ <u>25 to 50 miles</u>	140	12.4%
■ <u>Greater than 50 miles</u>	266	23.5%

Fig 9.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application, <http://onthemap.ces.census.gov>

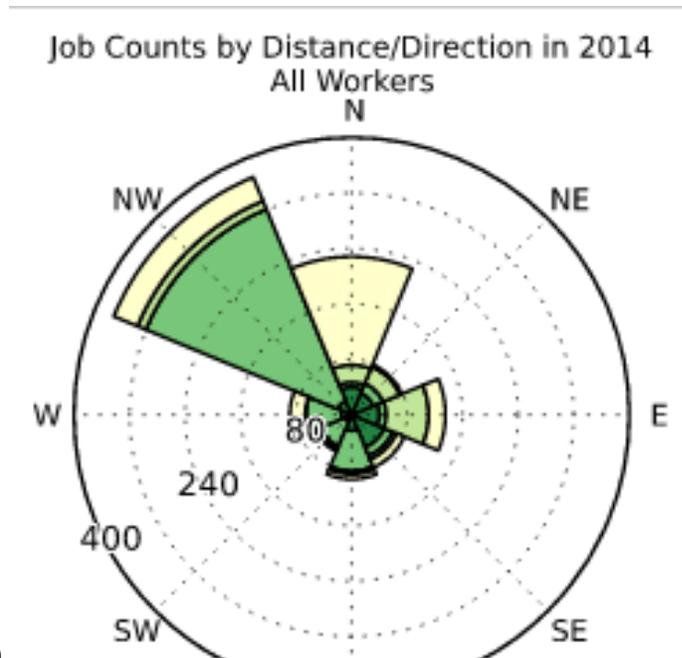


Fig. 10.

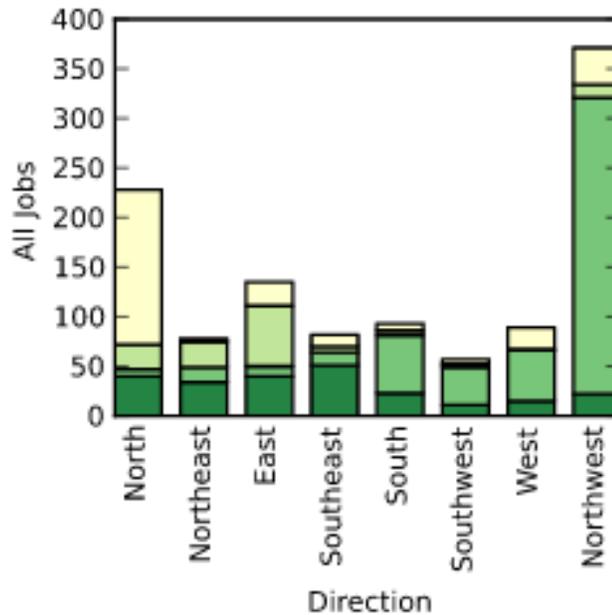


Fig. 11.

Summary

The population in Blooming Prairie is remaining stable. Blooming Prairie has the capacity for growth by continuing to capitalize on its strategic advantages. One such advantage is a robust manufacturing base and large percentage of the workforce which commutes into Blooming Prairie.

While other rural communities are experiencing significant decreases in population, Blooming Prairie has been able to remain stable in its population. A high percentage of its population are commuters who are working in the communities of Owatonna, Austin and Rochester. This trend is likely to continue. Blooming Prairie should explore options that would make Blooming Prairie an attractive option to individuals looking to work in places like Owatonna, Austin and Rochester, including bus service running between the communities.

Also, as the Owatonna I-35 continues to grow in the bigger cities' land and business costs continue to rise, community such as Blooming Prairie are strategically located as more affordable options for residential, commercial, and industrial development. This in turn would increase the amount of jobs and tax base in the community. Blooming Prairie is positioned for growth.

Land Use

Land uses is a broad socio-economic term used to categorize land based on both its present use and also according to its viability for future uses. The arrangements, activities, and actions undertaken by people in a certain area to develop, change, or preserve it characterize land use. This section as well as the proposed Land Use map should serve as a broad guide for City officials as they make decisions concerning the location of public facilities, housing, commercial and industrial development and recreational infrastructure to improve the quality of life for the residents of Blooming Prairie. Land use designations are generally characterized by the following classifications: Neighborhood Residential; Commerce and Industry; Mixed Used; and Open Space.

Blooming Prairie's Zoning map consists of the following zones:

Neighborhood Residential:

R-1 A & B Single Family Residence (Yellow)

R-2 One & Two family Residence (Orange)

R-3 Multiple Family Residence (Green)

Commerce and Industry:

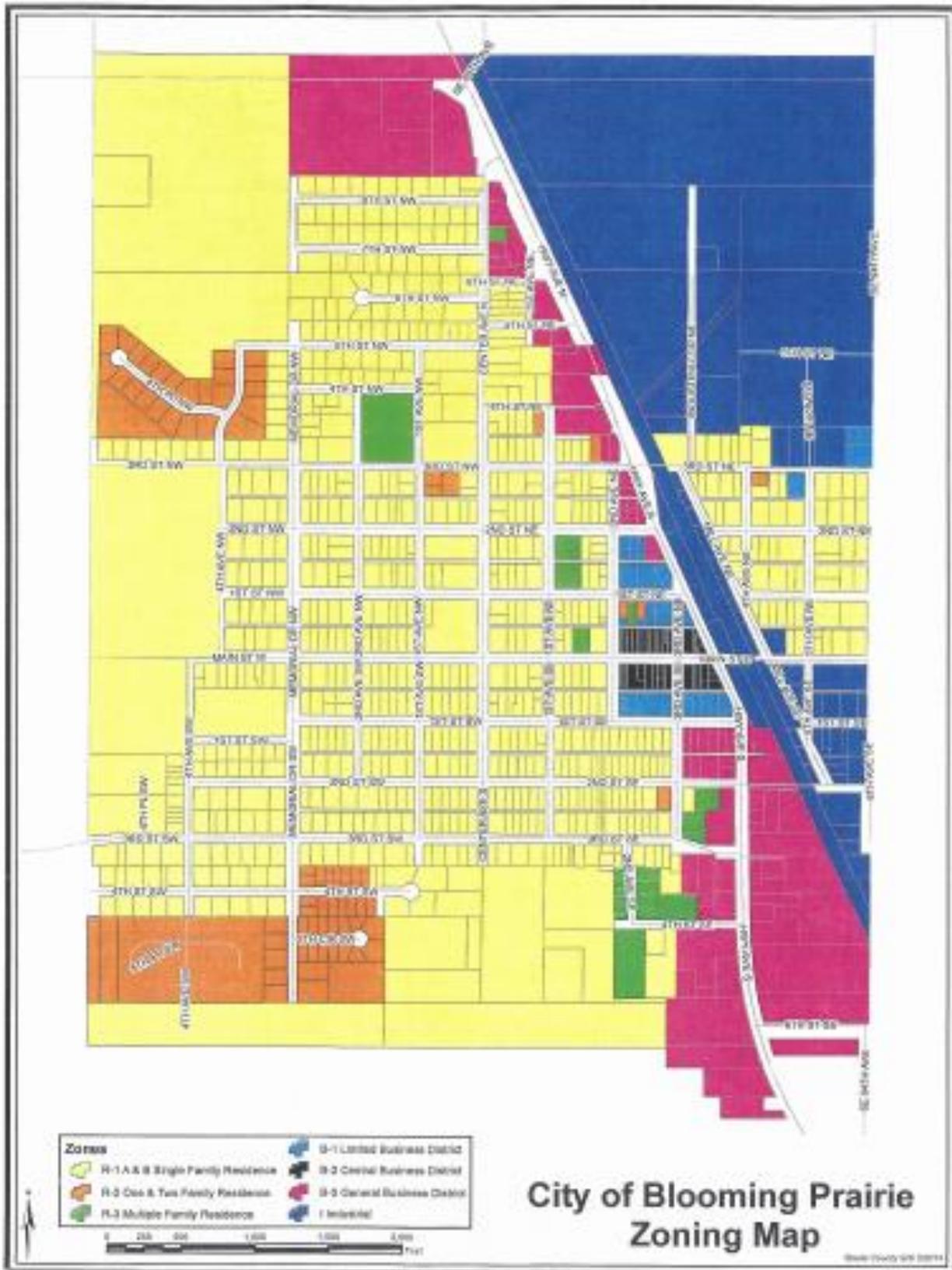
B1- Limited Business District (Blue)

B2 – Central Business District (Black)

B3 – General Business District (Pink)

I – Industrial (Purple)

Mixed Used; and Open Space: Not designated on the current zoning map. These areas should be identified on future zoning and/or Land Use maps.



Blooming Prairie Land Use General Characteristic

In terms of total community development, the patterns of land uses have evolved since its incorporation almost 150 years ago. Blooming Prairie is fortunate to have been platted and developed in a regular and fairly compact manner relative to its overall extent and configuration of the municipal limits.

