The Boone County Comprehensive Plan was created utilizing the established partnership between Boone County and the Region 1 Planning Council. Both Boone County and Region 1 Planning Council staff helped in the development, coordination, facilitation, and writing of the plan.
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The Boone County Comprehensive Plan is made up of eight different topics. The following highlights both the major themes and key action plan projects of each topic. For more information, see the topic’s associated chapter.

### 2029 Vision

An inclusive county that cherishes its rural heritage, while also maintaining its high quality of life through a strong education and health system, diversified housing and economic opportunities, strategically placed sustainable development, government efficiencies, and a multitude of family-friendly recreational options.

### Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Livability and Recreation</th>
<th>Environmental Sustainability</th>
<th>Health, Wellness, and Safety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o Preserve the rural character</td>
<td>o Preserve open spaces</td>
<td>o Increase equity of, access to and the public’s knowledge of services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Increase the amount and awareness of recreational and tourism assets</td>
<td>o Update, conduct, and implement more natural resources based planning efforts</td>
<td>o Increase the physical and mental health of the population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Increase communication and funding for environmental projects, plans, and studies</td>
<td>o Lower overall crime rates through increased communication and developing proactive methods of providing services</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Action Plan Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Livability and Recreation</th>
<th>Environmental Sustainability</th>
<th>Health, Wellness, and Safety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o County-wide recreational events calendar</td>
<td>o Boone County Natural Resources, Water Resources, and Hazard Mitigation Plan</td>
<td>o Social services volunteer network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o New multi-cultural celebration</td>
<td>o Environmental volunteer network</td>
<td>o Health and wellness summit and community newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Interactive online recreational facilities maps</td>
<td>o Capital Improvement Program for environmental projects</td>
<td>o Mental health division in the BCHD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Tourism Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td>o Neighborhood watch programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Public Safety Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>o Publish public safety data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education and Public Communication
- Improve the overall skills of the workforce
- Prepare students for existing and future job market
- Continue to utilize partnerships between educational services and government
- Use more effective communication methods with the public

Economic Development
- Promote business assistance programs and small-businesses
- Increase communication and partnerships between government and the business community
- Increase marketing of Boone County as a business destination
- Diversify and increase the sales tax base

Housing
- Maintain affordability
- Meet the needs of younger and aging populations

Transportation
- Increase the use of public transportation and access to active transportation options
- Maintain the efficiency of roadways
- Better utilize the county’s central location to major transportation hubs

Land Use
- Preserve prime farmland
- Concentrate future commercial and industrial around main arterial roadways
- Increase communication between governments on future development
- Prioritize growth areas
- Reevaluate zoning codes, procedures, and processes

Workforce Needs Assessment
- Local high school alumni presentations
- Regional Education Committee
- County-wide mobile library service

Forum for businesses to learn about incentives, assistance programs, and economic development
- Expedited permitting processes for existing employers
- Feasibility study for setting up of business incubators
- Targeted Industries study

Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program informational workshops
- Inclusionary zoning ordinance
- County-wide housing inventory and needs assessment
- Housing agency task force

Bus-Rapid transit and park-n-ride study
- Residents reporting system for roadway conditions and safety concerns
- Complete Streets Policy
- Resurface the Long Prairie Path

Municipal-level updates of their future land use map and strategy
- Establish boundary agreements between all municipalities
- Corridor study for Highway 76 and Business Highway 20
- Land use training session for elected officials and government staff
Chapter 1: Boone
County Overview
Introduction

Boone County has traditionally been known as a rural and agricultural-based county since its founding in 1837. The flat terrain of a landscape left behind from the glacial ice age provides spectacular soils for agricultural production, several flowing streams and rivers, ecologically rich wetlands, and pockets of thick wooded areas. While development has occurred over time, the county still prides itself on preservation and conservation of land and natural resources. Today, the county is considered a family-friendly, conservation-oriented, and truly livable collection of communities with a high quality of life.

Local and Regional Context

Boone County has an area of 280 square miles, one of the smallest northern tier counties. It is located in Northern Illinois along the Illinois-Wisconsin border and sits in a unique and strategically significant position because of its proximity to major population centers and location within the Rockford Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The county shares a border with Winnebago County to the west, Wisconsin to the north, and the Chicago exurbs to the east and south. This position has allowed the county to grow as a transportation crossroads between several major cities.

FIGURE 1.1 SURROUNDING COUNTY POPULATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rockford MSA</td>
<td>349,431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeKalb County, IL</td>
<td>105,106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McHenry County, IL</td>
<td>308,706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock County, WI</td>
<td>160,331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walworth County, WI</td>
<td>102,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnebago County, IL</td>
<td>295,266</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 1.2 REGIONAL CONTEXT

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
There are a total of five incorporated areas located entirely within Boone County. In the south-central portion of the county sits the City of Belvidere with a population of 25,741. The city has the largest population and economic center of the county and is strategically located along several major transportation corridors, such as I-90 with access to Chicago and north towards Wisconsin. Along the western side of the county, near the Winnebago-Boone County border, sits the Village of Caledonia. It is a small bedroom community with a total population of just 219 that has just become incorporated in the past 25 years (est. 1995). On the eastern side of the county, near the McHenry-Boone County line, sits the Village of Capron. It is another small bedroom community with a population of 1,846. In the center of the county, at the crossroads of Highway 173 and Highway 76, sits the Village of Poplar Grove. It is the second largest incorporated area in the county with a population of 5,258. Finally, located between Poplar Grove, Candlewick Lake, and Caledonia sits the Village of Timberlane. It was also incorporated in the past 25 years (est. 1995), and has a population of 937.²

There are additionally two other municipalities with boundaries that extend into Boone County, the City of Loves Park and the Village of Cherry Valley. Both are predominantly located in Winnebago County, but have extended their borders through annexation into Boone County over the past 25 years.

**Demographics**

The county’s population has seen some significant changes over the past 60 years. Between 1950 and 1980, the county grew at a relatively steady and consistent pace, but during the 1990s and 2000s a population boom occurred, and by 2010 the total population had nearly doubled to 54,165. Since 2010, the county’s population has plateaued and even seen a slight decline. The most recent total population of Boone County was 53,851 in 2015.³

That population growth has occurred in multiple locations within Boone County. While the majority of development is centralized around the incorporated municipalities of the county, some has taken place within the unincorporated areas too. Between 2000 and 2015, population totals within incorporated areas increased by 10,419 and within unincorporated areas by 1,646.⁴

---

**FIGURE 1.4 POPULATION GROWTH**

![Population Growth Graph](image-url)
The average age of Boone County’s population has also experienced a shift over the past few decades. In 1990, the median age was 33.1, by 2000 it had risen to 34.5, and by 2015 it was up to 38.2. Additionally, between 2000-2015, the percentage of residents younger than 34 years decreased by nearly 5%. The County, much like many parts of suburban and rural America, is seeing a shift towards an increasing larger portion of the population being over age 60.\(^5\)

On the contrary, Boone County is trending in the opposite direction of the nation when it comes to household size. As many Americans are now having less children, the opposite has been seen over the past 20 years in Boone County. The average household size was 2.84 in 2000 and has since increased slightly to 2.95 in 2015.\(^6\)

Historically, the county has been very culturally and ethnically homogeneous. However, similar to many other Midwestern counties over the past 30 years, a transformation to a more diversified population has taken place. Between 1990 and 2015, people of Hispanic origin increased from 6.4% of the total population to 20.4%. The majority of this increase has been concentrated within the incorporated areas of the county.\(^7\)

Following national trends, Boone County has seen educational attainment continue to rise over the past 20 years. In 2000, 80.8% of residents age 25 or older had at least a high school degree and 14% had at least a bachelor’s degree. To be expected, in 2015, both of those figures have improved, with 86.7% having at least a high school degree and 20.2% at least having a bachelor’s degree. However, these educational attainment levels still lag behind the state’s figures (87.9% and 32.3%).\(^8\)

In connection with the Great Recession and lack of any kind of significant recovery in the region, Boone County’s poverty rate has risen over the past 20 years. Between 2000-2015, the percentage of the population in poverty rose from 7% to nearly 11%. A very similar trend occurred concurrently with the percentage of families in poverty, 5% in 2000 up to 9% in 2015. Not surprisingly median household incomes has a comparable story. In 2000, the median household income was $52,397. That figure rose significantly during the next decade to $61,210, but in line with a decreasing population and increasing poverty rates, that number fell to $58,248 in 2015.\(^9\)
Within the Rockford Region, manufacturing has been the most important industry sector in driving much of the growth historically. Today, manufacturing is still a strong and vital component to the regional economy and the labor force reflects that. In 2015, Boone County had 15,438 total people working within the county and 8,628 of those people were employed within the manufacturing sector. Comparatively in 2005, there were 11,718 total people who worked in the county and 4,342 of them were employed in the manufacturing sector.10

**Historical Growth Patterns**

In general, the overwhelming majority of land in Boone County has historically been in some type of agricultural or open space use since the county was settled in the mid-1800s. For the first 100 years, Boone County saw very little growth and development take place and the growth it did experience centered around the City of Belvidere. The city was founded in 1851 around the utilization of the Kishwaukee River and railroad. For many years, almost all development in the county took place in Belvidere, with some small pockets in Capron, Poplar Grove, and Caledonia. However, after US Interstate 90 was completed in the mid-1950s (connecting Rockford to Chicago) and owning a personal vehicle became much more prevalent in American households, the suburbanization and sprawling nature of development became more prominent. At the same time, the City of Rockford, and its adjacent municipalities in Winnebago County, began to grow and stretch further toward both the interstate highway and Wisconsin-Illinois state line. In the mid-1960s, Chrysler built its Belvidere Assembly Plant along I-90, just southeast of Belvidere. It quickly became the largest employer in the region and still is today. The building of the plant, along with Rockford’s expansion, contributed to steady and continuous growth between 1950 and 1990 county-wide.

