



# COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE/WORK SESSION

*Commissioner's Room / Government Services Bldg. / Tuesday, July 21, 2020 at 8:30 AM*

## AGENDA

### **I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

(At the beginning of each Committee of the Whole Work Session meeting, the floor will be open to solicit public comments. Public Comments will be limited to two (2) minutes for each person, subject to the discretion of the County Board Chairperson)

### **II. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES: Julie Runkel**

A. Comprehensive Plan Update

### **III. ADJOURNMENT**

**SPECIAL NEEDS:** If you require special services to attend or participate in a public meeting, please call the County's Administration Office at 507.332.6101 or e-mail [sfolsted@co.rice.mn.us](mailto:sfolsted@co.rice.mn.us). TDD users can call 507.332.6248. Please call 24 hours before the meeting, if possible.

**\*\*This meeting will be open to the public. We will be following the CDC Guidelines with limited amount of seating, keeping 6 feet apart. Facemasks are required.**

To join the meeting on your computer: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3421170614>

To join the meeting by Phone please call: (507) 332-6030

Participant Meeting ID: 342 117 0614

Minn. Stat. §13D.021 requires a public body to make a determination that an in-person meeting is not practical or prudent because of a health pandemic or an emergency declared under Chapter 12 of Minnesota Statutes. At this time, the governor has declared an emergency under Chapter 12 of Minnesota Statutes. Therefore, the regular meeting of the Rice County Board of Commissioners may be conducted by telephone or other electronic means. The regular meeting of the Rice County Board of Commissioners shall occur in the Commissioner's Room of the Rice County Government Center, 320 3rd Street NW, Faribault, MN 55021. Some members may participate by telephone or other electronic means. If telephone or another electronic means is used to conduct a meeting, to the extent practical, Rice County shall allow a person to monitor the meeting electronically from a remote location, if requested. The person making a connection shall pay for the documented additional cost incurred as a result of the additional connection



# RICE COUNTY, MINNESOTA

## Request for County Board Action

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**AGENDA DATE:** July 21, 2020

**REQUEST BY:** Julie Runkel, Environmental Services

**STATE ITEM OF BUSINESS:**

Comprehensive Plan Update

**BACKGROUND:**

The draft consolidate comprehensive plan document is attached. Staff is looking for feedback from the Steering Committee on the draft consolidated document. As a refresher, the steering committee previously came to consensus on the economic development, land use, housing and transportation sections. It was requested that a Sustainability Chapter be added. A draft Sustainability Chapter has been added along with the draft Parks, Recreation & Open Space chapter, which was previously distributed but not discussed. Staff is looking for consensus on the consolidated draft plan so that it may be distributed and posted online for comments.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

**COUNTY BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:**

to review and discuss the draft consolidated comprehensive plan document.

Reviewed with additional material provided:

✓ Approved  
\_\_\_\_\_  
County Administrator



# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2040



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## Acknowledgments

**Rice County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee:**

**Jake Gillen, District 1 County Commissioner**

**Galen Malecha, District 2 County Commissioner**

**Dave Miller, District 3 County Commissioner**

**Steve Underdahl, District 4 County Commissioner**

**Jeff Docken, District 5 County Commissioner**

**Preston Bauer, Planning Commission Chair**

**Jill Ellingson, Planning Commissioner**

**Michael Streiff III, Planning Commissioner**

**Charlie Peters, Planning Commissioner**

**Aramis Wells, Planning Commissioner**

**Steve Bauer, Former District 4 County Commissioner**

**Joe Horejsi, Former Planning Commissioner**

**Tom Sammon, Former Planning Commissioner**

DRAFT

# 1.0 Introduction

Rice County is located in a transitional area between south-central and southeastern Minnesota, approximately 50 miles south of Minneapolis – St. Paul metropolitan area. The location has contributed to diverse land uses and development patterns. The County is predominately rural in nature with a total land area of roughly 496 square miles or 329,914 acres. Much of that land is used for the production of agricultural crops, in particular corn and soybeans, as well as livestock operations. The County’s cities are home to industry and education. Faribault has been known for woolen products, its garden and nurse industry and

**“The board has the power and authority to prepare and adopt by ordinance, a comprehensive plan. A comprehensive plan or plans when adopted by ordinance must be the basis for official controls adopted under the provisions and sections 394.21 to 394.37”**  
**-MN Statue (Section 394.23)**

Minnesota State Academies. Northfield is known for its two liberal arts colleges, St. Olaf College and Carleton College, and the Defeat of Jesse James.

## 1.1 Purpose of the Plan

The Rice County Comprehensive Plan (The Plan) is prepared to assist in the decision making to guide the growth and development through 2040 and beyond. It also represents the

goals and values of Rice County and provides the legal basis for updating Rice County ordinances. The first being the update of the Zoning Ordinance. It is understood that no plan can anticipate all the changes that will occur in that time frame so The Plan will need to be reviewed and amended from time to time. Action items will need review every one to two years to ensure implementation of the plan is on course.

## 1.2 Vision Statement

A vision statement provides strategic direction and describes what residents want the county to achieve in the future. A vision statement is a county’s road map, indicating both what the county wants to become and guiding transformational initiatives by setting a defined direction for the county’s growth. Vision statements undergo minimal revisions, unlike operational goals which may be updated from year-to-year. Vision statements also serve as the foundation for a broader strategic plan; motivate current and future residents by clearly categorizing the county’s goals; and focus efforts and facilitate the creation of core competencies by directing the county to only focus on strategic opportunities that advance the county’s vision.



The 2040 Vision is a long-range, big picture portrayal of our desired future. The vision was developed during multiple work sessions with the Steering Committee. Below is our 2040 Vision:

“As Rice County grows and evolves into the future, we will support and encourage orderly growth and a diverse economy that will continue to create jobs and a high quality of life for our citizens. We will aspire to maintain the small town feel of our cities and preserve our agricultural heritage.”

### 1.3 Fundamental Inventory Guide – Background Information

The Plan has been prepared in two documents, The Plan and the Fundamental Inventory Guide (FIG). The purpose of having separate documents is to maintain a more user-friendly, compact and interactive document. The FIG is an integral component of the Comprehensive Planning process. It provides extensive background information and data used in the development of The Plan. The following components are contained in the FIG: Agriculture, Community Facilities & Public Services, Demographics, History, Land Use, Natural Resources and Transportation. It is designed so that information and statistics can be updated more frequently than The Plan. The FIG can be found in Appendix 1 of this Plan and Online access to the FIG is available on the county website at: <http://www.co.rice.mn.us/482/Fundamental-Inventory-Guide-2040> . The FIG will be updated as new and additional information becomes available.

### 1.4 Planning Process

The process to prepare the 2040 Plan involved an ongoing exchange of information, analysis, and response between public officials, citizens, and County staff. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was comprised of Rice County Commissioners and members of the Planning Commission. Preparation of this Plan was organized into five phases:

**Phase 1: Initiation** – This phase involved the formation of the steering committee, initial meetings of the steering committee to provide background information on existing plan and development of a public participation plan.

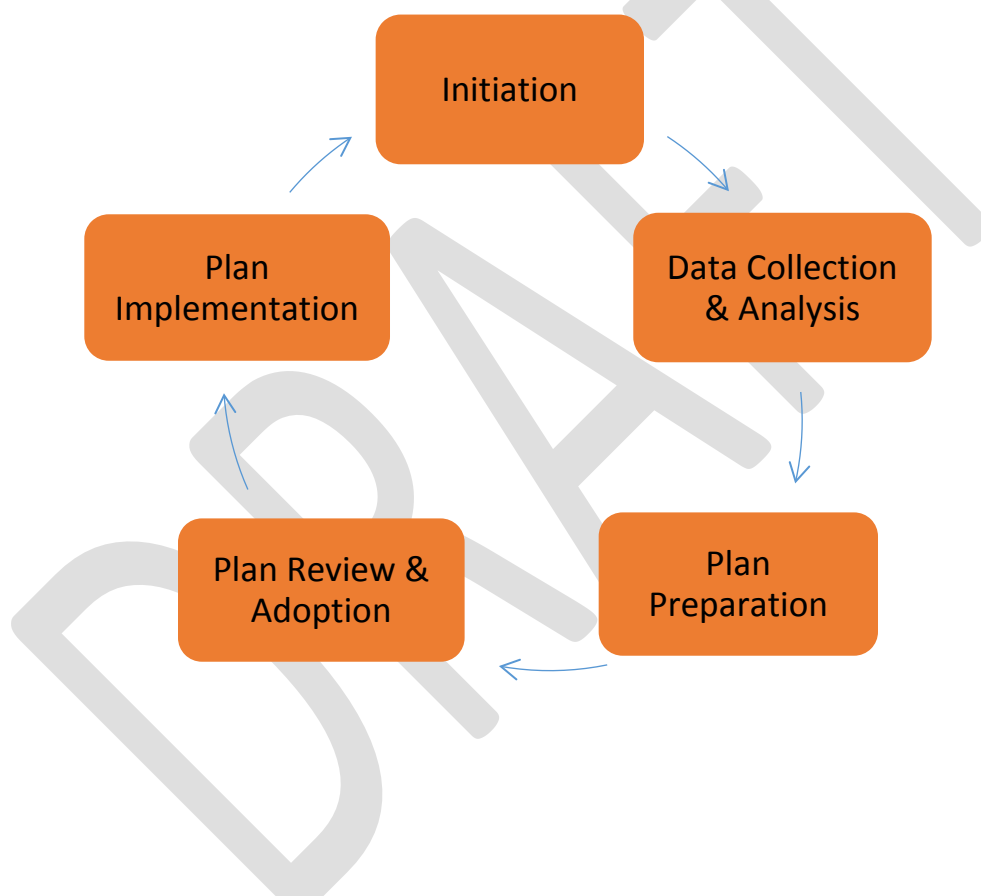
**Phase 2: Data Collection & Analysis** – This phase involved collection and analysis of data related to Rice County. Staff analyzed growth trends, community changes, and future projections. The FIG was updated and reorganized into an interactive document. Another objective of this stage was to increase public awareness and education. Various methods were used at this stage to improve awareness, including press releases, Rice County website,

newsletter and factsheets. Presentations were made to community and local groups. This step also involved the creation and distribution of a citizen survey.

**Phase 3: Plan Preparation** – This phase constituted actual plan formation. It involved regular work sessions with the Steering Committee and meetings with city and township officials.

**Phase 4: Plan Review & Adoption** – This phase involved steering committee, local units of government and citizen review of the newly drafted Rice County Comprehensive Plan.

**Phase 5: Plan Implementation** – Following the adoption of the Rice County Comprehensive Plan staff will initiate implementation of the plan, focusing attention on updating all relevant



land ordinances to be consistent with the new comprehensive plan.

## 1.5 Community Engagement

County residents were able to participate throughout the planning process in a variety of ways, including community forums, citizen survey, Steering Committee work sessions and public informational meetings.



## Community Forums

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan update began with public outreach that included three community forums. Community members gathered in three different locations and were informed about the comprehensive planning process and participated in a series of small group discussions. A total of 99 attendees responded to four questions asked at each meeting.



Citizen Participation at community forum in Northfield.

Top themes from the forums are summarized in “Comprehensive Plan Public Forum Summary” that is included in Appendix 2.