No serious instances of intermixing of various type developments have occurred to date; rather, newer development has tended to add onto older portions of the built up area and therefore has steadily pushed outward from the core area in a controlled manner.

The community has been platted in strict grid fashion with generously proportioned street right-of-ways but not overly large blocks.

Neighborhood Residential

R-1 A & B Single Family Residence (Yellow)

R-2 One & Two family Residence (Orange)

R-3 Multiple Family Residence (Green)

Neighborhood residential areas encourage the development of single family in lower density multi-family residential development

Residential areas are overwhelmingly composed of the single-family type of structure as opposed to the two-family or multiple structure. Many dwellings occupy quite spacious settings (average lot frontage is 80-90 feet).

Some two-family in multiples are scattered about the older sections around the Central Business District (CBD) normally do not account for much acreage.

Residential units in the form of small apartments and rooming quarters generally occupy the upstairs of many of the CBD business places although these are very seldom occupied by the owner of the business establishment as was common in past years.

The City should continue to work with developers to develop residential land to serve potential new residents to the community and seniors. Some of the key areas for this development are near the school facilities because the

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

school serves as one of the major draws for potential new residents. The City will also want to work to ensure a variety of property values to accommodate a broad range of housing incomes.

Commerce and Industry

Commerce and industry land use includes four district subsections designed to differentiate among desired and planned business uses. Land use designations include the Industrial Park, The Central Business District, The General Business District and the Limited Business District.

Desired characteristics of each designation are generally defined as follows:

Industry

I – Industrial (Purple)

Most all industrial uses have concentrated in the industrial park, located in the North East corner of the city, and along the rail trackage right-of-way. Though not as reliant on rail access as they once were, many industries are still attracted to proximity to rail lines as well as to highways, good soils and utilities.

Space in the current Industrial park is limited. Currently, there are only two lots available. This is a limiting factor in attracting further industrial growth. The city will have to look to other sites for future industrial use areas. These areas must take into consideration the location of infrastructure such as sewage systems and the water treatment plant. Due to the gently sloping terrain it is recommend future industrial growth areas be limited to areas supported by existing infrastructure, such as areas along the rail trackage right of way in the south east. The feasibility of expanding to the east into Dodge County should be strongly considered. Areas currently designated as Agricultural south of the city limits are another strong possibility but face the infrastructure challenges of the impact of gently sloping terrain.

Development proposals will require careful planning to ensure the objectives for the community are met.

Commercial Business

B1- Limited Business District (Blue)

B2 – Central Business District (Black)

B3 – General Business District (Pink)

There are three main categories of commercial business places which are: retail sales and services, general commercial, and limited businesses.

Retail businesses are those found most often in the Central Business District (B2) along with services and limited commercial on the fringes or above the ground floor use. General commercial uses are those establishments found more in outlying areas along highways or exposure to traffic and larger land area requirements are best satisfied. Future commercial expansions have to take these considerations into account.

Encouraged land use in the commercial core includes those which offer basic goods and services which are required by Blooming Prairie residents, professional office and related services, retail and entertainment businesses that promote visitor traffic, and higher density residential development.

The three basic commercial functions of retail trade, limited and general commercial have already developed over the years in a certain fashion and it is the main intention of the planning phase and subsequent zoning provisions to help define better the limits of each. These districts and functions associated with each are:

The Central Business District B2 (Black)

Central Business District (CBD) is that very small area of intense retail and related activities situated along both sides of Main Street between Second Avenue and Highway 218. This compact district is limited in its expansion potential.

The main commercial district of Blooming Prairie is a compactly built-up section containing most of the retail and service outlets in the entire community. The central business district (CBD) extends only about two blocks along either side of Main Street west of Highway 218 and not quite a full block on either side. Most of the commercial buildings have been fairly well kept up for their age but many are beginning to show their age and are becoming deteriorating influences on the others. Very little room exists for

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

expansion purposes of the CBD since other uses are concentrated around the district. Very limited off-street parking is also a factor to be reckoned within this tightly developed district. Additional commercial development has progressed along Highway 218 both north and south of the (CBD).

General Business District B3 (Pink)

General Business functions are intended to be provided for within the two general districts – the large expanses to the southeast along both sides of Highway 218 and the smaller sites on the north side around the west side of the intersection of Highway 218 and 30. These areas are meant to be flexible in coverage and can be enlarged or made smaller as needed to handle future requirements.

Limited Business District B1 (Blue)

Limited Business District is that area that would nearly encircle the CBD and is intended to supplement the CBD by allowing development and providing space and supporting functions that would make the CBD thrive. Off-street parking facilities, walk-in type clinics and other professional and personal type functions are intended for this area.

Mixed Use – Not Specified

The Mixed Use classification is intended to incorporate a blending of uses that isn't allowable by definition in the other land use designations. Projects reviewed for this type of designation could include commercial buildings with attached apartments. Care will have to be taken when reviewing these types of projects to ensure they do not negatively impact adjacent land uses or other commercial areas of the community.

Open Space – Not Specified

Open space is not specifically designated on the city zoning map; there is not a separate land use map. While city officials understand where these areas exist, it would be useful for continuity of information if this knowledge were recorded in a publically accessible format. Typically, these areas may be either publicly or privately owned. Limited land development will be permitted within these areas as a result of existing or future regulatory

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

standards, environmental protection provisions, access limitations and other conditions that impact development rights and alternatives. Generally stated, development should be restricted to limited recreational purposes and other passive land uses that are designed to complement and preserve existing conditions, and prohibit those which may create negative impacts.

Green space and parks was one of the areas highlighted by the community survey as an area of focus for the future of Blooming Prairie. These areas help maintain Blooming Prairie's rural character as well as the high quality of life for residents. Preserving and enhancing these areas is in the best interest of the city.

Blooming Prairie Public Swimming Pool

The publicly owned Pine Springs pool and surrounding park is a definite asset to the entire City. The pool's water comes from a natural spring located beneath the city block it sits on. Even though the pool is fed from natural spring water, it is still treated with chlorine to keep it from growing natural algae's and bacteria. The chlorine also keeps the pool safe for swimming.

Land Use Goals

- Enhance the quality of life for present and future generations of Blooming Prairie residents by providing economic growth for the highest quality of residential, recreational, and business development.
- Encourage the most desirable and efficient use of land while enhancing the physical and economic environment of Blooming Prairie.
- Maintain and enhance the City's local character and aesthetic value to land use planning.
- Identify specific land uses that are needed to serve the citizens of and visitors to Blooming Prairie.
- Modify, adapt, and promote City land use policies that both protect the various districts, and also provide safe, feasible, a cost efficient use of land zoning, subdivision, and building regulations.
- Continue to promote growth through maintained relationships with surrounding townships using orderly annexation agreements.
- Promote programs to assist with restoration and development in the Central Business District, Main Street area & HWY 218 Corridor when possible

Land Use Objectives

- Ensure that the regulatory policies within the City's Zoning Ordinance and related map are consistent with current City needs and desires.
- Ensure that Blooming Prairie's land use policies encourage a balance of land uses such that there are adequate areas for non-residential uses that will provide the essential tax base needed for the City to support existing and future residents.
- Review, and if necessary revise, the City's Zoning Ordinance to ensure that high standards are required for new development, both residential and non-residential.
- Ensure that new development enhances the quality of life in Blooming Prairie.
- Ensure that new development, both residential and non-residential, will be compatible with existing land uses in terms of use, density, building heights, scale, and off-site effects.
- Provide flexibility in development options/tools to create win-win outcomes between land owner desires and community interests.
- Ensure an appropriate balance of open space to develop areas is planned for all new residential and commercial development.
- Encourage the development of new commercial uses around sites that offer good access.
- Provide suitable sites in sufficient quantity for each type of proposal proposed use.
- Explore opportunities to rehabilitate and redevelop existing developed areas within the community and in planned growth areas.

Economic Development

General

Economic development has no generally accepted dictionary definition. It has always meant different things to different people. In his book on economic development planning, Edward J. Blakey defines local economic development as “a process by which local government and/or community-based groups manage their existing resources and enter into new partnership arrangements with the private sector, or with each other, to create jobs stimulate economic activity in a well-defined economic zone.”

In general, local economic development is a process to improve the economic well-being and quality of life of a community. It is a means of providing a balanced, healthy local economy. To many local governments, economic development is a means of providing employment opportunities, expanding the local tax base, expanding economic opportunity, and improving the quality of life for its residents.

Local governments can assume a key role in facilitating the actions necessary to develop a solid foundation for successful economic development efforts. Training of workforce, provision of infrastructure, coordination of educational institutions, offering of technical and financial assistance, development of public/private partnerships, and support of land use policies and regulations are all areas in which local government will continue to play a critical role.

Economic development does not grow spontaneously from the brick-and-mortar of abandoned buildings or from the weeds in the cow pasture. Rather, it happens as a result of careful planning with the necessary building blocks – planning and design, site assemblage, and financing – that have been put in place by public or private interests. Without these building blocks in place, development will come slowly, if at all.