Between 1990 and 2010, Boone County saw its most dramatic and land intensive growth patterns take place. Belvidere continued its expansion to the north, south, and west. Poplar Grove grew by five times its population.11 Additionally, a significant number of residential subdivisions started developing on the far west side of the county in unincorporated areas between Caledonia and Highway 20. Many of these subdivisions were in the form of large-lots (1-5 acres) with curvilinear streets and upscale homes. The demand for these homes was driven by the availability of land, proximity to Rockford and the Chicago suburbs, and a strong housing market of the 1990s and early 2000s. Overall, this era of development sparked the building of several new public institutional facilities, the formation of new municipalities, and the massive border expansion of existing incorporated areas within Boone County.

It all came to a screeching halt in 2008 when the Great Recession derailed the national housing market and slowed the entire global economy. As a result, Boone County and the Rockford Metropolitan Statistical Area at-large saw very little growth between 2010 and 2015. Over the past few years, however, some new development has started again, but nowhere near the peak levels experienced during pre-recession times. This has left many residential subdivisions in both the incorporated and unincorporated portions of the county only partially developed, multiple public facilities drastically underutilized, and several empty platted commercial and industrial areas. A map of urbanized growth can be found in Figure 1.11 on the following page.
History of Comprehensive Planning

Seven Comprehensive or Land Use based plans have been developed for Boone County prior to 2018.

- 1966 – Belvidere and Boone County Comprehensive Plan
- 1974 – Land Use Plan – Belvidere and Boone County, Illinois
- 1981 – Land Use Plan Belvidere/Boone County
- 1997 – West Hills Neighborhood Land Use Plan
- 1999 – Boone County Comprehensive Plan
- 2006 – Flora Neighborhood Land Use Plan

The most recent full rewrite of the Boone County Comprehensive Plan was in 1999. Nearing the height of the county’s population boom and feeling the pressure of continuous development, government officials hired Vandewalle & Associates to develop the county-wide comprehensive plan. This document included both incorporated and unincorporated areas of the county, and was heavily focused on land use practices. It proved to be a significant and influential plan that helped guide and shape development practices county-wide. The plan’s original time horizon was 20 years, and is at the end of its lifespan.
Chapter 1 Sources

Text

Figures
2. R1PC and Boone County GIS, 2017.
Chapter 2: Planning Process
Introduction

The Boone County Comprehensive Plan update is a community lead planning effort that establishes initiatives, guides decision making, and provides the county with opportunities to succeed over the next 10 years. The process began with the project being identified and prioritized in the 2017-18 Boone County Strategic Plan and the partnership between the Region 1 Planning Council and Boone County. The two entities collaborated to organize, develop, and write this plan. The process required a truly unique and customized planning effort because a project of this scale had never been undertaken by the partnership before. The approach included forming new internal and external partnerships, data and resource sharing, significant upfront public participation, and generating community-wide buy in.

In order to effectively implement the Boone County Comprehensive Plan, it should be evaluated on an annual basis and updated in full by the year 2029.

Legal Authority of County Comprehensive Plans

Illinois State Statute 55 ILCS 5/5-14001 documents the power counties have to develop plans. It states, “(counties or regions) should have a plan made for the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a co-ordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of said region, and of public improvements and utilities therein, and which plans will in the judgment of the county board, in accordance with the present and future needs of the region and of the State, best promote health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, efficiency and economy in the process of development and the general welfare of said region.”

In addition, the Illinois State Statute 55 ILCS 5/5-14005 describes the need for coordination among plans. It states, “The county planning commission or regional planning commissions created under the provisions of this Division shall encourage the cooperation of the political subdivisions within their respective territories in any matters whatsoever which may concern the county or regional plan or maps prepared by such commission as an aid toward coordination of municipal plans with county and regional plans.”

This plan strives to accomplish and satisfy both of these statutes.

Plan Objectives

There were three key objectives the Boone County Comprehensive Plan update set out to accomplish:

- **Objective 1**: Be more comprehensive than previous plans.
- **Objective 2**: Engage as many people as possible.
- **Objective 3**: Leverage partnerships and limited resources to develop an easy-to-use, implementable roadmap for the future, driven by the community’s needs, vision, and values.
Objective 1

A wide array of topics that effect the future quality of life for Boone County residents were included in the update. The approach still saw land use as a central component to the plan, but included seven additional community-centered topics in order to produce a more all-encompassing plan for the future.

Objective 2

A multitude of diverse public engagement methods were employed to spawn continuous community buy-in and input throughout the process. The combination of these methods generated hundreds of responses from several hundred people across various mediums.

Objective 3

A collaborative approach was utilized throughout the process. Staff leveraged established local and regional networks of agencies, organizations, and individuals to gather the most accurate data, distribute public participation materials, review information, and contribute to the plan. Without countless individuals across the county and region, a successful planning process would not have been possible. The process truly was collaborative in nature and thus has yielded collaboratively driven action items for the future.

Plan Topics

There are a total of eight topics detailed in this plan. Each topic was carefully selected to address a specific subject matter that is both important to residents, but also important for the overall growth and sustainability of the county.

FIGURE 2.1 PLANNING TOPICS
### Planning Process

The planning process took 12 months and included four different phases. Each phase had identified tasks, objectives, and timelines. The following figure shows the overall plan timeline; the public participation timeline; and the objectives, tasks, and results of each of the phases.

#### FIGURE 2.2 PLANNING PROCESS

**PHASE 1**  
**RESEARCH & DATA**  
**OBJECTIVES**  
- Gain insight on best practices.  
- Provide regional & local context.  
- Coordinate/mirror this plan with existing local plans.  
- Find trends and forecasts.  

**TASKS**  
- Research best practices for comprehensive planning.  
- Cross-reference local plans that relate to Boone County.  
- Collect data for all topic areas.  

**RESULTS**  
- 65 plans researched.  
- Hundreds of data points collected.

**PHASE 2**  
**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**  
**OBJECTIVES**  
- Collect citizens’ thoughts & ideas on strengths/weaknesses.  
- Provide chance for voices to be heard.  
- Generate community support.  

**TASKS**  
- Use the following participation methods:  
  - Surveys  
  - Focus Groups/Workshops  
  - Community Events  
  - Facebook Page  
  - Vision Boards  

**RESULTS**  
- 5 public workshops with 170 total attendees.  
- 186 survey responses.  
- 2 community event booths.  
- Facebook Page with 60 followers.  
- 5 vision boards.  
- 6 high school focus groups with 100 students.

**PHASE 3**  
**DRAFT PLAN**  
**OBJECTIVES**  
- Develop an easy-to-use & visually appealing document.  
- Create an implementable document.  

**RESULTS**  
- An all-encompassing, implementable plan for the future of Boone County.

**PHASE 4**  
**PLAN ADOPTION**  
**OBJECTIVES**  
- Formal adoption of the Comprehensive Plan by the Boone County Board.  

**RESULTS**  
- Adoption on XXXX XX, 2018.

**TIMELINE**

- **JUN - JUL 2017**  
  - Vision boards, vision surveys, Facebook Page launch  
  - Attended community events  
- **JUL - DEC 2017**  
  - Public workshops  
- **DEC 2017 - MAY 2018**  
  - High school survey & focus groups  
- **SUMMER 2018**
Overarching Themes

Throughout the planning process several key themes came to fruition. These themes are connected and integrated into the majority of the goals, objectives, and strategies formulated through public input, elected officials’ feedback, and technical staff support. The overarching themes of the Boone County Comprehensive Plan are:

» **Connection, Communication, and Coordination**: Creating new connections, coordinating initiatives, and working together with regional and local governments, agencies, and organizations.

» **Equity**: Providing services equitability through the engagement and inclusion of all residents.

» **Youth Retention and Aging in Place**: The services, options, opportunities, and amenities that allow an aging population to stay in the county, but also attract new and retain existing younger residents.

» **Agriculture**: The importance of the agricultural heritage of Boone County both past and present.

### Chapter 2 Sources

Boone County’s Vision for 2029

AN INCLUSIVE COUNTY THAT CHERISHES ITS RURAL HERITAGE, WHILE ALSO MAINTAINING ITS HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGH A STRONG EDUCATION AND HEALTH SYSTEM, DIVERSIFIED HOUSING AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES, STRATEGICALLY PLACED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCIES, AND A MULTITUDE OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY RECREATIONAL OPTIONS.
Introduction

Livability is a combination of two overarching ideas: how desirable is the county to live in now and how appealing is it for future residents. The only way to accurately calculate the livability of Boone County is through an analysis of several different topics: health, housing, safety, transportation, culture, economics, education, location, and the environment. Collectively those components demonstrate the attractiveness of the area in relation to other communities. Each one of those topics will be described in further detail within this plan, along with how they connect and overlap with other topics. This section specifically explores the recreational and cultural aspects of Boone County.

Recreational opportunities, availability, and relative proximity are substantial aspects of an area’s overall livability and resident’s quality of life. Because of this, the idea of Boone County being highly livable now or in the future is impossible to achieve without high quality recreational options playing an integral role. Recreation encompasses the vast inventory and network of parks, trails, open space, cultural events, and tourism destinations that contribute to a high quality of life for county residents.