## Citizen Survey

A citizen survey was also prepared to aid in developing The Plan goals and objectives. The survey was a way of soliciting public input on specific topics and issues. A press release was issued and contained a link to the online survey. Letters to each of the 14 township officials were also distributed. In addition, a paper copy of the survey was included within the County’s Newsletter that is dispersed to all mailing addresses in Rice County. In total, 1,326 residents and landowners in Rice County responded to the survey. The results are summarized in the report titled “Rice County Comprehensive Plan Survey Summary” that is included in Appendix 3.

## Steering Committee Work Sessions

Steering Committee work sessions were regularly held prior to Planning Commission meetings and/or during County Board of Commissioners Committee of Whole work sessions. County staff facilitated discussions on Plan elements to the Steering Committee. Meetings were open to the public.

## Meetings with Cities, Townships and Other Interested Community Groups.

Rice County staff conducted numerous meetings throughout all phases of the plan process with staff from the various cities in Rice County, various townships and other interested community groups. These meetings were valuable in getting input on various components of The Plan.

## 2.0 Economic Development

### 2.1 Introduction

Economic activity is the lifeblood of any community: providing jobs, creating wealth, and generating tax revenue. A diverse economic base lowers the risk of economic difficulty by distributing the effects of industry specific cycles across a broader range of industries.

It is Rice County's objective to have a strong and resilient local economy with a diverse portfolio of economic activity: agricultural, commercial, industrial, professional services, and retail jobs. The local economy shall provide goods and services for local residents and business needs.

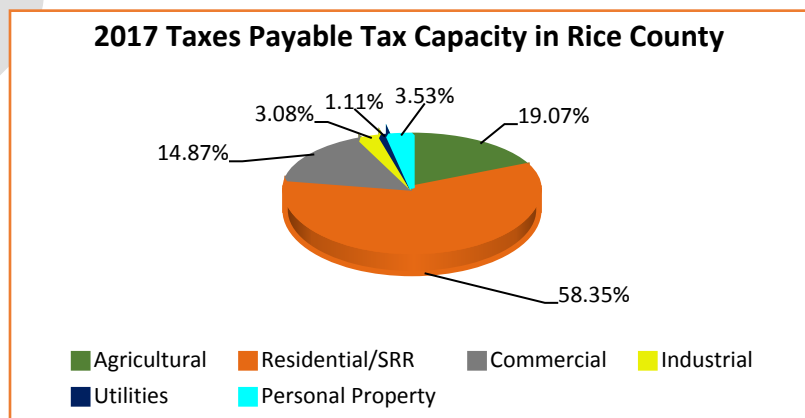


The underlying premise of this chapter is the concept that economic development, community development and workforce development are inter-dependent, mutually supportive and essential for sustainable economic vitality.

One of the key issues for the County is to retain and provide expansion opportunities for our existing businesses. Critical to facilitating successful business retention and growth is building strong relationships with the business community. The following focuses on economic indicators of the local business community and illustrates the importance of employment and tax base for our community.

Maintaining a healthy tax base is an important function of government and as the pie chart below shows, almost 60% of the County tax base comes from Residential and Seasonal Recreational Property (SRP). With the large difference in tax capacity percentages, steps must be

taken to maintain a healthy balance to ensure an acceptable residential tax rate. Rice County may need to consider analyzing and developing an optimum goal for maintaining a healthy



balance in the tax base. It is evident an increase in the commercial/industrial development is necessary in Rice County.

In 2002, the commercial/industrial tax base in Rice County was approximately 16% of the tax capacity but this has increased to roughly 18% in 2017.

“Participants at the community forums stated that the following are ways to take advantage of what we have to enhance the County in the next 20 years: promote businesses off I-35, invest in technology, and keep things local through market research and partnerships.”

Economic development also focuses on those business sectors that provide high quality employment opportunities in the community, bring wealth to the region, and strengthen the tax base of the county. Businesses depend upon a skilled, productive workforce in order to compete successfully. Workforce development enables workers to engage successfully in the changing economy and enables companies to be productive and competitive in a dynamic economic environment.

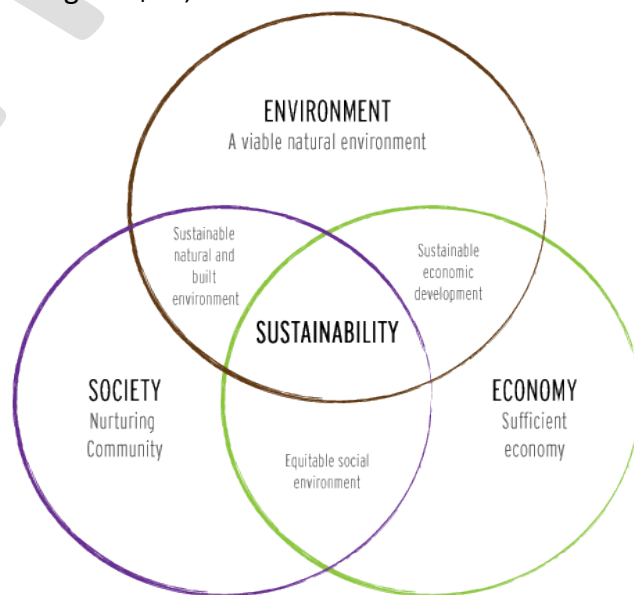
Job growth in Rice County from 2010 to 2016 shows 2,032 new jobs. The largest employing sector within the County is manufacturing, totaling 17.8% of the jobs. The next two largest employing sectors include educational services and health care/social assistance, which accounts for 29.3% of jobs within the County (DEED Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages).

Economic development programs have just recently been utilized at the county level to encourage expanding businesses or new business development. The Cities of Faribault, Northfield and Lonsdale have established programs as well.

According to the US Census Bureau, Rice County’s per capita income from 2014-2018 was \$29,767. This is lower than the Minnesota average of \$36,245. The lower incomes are concerning. The median household income for the same time period was \$65,758 (US Census Bureau, 2018), in which there was more than one wage earner per household.

Community development focuses on the infrastructure — transportation, telecommunications, workforce housing, utility services — necessary to support competitive businesses and the recreational, cultural and quality of life amenities essential to attracting a broad spectrum of skilled, creative, and productive people.

Over fifty percent of Rice County residents work outside of the County, with the highest number commuting, in order, to Hennepin, Dakota, Steele, Ramsey, and Scott Counties. That being said, just over 9,400 people



commute to Rice County for work. Most coming from Dakota County, followed by Steele, Goodhue, Hennepin, and Le Sueur (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). The County shall seek to expand the opportunities for residents to work closer to where they live. This will require promoting a mix of high quality housing opportunities for households with varying incomes. For more information on Rice County's education, labor and employment demographics, see the Demographics-Education and Demographics-Labor & Employment documents in the FIG section.

Rice County has a number of assets that can assist in working to build and strengthen a sustainable regional economy. Interstate 35 runs through the center of the County north to south providing easy access throughout the County. The County is also situated between two large metropolitan areas, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Rochester. This provides close proximity to healthcare, shopping, entertainment and other

Important amenities. Rice County is rich in cultural history and natural landscapes. Lastly, the County maintains its rural character and agricultural heritage which sets it apart from the nearby metropolitan areas.

This section can serve as a model for Rice County, bringing together county resources - community development, economic development and workforce development — to support a healthy, dynamic, sustainable economy.

## 2.2 Goals, Strategies and Action Items

The following goals and strategies are general statements that focus on Rice County's Economic Development plan. The goals are broadly worded, while strategies are actions that can be taken to achieve the overarching goal. The action items are related to the goals and strategies, but are more specific and detailed. It should be noted that goals, strategies, and action items are in no particular order of importance. Because Agriculture plays such a large role in Rice County's economy, goals have been created to specifically focus on Agricultural Economics, as well as, broader Economic Development within the County.

### 2.2.1 Business and Industry Economics

#### ***Goal 1. Maintain and strengthen economic diversity.***

**Strategy 1.** Support the establishment and maintenance of housing, transportation, communication, and utility systems which support and foster quality development.

**Action Item 1:** Coordinate the provision of supportive infrastructure in concurrence with new development.

**Action Item 2:** Evaluate new development impacts on existing infrastructure and services to ensure adequate availability of development ready land.

**Action Item 3:** Establish partnerships to address and solve transportation and workforce housing needs.

**Action Item 4:** Encourage the development of infrastructure and state of the art telecommunication technology to promote telecommuting and E-business.

**Strategy 2.** Encourage increasing the number of small to mid-size firms within the region by fostering local entrepreneurship and business ownership.

**Action Item 1:** Partner with other agencies and institutions to identify programs and services to assist in the creation of new small and mid-sized businesses.

**Action Item 2:** Strengthen programs which provide business development, information, and technical assistance.

**Strategy 3.** Promote and foster historical, ecological and agricultural tourism as a suitable and appropriate form of economic development.

**Action Item 1:** Coordinate tourism efforts with other public, non-profit and private organizations.

**Action Item 2:** Promote a variety of year-round attractions to encourage tourism.

**Action Item 3:** Educate the public on the economic benefits of historic and natural resource preservation.

**Action Item 4:** Encourage the development of tourism-related businesses.

## ***Goal 2: Build and retain a highly skilled, adaptable workforce.***

**Strategy 1.** Cooperate with local educational institutions to coordinate training/skill requirements to meet the needs of local employers.

**Action Item 1:** Work to reduce barriers to obtaining necessary or upgraded job skills.

**Action Item 2:** Promote access to resources and tools for education, training, and supportive services through a variety of means and media.

**Strategy 2.** Collaborate with business, educational institutions, community organizations, and government to provide information to local businesses.

**Action Item 1:** Provide information on work skills development and available employment opportunities through print, electronic, and telecommunications media.

**Action Item 2:** Create a collaborative recruitment strategy among business, non-profits, and government.

**Action Item 3:** Encourage business, labor, education, and government partnerships to solve work force development problems.

**Strategy 3.** Promote and encourage quality of life and healthy living environment for employers and employees.

**Employers**  
**Are you looking to close the skills gap and increase productivity?**

Give us a call and set up an appointment to meet with one of our consultants. We can assist you with pinpointing your specific training needs and provide you with recommended solutions for those needs.

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**CBI** Center for Business & Industry  
A Division of South Central College

**Photo:** ad for South Central College, Center for Business & Industry.

**Action Item 1:** Through public and private partnerships, improve and increase workforce housing options.

**Action Item 2:** Improve transportation connections between residential communities and work sites by pursuing opportunities for alternative modes of transportation such as transit bus service, bicycle/pedestrian facilities and amenities.

**Action Item 3:** Provide open space and recreational opportunities as an amenity to attract new businesses and their employees.



Photo: Downtown Faribault. Taken from faribaultmainstreet.org.

### ***Goal 3. Retain and expand existing local businesses.***

**Strategy 1.** Encourage access to economic incentives for quality job creation and/or tax base enhancement.

**Action Item 1:** Explore an economic development marketing and incentives program targeting strategic business clusters.

**Action Item 2:** Engage with State, Regional and local economic development organizations and agencies to sustain and expand current economic activities and be prepared for future economic trends.