There are six general variables that influence economic development activity: market, quality of life, labor, site, capital, and regulatory environment. These variables are important because they influence a community’s ability to encourage enterprise. Moreover, they can be influenced by local government policies. Of the six, only quality of life is not

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

an essential ingredient for projects to succeed financially, but is still a major consideration in the decision-making process. Any community having all six in a favorable condition will experience economic development. Any community not experience economic development is likely deficient in one or more of these areas.

According to “Achieving Economic Development Success,” a special report published by the International City/County Management Association, there are more than 20,000 organizations in the country trying to attract business to their area. Yet, on average, there are only 500 – 700 industrial location decisions made each year. Competing for a new major commercial enterprise is costly and competitive. Despite the economic benefits to be derived from successfully recruiting a major industrial business, most communities are seeing the economic growth resulting from the expansion of existing local enterprises. Given the competition, cost, and risk of trying to lure new industries, it is easy to understand why most communities now focus on business retention and expansion activities, which carry less risk.

Blooming Prairie

The business economy in Blooming Prairie is fairly diverse featuring strong industries, particularly in Rubbers and Plastics Manufacturing and Metal Working, small retail, and professional services.

The City has significant potential for growth in most of those sectors. The proximity to the larger economic generator communities of Owatonna, Austin and to some extent Rochester will provide positive and negative consequences for Blooming Prairie.

The positive being there is significant potential for businesses from those communities looking to expand in the area that could view the land cost and tax environment in Blooming Prairie inviting for growth.

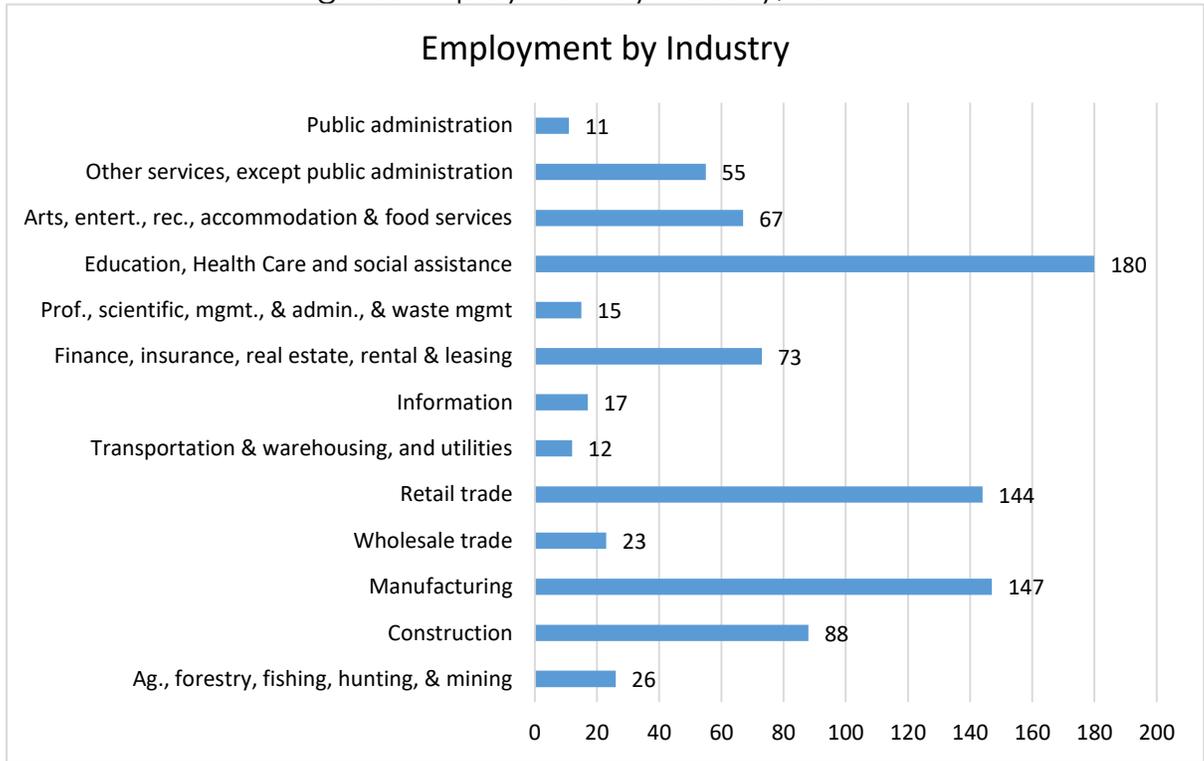
The potential negatives:

- Competition for work force
- No vacant industrial park space
- Wage rates to attract commuters
- Availability of goods and services already provided in other communities

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

- Retail competition (availability of big box retailers in larger communities)

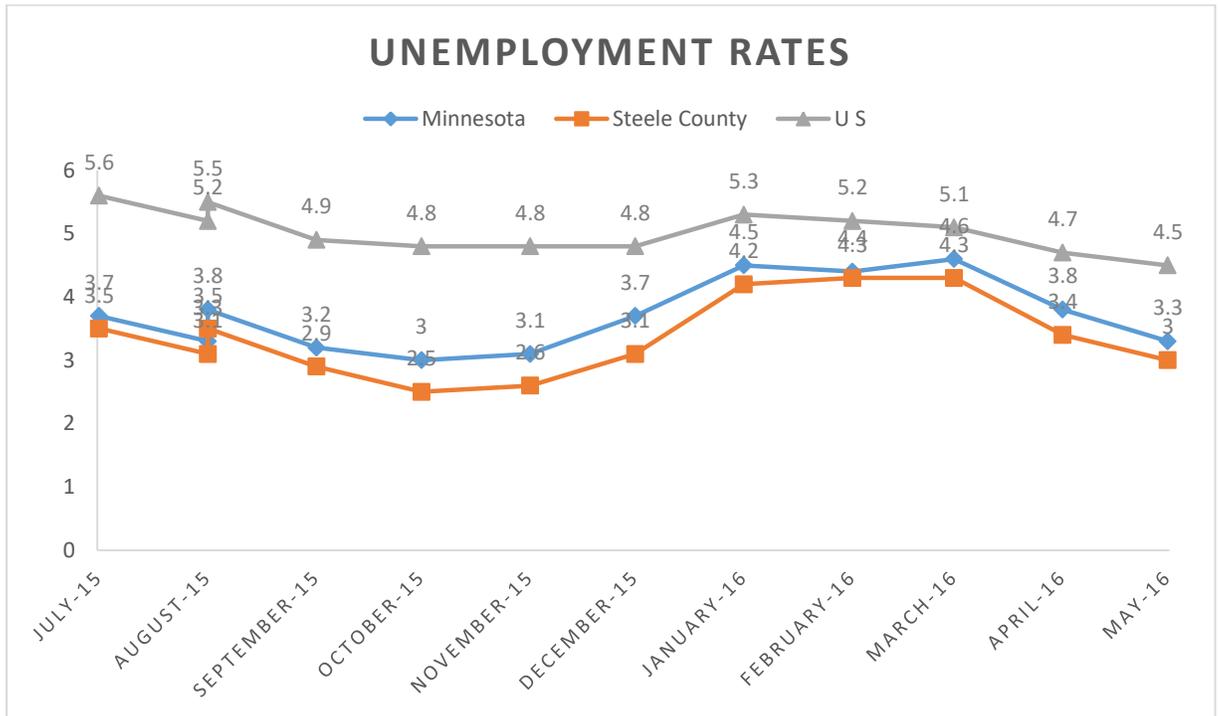
Fig. 13. Employment by Industry, 2014



Data Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey
Office, Washington, D.C.

[Disclaimer: Due to US Government data being restricted to the city limits of Blooming Prairie, Agriculture is under represented as agricultural activities occur outside of city limits]

Fig. 14. Unemployment Rates



Data Sources: MN Employment and Economic Development – Labor Market Information. <https://apps.deed.state.mn.us>

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

Economic Development Goals:

- Maintain positive relationships with the business community and actively pursue opportunities to improve the local economy.
- Increase job opportunities at all skill levels
- Expand commercial and industrial tax base
- Retain existing businesses and when possible assist their expansion efforts
- Encourage continued job skills training to maintain a strong workforce

Economic Development Objectives:

- Encourage small retail and service businesses that meet local needs to maintain strong quality of life
- Work with the State and other agencies to assist local businesses in accessing programs offering job-skills training to maximize workforce
- Utilize available financial programs both internal and through County, State, and Federal agencies to support business retention and growth when necessary
- Encourage development in areas serviced by adequate infrastructure by supporting contiguous development and orderly annexation
- Explore financial and logistical feasibility of new geographic areas for industrial and commercial growth
- Facilitate meetings with local businesses to discuss retention and expansion opportunities.
- Explore financial programs to encourage rehabilitation and revitalization of downtown
- Explore signage and marketing opportunities to enhance link to Interstate 35 and the significant traffic pattern there
- Utilize City website to provide economic development resources and information to local businesses