Recreational Assets

There are two key agencies in Boone County that are centered around recreation; the Boone County Conservation District and the Belvidere Park District. Between the two agencies, they operate and maintain over 30 miles of multi-use path and trail network, 3,300 acres of parks and open space, and organize/host over 70 combined events, activities, camps, leagues, and programs each year. The Park District also operates the William Grady Aquatic Center, Prairie Fields Sports Park, the Historic Baltic Mill, Riverside Ice Arena, and the Rivers Edge Recreation Center. Combined, most of these recreational opportunities are located in or around the City of Belvidere, but there are also a collection of open spaces and trails scattered throughout the county.

Public art and historic preservation has continued to be a priority of the community. The Boone County Arts Council and Historical Museum play key roles in preserving the community’s history, but also creating a more esthetically pleasing environment for residents and visitors. The majority of public art installations, historical elements, and the historical museum itself are located in Belvidere, but residents of the entire county view the programs, initiatives, and projects of these two organizations as a strength of the county at-large.

At a regional level, the largest operator of parks and open space is the Rockford Park District (RPD) with a total of 127 different parks and 1,561 acres of natural areas in Winnebago County. The district’s coverage area also extends into Boone County via the City of Loves Park’s eastern most municipal border. As an agency, RPD prioritized building new large-scale regionally-significant indoor and outdoor recreational facilities over the past 20 years; UW Health Sports Factory, Mercyhealth Sportscore, and Sportscore 2. These facilities combined to draw 2,884,713 visitors to

Livability & Recreation
Vision

A THRIVING COMMUNITY THAT BUILDS UPON ITS RICH FOUNDATION OF AGRICULTURE, WHILE ALSO PROVIDING A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGH ITS FAMILY-FRIENDLY OPEN SPACE AND PASSIVE RECREATION OPTIONS, IN ADDITION TO A VARIETY OF PUBLIC SPACES FOR RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND COMMUNITY EVENTS.

FIGURE 3.1 RECREATIONAL ASSETS

30+ MILES
OF SHARED USE PATHS

2,500+
ACRES
OF PARKS & OPEN SPACE

70+
ANNUALLY
OF EVENTS, CAMPS, ACTIVITIES, & PROGRAMS
FIGURE 3.2
RECREATIONAL AND TOURISM ASSETS

KEY
- Recreational and Tourism Assets
  - Multi-Use Trails
  - Rock Cut State Park
  - Belvidere Park District Boundary
  - Public Conservation Land
  - Parks/Open Space
  - Water
  - Boone County
  - Winnebago

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2019, Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
the region from all over the Midwest in 2015. In 2017, an expansion was completed at Mercyhealth Sportscore 2 in Loves Park along Boone County’s eastern border. It is an important recreational and potential tourism asset for Boone County.

Another significant regional recreational asset is Rock Cut State Park, also located in Loves Park. The park spans 3,092 acres with two lakes, a multitude of recreational trails, and a 270 site campground. Rock Cut State Park drew 1,095,539 visitors from all over northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin in 2015. It is an outdoor recreational oasis within the region.

Additional public and private recreational assets in Boone County include: public golf courses, campgrounds, YMCA, Boone County Community Building, Village of Poplar Grove municipal parks, Candlewick Lake, Kishwaukee River, and winter recreational trails.

Tourism

A driving force in the Boone County economy is tourism. There are several key organizations that play a role in attracting visitors; The Grange, Belvidere Chamber of Commerce, Growth Dimensions, University of Illinois-Extension, and several of the local agri-tourism businesses. Together these organizations helped bring hundreds of thousands of visitors and nearly $20 million dollars to the county in 2015. Tourism, especially centered around agriculture, is widely recognized as a central piece to a sustainable economic future for Boone County. Over the last decade, agri-tourism businesses have increased in size and popularity, drawing people from all over the region and state. There have even been new events created that highlight the work of these specific businesses, such as the Boone County Farm Stroll hosted by the University of Illinois – Extension. While some agri-tourism businesses have generated more popularity recently, the local event of the year in Boone County is still the Boone County Fair held each August. The fair is one of the few in Illinois that still centers around agriculture including farm equipment, crops, and animals. It draws nearly 200,000 visitors annually, making it the most well attended county fair of the 104 that take place each year in Illinois.

An event that blends many of the elements of livability and recreation with tourism, is a community-driven farmer’s market. In Boone County, there is currently one seasonal and one annual farmer’s market that takes place. Between May and October, in a parking lot along North State Street in Belvidere, there is a local farmer’s market held each Saturday morning. It is small in size, but has had consistent customers, participants, and farmers for many years. On an annual basis, the Boone County Health Department hosts a Famers Market and Wellness Fair in the county’s parking lot. This event highlights different programs, encourages nutrition, and engages the community. Overall, residents recognized throughout the public participation phase that a perfect way to showcase the county’s agricultural resources, attract visitors, and engage a wide range of demographics is through the expansion and marketing of farmer’s markets.
**Community Culture**

Boone County is steeped in a rich history of agriculture and rural heritage. Most residents of the county identify this as one of the reasons they choose to live here, and it is also widely regarded as being one of the most important elements of the county to protect moving forward. Previous plans have highlighted the notion of rural culture and protecting it for current and future residents. The same could be said today. However, it was also acknowledged that adapting and being open to change will be required over the next 10 years in order to allow the county to maintain, push forward, and prosper. Rural culture and remembering the county’s history and roots are still very important to the people of Boone County, but residents know that a healthy balance of new ideas coupled with tradition is necessary moving forward.

This balance is no more evident than in the form of shifting demographics and urbanization taking place over the past 20 years. County residents overall are older and increasingly more diverse than they were in 2000. In addition, the population increase has correlated with an increase in the amount of land that has been taken out of agricultural uses and developed into more urbanized uses. Recognizing and embracing cultural changes and shifts, in addition to continued growth of jobs and homes are important in preparing for the future. The key to a flourishing future for Boone County is striking a sufficient balance between protecting and conserving land and history, with future growth opportunities, and population needs.

Throughout the public participation process the most common theme discussed was the rural culture of Boone County.
Goal 3.1 Continue Boone County’s legacy as a family-oriented community that strikes the appropriate balance between preserving the established rural culture and adapting to the desires of an urban lifestyle.

OBJECTIVES

a. Preserve the existing rural character and improve the overall perception of the county.
b. Cultivate new public recreational resources and awareness.
c. Develop more county-wide events that provide activities for all ages.
d. More effectively market the county’s tourism and recreational assets.

STRATEGIES

Improve maintenance of existing public and open space.

Leverage the agricultural assets of the area in developing a reoccurring farmer’s market that showcases Boone County’s resources.

Create more county recreational facilities.

Seek new funding options for the Boone County Conservation District to expand its activities, assets, and programs.

Develop new multi-use trail connections within the county and region.

Leverage Boone County’s proximity to regional sports and recreation facilities such as Sportscore 2.

Partner with public organizations.

Increase collaboration of various recreational groups, schools, and government entities that organize and plan events.

Organize new events that are attractive for seniors, young adults, and children.

Increase the number of international and culturally inclusive events.

Incorporate both active and passive recreation options into the development of new events and activities.

Market snowmobiling and other winter outdoor activities in the northern part of the county.

Leverage the success of the existing agritourism establishments to increase visitors and foster development of new agritourism destinations.

Market the multi-use trail system to increase visitors.

Increase young people’s awareness of existing recreational opportunities.
Chapter 3 Sources

Text
1. RMAP, 2017
4. RMAP, 2017

Figures
1. RMAP, 2017
   Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. 2013 Year in Review.
   WinGIS, 2018.
Chapter 4: Environmental Sustainability
Environmental Sustainability

Vision

SUPPORT AND EXPAND BOONE COUNTY’S LEGACY OF PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND AGRICULTURE LANDS THROUGH THE PROTECTION OF GREEN SPACE AND PRIME FARMLAND, AS WELL AS CONSERVING WATER, AIR, LAND, AND ENERGY RESOURCES.

Introduction

Boone County is fortunate to have important conservation lands, natural resources, open spaces, and agencies dedicated to preserving those elements for future generations to enjoy. Most of the community’s natural resource base [soils, water, animals, plants and air – collectively referred to as (SWAPA)] remains under private ownership and consequently - private stewardship. In combination, these public and privately stewarded conservation lands significantly contribute to the county’s overall livability. Environmental sustainability encompasses the elements of SWAPA, land uses, waste management, pollution, culture, health, and educational components. These topics are essential in building the foundation of a sustainable plan for the future of Boone County. Historically, these areas have always been of great importance and value to the communities within Boone County, and this continues to be true today. This chapter identifies and prioritizes the environmental assets within the county, in addition to the planning initiatives and strategies that advance the ideas and principals of sustainable environmental protection.

Almost all agencies and entities under the umbrella of Boone County Government touch environmental sustainability issues in one form or another. However, there are several organizations/committees whose work is more centrally focused around environmental issues and rights. Those agencies are the Boone County Conservation District, Boone County Soil and Water District, Belvidere Park District, Boone County Health Department, Water Preservation and Protection Action Committee, Northern Regional Groundwater Planning and Protection Committee, Forest Preserves of Winnebago County, The Natural Land Institute, Regional Environmental Committee, and Winnebago-Boone County Farm Bureau. There are also countless other regional, state, and federal level groups that assist the county on various projects and plans.

Environmental Sustainability benefits the community in the following three ways:

- **Environmental**: less carbon emissions, sufficient water supply and quality, reducing product waste, and preparing for natural disasters and inclement weather events.

- **Economic**: local and regional job growth, reducing poverty, and increasing property values.