**Action Item 3:** Continue to collaborate and partner with municipalities and townships, to promote employment opportunities and expand the tax base in Rice County.

**Strategy 2.** Encourage existing neighborhood employers to grow “in place,” keeping jobs close to where people live.

**Action Item 1:** Develop industry clusters by encouraging the retention, expansion, and recruitment of industries that already have a presence in the County.

**Action Item 2:** Encourage Cities to work with property owners and interested developers to address unique development challenges including the maintenance, revitalization and redevelopment of existing buildings.

**Strategy 3.** Support downtown revitalization and neighborhood business development in the cities.

**Action Item 1:** Develop strategies to increase employment growth through more intense and efficient use of existing infrastructure.

**Action Item 2:** Support local innovative businesses and economic activities.

**Action Item 3:** Promote downtowns as a place for innovative and emerging business to expand or relocate.

**Goal 4. Attract new businesses to Rice County.**

**Strategy 1.** Make available vacant, development-ready land for commercial and industrial use.

**Action Item 1:** Promote well-designed and efficient development and redevelopment of vacant and underutilized industrial and commercial lands.

**Action Item 2:** Support redevelopment of existing vacant and underutilized industrial and commercial lands rather than designing additional lands for these purposes.

**Action Item 3:** Monitor and update buildable lands inventory to ensure adequate short and long-term supplies of buildable commerce land.

**Strategy 2.** Encourage businesses that are environmentally and economically sustainable.

**Action Item 1:** Encourage programs that promote sustainable business practices (e.g., recycling, green building or other sustainable design features, the use of green or alternative energy, commute trip reduction programs and utilizing by-products of other Rice County businesses).

**Action Item 2:** Educate businesses on opportunities to buy local.

**Strategy 3.** Maximize efforts to attract and recruit industries that are best suited for Rice County's assets and opportunities.

**Action Item 1:** Actively encourage businesses that provide family-wage jobs to start-up, expand, or locate in Rice County.

**Action Item 2:** Develop a branding/marketing effort to promote Rice County as a place to live and do business.

**Action Item 3:** Institute appropriate land use regulations to accommodate a contemporary mix of economic activities and development.

**Action Item 4:** Promote Rice County's cultural, historic, recreational, educational, and environmental assets and amenities.



Photo: Taken from Lonsdale.govoffice.com

Citizen Survey respondents felt that agricultural, commercial and retail, and technology related businesses are very important based on the needs of Rice County residents

**Action Item 5:** Update zoning and subdivision regulations to accommodate for a variety of potential industries.

**Action Item 6:** Promote economic development along the Interstate 35 corridor.

## 2.2.2 Agriculture Economics

### ***Goal 1. Sustain a diverse economic mix for the County by promoting and strengthening agriculture and complementary businesses.***

**Strategy 1.** Maintain a strong and productive agricultural economy while promoting the purchase and sale of locally produced products.

**Action Item 1:** The County, in cooperation with the cities, will actively promote buying locally, farmer's markets, events and agricultural tourism opportunities.

**Action Item 2:** Attract agricultural related industries to support diversification and use of raw materials from area farms.

**Strategy 2.** Expand rural business opportunities and enhance rural quality of life.

**Action Item 1:** Work with agencies such as the US Department of Agriculture and other state and local agencies to help fund agricultural resources projects.

**Action Item 2:** Identify strategies that promote agriculture and agricultural support businesses in the County, which may include but not be limited to vineyards, community gardens, agri-tourism, et al.

**Action Item 3:** Revise the County's regulations and ordinances to address the evolving technological and operational characteristics of farm operations.

### ***Goal 2. Expand awareness of local agriculture opportunities and agriculture related businesses within the County.***



Photo: "A Day on the Farm" at the Wegner Dairy Farm.  
Taken by Audrey Kletscher Helbling

**Strategy 1.** Coordinate with local agencies, groups, and clubs to create programs, initiatives, and marketing to promote agriculture within the County.

**Action Item 1:** Develop a program to educate the public and the farming community on agricultural issues and opportunities.

**Action Item 2:** Establish a leader and mentorship program to encourage youth involvement in agriculture.

**Action Item 3:** Develop a marketing/awareness campaign focused on local food and agricultural programs.

**Action Item 4:** Create outreach programs to engage youth and adults with little or no agricultural experience.



# 3.0 Land Use

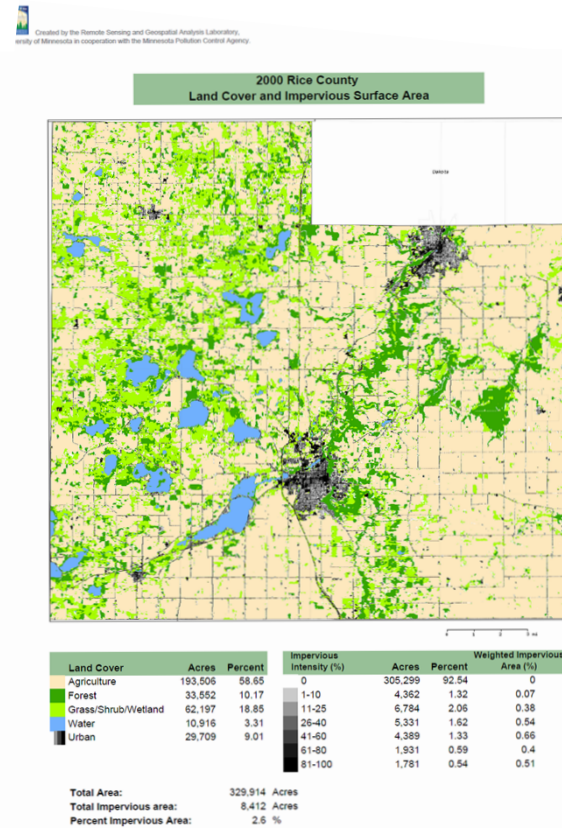
## 3.1 Introduction

The use of land and the pattern of development affect everything from the location and expansion of roads and central utilities to the state of agriculture, the provision of emergency services, the protection of natural resources, and the intangible qualities that constitute “rural character.” That is why Land Use is an imperative element in a Comprehensive Plan (The Plan).

The Land Use section of The Plan is intended to provide the framework that will guide County policies, priorities and investments. This section will help guide the County’s actions in the areas of sustainable growth, economic development, active lifestyles, transportation, and agricultural and natural resource protection.

Rice County is located in a transitional area of Minnesota between south-central and southeastern Minnesota. The location has contributed to diverse land uses and development patterns.

The County is predominately rural in nature with a total land area of roughly 496 square miles (329,914 acres). In 2000, approximately 59% was comprised of agricultural land; 19% grass, shrub, or wetland; 10% forested; 9% urban; and the remaining 3% was water. For more information on Rice County’s land use, see the Land Map and Land Cover documents in the FIG.



## 3.2 Goals, Strategies and Action Items

The following goals and strategies are general statements that focus on the land use topics identified through the planning process. Goals are broadly worded, while strategies are actions that can be taken to achieve a goal. The action items are related to the goals and strategies, but are more specific and detailed. Many of the goals for 2040 are the same or similar to those of the 2002 plan, but have been updated to address progress toward the goals and improved understanding of the relationship between land use and natural resources. It should be noted that goals, strategies, and action items are in no particular order of importance.

## 3.2.1 Growth and Development

### **Goal 1. Support and encourage orderly growth and development.**

**Strategy 1.** Support land use planning, which encourages orderly growth and sustainable development and redevelopment.

**Action Item 1:** Coordinate infrastructure expansion with development; and encourage development where the infrastructure is adequate to serve that growth.

**Action Item 2:** Support the provision of joint services among jurisdictions.

**Action Item 3:** Remain apprised of expected future urban growth areas.



**Photo:** Faribault Energy Park, Faribault. Taken by County Staff.

**Strategy 2.** Encourage a diverse economic mix for Rice County by promoting existing assets and identifying new opportunities.

**Action Item 1:** Create commercial/industrial zones to promote employment and generate tax base in Rice County.

**Action Item 2:** Identify appropriate areas for commercial and industrial developments, including along the I-35 corridor.

**Action Item 3:** Promote agriculture and associated businesses.

**Action Item 4:** Identify and reserve areas with sand, gravel and aggregate deposits for extraction.

**Strategy 3.** Identify additional areas for mixed-use development and further support urban growth.

**Action Item 1:** Continue to evaluate and implement urban growth zones where municipal infrastructure is likely to extend.

**Action Item 2:** Continue to have zoning districts for the unincorporated villages to allow for mixed-use development encouraging the development of municipal type water and sewer services.

**Strategy 4.** Promote the opportunity to lead active and healthy lifestyles through the coordinated development of infrastructure or supporting programs that promote active lifestyles.

**Action Item 1:** Develop connections between existing communities, parks and other destinations to promote safe and active options.

**Action Item 2:** Create land use regulations to improve proximity to nutritious foods and encourage local wholesome food-related businesses and activities.

“Over 92% of Rice County residents that participated in the citizen survey either agreed or strongly agreed that local food production is important to the future of Rice County.”

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**Strategy 5.** Support and further develop land use patterns that encourage alternative modes of transportation.

**Action Item 1:** Identify and map concentrations of compact residential and employment development that has potential to be served by transit.

**Action Item 2:** Identify existing land uses and travel corridors in the county that could be transformed into transit-friendly corridors.

**Action Item 3:** Encourage local planning for mixed land use areas in or adjacent to transit corridors.

**Action Item 4:** Continue to expand existing partnerships and look for new opportunities to collaborate on providing alternative modes of transportation.

### 3.2.2 Agriculture and Natural Resources

“86% of citizen survey respondents either agree or strongly agree that preserving existing agricultural land should be a planning priority for Rice County.”

#### **Goal 2: Preserve Agricultural Land and Natural Resources.**

**Strategy 1.** Minimize conflicts between agricultural, residential, and other uses.

**Action Item 1:** Adopt land use regulations that control density and development in agricultural and open spaces, to protect and preserve agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas.

**Action Item 2:** Develop management methods for accommodating diverse types of agricultural activity.

**Action Item 3:** Allow and encourage complementary commercial or industrial uses.

**Action Item 4:** Protect and promote agriculture by preserving large tracts of land by encouraging clustering of rural residential development through use of transfer of development rights.

**Action Item 5:** Promote higher density housing development in cities and unincorporated villages that can provide municipal or municipal type water and sewer services rather than in the agricultural districts.



Grazing cows in rural Rice County. Taken by County staff.

“Citizen Survey respondents felt that river/stream (85%) and lakes (82%) are natural resources that need the most attention in order to improve or maintain the quality of life in Rice County.”

**Strategy 2.** Preserve, protect, and improve the surface and underground waters including, but not limited to, rivers, streams, lakes, groundwater, and aquifer recharge areas.

**Action Item 1:** Encourage development to comply with wellhead protection zones.

**Action Item 2:** Develop and employ land use regulations and other techniques for natural resource protection, including transfer of development rights or density, and best management practices.

**Action Item 3:** Recognize the relationship between land use and water quality, and continue to support water quality improvements through land use plans and regulations.

**Action Item 4:** Encourage shore land protection and restoration methods such as vegetative buffers.

**Action Item 5:** Continue to address wastewater treatment and water quality through watershed plans, funding opportunities and various collaborations and partnerships.