Housing

General

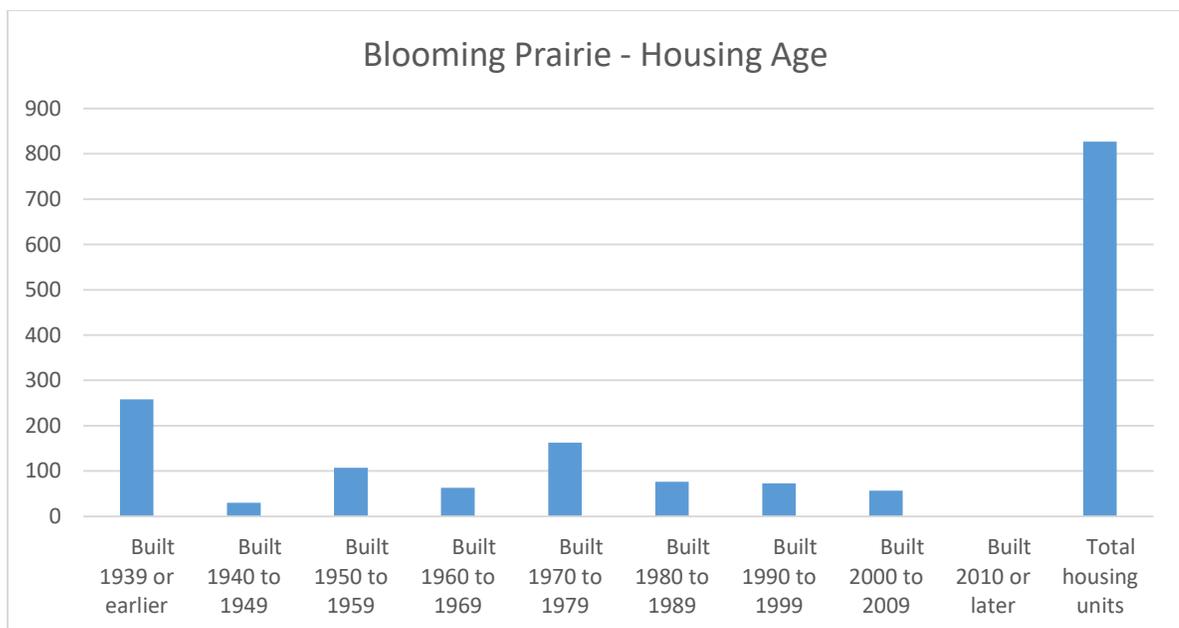
Along with water, sewer, roads, bridges, and schools, housing is an important component of a community's infrastructure. As such, local governments have a responsibility to ensure that the housing system meets the needs of its residents.

Unlike most infrastructure components, however, housing is provided primarily by the private sector. Even though the private sector constructs most housing units, local governments have a responsibility to ensure that the local housing market functions effectively and that the housing needs of the community are met. By so doing, local governments can enhance economic development and maintain a high quality of life.

In 1968, the federal government established the national housing goal of "a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family". Since then, that goal has been the guiding force for local government housing policy.

Housing Growth

Fig. 15. Blooming Prairie Home Construction by Decade

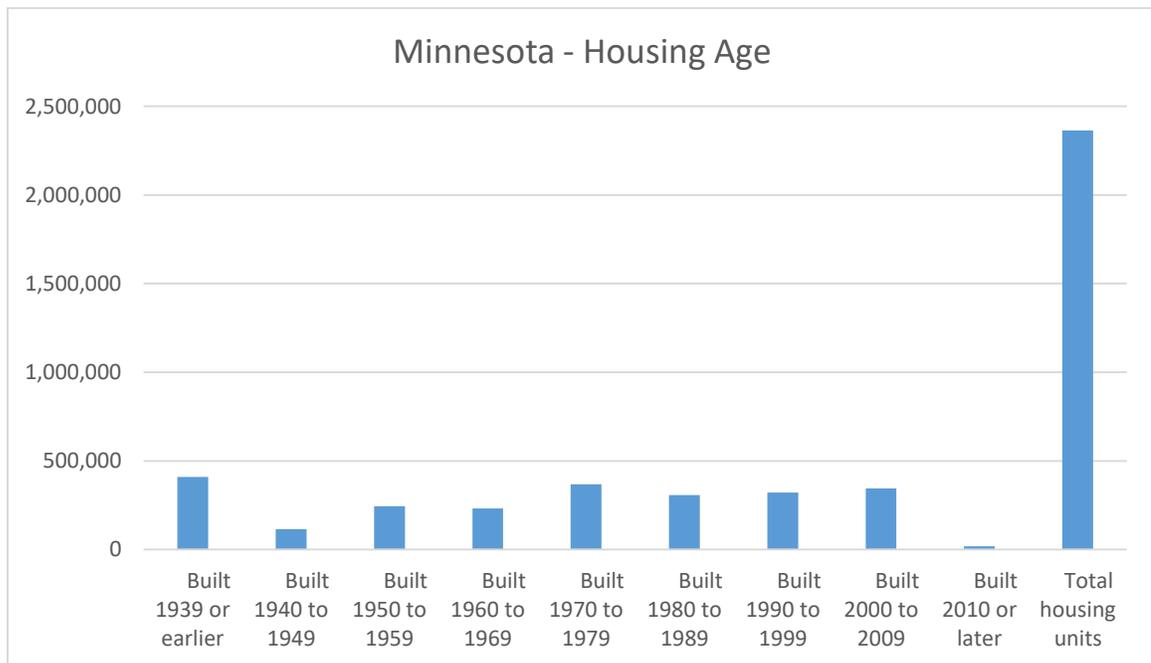


Data Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce. 2014. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Office, Washington, D.C

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

As you can see in the table above, a vast majority (75%) of Blooming Prairie's housing stock was built prior to 1980. For the entire state of Minnesota only 58% of the housing stock was built prior to 1980. With Blooming Prairie's housing stock being older than most of the state, more care will have to be given to maintain that housing stock. Energy efficiency projects and programs which focus on energy efficiency updates of older houses should be considered.

Fig. 16. State of Minnesota Prairie Home Construction by Decade



Data Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce. 2014. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Office, Washington, D.C

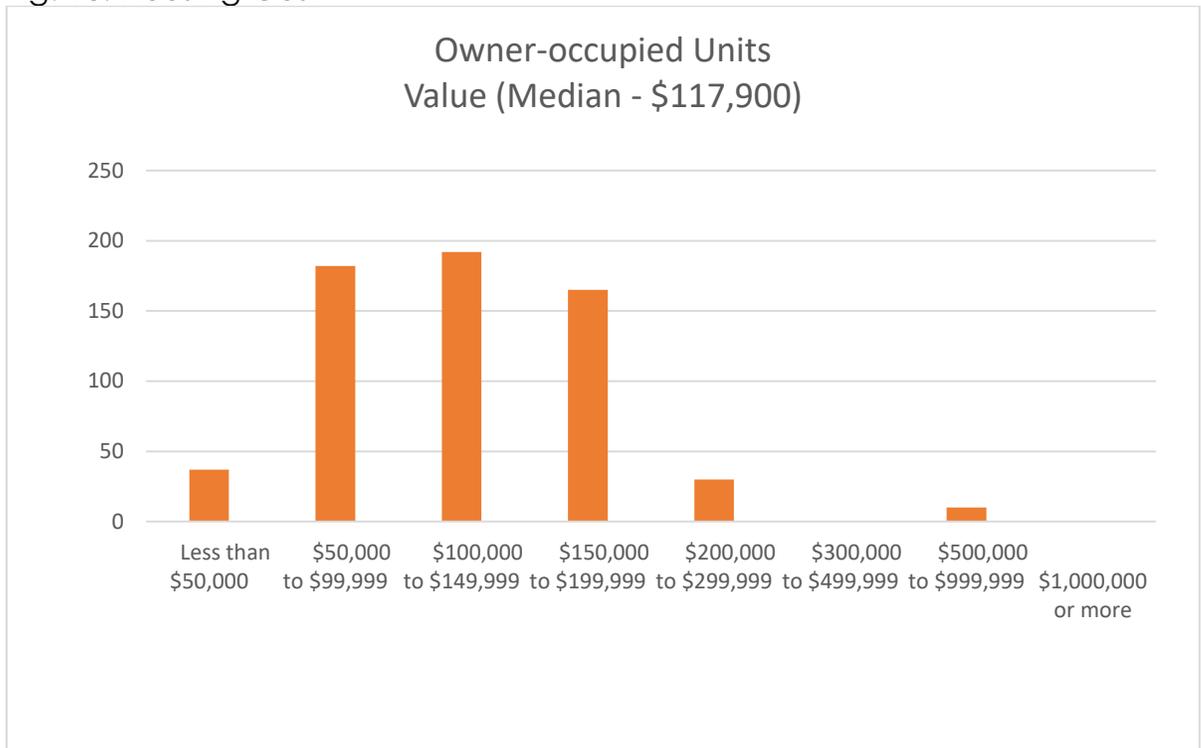
Fig. 17. Housing Characteristics, 2014

Subject	Blooming Prairie city, Minnesota		
	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percent
HOUSING OCCUPANCY			
Total housing units	827	+/-53	827
Occupied housing units	781	+/-52	94.4%
Vacant housing units	46	+/-32	5.6%
Homeowner vacancy rate	4.2	+/-4.3	(X)
Rental vacancy rate	5.0	+/-8.1	(X)
UNITS IN STRUCTURE			
Total housing units	827	+/-53	827
1-unit, detached	615	+/-57	74.4%
1-unit, attached	49	+/-17	5.9%
2 units	40	+/-32	4.8%
3 or 4 units	43	+/-24	5.2%
5 to 9 units	21	+/-17	2.5%
10 to 19 units	39	+/-20	4.7%
20 or more units	0	+/-9	0.0%
Mobile home	20	+/-16	2.4%
YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT			
Total housing units	827	+/-53	827
Built 2010 or later	0	+/-9	0.0%
Built 2000 to 2009	57	+/-18	6.9%
Built 1990 to 1999	73	+/-26	8.8%
Built 1980 to 1989	76	+/-34	9.2%
Built 1970 to 1979	163	+/-50	19.7%
Built 1960 to 1969	63	+/-25	7.6%
Built 1950 to 1959	107	+/-33	12.9%
Built 1940 to 1949	30	+/-17	3.6%
Built 1939 or earlier	258	+/-57	31.2%