- **Social**: increased recreational opportunities, better quality of life, improved health, and a more diverse culture.
Water Resources

One of the most valuable natural resources in Boone County is the availability and access to water, located both above and below ground level. Some 13,000 years ago, a much larger river system was situated approximately where the Kishwaukee River is today. As glacial melt water rushed over the landscape a very large basin was developed and was eventually filled in with sandy material.\textsuperscript{1} This has helped to shape the county’s landscape, provide prime soils for agriculture, and allowed rainwater to collect in large underground aquifers. There are also several lakes, ponds, rivers, and creeks within the county, mostly flowing as tributaries into the Kishwaukee River and eventually the Rock River near the Chicago Rockford International Airport in neighboring Winnebago County.

These rivers and streams provide economic, recreational, and intrinsic value to the region. This abundant source of clean water is needed to sustain manufacturing and food processing industries, large generational crop farms, and use by Boone County residents, plants, and animals. The Kishwaukee River is a well-known tributary of the Rock River and the most prominent body of water in Boone County. It offers a variety of habitats for plants, animals, and humans alike. Segments of the Kishwaukee River, along with its tributary, Piscasaw Creek, are recognized as “unique aquatic resources” by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) because of their high biodiversity and environmental benefits.\textsuperscript{2} Overall, the Kishwaukee River and the other bodies of water across the county sustain a highly critical and sensitive ecosystem that helps supports a wide variety of species.

The segments of the Kishwaukee River and its tributaries that are recognized as “unique aquatic resources” are one of only three with that classification in the state.\textsuperscript{4}
Figure 4.3
Hydrology

Key:
- **Blue**: Hydrology
- **Green**: Wetlands
- **Light Blue**: 100-Year Floodplain
- **Green**: Public Conservation Land
- **Green**: Park/Open Space
- **White**: Municipalities
- **Red**: Townships
- **Orange**: Boone County

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
Water Use and Economic Development

Due to the traditional rural nature of development, a large number of Boone County residents have private on-site well and septic systems. However, in locations where the largest population centers exist, public and private water and waste water treatment services are present. The locations of these off-site utility water services are the majority of properties within the following corporate or association boundaries.

- Candlewick Lake Association
- City of Belvidere
- City of Loves Park
- Village of Capron
- Village of Cherry Valley
- Village of Poplar Grove

The majority of homes, businesses, and institutional uses within the boundaries of these areas are connected to public or private water services, which mainly draw water from subsurface aquifers through wells and pumping stations. The City of Belvidere is the largest water user in the county and subsequently has the largest municipal system. In 2012, Belvidere used approximately 1,163,488,000 gallons of water.5

In the case of most commercial and industrial users, water service hook ups are extremely important for daily operations and potential future expansions. This is a contributing factor to where existing services are located, where the majority of these types of users are located, and where new future businesses will choose to locate within Boone County.

Access to water is also critically important for another significant portion of Boone County’s economy, agricultural users. Farm users draw significant amounts of water for the daily operations of crop and animal production. However, this is almost all done through private on-site wells and distributed throughout the crop fields by irrigation systems and field tiles.7

Recreational Water-Use

Options for recreational water activities are abundant in Boone County, the most well-known being the Kishwaukee River; which flows directly through downtown Belvidere. The river flows from east to west the entire width of the county until it meets the Rock River in southeastern Winnebago County. Conservation efforts of the Boone County Conservation District (BCCD) and the Forest Preserve District (FPDW) have publically protected more than 3,400-acres of important conservation lands along the meandering Kishwaukee River Corridor from the western edge of Belvidere to the river’s confluence with the Rock River in Winnebago County.8 Providing paddlers, anglers, hikers and others with passive recreational opportunities along nearly 20 miles of scenic riverside habitat. In addition to the river, there are a variety of public and private ponds and lakes throughout the county. Most notably is Candlewick Lake located between the Village of Caledonia, Village of Poplar Grove, and Village of Timberlane. It offers fishing, swimming, and other outdoor recreational opportunities for its association members. The river and other recreational water assets of the region are model examples of how impactful outdoor recreation can be to the local economy through tourism opportunities. For more information about all of the recreational assets in Boone County, see Chapter 3: Livability and Recreation.
Water Resources Planning

Due to the fact that surface and ground water are connected, it is important to plan, operate, and manage water supply, water quality, wastewater, stormwater, and other natural water systems in concert with one another. The American Planning Association has coined the term “One Water”, which emphasizes managing water as one resource to break down silos and ensure action occurs through proper policy advancements. Some of the fundamentals of this concept include:

- All aspects of the water system should be integrated into planning for the built environment, including the linkages with land use, energy, and transportation.
- Water is a key amenity in terms of urban design and reinvestment.
- Water planning is as important as land-use and transportation planning.
- One Water values equity, environmental justice, and respect for nature.

There are a few very influential and important regional plans and studies related to water resources in and around Boone County: the Regional Greenways Plan, Strategic Plan for Habitat Conservation and Restoration in the Kishwaukee River Watershed, Winnebago County Natural Resources Inventory, Kishwaukee River Corridor Green Infrastructure Plan, and McHenry County Water Resources Action Plan. The Regional Greenways Plan is utilized to identify critical habitat areas and offer public officials a tool for reviewing proposed land development and acquiring grants. The Strategic Plan for Habitat Conservation and Restoration in the Kishwaukee River Watershed comprehensively addresses the threats to the health of the river and watershed, especially rapid urban growth and construction. The Winnebago County Natural Resources Inventory in combination with the Kishwaukee River Corridor Green Infrastructure Plan identifies and analyzes significant natural and recreational resources in and around the Kishwaukee River and other water resources in Winnebago County, downstream from many of the water resources in Boone County. The McHenry County Water Resources Action Plan, a study conducted by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and the Illinois State Geological Survey (ISGS), evaluates the water resources of McHenry County, upstream from many of the water resources of Boone County. That plan discovered that Boone County’s water may be at risk from depletion due to overuse of water resources by residents in the suburbs west of Chicago and contamination potential from Boone County’s current water practices.

Presently, there are two groups leading the way in water planning and more specially groundwater protection within Boone County, the Water Protection and Preservation Action Alliance (WPPA) and the Northern Regional Groundwater Preservation and Protection Committee (NRGPPC). The WPPA has recently been reestablished in 2017 as more concerns developed over the future of water in Boone County. This group focuses on developing policy and other guidelines for elected officials to utilize in the protection of water. The NRGPPC focuses on education of youth around the region on the importance of groundwater recharge to the vitality of the area. Both groups together have made great progress in these areas over the past year.

Additionally, the NRGPPC and WPPA are working together to apply for water planning grants. The goal is to acquire funds to be used for a study of the current quality of the region’s groundwater in order to establish a baseline for potential contaminants. The study would also assess the quantity of water in the region and the unsustainable depletion practices both in and around the county. The study would collect local data that could then be used to develop a three-dimensional (3D) computerized interactive model. A 3D Groundwater Model would work to help planners and elected officials make better and more informed water planning decisions moving forward. Overall, the people of Boone County believe that it is imperative to protect the county’s water supply in order to ensure the quantity and quality of water is preserved for future generations to use and enjoy.

In addition, there are several other important local, county, and state environmental planning agencies have made significant strides towards proactively addressing concerns over the protection and conservation of in-valuable water resources. Over the past twenty years, the IDNR Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, Boone County Stormwater Management Plan, Boone County Conservation District Master Plan, Water 2050: Northeastern Illinois Regional Water Supply and Demand Plan,
FIGURE 4.5
SENSITIVE AQUIFER RECHARGE AREAS (SARA)

KEY
- High Recharge Areas*
- Water
- Municipalities
- Townships

*See methodology and definitions in Appendix B

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
Crow’s Foot Conservation Area Feasibility Study, and the Beaver Creek Watershed Plan have all conducted some form of water resource planning within Boone County.

Hazard Mitigation and Climate Resiliency

Hazard mitigation is any sustained action to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to human life and property by lessening the impact from naturally occurring disasters.\textsuperscript{10} Climate resiliency planning is the ability to adapt to changing conditions and withstand and rapidly recover from disruption due to complex climate and environmental challenges.\textsuperscript{11} The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) makes reducing hazards one of its primary goals; hazard-mitigation planning and the subsequent implementation of mitigation and resiliency projects, measures, and policies is a primary mechanism in achieving FEMA’s goal. Hazard mitigation and resiliency is most effective when implemented under a comprehensive long-term mitigation plan. Local governments engage in hazard mitigation planning in order to identify risks and vulnerabilities associated with natural disasters, and develop long-term strategies for protecting people and property from future events. A mitigation plan is key to breaking the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage.\textsuperscript{12}

Developing a hazard mitigation plan enables local governments to:

- Increase education and awareness around threats, hazards, and vulnerabilities.
- Build partnerships for risk reduction involving government, organizations, businesses, and the public.
- Identify long-term, broadly-supported strategies for risk reduction.
- Align risk reduction with other state, tribal, or community objectives.
- Identify implementation approaches that focus resources on the greatest risks and vulnerabilities.
- Communicate priorities to potential sources of funding.\textsuperscript{13}

Hazard mitigation plans are also critically important because they play a role in acquiring federal monies. A FEMA approved plan is a condition for receiving different types of non-emergency disaster assistance, including funding for mitigation projects and other preservation measures. Ultimately, establishing a hazard mitigation plan enables local planning officials to take action in reducing loss of life and property, thus lessening the impact of disasters.\textsuperscript{14}

Currently, Boone County does not have a county-wide hazard mitigation or resiliency plan, however it does have a variety of different plans and groups focused on working together to address hazard mitigation and resiliency planning. The Boone County Emergency Management Agency (EMA), the Boone County Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program (PHEP Program), and the Boone County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) work together to plan, organize, and prepare for potential disasters. A more detailed explanation of each group’s work can be found in Chapter 5: Health, Wellness, and Safety.