**Strategy 3.** In working through land development, the potential for air, water, and land contamination will be considered and minimized throughout the entire process.

**Action Item 1:** Encourage conservation design to preserve natural and scenic values.

**Action Item 2:** Support and implement state and federal regulations that pertain to environmental review.

**Action Item 3:** Define, by GIS overlay, and preserve environmentally sensitive areas and other open space by allowing only compatible land uses and development.

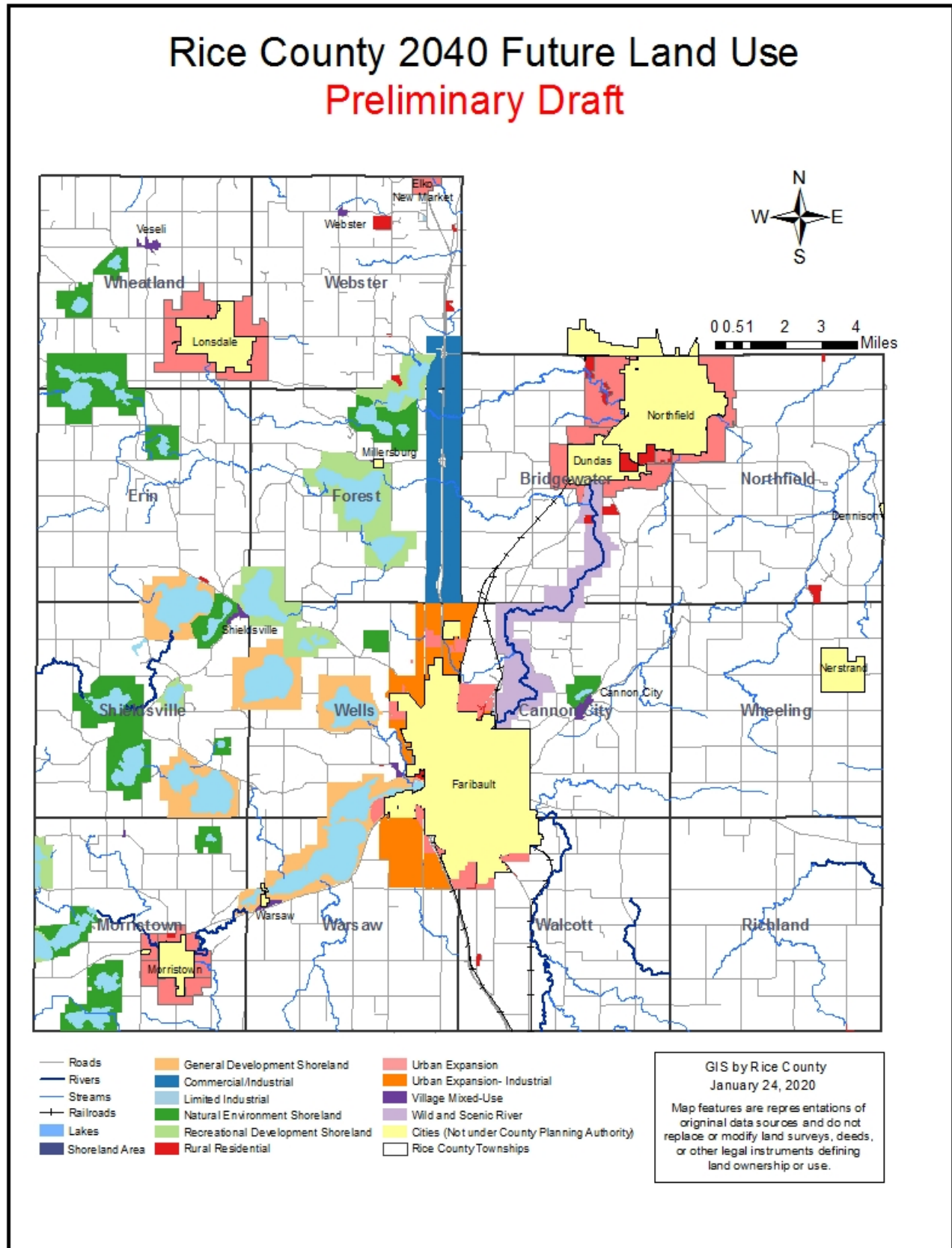
**Action Item 4:** Recognize that soil conditions may limit development potential.

**Action Item 5:** Coordinate with Local, State and Federal agencies and organizations to encourage landowners and tenants to implement and maintain good soil erosion and healthy soil practices.



**Photo:** Cannon River Wilderness Area, Bridgewater Township. Taken by County staff.

### 3.3 Future Land Use Map



## Land Use Map Legend Descriptions:

**General Development Shoreland** – Shoreland around lakes that are classified as General Development. These lakes are categorized as large, deep lakes or lakes of varying sizes and depths with high levels and mixes of existing development. These lakes are extensively used for recreation and are heavily developed around the shore.

**Commercial/Industrial** – Areas adjacent Interstate 35 that promote employment and generate tax base in Rice County.

**Limited Industrial** – Commercial/industrial land use to promote employment and generate tax base in Rice County.

**Natural Environment Shoreland** – Shoreland around lakes that are classified as Natural Environment. These lakes are categorized as small, often shallow lakes with limited capacities for assimilating the impacts of development and recreational use. They often have adjacent lands with substantial constraints for development such as high water tables, exposed bedrock, and soils unsuitable for septic systems.

**Recreational Development Shoreland** – Shoreland around lakes that are classified as Recreational Development. These lakes are categorized as medium-sized lakes of varying depths and shapes with a variety of landform, soil, and groundwater situations on the lands around them. They often are characterized by moderate levels of recreational use and existing development.

**Rural Residential** – An area that recognizes existing low-density residential development in already-developed areas. Most of these areas are located in agricultural areas or on the outskirts of unincorporated villages.

**Urban Expansion** – An area around the municipal boundary of an incorporated City/Village that is reserved for future residential and business growth.

**Urban Expansion -Industrial** – An area reserved in the urban expansion zone for the growth of industrial business.

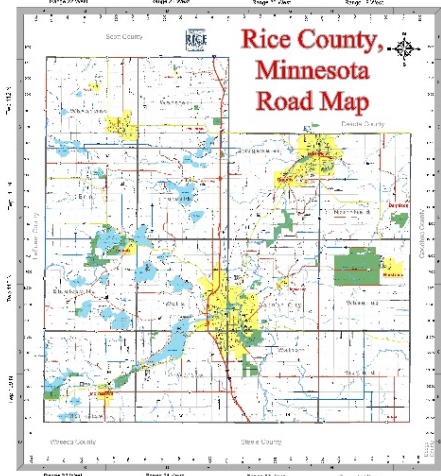
**Village Mixed-Use** – Existing unincorporated villages that are compatible for new development and a pedestrian-friendly environment.

**Wild and Scenic River** – This district protects and preserves the scenic, recreational, natural and historical values of the Cannon River in Rice County by ensuring that development within this river corridor is consistent with the Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers Statewide Standards.

# 4.0 Transportation

## 4.1 Introduction

The transportation system in Rice County is the backbone for commerce and assists in establishing development patterns. The system is comprised of roadways, railroads, airports, waterways, transit, technology and trails for pedestrians and non-motorized bikeways. The transportation system is a critical element in the quality of life for county residents. Transportation systems, both highway and multi-modal, must safely, efficiently and effectively allow citizens to travel to work, recreate and conduct their personal lives. Transportation systems must further provide for efficient movement of goods and services to markets to support the county’s economic vitality. Improvements to the transportation systems are necessary to keep up with the changing needs of the citizens and businesses of Rice County.

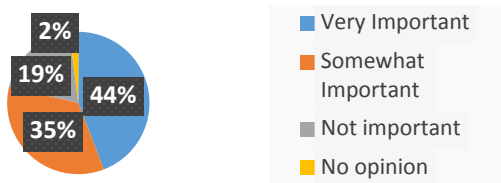


Rice County will continue to experience demands with limited resources to meet the transportation needs of the county. The significant investment that the county has made in the transportation system requires that this infrastructure be maintained and properly managed to protect these investments. Continued economic development and growth will also create demand for improvements of the existing roadway system such as turn lanes, bypass lanes, intersection improvements and traffic control changes. Other non-automobile modes for people and freight that maximize transportation system efficiently will also need to be explored. It will be important for collaborations and partnerships to be formed in order to carry out future projects and improvements. Financial plans with various funding options will need

to be developed for implementing the selected projects and strategies.

To be efficient and fair a transportation system must serve diverse demands. Rice County will not only see an increase in the aging population, but also an even more diverse population in the next 10-20 years. Therefore, Rice County as whole will need to look for alternative forms of transportation utilizing a variety of multi-modal options. It will be critical for economics of various businesses in the county for their workforce to have

**How important is increasing alternative modes of transportation (such as bus, biking, walking, train etc.) to the future of Rice County?**



“78% (1,001) of respondents feel that increasing alternative modes of transportation is very or somewhat important to the future of Rice County.”

access to multi-modal forms of transportation.

Not only do employment clusters need to have adequate transportation options for their work force, ensuring that essential services like grocery stores, medical facilities, schools or government buildings can be reached are important active living and livability considerations.

This transportation chapter is an abridged version of the County's full Transportation Plan which is a separate and much more detailed plan document. The 2025 Rice County Transportation Plan was adopted in 2006 and can be found in Appendix 4. It is highly recommended that the full Transportation Plan be updated in the near future.

## 4.2 Goals, Strategies, and Action Items

The following goals and strategies are general statements that focus on Rice County's Transportation plan. The goals are broadly worded, while strategies are actions that can be taken to achieve the overarching goal. The action items are related to the goals and strategies, but are more specific and detailed. It should be noted that goals, strategies, and action items are in no particular order of importance.

### 4.3.1 Transportation

**Goal 1. Enhance and maintain a transportation system that supports economic development along with existing and future land uses.**

**Strategy 1.** Update the Rice County Transportation Plan to guide future transportation improvement decisions for the County.

**Action Item 1:** Identify and collaborate with local, regional and State transportation agencies, governmental units, businesses and county residents to gather input on existing and future concerns.

**Action Item 2:** Identify and address emerging deficiencies in capacity, access, mobility, safety, transit, trail and multi-modal needs.

**Action Item 3:** Coordinate and work with cities and townships to develop long term land use and transportation plans to develop cost effective and efficient transportation systems.

**Strategy 2.** Improve and expand identified transportation corridors.

**Action Item 1:** Develop priorities, financing scenarios and funding options for improving and expanding identified transportation corridors.



*Photo: A section of County Road 76. Photo taken from: SouthernMinn.com*



**Action Item 2:** Develop partnerships, collaborate and cost-share with local and state transportation agencies on traffic studies, planning and programming of future improvements.

**Action Item 3:** Identify preliminary needs for planning, design, right of way, access control and construction of transportation corridors.

**Action Item 4:** Consider multi-modal air/rail corridors that may be utilized for economic transport.

***Goal 2. Preserve and improve the transportation infrastructure in Rice County to maximize safety and efficiency.***

**Strategy 1.** Develop preservation strategies and policies to maintain the existing transportation system to ensure safe and efficient travel.