Data Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce. 2014. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Office, Washington, D.C

Blooming Prairie has a very low percentage of vacant or available housing options to support continued population growth. In order to continue to grow, the community is going to have to continue to promote new housing development in all price ranges in order to accommodate both new residents and current resident looking to upgrade their housing.

Fig. 18. Housing Cost



Data Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce. 2014. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Office, Washington, D.C

Fig. 19. Home Sales in Blooming Prairie

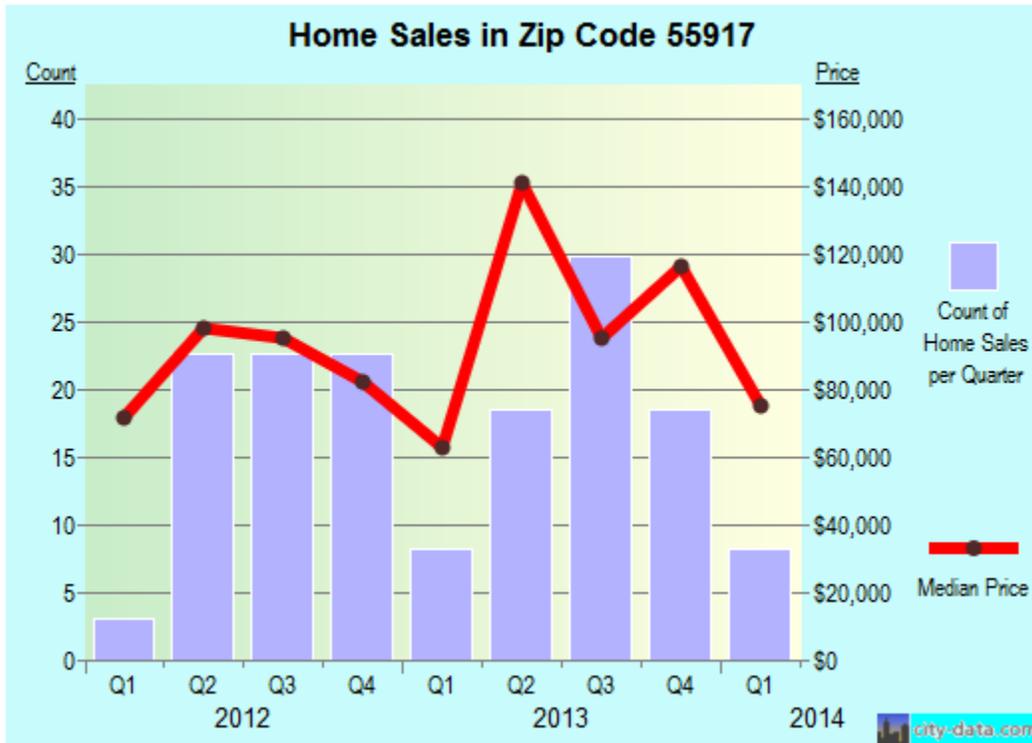
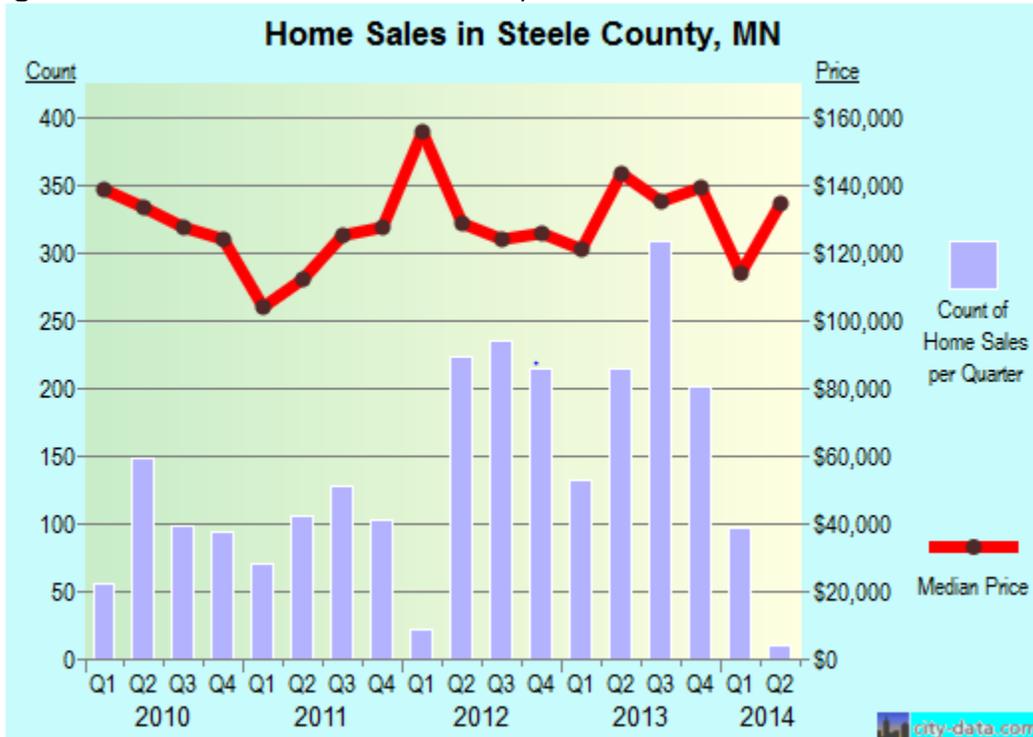


Fig. 20 Home Sales in Steele County



Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

As of August 2016, the median home value in Minnesota was \$193,500. Minnesota home values have gone up 7.1% over the past year. The median list price per square foot in Minnesota was \$162. The median rent price in Minnesota is \$1,450

Blooming Prairie has maintained a lower housing cost recently even though national trends have been to the contrary. This is a positive for new families looking to move to the community to take advantage of the very strong school system. It will be important for the community to continue to promote new housing growth across a diverse price range in order to maintain its recent growth. The Blooming Prairie school district is a very important asset. It continues to be a significant draw for young families to move to the community.

Diversity in the city's population should be matched by diversity of housing choices. The City must continue to facilitate a mix of housing types, including less land-consumptive alternatives such as duplexes, small-lot homes, and townhouses in addition to continued single family home development.

Independent School District #756

One of the major strengths noted by the community in the survey and the community meeting sessions was the Blooming Prairie School District. The district consists of two schools, an elementary school (Kindergarten thru 6th grade) and a High School (7th thru 12th grade). According to the Blooming Prairie School website, <http://www.blossoms.k12.mn.us/>, the mission of Blooming Prairie Schools is to provide challenging opportunities for lifelong learning in a safe and caring environment.

- The school will provide opportunities for all to increase achievement.
- The school will provide an atmosphere conducive to learning.
- The school will provide quality facilities.
- The school will operate effectively and efficiently.