Energy Consumption/Conservation

Energy consumption is a necessary attribute of the modern world and as a result society is heavily dependent on fossil fuels for transportation, heating, electricity, industry, and in general, daily life. Nevertheless, over the past twenty years there has been an intensified global shift to start reducing the amount of energy consumed and conserve what is left. The shift has been driven by cost savings and an effort to decrease humanity’s overall carbon footprint. Boone County businesses and homeowners alike have worked to improve their structure’s energy consumption through employing alternative energy sources, new technologies, creating greater energy efficiency, carefully monitoring usage, and educating people on conservation practices. In fact, the private sector has embraced and pursued many of these ideas. The Chrysler Group LLC completed three natural gas-saving projects at the Belvidere Assembly Plant in early 2010, earning a total of $1.3 million in incentives from the Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program. The upgrades and improvements save nearly 2.5 million
therms annually, equivalent to 1,000 homes’ energy usage for one full year. Due to this effort and several others, in 2015 the plant was awarded a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold Green Building System certification. In the public sector, there are similar initiatives underway. For example, Belvidere School District 100 is actively adopting eco-friendly practices throughout their facilities and have recently received the Schools of Illinois Public Cooperative Stewardship Award for their work. It is critically important for both private and public entities in the county to learn from these examples and over the next decade, a prioritized county-wide focus needs to be placed on consuming less and conserving more energy.

**Natural Resources**

Historically, Boone County has always had a rural culture where its residents value agriculture and open space. Today that is still true, however the challenge remains — how to maintain the balance between an agrarian lifestyle and increasing development; all while protecting the health and wellbeing of the population and remaining ecological communities. One of the main reasons Boone County has remained mostly agricultural-based, with family farms in operation for generations, is due to the high-quality nutrient-rich soils found in the area. The county is almost completely covered in soils that the U.S. Department of Agriculture defines as prime farmland. The highly productive soils are so important that several programs, groups, and laws at the state, county, and community-level are actively working to protect agricultural land throughout the county. See Chapter 10 Land Use for more information.

Open space protection is also a high priority. The green infrastructure network of open spaces, otherwise known as greenways, are an interconnected system of parks, prairies, forests, paths, trails, wetlands, riparian areas, and lands within the 100-year floodplain. Greenways have high biodiversity and are extremely important to the preservation and conservation of natural habitats, wildlife, and environmentally sensitive areas. There are over 33,000 acres of land in Boone County that have been identified in the Regional Greenways Plan, many of which are privately held. This map provides local agencies a guide for new priority land acquisition, protection, and importance. However, many of these areas have not been studied or analyzed in several decades. The data being used to quantify, designate, protect, and determine where these key areas are located is outdated and must be modernized. It will take a concerted effort of both public agencies and private land owners to continue the protection of the areas identified in the plan and work to update the data within it.

Boone County’s natural resources are plentiful, especially near the Kishwaukee River which is considered one of the highest-quality streams in Illinois due to its relatively clean, clear water, and its diversity of wildlife. The entire Kishwaukee River watershed is designated as both a Conservation Opportunity Area and an “Illinois Resource Rich Area” by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The watershed supports numerous threatened and endangered plant and animal species. The entire length of the Kishwaukee River corridor is 63.4 miles and the watershed has an area of 1,250 square miles, with 20 miles of the main branch in Boone County alone. About 1,700 species of plants are found in the Kishwaukee River watershed, as well as 59 species of fish, 26 species of mussels, and 14 species of large crustaceans. At least 28 of its plants and 30 of its animals are listed as threatened or endangered in Illinois. Within the portion of the river located in Boone County there were 15 species identified as threatened and endangered during the 2016 Illinois Natural Heritage Database Collection process. In total, 16 species of mussels have been documented throughout the entire river system, which is a significant indicator of a waterways long-term health.

There is also a continued need to prioritize the protection of the county’s various high quality habitats. These areas are important because they help improve water and air quality, help stabilize lands from erosion, protect important species, and provide a home to diverse native plant and animal populations. Some of the various natural habitats that currently exist within Boone County are wetlands, forests, prairies, meadows, marshes, riparian areas, and open fields, to name a few. Each of the different habitat types throughout the county provides an opportunity for diverse plants and animal species to thrive. Without an assortment of high quality habitats, the possibility of losing...
many of the area’s native species becomes ever-increasing. A few key public habitat areas include the Kinnikinnick Conservation Area, Piscasaw Fen Conservation Area, Kishwaukee Bend Conservation Area, and Beaver Bluffs Conservation Area. In addition, there are countless private properties where many of these naturally occurring, high quality habitats present.

Although the water quality of the Kishwaukee River is generally very good, sections of it have recently been found to be contaminated with low levels of pollutants affecting the river’s ability to support plant, animal, and human populations. According to the IEPA, of the 63 total miles that make up the north branch, 35 miles are impaired due to Polychlorinated Biphenyls and 26 miles exceeds acceptable levels of mercury. The result is consumption advisories for fish caught anywhere within these river locations. Pollutants are not the only cause of decreased water quality along the Kishwaukee River, dams, habitat loss, extreme weather events, erosion, and urbanization have also had negative effects on the environment and the health of the plant, animal, and human populations. All of these issues are addressed in the Strategic Plan for Habitat Conservation and Restoration in the Kishwaukee River Watershed developed by the Kishwaukee River Ecosystem Partnership in 2006.

Both urban and rural runoff factors effect water quality. In urbanized areas like Belvidere and Woodstock (McHenry County), parking lots, roads, rooftops, and municipal discharge contribute to the stormwater runoff that ends up in the Kishwaukee River. This runoff can often times contain pollutants. However, rain gardens, bioswales, rain barrels, and other stormwater mitigation strategies can reduce the effects of these occurrences. In more rural areas dominated by agricultural uses, runoff from fields often makes its way through the northern tributaries of Boone County to the Kishwaukee River. This water can contain chemical runoff and stream sedimentation pollution. Since the majority of the land within the Kishwaukee Watershed is in agricultural production, it is critically important for stormwater mitigation strategies to be utilized by Boone County farmers. Best management practices like minimum tillage, grassed waterways, streamside filter strips, terraces, tile runoff maintenance, no-till, cover crops, bioreactors and other natural plant buffers are very effective techniques to minimizing the various effects of agricultural runoff. The Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District provides a wide variety of services designed to educate and inform residents of these types of stormwater management best practices.

Most of the land and natural resource protection in Boone County is made possible by the hard work of private stewardship. While the Boone County Conservation District, Belvidere Park District, and Forest Preserves of Winnebago County continuously prioritize property acquisition, the overwhelming majority of environmental assets in the county are privately held. That’s why it is extremely important to continuously promote the efforts of and provide resources, opportunities, and education to private land owners. The Boone County Conservation District, Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District, IDNR, Natural Land Institute, Openlands, and a host of other local, state, and federal agencies work to both promote and provide resources for private stewardship. It is critically important to the long term success of the county’s protection and conservation of natural resources to maintain the efforts of both private land owners and public agencies in Boone County.

Environmental Health

The environment plays a key role in the overall health of Boone County’s residents. Air, water, and soil quality are linked to public health through the negative aspects of these elements effecting the overall environmental sustainability of the county. Environmental health hazards like pollution, contamination, habitat fragmentation, and natural disasters can negatively impact both the natural resources of the area and health outcomes of the population. Overall, there is a symbiotic relationship within a healthy ecosystem between the health of the environment and the health of the people living, working, and visiting the area. This is just another reason why maintaining and improving the environmental sustainability of Boone County is so important for the future. More information regarding public health issues and opportunities can be found in Chapter 5: Health, Wellness, and Safety.
FIGURE 4.8
GREENWAYS MAP

KEY
- Public Parks
- Conservation Area /
  Public Preserve
- Privately Protected
- Critical/Sensitive Area
- Priority Acquisition
- Municipal Boundaries
- Agricultural Preservation
  Areas
- Lakes & Ponds
- Rivers, Streams & Creeks
- Illinois Protected Natural
  Area/Preserve
- Canoe Launch

The Critical/Sensitive Areas includes property in the floodplain, steep slopes, 150ft buffer around all hydrology, and any special areas identified as priority for acquisition.
FIGURE 4.9
PRIME FARMLAND

KEY
- **Green**: Prime Farmland
- **Blue**: Water
- **White**: Municipalities
- **Yellow**: Boone County

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
Environmental Sustainability Goals, Objectives, & Strategies

Goal 4.1 Protect and promote the natural resources of Boone County.

OBJECTIVES

a. Update and conduct more natural-resources-based planning efforts.

b. Prioritize the implementation of existing plans.

c. Preserve open spaces.

STRATEGIES

Update the wetlands database.

Conduct new studies on different natural resources to better understand the quantity and quality.

Pursue a water resources plan that incorporates groundwater quantity and quality, recharge areas, soil type, bedrock structure, and protection of our water supply.

Conduct a study on riparian areas.

Create a hazard mitigation plan to build upon the existing coordination of agencies/departments and educate the public.

Implement the Stormwater Management Plan.

Implement other existing natural-resources-related plan recommendations.

Utilize more agricultural easements to protect valuable land.

Prioritize the protection of riparian areas.

Continue to prioritize open space areas to be added to the Boone County Conservation District’s future land bank.

Goal 4.2 Cultivate a unified voice for the county on environmental issues, priorities, and funding.

OBJECTIVES

a. Find alternative and unique resources for environmental projects, plans, and studies.

b. Increase communication between agencies and the public on environmental topics

STRATEGIES

Create connections with local colleges and universities to use interns and other resources for conducting environmental studies within the county.