**Action Item 1:** Review and update access management and cost participation policies.

**Action Item 2:** Analyze crash data to identify potential needs while updating and utilizing adopted safety plans.

**Action Item 3:** Identify and negotiate maintenance agreements that provide more efficient delivery of services.

**Action Item 4:** Identify reconstruction and replacement projects as part of the annual Transportation Improvement Plan.

**Strategy 2.** Evaluate existing conditions and identify future needs in an effective way to maximize and protect existing investment.

**Action Item 1:** Evaluate and prioritize system wide needs, develop funding and collaboration opportunities.

**Action Item 2:** Strategically apply for funding to offset county investment needed for the transportation system.

**Action Item 3:** Build a local coalition of support for planning and funding partnerships by encouraging cities, business owners and community groups to be active participants in seeking funding at local, state, and federal levels.

***Goal 3. Develop multi-modal and integrated transportation components to enhance options for a diverse population.***

**Strategy 1.** Support the continued efforts of the County and Cities working together to support transit opportunities.

**Action Item 1:** Evaluate the option of the Park-and-Ride facilities for carpool commuters within the county.

**Action Item 2:** Increase current transit options/routes within and outside the cities of Rice County.

**Action Item 3:** Advocate for long-term investment in transit infrastructure.

**Strategy 2.** Encourage usage of the transit systems.

**Action Item 1:** Prioritize transit service and bike/walk infrastructure improvements in populated areas with low vehicle ownership and low access to needed services.

**Action Item 2:** Connect major employers with needed work forces through a variety of multi-modal programs.

**Action Item 3:** Encourage increased advertising and education of alternative transportation options and local transit providers.

**Strategy 3.** Support and incorporate active living principles in transportation plans and identified projects.

**Action Item 1:** Continue working with surrounding counties to establish long range trails that could be used for recreation and transportation.

**Action Item 2:** Work with Cities and Townships to implement safe and appropriate trail crossings and access to the roadway system.

**Action Item 3:** Identify and promote safe pedestrians crossings to promote walkable communities.

**Action Item 4:** Support and assist Cities with their Safe Routes to School Plans.



*Photo: Two bikers ride along the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail. Photo taken from: Faribault, MN Tourism*

## 5.0 Housing and Livable Communities Design

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### 5.1 Introduction

A critical component to a healthy and vibrant community is a diverse and balanced housing supply in good physical condition that includes a variety of price levels, housing types, and sizes. A mix of housing tenures, types, and rent and sales prices provides residents with a range of choices so that they can continue living in their community as their housing needs change through their lifetimes. The affordability of housing is especially important for all

According to AARP, “A livable community is one that is safe and secure, has affordable and appropriate housing and transportation options, and offers supportive community features and services.”

residents because it provides a stable foundation on which to build one’s life. Affordable housing can also improve health outcomes by freeing up family resources for nutritious food, transportation, and health care expenditures. A diverse housing supply can also better adapt to future environmental, social, and economic changes than one that is largely based on just one of these types. A full range of housing options also enables communities to address the housing needs of employers and a

diverse workforce. These qualities define a livable community.

Housing in Rice County has been presented in a housing study that was finalized in August 2018, titled “Comprehensive Housing Study: Rice County and Identified Sub-Markets.” The complete study can be reviewed in Appendix 5. The report identifies current and future needs, recommends a housing mix, and the suggested amount and types of housing that could be developed to meet the needs of Rice County for the next five, ten and fifteen years. Major housing issues identified in the County by the study were high cost of housing (third most expensive area for housing in Minnesota, ranked behind Rochester and the Twin Cities) and a gap in ownership by minority residents versus white residents (98 percent of households in Rice County are owned by whites compared to the State in which 75 percent of whites own homes). The data also shows a lack of senior housing and affordable rental housing units. Opportunities for encouraging construction of missing housing options are discussed in the Recommendation section of the report. For more information on Rice County’s housing in addition to the study, see the Household Characteristics and Housing documents in the FIG.

### 5.2 Goals, Strategies and Action Items

The following goals and strategies are general statements that focus on Rice County’s Housing and Livable Communities Design. The goals are broadly worded, while strategies are actions that can be taken to achieve the overarching goal. The action items are related to the goals and strategies, but are more specific and detailed. It should be noted that goals, strategies, and action items are in no particular order of importance.

## 5.2.1 Housing

### **Goal 1. Create a diverse range of housing types for all income levels.**

**Strategy 1.** Partner with local communities to develop and manage housing choices for seniors, low- and moderate-income families, and minorities.

**Action Item 1:** Incorporate services into denser areas that support affordable housing.

**Action Item 2:** Encourage the availability of an adequate supply of land and infrastructure for multi-family housing developments.

**Action Item 3:** Allow accessory dwelling units in single-family houses or on single-family lots in certain districts that are subject to specific development, design, and occupancy standards.

**Action Item 4:** Encourage the development of mixed income housing units.

**Strategy 2.** Work with other organizations to coordinate funding for additional affordable housing units.

**Action Item 1:** Use tax increment financing to support housing projects that serve a mix of incomes and housing types.

**Action Item 2:** Encourage private-public partnerships to aid in the development of affordable housing.

**Strategy 3.** Promote mixed-use development near infrastructure that integrates rental housing.

**Action Item 1:** Support the provision of rental assistance programs for low-income residents.

**Action Item 2:** Encourage the cities to use inclusionary zoning and developer incentives to integrate affordable rental units into market rate developments.

**Action Item 3:** Support the provision of programs that provide affordable financing options to owners of rental housing to maintain, improve and upgrade the existing supply of rental housing in the county.

58% of citizen survey respondents felt that single-family housing is very important in rural areas.

### **Goal 2: Make available adequate housing for all life stages to ensure diverse communities.**

**Strategy 1.** Encourage affordable senior housing to allow residents to age in their own communities instead of needing to relocate to get the care they need.

**Action Item 1:** Work with cities to locate senior housing in or adjacent to basic amenities and transit hubs.

**Action Item 2:** Promote a range of housing types for seniors; e.g., adult family homes, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living, and independent living communities.

**Strategy 2.** Promote the development of affordable workforce housing for newly hired workers (e.g. teachers, nurses, city/county employees, etc.).

Citizen survey respondents felt that single-family (69%), affordable (61%) and senior complexes (61%) are very important types of housing in urban areas.

on assistance programs.

**Action Item 2:** Encourage equitable access to housing, making a special effort to remove disparities in housing access for people with disabilities, people of color, low-income households, diverse household types, and older adults.

**Strategy 4.** Support housing that addresses the needs of people with physical or developmental disabilities, or mental illness.

**Action Item 1:** Encourage the development of specialized programs to provide rental assistance to persons with disabilities.

**Action Item 2:** Support development of physically-accessible housing to allow for a diverse supply of affordable, accessible housing to meet the needs of people with disabilities, especially near basic amenity areas and provide services and transit.

### ***Goal 3. Encourage maintenance and improvements of existing housing stock.***

**Strategy 1.** Support the provision of homeowner rehabilitation and improvement programs that assist low and moderate income residents with the financial means to maintain and improve the quality of their homes.

**Action Item 1:** Partner with non-profit housing providers to rehabilitate existing housing for low and moderate income homeowners.

**Action Item 2:** Advocate grant and loan programs that provide residents with the ability to make energy and weatherization improvements to their properties in order to make their homes more energy efficient.

**Action Item 3:** Support educational programs that provide residents with information on how to rehabilitate, improve and upgrade their homes.

**Action Item 1:** Provide education on first time home buying and homeownership.

**Action Item 2:** Look for opportunities to co-locate housing with other civic project and/or employers.

**Strategy 3.** Continue to promote homeownership and increase opportunities for minority families.

**Action Item 1:** Support and collaborate with Rice County's Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA)



Source: rhondahowlett.blogspot.com

**Strategy 2.** Support local city and township redevelopment efforts.

**Action Item 1:** Support local efforts to retrofit existing homes with accessibility improvements.

**Action Item 2:** Support tax incentives policies that encourage the rehabilitation of existing housing in the county.

**Goal 4. Advocate for housing near basic amenities and features necessary for a high-quality of life and to maintain a healthy life style.**

**Strategy 1.** Support land use patterns that efficiently connect housing, jobs, retail centers and civic uses.

**Action Item 1:** Collaborate with cities to put housing in transit corridors and near greenway/recreation corridors and basic amenities.



**Action Item 2:** Encourage compact, mixed-use, multi-modal development that will increase travel options within existing urbanized areas, employment centers, and along transit nodes and corridors.

**Action Item 3:** Encourage the cities to have complete, walkable neighborhoods that provide proximity to daily goods and services in order to decrease automobile dependence, and enhance livability and build community cohesion.

**Strategy 2.** Support the development of housing that is in close proximity to healthy foods and recreational opportunities.

**Action Item 1:** Build and encourage partnerships that work to expand residential access to healthy food.

**Action Item 2:** Provide convenient and accessible recreational open space.

**Action Item 3:** Improve year-round access to both public and private recreational facilities.

# 6.0 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space



*Photo: A Rice County Park sign. Taken by County Staff.*

## 6.1 Introduction

Parks and open areas are essential spaces that are shared by everyone within a community, this statement also runs true for Rice County. There are currently 13 parks within the Rice County park system totaling over 1,100 acres. These parks don't only provide a way for residents to achieve a healthy lifestyle by being active, but also by utilizing the benefits of being out in nature. Many of the parks within Rice County offer amenities that visitors can use such as: picnic areas with a shelter, fishing dock, restrooms, hiking trails and playground equipment. Rice County has a handful of open space land as well. Some of those areas include: Rossez Wildlife Area, areas along the Cannon River, conservation lands, Farmed lands, and Forest land. The County also has Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and State Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA) that are open for public use. Visitors are

What types of Development/growth would you like to see in the County?

1,300 Rice County Residents responded



77.91% (998 responses) agreed that parks and nature preserves were important for development



Was voted the most important category out of the 13 options provided

encouraged to observe and learn while protecting the natural features, plants, and animals.

Over the years, there have been Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Plans set into place. In 1992, Rice County adopted the first Rice County Park System Plan, which contained policies for existing park infrastructure, and implementation strategies to support the goals of the parks. The framework of the 1992 parks plan not only helped with the direction the county needed to take with parks and open space, but as well as where to go for the future. In 2012, the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan was updated with even more expansive implementation strategies. The 2012 Parks Plan can be found in Appendix 7.



*Photo: Bicyclists on the Mills Town State Trail. Taken by SouthernMinn.com*

## 6.2 Goals, Strategies and Action Items



*Photo: Webster Township Park. Taken by County Staff*

The following goals and strategies are general statements that focus on Rice County's Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces. The goals are broadly worded, while strategies are actions that can be taken to achieve the overarching goal. The action items are related to the goals and strategies,

but are more specific and detailed. It should be noted that goals, strategies, and action items are in no particular order of importance.

### 6.2.1 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

#### **Goal 1. Utilize All Available Resources to Further Enhance the Quality of the Rice County Park System.**

**Strategy 1.** Update the 2012 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.

**Action Item 1:** Work with local municipalities, agencies, and residents to construct a new and revised Parks Plan that suits all party's needs.