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

Current Enrollment by Grade (Projection for the 2016-2017 School Year):

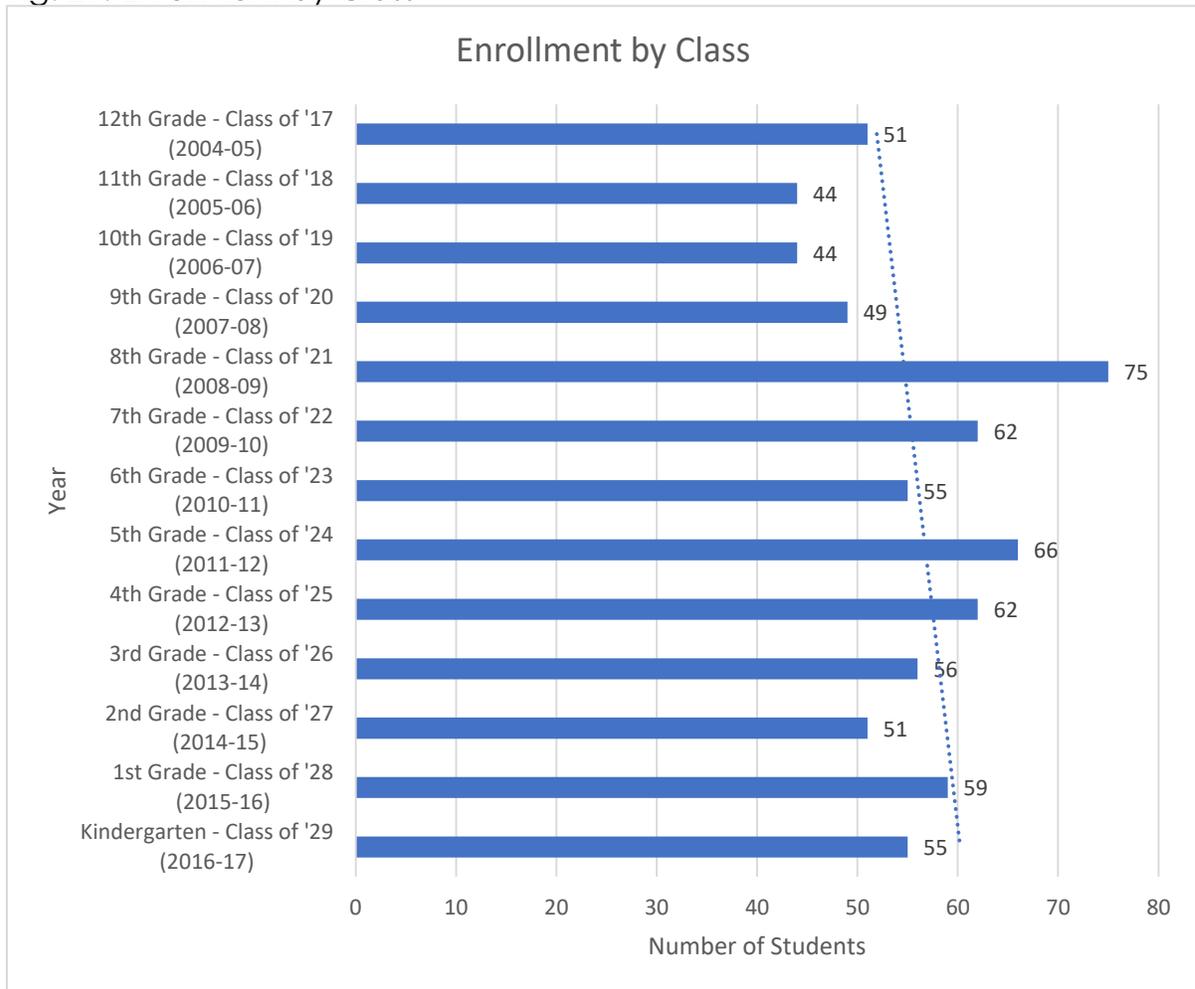
Kindergarten	55
1 st Grade	59
2 nd Grade	51
3 rd Grade	56
4 th Grade	62
5 th Grade	66
6 th Grade	55
7 th Grade	62
8 th Grade	75
9 th Grade	49
10 th Grade	44
11 th Grade	44
12 th Grade	51

Kindergarten – Grade Six: 408

Grade Seven – Grade Twelve: 328

736 Total Enrollment

Fig. 21. Enrollment by Class



As noted by the trend line in the graph above, Blooming Prairie I.S.D #756 has experienced modest growth in average class size. This trend is different from many other rural districts over the same time frame that have experienced decreasing enrollments and faced school consolidations.

The original High School building was built in 1956 with subsequent additions. Currently, there are sufficient facilities to accommodate the continued student population at the current rate. In the community survey, there is an expressed need for an auditorium to be used for assembly and other community events.

These numbers confirm ISD#756 continues to be a significant strength for the community and should be highlighted as a draw for continued population growth for the City.

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

Housing Goals:

- Provide for adequate housing opportunities for current and future residents of Blooming Prairie while retaining the small-town character of the community.
- Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population and to serve special needs populations, such as the elderly.
- Maintain close positive relationship with the school district
- Improve property maintenance / elimination of substandard housing.
- Improve infrastructure and community development elements such as non-motorized trails and green spaces.
- Promote energy efficient construction and remodeling

Housing Objectives:

- Support housing repair and rehabilitation efforts to preserve and enhance existing housing stock.
- Continue exploring additional opportunities for townhomes, duplexes, small-lot developments, and other multifamily dwelling units that encourage affordable housing
- Encourage housing diversity that maintains the predominantly single family character of the community but also provides options to meet the needs of an economically diverse community
- Support funding programs designed to make housing more affordable.
- Plan for safe non-motorized transportation routes like sidewalks and bikes trails to connect residential areas to commercial areas, schools, and other residential areas
- Work with federal, state, and local agencies and programs to promote and possibly incent maintenance and rehabilitation of older housing stock to avoid blight and improve energy efficiency
- Continue to meet regularly with school district officials to stay informed on district issues and plans, and to continue to explore ways to partner together.

Public Facilities

General

The Public Facilities section of a Comprehensive Plan addresses the expectations that a community's residents have regarding certain public services and the facilities needed to provide those services. Public buildings that house the various governmental and service functions of a municipality are generally of two types: (1) those that require a nearly central or common location and that serve the entire municipal area, and (2) those that serve segments of the community on a service-area basis. The City Hall is an example of a governmental building that serves the entire community, while a fire station represents a public building that has a service-area relationship.

The demands for public facilities space at all levels of government usually increase as the population served grows and as the level of service expands. As a general rule, as communities grow in size, its citizens require increased levels of service. It is appropriate to review the status of existing municipal buildings as a basis for determining the future changes and additions that will likely be required. The following sections are a general evaluation and explanation of existing buildings and facilities.

There is a growing recognition that the availability of services, such as water and sewer, has a direct impact on increased traffic and residential activity. The community has been actively trying to manage growth for the past few years. The pressure on existing services, the cost of new services (compared to revenue collected), and the indirect impact of additional services are all issues continually explored as new projects are presented and discussed.

Waste Water Treatment

Construction of Blooming Prairie's wastewater treatment improvements began in May, 1989 and was completed in March, 1991. The total construction cost was \$3,757,000 of which 80% was funded by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The project included both renovation of the existing plant and new construction. New construction included a new submersible pumping station, primary clarifier, sequencing batch reactor treatment facility, chlorination facilities, aerobic sludge digester, two sludge storage tanks, administration building, and a garage.

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

Renovation of the existing plant included new raw wastewater pumps, a standby power generation system, a belt sludge thickener, air compressors, and electrical control panels. A sludge application vehicle was purchased for injection of treated sludge to nearby farmland.

Sanitary Sewer Collection and Treatment

The City of Blooming Prairie offers municipal wastewater collection and treatment services to residents and businesses within the City limits. The wastewater collection system consists of both gravity and force mains. A majority of the system is gravity sewer, ranging in sizes of 6-15", and materials include both VCP and PVC. Three lift stations aid in delivering waste water through pressurized force mains to the WWTP.

The existing mechanical waste water treatment facility in the southeast corner of the City maintains the ability to treat waste water of the existing population, as well as any foreseeable development, residential, commercial and industrial.

As is the case with any municipality, the collection and treatment system needs to continue to monitor its needs as the City grows.

Water System

The City of Blooming Prairie distributes municipal drinking water to its residents, commercial and industrial properties through 4-8" ductile iron or cast iron water mains that exist within the roadway corridors. The City currently operates 2 municipal wells with approximate 500 GPM capabilities per well, and a combination of elevated (65,000 gallons) and ground storage (220,000 gallons). The system is controlled via inline gate valves, and includes hydrants for fire protection.

Storm Water Conveyance and Treatment

The City of Blooming Prairie continues to upgrade its storm water conveyance capacity. Currently, storm water is conveyed throughout the City via a combination of gutters, piping, open ditch systems and detention ponding. The City has made major improvements in this system over the last 10 years, and has planned improvements that will be constructed within the 10 years.

Street System

Residents and visitors of the City utilize a combination of municipal, county and State roadways throughout the City. A majority of the roadway systems are urban roadways with concrete curb and gutter. Major roadways within the City include State Trunk Highway 218 and CSAH's 46 and 15.

The community survey noted that the two biggest concerns for the residents with regard to transportation were upgrading road surfaces and better maintenance of roads. Upgrades are costly and need to be planned for over time in order to meet budgetary constraints, therefore street upgrades should be included in the community's Capital Improvement Plan.

The Blooming Prairie Street Department is a two man department. One of their many responsibilities is taking care of all five (5) city parks. They are also in charge of maintenance of the public swimming pool, and ice rink located at Victory Field Park.

The department is responsible for approximately 30 miles of streets, alleys, and gravel roads for snow removal. They also remove snow in the downtown area, ice rink, city shop and wastewater treatment plant. Another responsibility is to oversee tree removal, tree trimming on city boulevards, seal coating, street overlays, storm sewers, and sidewalk maintenance. The department also maintains stop signs, yield signs, and other street signs.

Some major equipment owned by the city to help in maintaining Blooming Prairie are two (2) dump trucks, two (2) pick up trucks, a grader, a loader, skidsteer, Jetter Vac Truck, water truck, and a street sweeper.