Expand the use of public/private partnerships and the seeking of grant opportunities to address the funding gap for future environmental planning efforts.

Create an environmental volunteer network for people to connect with organizations and projects needing assistance.

Develop a funding allocation strategy for environmental projects, similar to a Capital Improvements Plan.

Coordinate the multitude of grassroots efforts in the county and region to better utilize resources and prevent redundancy of efforts.

Develop alternative and effective ways of communicating local environmental issues and news.
Chapter 4 Sources

Text

17. Appendix B, U.S. Department of Agriculture Prime Farmland Map
24. RMAP GIS
Chapter 4 Sources

Figures

7. Illinois Natural Heritage Database
Chapter 5: Health, Wellness, and Safety
Health, Wellness, and Safety
Vision
A COUNTY COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY BY IDENTIFYING NEEDS, IMPROVING SERVICES, PROVIDING GREATER ACCESS TO THOSE SERVICES, AND LOWERING CRIME RATES.

Introduction
Healthy and safe residents are cornerstone traits to a prosperous and thriving county. This chapter will explore the current state of public health, community wellness, and the status of safety in Boone County, in addition to past successes and future opportunities.

Public health is comprised of a large and complex network of social and physical influences such as land use, the environment, social norms, education, transportation, and health care. Collectively, the physical environment, built environment, and social construct of the community contribute to the overall public health of Boone County residents. Public safety includes the services, organizations, and programs that strive to both protect and preserve the community’s well-being, culture, and assets.

Health and Wellness
A topic that has often been overlooked in previous comprehensive planning efforts is public health, however this plan aims to change that in part because of the emphasis the community has placed on the subject throughout the public participation phase. Improving the overall health of the community was collectively voted a top priority by over 200 county residents.1 While the county currently ranks 14th in the state for overall health outcomes, there are still glaring needs within the population and gaps in the services provided.2 Some of the most significant weaknesses that were identified during the public participation phase were overall physical health of the population, mental health services, and access to health services.

There are several agencies and organizations that make up the public health services network in Boone County including the local health department and other county government services, clinics and immediate care facilities, social service organizations, mental health facilities, schools, food pantries, and the parks and recreation facilities.

Physical Health
Residents of Boone County have always strived to be physically healthy. This is no more evident than the countless recreational and exercise opportunities available, the investment of several major health care providers in the community, and the expansive array of social services provided. The county values a healthy population because it reduces the demand on public services and increases the overall livability of the community. In total, a physically healthy population is in the best interest of all residents, businesses, taxpayers, and governments.

A positive sign, in relation to the physical health of the community, is the increasing life expectancy of Boone County’s residents. This is a positive effect of some technological advances in medicine, care, and knowledge, but also the attitude and culture of the community. The current life expectancy of a Boone County resident in 2014 was 79 years old,3 up from 77 years old in 1990.4 That figure is
Nevertheless, Boone County is not without its weaknesses when it comes to physical health. There are several trends in diseases, behaviors, and practices that can be improved upon to promote the sustained long-term physical health of the community. The first is nutrition and exercise. In Boone County, 34% of all adults were obese in 2016. That's up from 27% in 2011 and is 7% higher than both the state and country. In concert with this trend, the number of people diagnosed with diabetes has also been on the rise. In 1996, only 5.4% of adults were diagnosed with the disease, but by 2014 that figure rose to 8%. In a recent survey by the Boone County Health Department (BCHD) as part of their Mobilizing Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Strategic Planning Process, nearly 800 people were asked what their assessment was of the county population’s overall physical health, their own personal physical health, diet, and levels of exercise. The majority of responses for all questions cited a “somewhat healthy” response, meaning that they see room for improvement in this area. In an effort to reverse these trends, the BCHD recognized obesity and Type II diabetes as the top two health concerns for Boone County in their 2012 Illinois Project for Local Assessment of Needs (IPLAN). Both diseases have dedicated action plans within the document that are actively being worked on by the BCHD for reducing the county’s totals.

The second trend is the number of people diagnosed and dying from chronic diseases, particularly heart disease and cancer. Over the past seven years alone, 52% of all deaths in Boone County have been related to one of the two diseases. A sum of the next ten combined leading causes of death in the county do not even equal the total deaths from heart disease and cancer. The BCHD has recognized these issues and developed programs to address education, prevention, and awareness of the chronic diseases affecting Boone County. An example is the “Chronic Disease Prevention Program”, which focuses on monitoring individuals through screening and conducting general wellness tests for chronic diseases. Overall, the physical health of Boone County’s residents has both positive components and room for improvement moving forward.

**Mental Health**

Boone County has acknowledged that increasing mental health services is a high priority over the next 10 years, chiefly addiction and substance abuse. The most traditional forms of these issues are usually associated with tobacco and alcohol use, but a new substance is rapidly taking hold, opioids. Between 2010 and 2015, the number of overdose related hospitalizations in the county as a result of opioids or heroin has increased 175%. At a regional, state, and national level, similar trends exist. In the Community Assessment Survey conducted by the BCHD, illegal drug use was voted the most important health concern moving forward. The problem has even escalated to a level where the Federal Government has declared the opioid crisis a public health emergency. Many different agencies, organizations, and partnerships are working to combat addiction and other mental health issues. First, Boone County has recently announced that it is suing several large pharmaceutical companies for compensation because of the role they played in producing opioids and pushing them to doctors and patients. Regionally, Winnebago County and the City of Rockford have jointly filed a similar lawsuit on the same basis. Second, there are two established groups made up of health and safety officials in Boone County who are already working together on substance abuse issues, the Boone County Drug Coalition and the Boone County Behavioral Task Force. Third, related to another addiction issue, is the “Illinois Tobacco Quitline” program. It provides free resources to encourage people to stop smoking through a partnership between the BCHD, Illinois Department of Public Health, and the American Lung Association. Lastly, the Boone County Council on Aging has developed multiple programs aimed at mental health for older residents, including the “Memory Café” and “To Your Health” event series. These and other related programs will be increasingly needed as the county’s population ages over the next decade. In total, mental health programs, resources, and education have become a priority in Boone County and will continue to be in the coming years.
Access and Reducing Inequities in Services

It was widely recognized throughout the public participation phase that there are two major improvements the county should be striving to accomplish when it comes to public health services; increase access and provide more equitable services.

Locally, there are several small medical clinics within Boone County, and several major hospital campuses in the region. The clinics are conveniently located for a large portion of the county’s population, but they mainly provide routine-type check-ups and thus do not offer the more significant or specific health services some need. The proximity of the major medical centers regionally allows county residents to get top-notch, specialized services nearby. It also helps curb the demand for developing redundant health programs in Boone County. This and a collaborative approach to providing health services is especially important moving forward as resources and budgets continue to shrink. However, the issue of access will continue to be critically important as more residents are forced to travel greater distances routinely for medical care and services.

Boone County is similar to most rural counties across the nation where the transportation system has traditionally been automobile oriented. Without a personal vehicle, it is nearly impossible to travel to work, run errands, or access services. This has continuously caused difficulty for low income individuals and families who may not have access to a vehicle or younger and/or aging populations who cannot drive. In turn, these populations have significant obstacles when it comes to accessing medical care, social services, and nutritious foods. A more detailed description of existing weaknesses and future opportunities related to access is provided in Chapter 9: Transportation.

Boone County’s population is now over 20% of Hispanic Origin, with portions of that group speaking Spanish as their primary language. This has proven to be a barrier in engaging, communicating, and providing accurate services for the group because of cultural and language differences. Boone County government, specifically the BCHD, has made a concerted effort to reach the Latinx and Hispanic community through the hiring of bi-lingual staff, translation of most written departmental materials into Spanish, community outreach targeting the Latinx and Hispanic population, and engagement of community leaders. Utilizing these successes and pursuing future alternative opportunities are core to the continued effort of the county to provide equitable government services.

Of the 17 people currently employed by the BCHD, 7 are bi-lingual speaking both Spanish and English.
FIGURE 5.5
COUNTY AND REGIONAL HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

KEY

Provider Locations

MUNICIPALITY

Belvidere
Cherry Valley
Loves Park
Poplar Grove
Rockford
Timberlane
County Border

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Providers</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belvidere Park District</td>
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<tr>
<td>CASA Program Boone County</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boone County Conservation District</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boone County Council on Aging</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boone County Health Department</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Action Agency</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crusader Community Health</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>MercyHealth Belvidere</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javon Bea Hospital- Rockton</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Illinois Food Bank</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSF St. Anthony Medical Center</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSF Medical Group Belvidere</td>
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<td>RAMP</td>
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</tr>
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<td>SwedishAmerican Medical Center</td>
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<td>SwedishAmerican Hospital</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Way of Boone County</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Illinois Extension</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
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<td>Belvidere Family YMCA</td>
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<td>OSF Poplar Grove</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javon Bea Hospital-Riverside</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public Safety

Safety is critically important to the livability of a community. The public safety services in Boone County are a combination of the 911 Call Center (shared between the county and City of Belvidere), Boone County Sheriff’s Department, Boone County Fire Districts 1-5, Boone County Circuit Court, Boone County Coroner’s Office, Boone County Emergency Management Agency, Boone County Public Defender’s Office, Boone County Corrections Office, Boone County Jail, Capron Rescue Squad, Candlewick Lake Public Safety, Belvidere Fire Department, and Belvidere Police Department.