**Action Item 2:** Set a timeline for the completion of each section of the Parks Plan.

**Action Item 3:** The County will use the Comprehensive Plan to guide the development of updating the Parks Plan.

**Strategy 2.** Create/update Master Plans for each County Park.

**Action Item 1:** Use GIS to construct descriptive maps for these master plans.

**Strategy 3.** Identify and implement funding resources for maintenance and improvement of the County park system.

**Action Item 1:** Work with inter-county municipalities to secure funding from sources such as grants.

**Strategy 4.** Promote active communication between the County, local municipalities, and residents.

**Action Item 1:** Increase the frequency of public meetings and surveys for residents to have the ability to voice their opinions/concerns in regards to County parks, trails, and open spaces.

## **2016 RICE COUNTY SURVEY COMMENTS**

“As cities continue to grow, I would like to see more green space around the cities themselves, in which community gardens, parks, and trails could all exist. Similar to green ring around London to stop the sprawl and encourage multifamily dwellings to conserve space, resources, and energy.”

“Maintenance and expansion of the City of Faribault trails are important. Connecting all the towns and cities of Rice County via bike trails and parks, including camping and privacy areas, would be a big boost to the desirability of Rice County as the next great place to live.”

“We need more bike/walking trails, particularly in rural areas. We desperately need to encourage recreation for health and tourism.”



**Action Item 2:** Improve and update the parks section of the County website.

**Action Item 3:** Work with cities, townships, and school districts to promote community use of parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces.

## **Goal 2. Protect, Enhance, and Maintain County Parks and Open Areas.**

**Strategy 1.** Identify areas where future parks, recreation, and open areas could be placed.

**Action Item 1:** Utilize GIS to analyze features for potential uses and future County parks.

**Action Item 2:** Work on providing parks, facilities, and programs to underserved areas.

**Strategy 2.** Continue keeping county parks and trails clean and accessible for residents.

**Action Item 1:** Encourage the development of a volunteer program to help with maintaining and improving the overall quality of the County's natural spaces.

**Action Item 2:** Implement excellent maintenance service in the park system.

**Action Item 3:** Develop a plan to eliminate physical barriers in all park areas to meet the recreational needs of all residents.

**Action Item 4:** Address ADA accessibility across the park and trail system and incorporate changes (where needed) when there are park improvement projects.

**Strategy 3.** Ensure safety throughout the park system.

**Action Item 1:** Have park and trail map guides easily available for Rice County residents and visitors.

**Action Item 2:** Increase and improve wayfinding's throughout County parks

**Action Item 3:** Continue working with the Rice County Sheriff's Department to decrease negative activity going on in parks, open spaces, and trails.

## **Goal 3. Encourage a Healthy and Active Lifestyle by Promoting the Use of Parks and Trails.**

**Strategy 1.** Work with surrounding counties and municipalities to develop potential multi-county trails/parks.

**Action Item 1:** Continue advocating for the expansion of the Sakatah State Trail and the Mills Town Trail.



*Photo: Cannon River Wilderness Area. Taken by County Staff*

**Action Item 2:** Explore the option of implementing an Adopt-a-Trail program within the County Park System.



*Photo: Picnic Shelter at King Mill Park. Taken by County Staff.*

**Strategy 2.** Support the development of programs that encourage active living.

**Action Item 1:** Encourage community involvement with the park and trail system. Ex. Park clean-ups, fundraisers for park equipment.

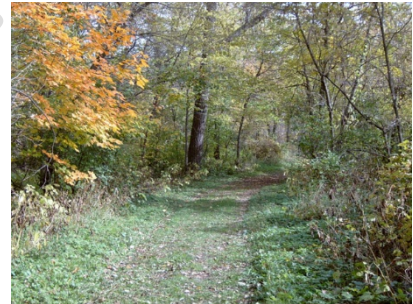
**Goal 4. Conserve and Protect Natural Resources that are Present in the County Park System.**

**Strategy 1.** Park design shall protect and improve the functions of the natural environment and strike a balance between public use and preservation.

**Action Item 1:** Encourage the establishment of a planting program in parks and open space areas where trees and vegetation are lacking.

**Action Item 2:** Support native landscaping and maintenance in County parks, if applicable, to maintain the natural environment.

**Action Item 3:** Advocate for the maintenance and development of natural corridors to foster ecosystems continuity and connections to parks and open spaces.



**Strategy 2.** Encourage the creation, adoption, and usage of Natural Resource Management plans to manage and preserve natural resources within Rice County parks.



**Strategy 3.** Provide recycling opportunities and facilities at public parks and points along the trail.

*Photo: Various parks and wilderness areas in Rice County. Taken by County Staff.*

# 7.0 Sustainability

## 7.1 Introduction

Sustainability focuses on meeting the current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The concept of sustainability is composed of three pillars: economic, environmental and social. Sustainability encourages decisions be framed in terms of environmental, social and human impact for the long-term, rather than on short-term gains.



**Photo:** *Kayakers in the Cannon River. Taken by County Staff*

Rice County’s abundant natural resources contribute to the overall quality of life for all of its residents and visitors. These resources provide many benefits to the County such as economic opportunities, recreational activity options and biological diversity. Sustaining and enhancing these resources will contribute to not only the County’s vibrant economy but will also provide enjoyment for generations to come. While there are areas within Rice County that are attractive for future development it is important that it does not intrude on prosperous agricultural land, protected and preserved natural land and in areas that could cause

potential environmental concerns.

The county is already taking steps toward becoming a more sustainable place for residents and visitors to be. For example, Rice County has over 24 completed solar gardens within its boundaries and has quite a few more in the process of being constructed. Rice County also has

## RICE COUNTY SURVEY COMMENTS

“It would be great to continue and expand attention on renewable energy, clean water, and good agricultural practices for residents and visitors.”

“Protecting surface and groundwater is the most important issue for the future of Rice County. Beyond that, the historic preservation and rural nature of the county attracted us to move here in retirement.”

“Protecting and enhancing our natural environment, and developing jobs/businesses that are environmentally sustainable are my priorities.”

“Carefully planned sustainable development that protects natural resources is most important to me”

County farmers and agricultural land owners to

options for residents at the County solid waste facility to dispose of household hazardous waste, which can be harmful to the environment if not disposed of properly, and as well as a composting site where County residents can dispose of yard waste.

There are also a few cities within Rice County that developed (or are in the process of developing) and are implementing various sustainability practices and plans. For example, the City of Northfield adopted their Climate Action Plan in November of 2019. Their plan’s goal is to go 100% carbon-free by 2040 by decreasing greenhouse gas emissions through mitigation strategies and as well as becoming more resilient to prepare for a changing climate. The City of Faribault started the process of a city-wide Climate Action Plan in the summer of 2020 with the hopes of having it completed and approved for adoption by early 2021.

Looking ahead to 2040, Rice County is looking at ways to become more sustainably friendly in support with the communities within the County. Some options the County’s looking into is preservation and enhancement of natural lands and systems, exploring and expanding energy efficient methods and renewable energy resources, and encouraging the reduction of waste, recycling, reuse, and composting.

## 7.2 Goals, Strategies and Action Items

The following goals and strategies are general statements that focus on Rice County’s Sustainability plans. The goals are broadly worded, while strategies are actions that can be taken to achieve the overarching goal. The action items are related to the goals and strategies, but are more specific and detailed. It should be noted that goals, strategies, and action items are in no particular order of importance.

### 7.2.1 Sustainability

**Goal 1. Enhance, Protect, and Restore Natural Lands and Systems.**

**Strategy 1.** Encourage



**Photo:** Raingarden kit. Taken by the Rice County Soil and Water Conservation District. Page 36 of 55

participate in The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP).

**Strategy 2.** Protect and manage streams, watersheds, and floodplains.

**Action Item 1:** Promote education about the values of watersheds, rain gardens, and low-impact development to address storm water run-off.

**Action Item 2:** Minimize the potential for air, waters and land contamination and pollution that could result from the development process.

**Strategy 3.** Encourage cities to expand urban parks and street tree programs.

**Strategy 4.** Encourage farmers to utilize cover crops programs such as Rice County's Soil and Water Conservation Districts Cover Crop Incentive Program.

**Strategy 5.** Work with County landowners and local municipalities to increase land enrolled in programs like the Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (MN CREP) and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).



*Photo: Solar panels within a solar garden in Rice County. Taken by County Staff gardens and wind turbines.*

**Goal 2: Advocate and Expand the Use of Energy Efficient Methods and Renewable Energy Resources.**

**Strategy 1.** Encourage cities within Rice County to participate/continue to participate in the Minnesota Green Steps Cities program.

**Strategy 2.** Evaluate Rice County owned land that is suitable for renewable energy sources as solar

**Strategy 3.** Collaborate with local municipalities to offer incentives for businesses to incorporate environmentally friendly and sustainable business models and practices.

**Action Item 1:** Work with MinnPACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) and commercial property owners to invest in energy efficiency upgrades.

**Action Item 2:** Advocate for the implementation of green building and energy conservation.

**Strategy 4.** Encourage Rice County residents to reduce their carbon footprint.

**Action Item 1:** Work with local municipalities to increase the number of electric vehicle charging stations.

**Action Item 2:** Assist homeowners with researching and obtaining grants for the weatherization of their homes.

**Goal 3. Encourage Waste Reduction, Reuse, Recycling, and Composting.**

**Strategy 1.** Increase accessibility of composting and organics recycling.

**Action Item 1:** Encourage the use of programs like Northfield Curbside Compost.

**Strategy 2.** Work with local municipalities to host educational engagements pertaining to waste reduction, reducing and managing food waste, and composting and recycling practices.

**Action Item 1:** Advocate for events going on in Rice County to be zero waste.

**Strategy 4.** Encourage businesses around the County to switch over to more sustainable and biodegradable products.

**Strategy 5.** Promote and advocate for funding of food rescue programs.



*Photo: Northfield Curbside Compost logo.*

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## 8.0 Implementation Plan

# 2040 Comprehensive Plan Goals, Strategies, and Action Items

## Economic Development

### Business and Industry Economics:

#### Goal 1: Maintain and strengthen economic diversity.

<b>Strategy 1.</b> Support the establishment and maintenance of housing, transportation, communication, and utility systems which support and foster quality development.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Coordinate the provision of supportive infrastructure in concurrence with new development.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Evaluate new development impacts on existing infrastructure and service to ensure adequate availability of development ready land.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Establish partnerships to address and solve transportation and workforce housing needs.
	<b>Action Item 4:</b> Encourage the development of infrastructure and state of the art telecommunication technology to promote telecommuting and E-business.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Encourage increasing the number of small to mid-size firms within the region by fostering local entrepreneurship and business ownership.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Partner with other agencies and institutions to identify programs and services to assist in the creation of new small and mid-sized businesses.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Strengthen programs which provide business development, information, and technical assistance.
<b>Strategy 3.</b> Promote and foster historical, ecological and agricultural tourism as a suitable and appropriate form of economic development.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Coordinate tourism efforts with other public, non-profit and private organizations.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Promote a variety of year-round attraction to encourage tourism.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Educate the public on the economic benefits of historic and natural resource preservation.
	<b>Action Item 4:</b> Encourage the development of tourism-related businesses.

**Goal 2: Build and retain a highly skilled, adaptable workforce.**

**Strategy 1.** Cooperate with local education institutions to coordinate training/skill requirements to meet the needs of local employers.