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

Public Utilities Power Plant

The Blooming Prairie Public Utilities power plant was built at a cost of \$75,000 in 1931. It was built because of the demand from the citizens to have their own power plant. Many were upset due to the sporadic power outages due to the city receiving electricity from one power line leading into the city. Many times this line would fail and the city would be without power for hours, even days. So it was decided that it was time to build a power plant within the city to create the demand that was needed to satisfy the people's needs for electricity.

Today, the Blooming Prairie Public Utilities is a member of SMMPA or Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency. The plant can generate the power needed for the City of Blooming Prairie. The city also ties into the City of Austin, who is also a SMMPA member. In 1999, Blooming Prairie did a joint intercommunication project with Steele Waseca Electric Cooperative to tie in a transmission line to their substation in Bixby just north of Blooming Prairie. This allows the city to be on two lines instead of just one, improving the ability to maintain power during severe weather conditions.

Just recently the utilities built a new substation in the new industrial park located in the northeast part of the city. Most of the line work was done by the utilities employees themselves with some work being sub contracted out for the substation construction and installation of new generators. This will help with the growing demand of electricity while the city continues to grow.

The Public Utilities employs 1 Manager, 2 Office Staff Personnel, 3 Linemen/Operators, and 1 Groundman/Operator. Many employees are highly trained and skilled in high voltage line work and maintenance.

Pedestrian System

“Walkability” is a term that has become incredibly important in recent years as people tend to look for the ease of non-motorized transportation throughout their community or potential communities that they may look to relocate to.

Pedestrians commute through the City of Blooming Prairie via a concrete sidewalk system that connects a majority of the town, including the public school system, residential neighborhoods and the downtown business district. Additional sidewalks and trails continue to be explored and added to increase connectivity of the high-travel areas for residents.

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

In the community survey, there is overwhelming support and demand for increased “walkability”. The majority of the community includes sidewalks for pedestrian movement. Bituminous and concrete walking/biking trails should be included into community’s transportation system and designated on the proposed land use map. These sidewalks and trails provide essential linkages to areas of the community such as downtown, parks, and school.

City Hall / Fire Station / Library

The City has a combined City Hall / Fire Station facility and library on City-owned property. This facility was constructed in 1992. As the community continues to grow, it will be important to make sure that the fire station facility has the necessary space to provide the level of service requisite the community’s size and need.

Trails

As indicated in the community survey there is an increasing need and demand for recreational hiking and biking trails and neighborhood trails and connections. In addition to encouraging recreation, the development of a non-motorized trail system can help reduce vehicle trips. The result will be a community resource providing transportation alternatives, recreational opportunities, environmental aesthetics, and preserving open space.

Public Facility Goals:

- Provide high level public facilities and services in the most effective and cost efficient manner possible
- Explore alternative forms of energy that can help provide quality renewable sustainable energy for Blooming Prairie and its residents
- Provide safe and quality water supply
- Manage storm water in an efficient, effective, and environmentally conscious manner
- Create and maintain capital improvement program for large investments in upgrading infrastructure and public facilities to maximize efficiency of investment
- Provide and maintain quality street system within the community
- Encourage non-motorized transportation within the community
- Aesthetic values and natural environment will be considered when replacing and expanding City utilities

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

- Create and maintain a quality system of interconnected parks, recreation facilities, and open green spaces throughout the community
- Provide each new housing development or neighborhood with easy and direct access to a park
- Continually explore funding programs from local, state, and federal organizations for improvements to Blooming Prairie's parks

Public Facility Objectives:

- Explore local, state, and federal agency programs for funding for utility improvements
- Require adequate park / green space be incorporated into new residential developments
- Require storm water retention ponding and other run off prevention methods be incorporated into new large scale developments
- Provide adequate funding to maintain existing park and recreational facilities including a balance between maintenance and new capital improvement expenditures
- Continually monitor whether facilities such as the Fire Station and City Maintenance building are sufficient to meet the growing community's needs
- Be active in communications with Steele County and the Department of Transportation regarding the HWY 218 corridor and the other major traffic routes around the city
- Create and adhere to an annual maintenance plan to ensure existing curb, gutter, and road surfaces are well maintained.
- Incorporate large scale street and utility improvements into the City's capital improvement plan
- Work to improve the overall non-motorized connectivity of the community through additional trails and sidewalks. Special attention should be paid to high traffic areas like the school, downtown and Straight River Park.
- Explore local, state, and federal agency programs for funding for parks and trails additions and improvements

Conclusion

Many communities feel that the planning process is complete with the adoption of a comprehensive plan, but the planning process in Blooming Prairie will never end. The world outside of Blooming Prairie is constantly changing and many of these changes will have an impact on Blooming Prairie. The City will continue to grow and be successful if it is constantly planning and adapting to these impacts and changes. Formal adoption of the Comprehensive Plan establishes the goals for the direction of the City, including both policy objectives and achievement strategies, and should be viewed as the beginning of the journey, not the end. The community's planning efforts up to this point will not have the type of long range impact it is looking for without continuing advancement to implement and update the Plan continually.

The implementation of this plan is firmly tied to the ability of the City to promote the Plan over the long term. Key partners in the implementation include City Council, boards and commissions, staff, and residents. Support of the Plan by the residents and business owners of Blooming Prairie is essential to the successful implementation of the Plan.

There are several critical requirements for effective implementation of this Comprehensive Plan. First, Blooming Prairie should continue to evaluate and amend its official development controls, such as the zoning ordinance, which can enforce the Plan's policies and recommendations. Second, the City should develop its Capital Improvements Plan, which would implement a priority-based system of the most important public improvements in infrastructure and public facilities within the parameters of yearly budgetary guidelines.

City officials must ensure that the citizens of Blooming Prairie continue to be actively involved in this and future planning projects to ensure their needs and concerns are being met by these plans. Some good examples of this would be the citizen group that came together to participate in the Blandin Foundation Leadership Training to strengthen rural Minnesota.

Residents had the opportunity to identify Strengths, Challenges (Weaknesses), Opportunities, and Threats through a community survey and community input meetings as part of the information gathering process for the comprehensive plan. Many great thoughts and ideas were discussed, listed below are the ones that were identified most often:

Implementation Tools

Implementation tools are the mechanisms that the City has to use to guide its future development. These tools really are the “teeth” to realize the vision for the community described in this comprehensive plan. To that end, it is essential that these tools be instituted or revised in a way that is consistent with the goals and objectives set forth in this Comprehensive Plan. The following implementation tools can be utilized to reflect the community’s values and accomplish the goals set forth in this plan.

Zoning Ordinance

The City’s zoning ordinance utilizes zoning districts as its principal tool to implement the City’s land use policies. The zoning ordinance consists of two essential parts, the ordinance text and the official zoning map. The ordinance text sets forth the specific rules for the development of land within Blooming Prairie and the official map shows the zoning district boundaries.

The City should review its zoning ordinance and proposed official land use map and compare them to the adopted goals and objectives in this plan to identify and reconcile any discrepancies.

The zoning Ordinance and zoning map may be amended from time to time to reflect new goals, objectives and opportunities identified by the community. The City Council has tools to make these amendments through review by the Planning Commission. Any changes in zoning should be done as orderly and contiguously as possible, with great care taken to minimize effects on current and neighboring land owners. Spot zoning should be avoided.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

As indicated above, another potential tool for implementation is the Capital Improvement Program, which would prioritize and schedule large capital projects usually over a five to ten year period. City staff first compiles a list of all public improvements that will be required in the next five to ten years including such things as the Pavement Management Plan (2011), the Storm Sewer Comprehensive Plan (2005), new equipment and public facilities projects. Then all projects are reviewed, priorities are assigned, cost estimates prepared, and potential funding sources identified.

In the current fiscal climate, the City’s financial resources will always be limited and there will always be competition for those resources. The Capital

Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan

Improvement Program allows Blooming Prairie to provide the most critical public improvements, yet stay within budget constraints. Many of the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan can be articulated in a Capital Improvements Program. Through this CIP, the recommendations can be prioritized, budgeted and programmed into the City's decision making process.

Community Involvement and Communication

The City of Blooming Prairie benefits from an active citizenship, involved and aware of issues and concerns throughout the community. Blooming Prairie should continue to encourage opportunities for citizen participation at all levels of the planning and development processes through appointed citizen commissions and boards, and attendance and participation at public meetings.

The City should continue to use as many media outlets as possible to provide public information. This can be accomplished through the City's website (the web address is www.BloomingPrairieMinnesota.com), Facebook pages of the City, Police and Library, City newsletter, school district newsletter, public service announcements on local radio and local cable access channel, informational brochures, and press release distribution to area newspapers.

Implementation Strategies

Comprehensive Planning: Blooming Prairie should review and amend the Comprehensive Plan as necessary, but at a minimum every seven to ten years, to ensure its usefulness as a practical guide for current and future development.

Development Ordinances: The City should synchronize the zoning map with the proposed Land Use Plan to ensure future projects are in line with its strategic vision. To support the orderly growth of Blooming Prairie, the City should continually evaluate, maintain and enforce development performance standards to promote land use efficiency, quality development, and attractive neighborhoods.