Public Safety Services

Boone County is a small rural county, and because of this many public services are shared or consolidated for efficiency. An example of this is the 911 Call Center in Belvidere, which is a shared operation between the county and the City of Belvidere. The center fielded 78,548 emergency calls in 2016. Of those calls, 33,292 were specifically for the Boone County Sheriff’s Office.\(^\text{15}\) The Sheriff’s Department provides services to the entire county, including all municipalities other than the City of Belvidere. The same is true of the Boone County Fire Districts. The City of Belvidere operates its own public safety services within the city limits, but provides assistance and resources outside of the city, when needed. In total, there are currently 37 sworn deputies in the Sherriff’s Department and 88 volunteer firefighters in Boone County Fire Districts 1-5.\(^\text{16}\) The partnerships between the fire departments and police services has yielded effective results and because of this collaborative effort Boone County has maintained a high level of public safety.

Emergency management services and planning are also provided county-wide through a collaborative effort led by the Boone County Emergency Management Agency (EMA). EMA, led by the Boone County Sheriff’s Department includes county and municipal governments, public safety officials, first responders, and other local organizations who prepare, plan, and coordinate emergency response. Two additional groups partner with the EMA and focus on more specific elements of emergency management planning. The Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program (PHEP) centers on public health effects of emergencies and the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) focuses on chemical and hazardous spills.

Crime Rates

Crime rates are one of the most effective ways to rank and compare public safety across the state. There are three main categories of crime rates: property, violent, and drug arrests. Boone County overall ranks favorably in two out of the three categories. When it comes to property crime rates, the county ranks much lower than the state and near the middle among counties. In 2014, the property crime rate was 1,149 per 100,000 people, which is 59 out of 102 Illinois counties. Violent crime rates are also low at 143 per 100,000 people in 2014, which is 56 out of 102 counties. Drug crime arrests, however, are much higher than the state, and the county overall ranks third worst in that measure.\(^\text{17}\) While Boone County is largely considered by most residents and visitors to be safe, there is room for improvement in each of these three areas.

Through the public participation activities several specific weaknesses and potential opportunities were identified. A few key weaknesses that contributed to the previously mentioned crime rates include: shrinking resources, limited communication with the public, and increased drug usage. First, dwindling resources are not uncommon among small rural counties and Boone County is no different. Specifically, this weakness is not just isolated to public safety services, it is effecting all county government functions. In Chapter 7: Economic Development, this topic is explored in greater detail. Second, communication problems with the public can be attributed to many different issues and are again not just isolated to the public safety service providers. Specific detail on this topic is further
explored in Chapter 6 Education and Public Communication. Finally, increased drug usage is an ever-growing issue in the county and region, and it too is detailed more extensively in a different section (see the Health and Wellness section above).

There are already strategies in place or opportunities identified to combat some of these weaknesses and help improve the overall crime rates in the county. One is the increased use of data, tracking measures, and obtainable targets to increase efficiency and effectiveness of services. The Sheriff’s Department has already started doing some of this internally, but it could be increasingly expanded upon over the next ten years. A second is furthering the strong connections already established between the county’s services (Sheriff’s Department and Fire Districts) and City of Belvidere’s services (Police and Fire Department). These agencies currently share the 911 Call Center and police station, they actively communicate and coordinate with each other, and ultimately provide more expansive coverage of the county with limited resources. The collaboration has proven successful for the community at-large, however increasing communication with the public through education, community outreach, and neighborhood watch programs can be effective tools for engaging the public in the future.

It is important to note that the collaborative and systematic approach currently being utilized is working to provide high levels of public safety for Boone County residents, and it will continue to remain a priority over the next decade. However, to maintain and improve upon those services it is also important to build off of the successes of existing programs, initiatives, and communication already in place, while also striving to innovate, utilize technology, and be proactive.
FIGURE 5.8
PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICE PROVIDER BOUNDARIES AND LOCATIONS

KEY

- Police Center*
- Fire Stations
- Fire Districts
- Belvidere Muni. Fire Coverage

POLICE DISTRICTS
- Belvidere PD
- Cherry Valley PD
- Boone Co. Sheriff’s Department
- Loves Park PD
- Water

* Police Center includes the Belvidere Police Station,
  Boone County Sherriff’s Office,
  Boone County Jail,
  Boone County Court House, and
  combined 911 Dispatch Center

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
## Health and Wellness Goals, Objectives, & Strategies

### Goal 5.1 Equal access to health and wellness services for all community members.

**OBJECTIVES**

| a. Improve access for residents to health and wellness services. |
| b. Increase the public’s knowledge of the health and wellness services available within the county and region. |
| c. Continuously provide equitable health and wellness services. |

**STRATEGIES**

- Continue to pursue coordination and shared resources between other county health departments, health coalitions, and regional entities.
- Encourage local businesses to establish and promote wellness programs.
- Expand public transportation routes within Boone County and increase public transportation programs to connect underserved populations with limited mobility to major medical facilities in the region.
- Leverage Boone County’s proximity to several regional-medical centers.
- Allow all populations to use and access services.
- Increase awareness and recognition of cultural differences by encouraging policies which improve service provision to all county demographics.
- Pursue opportunities to expand services that allow a greater number of residents to age in place, such as in-home care.
- Expand services for children and families, especially young mothers.

### Goal 5.2 Foster increased overall public health for Boone County residents.

**OBJECTIVES**

| a. Improve access to mental health services. |
| a. Strive for physical health improvements population-wide. |

**STRATEGIES**

- Establish a mental health division in the Boone County Health Department.
- Develop and promote more programs to help homeless populations.
- Develop and promote more programs to address drug addiction, substance abuse, and recovery.
- Find new or alternative long-term funding options for services and programs.
- Pursue alternative transportation options/improvements that promote healthier living.
- Develop healthy food/nutrition, heart disease, and physical health education and programs.
- Partner with the Boone County Conservation District, Belvidere Park District, and the school districts to create more engaging physical activities for all populations.
- Explore partnerships with the region’s post-secondary education institutions, such as UIC College of Medicine, Saint Anthony College of Nursing, and Rock Valley College as resources for health education.
Safety Goals, Objectives, & Strategies

Goal 5.3 Maintain and continue to improve upon the high quality of public safety provided in Boone County.

OBJECTIVES

a. Continue to make Boone County a safer community.

b. Increase communication, community relationships, and public safety transparency.

c. Develop proactive and preventative methods for providing all forms of public safety services.

STRATEGIES

Develop new and expand existing programs to educate youth about drug use.

Create neighborhood watch programs throughout the county.

Research and pursue replication of existing public safety best practices that have proven successful in other similar areas.

Maintain coordination and communication with regional and municipal public safety agencies.

Increase the accuracy of the 911 dispatch services through upgrading the technology used.

Increase communication between public safety agencies and citizens through multiple communication forms, specifically through social media.

Increase levels of public interaction and community involvement by Sheriff’s Department employees.

Highlight the outstanding personnel and volunteers that provide public safety services in Boone County.

Actively pursue new connections between public safety staff and the Latino population.

Use performance measures and data to prioritize resources and plan for future need.

Increase coordination with other governments to minimize budgetary constraints and avoid duplication of services.
Chapter 5 Sources

Text

1. Boone County Comprehensive Plan public participation events. See Appendix Page. X.


Chapter 5 Sources

Figures


6. R1PC GIS, 2018


8. Boone County GIS, 2018
Chapter 6: Education and Public Communication
**Introduction**

Public education is an investment in the future of a community. Having reputable schools and the opportunity they provide is vital to the current and future health of the region. Quality schools are attractive for families who want to provide their children with the best opportunities available. Likewise, a strong educational environment is also attractive for business and industry that strive to recruit an educated, well-adjusted, and skilled labor force. A region’s educational institutions don’t just prepare students to be degree or certificate holders, but active and contributing members of society. In order for Boone County to continue to be a livable place, the educational environment, which includes the public K-12 schools, regional higher education institutions, and adult education programs, must continue to be one of the major strengths for the region. The county supports these institutions by partnering with them in order to support their infrastructure, programmatic, and facility needs. In this way, the county has a role in driving the positive community impacts of quality education.

This chapter will include a profile of the educational institutions within Boone County, the links between education and other important regional assets, as well as the relationship between schools and local governments.

**Profile of School Districts**

Boone County’s K-12 education system consists of two school districts. Belvidere Community Unit School District 100 (CUSD100) serves Belvidere and the rural areas in the southern half of the county. It includes five elementary, two middle, two high schools, and one STEM academy. The North Boone Community Unit School District 200’s (CUSD 200) service area includes Capron, Poplar Grove, and the northern rural areas of the county. The district consists of three elementary, one upper elementary, one middle school, and one high school. In 2017, approximately 8,070 students were enrolled in the Belvidere School District, and 1,644 were enrolled in the North Boone School District.\(^1\)\(^2\)

In 2017, both school districts performed just below the state level in PARCC scores, the statewide standardized test. However, the two districts graduation rates were on par with the overall state average. By these measures, Boone County’s school districts are well-performing, but still have room for improvement. While both schools spend less per student than the state average, both instructional and operational per student spending has increased in-tandem with state spending increases since at least 2012.\(^3\)\(^4\)

Like many school districts across the country, District 100 and 200 don’t just focus on these graduation rates, but also work to prepare students to either enter the workforce or continue on with post-secondary education. Emblematic of this, is the partnership with Rock Valley College in the form of the Running Start program, which allows high school students to earn their Associate’s degree along with their high school diploma during their junior and senior years. All three high schools in...
FIGURE 6.2
SCHOOL DISTRICT BOUNDARIES AND LOCATIONS

KEY

- Schools

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- Belvidere CUSD 100
- Harvard CUSD 50
- Hiawatha CUSD 426
- North Boone CUSD 200
- Rockford CUSD 205

MUNICIPALITY

- Belvidere
- Caledonia
- Capron
- Cherry Valley
- Loves Park
- Poplar Grove
- Timberlane
- Public Conservation Land
- Park/Open Space
- Water

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
both Boone County school districts participate in Running Start and Running Start Engineering. These programs have been well received by students, parents, employers, and faculty alike.