**Action Item 1:** Work to reduce barriers to obtaining necessary or upgraded job skills.

**Action Item 2:** Promote access to resources and tools for education, training, and supportive services through a variety of means and media.

**Strategy 2.** Collaborate with business, educational institutions, community organizations, and government to provide information to local businesses.

**Action Item 1:** Provide information on work skills development and available employment opportunities through print, electronic, and telecommunications media.

**Action Item 2:** Create a collaborative recruitment strategy among business, non-profits, and government.

**Action Item 3:** Encourage business, labor, education, and government partnerships to solve work force development problems.

**Strategy 3.** Promote and encourage quality of life and healthy living environment for employers and employees.

**Action Item 1:** Through public and private partnerships, improve and increase workforce housing options.

**Action Item 2:** Improve transportation connections between residential communities and work sites by pursuing opportunities for alternative modes of transportation such as transit bus service, bicycle/pedestrian facilities and amenities.

**Action Item 3:** Provide open space and recreational opportunities as an amenity to attract new businesses and their employees.

**Goal 3: Retain and expand existing local businesses.**

**Strategy 1.** Encourage access to economic incentives for quality job creation and/or tax base enhancement.

**Action Item 1:** Explore an economic development marketing and incentives program targeting strategic business clusters.

**Action Item 2:** Engage with State, Regional and local economic development organizations and agencies to sustain and expand current economic activities and be prepared for future economic trends.

**Action Item 3.** Continue to collaborate and partner with municipalities and townships, to promote employment opportunities and expand the tax base in Rice County.

**Strategy 2.** Encourage existing neighborhood employers to grow “in place,” keeping jobs

**Action Item 1:** Development industry clusters by encouraging the retention, expansion, and recruitment of industries that already have a presence in the County.



close to where people live.	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Encourage Cities to work with property owners and interested developers to address unique development challenges including the maintenance, revitalization redevelopment of existing buildings.
<b>Strategy 3.</b> Support downtown revitalization and neighborhood business development in the cities.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Develop strategies to increase employment growth through more intense and efficient use of existing infrastructure.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Support local innovative businesses and economic activities.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Promote downtowns as a place for innovative and emerging business to expand or relocate.
<b>Goal 4: Attract new businesses to Rice County.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Make available vacant, development-ready land for commercial and industrial use.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Promote well-designed and efficient development and redevelopment of vacant underutilized industrial and commercial lands.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Support redevelopment of existing vacant and underutilized industrial and commercial lands rather than designing additional lands for these purposes.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Monitor and update buildable lands inventory to ensure adequate short and long-term supplies of buildable commerce land.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Encourage businesses that are environmentally and economically sustainable.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Encourage programs that promote sustainable business practices (e.g., recycling, green building or other sustainable design features, the use of green or alternative energy, commute trip reduction programs and utilizing by-products of other Rice County businesses).
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Maximize efforts to attract and recruit industries that are best suited for Rice County's assets and opportunities.
<b>Strategy 3.</b> Maximize efforts to attract and recruit industries that are best suited for Rice County's assets and opportunities.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Actively encourage businesses that provide family-wage jobs to start-up, expand, or locate in Rice County.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> The County shall assure economic development that promotes other community qualities, such as livability and environmental quality that are necessary for a sustainable economic future.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Develop a branding/marketing efforts to promote Rice County as a place to live and do business.
	<b>Action Item 4:</b> Institute appropriate land use regulations to accommodate a contemporary mix of economic activities and development.
	<b>Action Item 5:</b> Promote Rice County's cultural, historic, recreational, education, and

	environmental assets and amenities.
	<b>Action Item 6:</b> Update zoning and subdivision regulations to accommodate for a variety of potential industries.
	<b>Action Item 7:</b> Promote economic development along the Interstate 35 corridor.

## Agricultural Economics: Economic Development

**Goal 1: Sustain a diverse economic mix for the County by promoting and strengthening agricultural and complementary businesses.**

<b>Strategy 1.</b> Maintain a strong and productive agricultural economy while promoting the purchase and sale of locally produced products.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> The County, in cooperation with the cities, will actively promote buying locally, farmer’s markets, events and agricultural tourism opportunities.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Attract agricultural related industries to support diversification and use of raw materials from area farms.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Expand rural business opportunities and enhance rural quality of life.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Work with agencies such as the US Department of Agriculture and other state and local agencies to help fund agricultural resources projects.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Identify strategies that promote agriculture and agricultural support businesses in the County, which may include but not be limited to vineyards, community gardens, agritourism, et al.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Revise the County’s regulations and ordinances to address the evolving technological and operational characteristics of farm operations.

**Goal 2: Expand awareness of local agriculture opportunities and agriculture related businesses within the County.**

<b>Strategy 1.</b> Expand awareness of local agriculture opportunities and agriculture related businesses within the County.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Develop a program to educate the public and the farming community on agricultural issues and opportunities.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Establish a leader and mentorship program to encourage youth involvement in agriculture.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Develop a marketing/awareness campaign focused on local food and agricultural programs.
	<b>Action Item 4:</b> Create outreach programs to engage youth and adults with little or no agricultural experience.

# Land Use

## Growth and Development:

### Goal 1: Support and Encourage Orderly Growth and Development.

<p><b>Strategy 1.</b> Support land use planning, which encourages orderly growth and sustainable development and redevelopment.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Coordinate infrastructure expansion with development; and encourage development where the infrastructure is adequate to sever that growth.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Support the provision of joint services among jurisdictions.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3:</b> Remain apprised of expected future urban growth areas.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 2.</b> Encourage a diverse economic mix for Rice County by promoting existing assets and identifying new opportunities.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Create commercial/industrial zones to promote employment and generate tax base in Rice County.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Identify appropriate areas for commercial and industrial developments, including along the I-35 corridor.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3:</b> Promote agriculture and associated businesses.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 4:</b> Identify and reserve areas with sand, gravel and aggregate deposits for extraction.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 3.</b> Identify additional areas for mixed-use development and further support urban growth.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Continue to evaluate and implement urban growth zones where municipal infrastructure is likely to expand.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Continue to have zoning districts for the unincorporated villages to allow for mixed-use development encouraging the development of municipal type water and sewer services.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 4.</b> Promote the opportunity to lead active and healthy lifestyles through the coordinated development of infrastructure or supporting programs that promote active lifestyles.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Develop connections between existing communities, parks and other destinations to promote safe and active options.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Create land use regulations to improve proximity to nutritious foods and encourage local wholesome food-related businesses and activities.</p>

<p><b>Strategy 5.</b> Support and further develop land use patterns that encourage alternative modes of transportation.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Identify and map concentrations of compact residential and employment development that has potential to be served by transit.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Identify existing land uses and travel corridors in the county that could be transformed into transit-friendly corridors.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3:</b> Encourage local planning for mixed land use areas in or adjacent to transit corridors.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 4:</b> Continue to expand existing partnerships and look for new opportunities to collaborate on providing alternative modes of transportation.</p>

**Agriculture and Natural Resources:**

**Goal 2: Preserve Agricultural Land and Natural Resources.**

<p><b>Strategy 1.</b> Minimize conflicts between agricultural, residential, and other uses.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Adopt land use regulations that control density and development in agricultural and open spaces, to protect and preserve agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Develop management methods for accommodating diverse types of agricultural activity.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3:</b> Allow and encourage complementary commercial or industrial uses.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 4:</b> Protect and promote agriculture by preserving large tracts of land by encouraging clustering of rural residential development through use of transfer of development rights.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 5:</b> Promote higher density housing development in cities and unincorporated villages that can provide municipal or municipal type water and sewer services rather than in the agricultural districts.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 2.</b> Preserve, protect, and improve the surface and underground waters including, but not limited to, rivers, streams, lakes, groundwater, and aquifer recharge areas.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Encourage development to comply with wellhead protection zones.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Develop and employ land use regulations and other techniques for natural resource protection, including transfer of development rights or density, and best management practices.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3:</b> Recognize the relationship between land use and water quality, and continue to support water quality improvements through land use plans and regulations.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 4:</b> Encourage shore land protection and restoration methods such as vegetative</p>

	<p>buffers.</p> <p><b>Action Item 5:</b> Promote higher density housing development in cities and unincorporated villages that can provide municipal or municipal type water and sewer services rather than in the agricultural districts.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 3.</b> In working through land development, the potential for air, water, and land contamination will be considered and minimized throughout the entire process.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Encourage conservation design to preserve natural and scenic values.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Support and implement state and federal regulations that pertain to environmental review.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3:</b> Define, by GIS overlay, and preserve environmentally sensitive areas and other open space by allowing only compatible land uses and development.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 4:</b> Recognize that soil conditions may limit development potential.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 5:</b> Coordinate with Local, State and Federal agencies and organizations to encourage landowners and tenants to implement and maintain good soil erosion healthy soil practices.</p>

## Housing and Livable Communities Design

<p><b>Goals 1: Create a diverse range of housing types for all income levels.</b></p>	
<p><b>Strategy 1.</b> Partner with local communities to develop and manage housing choices for seniors, low- and moderate-income families, and minorities.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Incorporate services into denser areas that support affordable housing.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Encourage the availability of an adequate supply of land and infrastructure for multi-family housing developments.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3:</b> Allow accessory dwelling units in single-family houses or single-family lots in certain districts that are subject to specific development, design, and occupancy standards.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 4:</b> Encourage the development of mixed income housing units.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 2.</b> Work with other organizations to coordinate funding for additional affordable housing units.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Use tax increment financing to support housing projects that serve a mix of incomes and housing types.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Encourage private-public partnerships to aid in the development of affordable housing.</p>

<b>Strategy 3.</b> Promote mixed-use development near infrastructure that integrates rental housing.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Support the provision of rental assistance programs for low-income residents.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Encourage the cities to use inclusionary zoning and developer incentives to integrate affordable rental units into market rate developments.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Support the provision of programs that provide affordable financing options to owners of rental housing to maintain, improve and upgrade the existing supply of rental housing in the county.

**Goal 2: Make available adequate housing for all life stages to ensure diverse communities.**

<b>Strategy 1.</b> Encourage affordable senior housing to allow residents to age in their own communities instead of needing to relocate to get the care they need.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Work with cities to locate senior housing in or adjacent to basic amenities and transit hubs.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Promote a range of housing types for seniors; e.g., adult family homes, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living, and independent living communities.

<b>Strategy 2.</b> Promote the development of affordable workforce housing for newly hired workers (e.g. teachers, nurses, city/county employees, etc.).	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Provide education on first time home buying and homeownership.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Look for opportunities to co-locate housing with other civic projects and/or employers.

<b>Strategy 3.</b> Continue to promote homeownership and increase opportunities for minority families.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Support and collaborate with Rice County’s Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) on assistance programs.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Encourage equitable access to housing, making a special effort to remove disparities in housing access for people with disabilities, people of color, low-income households, diverse household types, and older adults.

<b>Strategy 4.</b> Support housing that addresses the needs of people with physical or developmental disabilities, or mental illness.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Encourage the development of specialized programs to provide rental assistance to persons with disabilities.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Support development of physically-accessible housing to allow for a diverse supply of affordable, accessible housing to meet the needs of people with disabilities, especially near basic amenity areas and provide services and transit.