Capital Improvements Plan: The City should work with its financial advisor to put together a formal capital improvements plan. As noted, this would prioritize and schedule large capital projects usually over a five to ten year period. City staff first compiles a list of all public improvements that will be required in the next five to ten years, including things like street upgrades, new equipment and public facilities projects. Then all projects are reviewed, priorities are assigned, cost estimates prepared, and potential funding sources identified.

Comprehensive Housing Study: The City could work with the County and other agencies to conduct an updated comprehensive housing study to identify gaps in the market. These gaps present opportunities for developers to meet potential demand in the market. Meeting this demand allows the community to continue to grow.

Annexation: Blooming Prairie should maintain a policy of Orderly Annexation to contain development allowing for the most efficient use of existing utilities and infrastructure. Regular discussions should continue with the neighboring townships and Dodge County as the community continues to grow in size.

Summary Statement

Successful communities do not happen by accident. They are the product of hard work and dedication displayed by their decision makers, staff, and residents. Together, the community of Blooming Prairie can make itself the best place to live, work, recreate, and do business.

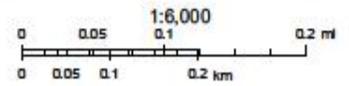
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November 23, 2016

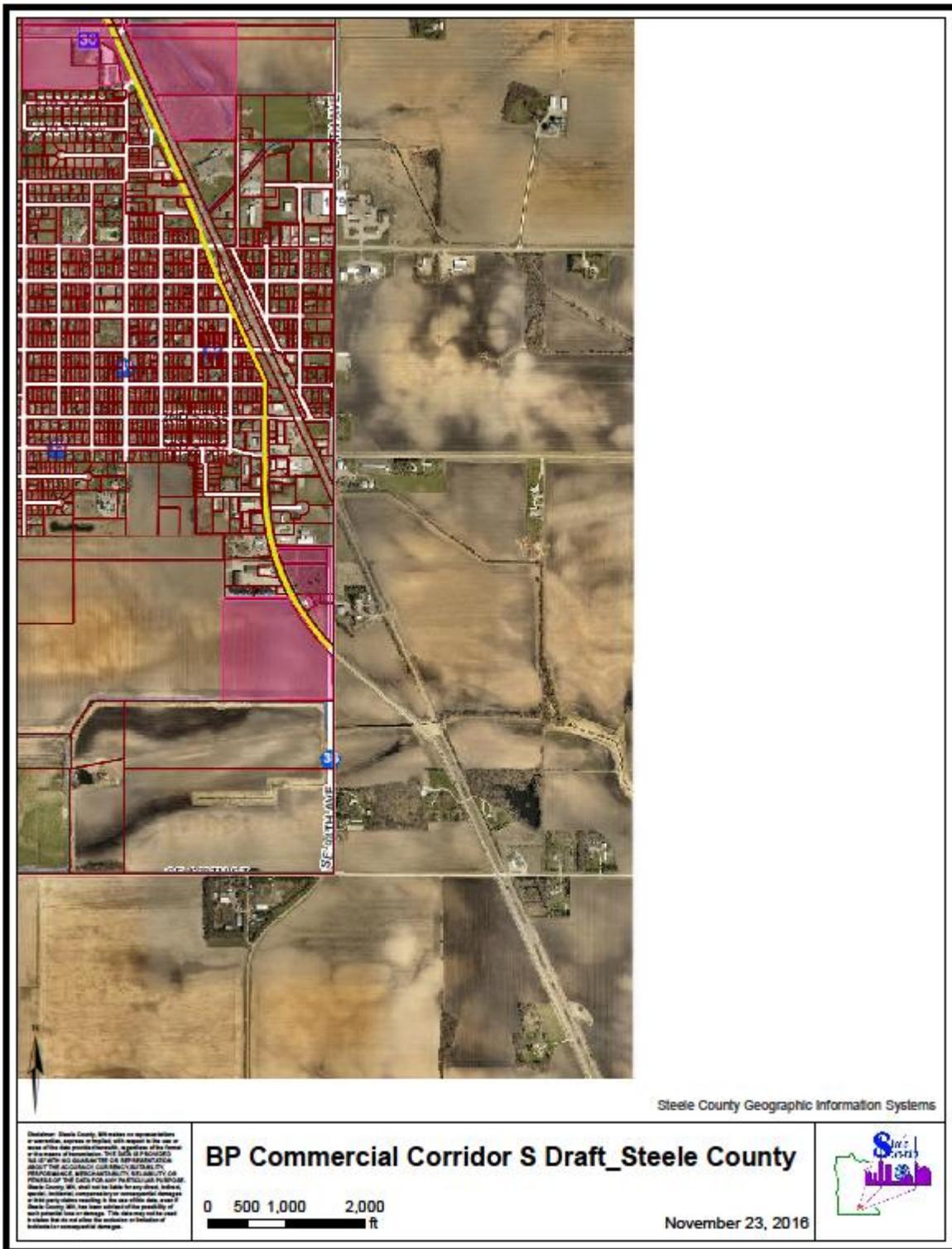
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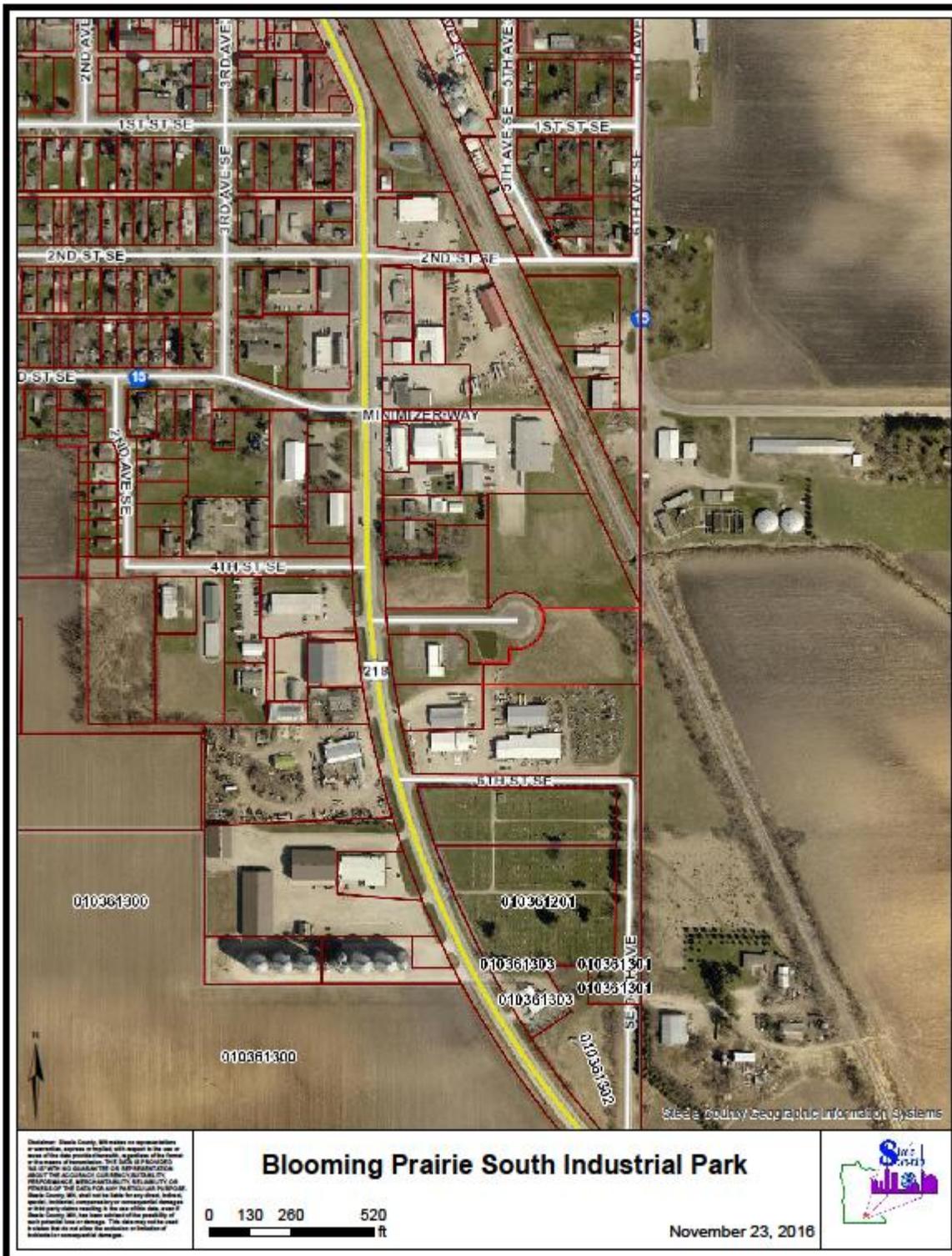
Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan



Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan



Blooming Prairie Comprehensive Plan



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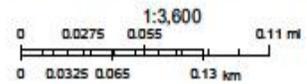


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