**Goal 3: Encourage maintenance and improvements of existing housing stock.**

<p><b>Strategy 1.</b> Support the provision of homeowner rehabilitation and improvement programs that assist low and moderate income residents with the financial means to maintain and improve the quality of their homes.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Partner with non-profit housing providers to rehabilitate existing housing for low and moderate income homeowners.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Advocate grant and loan programs that provide residents with the ability to make energy and weatherization improvements to their properties in order to make their homes more energy efficient.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3.</b> Support educational programs that provide residents with information on how to rehabilitate, improve and upgrade their homes.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 2.</b> Support local city and township redevelopment efforts.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Support local efforts to retrofit existing homes with accessibility improvements.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Support tax incentives policies that encourage the rehabilitation of existing housing in the county.</p>
<p><b>Goal 4: Advocate for housing near basic amenities and features necessary for a high-quality of life and to maintain a healthy life style.</b></p>	
<p><b>Strategy 1.</b> Support land use patterns that efficiently connect housing, jobs, retail centers and civic uses.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Collaborate with cities to put housing in transit corridors and near greenway/recreation corridors and basic amenities.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Encourage compact, mixed-use, multi-modal development that will increase travel options within existing urbanized areas, employment centers, and along transit nodes and corridors.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3:</b> Encourage the cities to have complete, walkable neighborhoods that provide proximity to daily goods and services in order to decrease automobile dependence, and enhance livability and build community cohesion.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 2.</b> Support the development of housing that is in close proximity to healthy foods and recreational opportunities.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Build and encourage partnerships that work to expand residential access to healthy food.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Provide convenient and accessible recreational open space.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3:</b> Improve year-round access to both public and private recreational facilities.</p>

## Transportation

**Goal 1: Enhance and maintain a Transportation system that supports economic development along with existing and future land uses.**

<p><b>Strategy 1.</b> Update the Rice County Transportation Plan to guide future transportation improvement decisions for the County.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Identify and collaborate with local, regional and State transportation agencies, governmental units, business and county residents to gather input on existing and future concerns.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Identify and address emerging deficiencies in capacity, access, mobility, safety, transit, trail and multi-modal needs.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3:</b> Coordinate and work with cities and townships to develop long term land use and transportation plans to develop cost effective and efficient transportation systems.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 2.</b> Improve and expand identified transportation corridors.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1.</b> Develop priorities, financing scenarios and funding options for improving and expanding identified transportation corridors.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2.</b> Develop partnerships, collaborate and cost-share with local and state transportation agencies on traffic studies, planning and programming of future improvements.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3.</b> Identify preliminary needs for planning, design, right of way, access control and construction of transportation corridors.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 4.</b> Consider multi-modal air/rail corridors that may be utilized for economic transport.</p>
<p><b>Goal 2: Preserve and improve the transportation infrastructure in Rice county to maximize safety and efficiency.</b></p>	
<p><b>Strategy 1.</b> Develop preservation strategies and policies to maintain the existing transportation system to ensure safe and efficient travel.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Review and update access management and cost participation polices.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Analyze crash data to identify potential needs while updating and utilizing adopted safety plans.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 3:</b> Identify and negotiate maintenance agreements that provide more efficient delivery and services.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 4:</b> Identify reconstruction and replacement projects as part of the annual Transportation Improvement Plan.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 2.</b> Evaluate existing conditions and identify future needs in an effective way to maximize and protect</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Evaluate and prioritize system wide needs, develop funding and collaboration opportunities.</p>
	<p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Strategically apply for funding to offset county investment needed for the transportation system.</p>



existing investment.	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Build a local coalition of support for planning and funding partnerships by encouraging cities, business owners and community groups to be active participants in seeking funding at local, state, and federal levels.
<b>Goal 3: Develop multi-modal and integrated transportation components to enhance options for a diverse population.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Support the continued efforts of the County and Cities working together to support transit opportunities.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Evaluate the option of the Park-and Ride facilities for carpool commuters within the county.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Increase current transit options/routes within and outside the cities of Rice County.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Advocate for long-term investment in transit infrastructure.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Encourage usage of the transit systems.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Prioritize transit service and bike/walk infrastructure improvements in populated areas with low vehicle ownership and low access to needed services.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Connect major employers with needed work forces through a variety of multi-modal programs.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Encourage increased advertising and education of alternative transportation options and local transit providers.
<b>Strategy 3.</b> Support and incorporate active living principles in transportation plans and identified projects.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Continue working with surrounding counties to establish long range trails that could be used for recreation and transportation.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Work with Cities and Townships to implement safe and appropriate trails crossings and access to the roadway system.
	<b>Action Item 3:</b> Identify and promote safe pedestrians crossings to promote walkable communities.
	<b>Action Item 4:</b> Support and assist Cities with their Safe Routes to School Plans.

## Parks, Trails, Recreation & Open Space

**Goal 1: Utilize all available resources to further enhance the quality of the Rice County Park System.**

<b>Strategy 1.</b> Update the 2012 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Work with local municipalities, agencies and residents to construct a new and revised Parks Plan that suits all party's needs.
	<b>Action Item 2.</b> Set a timeline for the completion of each section of the Parks Plan.
	<b>Action Item 3.</b> The County will use the Comprehensive Plan to guide the development of updating the Parks Plan.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Create/update Master Plans for each County Park.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Use GIS to construct descriptive maps for these master plans.
<b>Strategy 3.</b> Identify and implement funding resources for maintenance and improvements of the County Park System.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Work with Inter-county municipalities to secure funding from sources such as grants.
<b>Strategy 4.</b> Promote active communication between the County, local municipalities, and residents.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Increase the frequency of public meetings and surveys for residents to have the ability to voice their opinions/concerns in regards to County parks, trails, and open spaces.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Improve and update the parks section of the County website.
	<b>Action Item 3.</b> Work with cities, townships, and school districts to promote community use of parks, recreation facilities, and opens spaces.
<b>Goals 2: Protect, Enhance, and Maintain County Parks and Open Areas.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Identify areas where future parks, recreation, and open areas could be placed.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Utilize GIS to analyze features for potential uses and future County parks.
	<b>Action Item 2.</b> Work on providing parks, facilities, and programs to underserved areas.

<b>Strategy 2.</b> Continue keeping County parks and trails clean and accessible for residents.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Encourage the development of a volunteer program to help with maintaining and improving the overall quality of the County's natural spaces.
	<b>Action Item 2.</b> Implement excellent maintenance service in the park system.
	<b>Action Item 3.</b> Develop a plan to eliminate physical barriers in all park areas to meet the recreational needs of all residents.
	<b>Action Item 4.</b> Address ADA accessibility across the park and trail system and incorporate changes (where needed) when there are park improvement projects.
<b>Strategy 3.</b> Ensure safety throughout the park system.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Have park and trail map guides easily available for Rice County residents and visitors.
	<b>Action Item 2.</b> Increase and improve wayfinding's throughout County parks.
	<b>Action Item 3.</b> Continue working with the Rice County Sheriff's Department to decrease negative activity going on in parks, open spaces, and trails.
<b>Goal 3. Encourage a Healthy and Active Lifestyle by Promoting the Use of Parks and Trails.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Work with surrounding counties and municipalities to develop potential multi-county trails/parks.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Continue advocating for the expansion of the Sakatah State Trail and the Mills Town Trail.
	<b>Action Item 2.</b> Explore the option of implementing an Adopt-a-Trail program within the County park system.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Support the development of programs that encourage active living.	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Encourage community involvement with the park and trail system. Ex. Park clean-ups, fundraisers for park equipment.
<b>Goal 4: Conserve and Protect Natural Resources that are Present in the County Park System.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Park design shall protect and improve the functions of the natural environment and strike a balance between	<b>Action Item 1.</b> Encourage the establishment of a planting program in parks and open space areas where trees and vegetation are lacking.
	<b>Action Item 2.</b> Support native landscaping and maintenance in

public use and preservation.	County parks, if applicable, to maintain the natural environment.
	<b>Action Item 3.</b> Advocate for the maintenance and development of natural corridors to foster ecosystems continuity and connections to parks and open spaces.
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Encourage the creation, adoption, and usage of Natural Resource Management plans to manage and preserve natural resources within Rice County parks.	
<b>Strategy 3.</b> Provide recycling opportunities and facilities at public parks and points along the trail.	

## Sustainability

<b>Goal 1: Enhance, Protect, and Restore Natural Lands and Systems.</b>	
<b>Strategy 1.</b> Encourage County farmers and agricultural land owners to participate in The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP).	
<b>Strategy 2.</b> Protect and manage streams, watersheds, and floodplains.	<b>Action Item 1:</b> Promote education about the values of watershed, raingardens, and low-impact development to address storm water run-off.
	<b>Action Item 2:</b> Minimize the potential for air, waters and land contamination and pollution that could result from the development process.
<b>Strategy 3.</b> Encourage cities to expand urban parks and street tree programs.	
<b>Strategy 4.</b> Encourage farmers to utilize cover crops programs such as Rice County’s Soil and Water Conservation Districts Cover Crop Incentive Program.	

<p><b>Strategy 5.</b> Work with County landowners and local municipalities to increase land enrolled in programs like the Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement (MN CREP) and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).</p>	
<p><b>Goal 2: Advocate and Expand the Use of Energy Efficient Methods and Renewable Energy Resources.</b></p>	
<p><b>Strategy 1.</b> Encourage cities within Rice County to participate/continue to participate in the Minnesota Green Steps Cities program.</p>	
<p><b>Strategy 2.</b> Evaluate Rice County owned land that is suitable for renewable energy sources as solar gardens and wind turbines.</p>	
<p><b>Strategy 3.</b> Collaborate with local municipalities to offer incentives for businesses to incorporate environmentally friendly and sustainable business models and practices.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Work with MinnPACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) and commercial property owners to invest in energy efficiency upgrades.</p> <p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Advocate for the implementation of green building and energy conservation.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 4.</b> Encourage Rice County residents to reduce their carbon footprint.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Work with local municipalities to increase the number of electric vehicle charging stations.</p> <p><b>Action Item 2:</b> Assist homeowners with researching and obtaining grants for the weatherization of their homes.</p>
<p><b>Goal 3: Encourage Waste Reduction, Reuse, Recycling, and Composting.</b></p>	
<p><b>Strategy 1.</b> Increase accessibility of composting and organics recycling.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Encourage the use of programs like Northfield Curbside Compost.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 2.</b> Work with local municipalities to host educational engagements pertaining to waste reduction, reducing and managing food waste, and composting and recycling practices.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1:</b> Advocate for events going on in Rice County to be zero waste.</p>

<b>Strategy 3.</b> Encourage businesses around the County to switch over to more sustainable and biodegradable products.	
<b>Strategy 4.</b> Promote and advocate for funding of food rescue.	

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# Appendices

Appendix 1: Fundamental Inventory Guide

Appendix 2: Public Forum Summary

Appendix 3: Community Survey & Results

Appendix 4: 2025 Rice County Transportation Plan (May 9, 2006)

Appendix 5: Comprehensive Housing Study

Appendix 6: Le Sueur & Rice Active Living Profile

Appendix 7: Rice County Parks, Recreation & Open Space 2011-2021

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