University of Illinois’ Project Lead the Way (PLTW) currently provides STEM focused curricular activities in some Boone County schools. Through PLTW, students are not only exposed to engineering, computer, and environmental concepts, but can also earn college credit hours. Programs like these were identified as priorities within public workshops and should continue to be expanded and promoted.

These initiatives show a commitment within the district to experiment with new educational ideas. Both the Belvidere and North Boone School Districts should continue with this adaptive mentality to prepare for a changing regional and national economy.

Challenges for School Districts

While both of Boone County’s public school districts have enjoyed strong financial positions, public education funding and finances will remain a challenge to be monitored and managed closely. According to Moody’s 2017 municipal bond reports, both school districts have healthy credit positions, and though not perfect, credit strength indicator trends for both districts are positive. In particular, available fund balances for both districts are far above the U.S. median.\(^5\) One of the strongest indicators is Boone County’s economy and strong residential tax base, which should continue to be the backbone of the County’s K-12 schools. However, there have been recent concerns related to the declines in the County’s fund balance. Although the County’s General Obligation Bonds are still highly rated because of its strong property tax base, the county was downgraded in 2018 by Moody’s to a bond rating of Aa3.\(^6\) Financial challenges like these at state and county levels of government can adversely affect the school districts’ finances. As more expansionary opportunities arise for schools - whether they be financial, physical, programmatic, or systematic – the districts should be cognizant of the county and region’s present financial situation.

Another challenge faced by many school districts is how to close the achievement gap between student demographic groups. Both Boone County school districts have had lower achievement gaps between students of various racial backgrounds, measured by PARCC scores, than the state averages since 2015. However, both districts have a larger portion of Hispanic students who do not meet PARCC score standards relative to the entire student body.\(^7,8\) In both Belvidere 100 and North Boone 200, the percentage of Hispanic Origin and mixed-race students has been increasing since 2013. In response to these trends, both districts have developed robust and immersive dual-language programs to help close achievement gaps between demographics. These programs have been received positively and should continue to be prioritized over the next decade to prepare students of all backgrounds to better integrate into an ever-changing world.

Finally, the patterns and choices related to future growth in the county is another potential challenge for school districts. Boone County is experiencing a gradual recovery from the 2008 Recession and some new growth is starting to take place. This makes it an optimal time for the school districts to stay informed in land use decision making processes that affect overall county growth patterns within each district’s boundaries. Both districts currently participate in the Boone County Planning Commission, which meets on a monthly basis to discuss such land use issues. In order to continuously stay abreast to new growth and possible district effects, it is recommended that District 100 and 200 remain as active participants in these meetings.

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**Boone County's public school districts are committed to technological, career-focused, and innovative programming. For example, in 2016 Belvidere 100 School District rolled out their 1:1 Initiative, which provides Chromebooks or other electronic devices to students in order to incorporate technology with students’ learning, assignments, and organizational skills. It is the goal for every student in the district's middle and high schools to take part in the program.**
Additional Community Resources for Education

Day cares are a valuable portion of a community’s education network, as they allow children to develop academic and social skills before entering the formal education system. Boone County is home to exceptional preschools and child development centers, with at least ten private childcare providers in addition to scattered in-home daycares within communities. Convenience is a key factor in day care siting, so local government officials should advocate for locating daycare facilities in neighborhoods or population centers where it is convenient for working families to drop off and pick up their children.

Several other educational opportunities exist within community-oriented organizations. Many of these are geared toward adults or groups who wish to learn new skills. For example, the Boone County Council on Aging is a community organization which offers educational, recreational, and social activities, geared towards the older populations in Boone County. This programming primarily takes place at the Keen Age Center. Another example is the Ida Public Library, which is the only public library in Boone County. It primarily serves the City of Belvidere, but is available for county residents to use by paying a non-resident fee that is comparable to city residents’ library property tax. In addition to borrowing and gathering services, the library also offers youth-focused resources and programs through their Children’s Department, tutoring programs, Spanish resources, and adult and youth book clubs. Importantly, the library is also home to historical and genealogical community records. During public input sessions, residents outside Belvidere expressed interest in the library’s service area being expanded to a countywide district, which could be done under several state-prescribed processes.

Post-Secondary and Adult Education

While Boone County does not have any colleges or universities, it benefits from proximity to multiple post-secondary schools, which provides opportunities to build on existing partnerships. There are multiple colleges within 20 miles of Boone County, including the region’s community college, Rock Valley College (RVC). In addition, within 30 miles, there are multiple universities including Northern Illinois University (NIU). Both RVC and NIU have existing partnerships with the Boone County school districts.

RVC offers 30+ associate’s degree or certification programs in 60 course areas.9 It is also a major player in regional workforce development efforts, providing coursework that aligns with major

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FIGURE 6.6
NOT-FOR-PROFIT POST-SECONDARY SCHOOLS WITHIN 30 MILES OF BOONE COUNTY

KEY
- Boone County
- Illinois
- Wisconsin

Post Secondary Schools
1 - Rockford University
2 - Rock Valley College
3 - University of Illinois College of Medicine
4 - Saint Anthony College of Nursing
5 - Kishwaukee College
6 - Northern Illinois University
7 - McHenry County College
8 - Beloit College
9 - Blackhawk Technical College

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
regional industry needs. Other non-profit higher education institutions within a drivable distance include Rockford University, McHenry County College, Kishwaukee College, Saint Anthony College of Nursing, Northern Illinois University, Beloit College, Blackhawk Technical College, and University of Illinois at Chicago’s Health Science Campus in Rockford. Creative partnerships with these higher education institutions, particularly those which advance adult education, workforce training, and community development efforts should continue to be welcomed and utilized by Boone County residents and entities.

Education and Economic Development

Though quality education has many other benefits for the region outside of economic growth, the ability for Boone County to grow and increase its economic competitiveness in an ever-evolving global economy hinges on the county’s ability to create and sustain an educated workforce. In this way, a region’s approach to human capital is fundamental to economic development, and should not be overlooked. The importance of workforce development may not be viewed as the most significant component of the county’s educational environment, especially when compared to the K-12 system. However, given the current and future challenges surrounding the region such as its aging workforce, brain drain, and minimal population growth post-recession, building upon the skills of the workforce will be integral to a thriving long-term Boone County economy. Because of this, workforce development efforts must continue to grow within the county.

Many institutions and programs in the region have proven themselves as successful workforce intermediaries who, through education and training services, have provided a strong link between education and economic development. Examples include not only the aforementioned Rock Valley College initiatives, vocational programs within the public school system, and other community resources, but also regional economic development agencies such as Growth Dimensions and the Workforce Connection. Coordinating regional workforce development to address business and community needs has been a consistent goal in recent regional workforce and economic development initiatives, such as the 2017 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Regional Plan (WIOA Plan), and the 2016-2020 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Both of these plans stress the importance of vocational and career training for regional economic growth that both the Workforce Connection and Growth Dimensions promote.

The Workforce Connection is a partnership between federal and state employment programs, economic development agencies, and educational entities that seeks to address workforce needs for the region’s business communities. The organization oversees many workforce-tailored programs such as:

- Youth services including tutoring, career exploration, and job placement assistance.
- Adult education and High School Equivalency classes.
- Employer services such as recruitment events, candidate assessment/testing, and numerous job-training opportunities.

Rock Valley College has directly addressed regional workforce by offering Workforce Training courses, which include RVC’s certification programs. These courses offer skills training for industries that the region has been targeting. These include manufacturing-focused classes as well as courses to bolster the healthcare industry. Many of those who go through these certifications/programs have easily found careers because of their training, and the programs have also been well received by employers. Workforce development will continue being a coordinated effort among regional economic development and educational institutions. Regional economic development institutions and their specific roles in Boone County’s economic development efforts are detailed further in Chapter 7: Economic Development.
Education Infrastructure and Land Use

The location of schools and educational institutions greatly affect local land use and infrastructure needs. As Boone County’s population grows, in part as a result from its educational strengths, the county will need to be ever-cognizant of these impacts and plan accordingly with the school districts. Currently, the districts coordinate with the county on planning issues, and that continued cooperation should be prioritized in order to avoid:

- Increased strain on transportation and infrastructure networks.
- Environmental issues that may arise from school operations such as transportation emissions, energy usage, etc.
- Sporadic development and housing patterns as a result of residential growth in relation to education infrastructure.
- Public health consequences of walkability levels, safe routes to school, and neighborhood continuity.
- Social equity issues as a result of school location, which can impact how far students, parents, and staff of all incomes have to travel, level of participation in extracurricular events, and parents' level of involvement in teacher conferences and other activities.
- Inefficient use of tax dollars on school expansions, community facilities, or transportation/utility upgrades.

The effects of schools’ locations on land use patterns are commonly examined and many resources exist which could aid in a coordinated process for school siting. Principal among them is the EPA’s Smart School Siting Tool, which aims to help school and local government agencies coordinate to align school siting and community development decisions through Smart Growth principles.12

In 2018, Davis Demographics and Planning prepared the 10-year Student Population Projection report for the Belvidere School District, which included planned residential developments as a part of their projection methodology. Reports such as this signal that the districts are aware of development decisions and take part in their own internal school planning process for future enrollment changes. North Boone and Belvidere School District superintendents are also active in a variety of planning processes throughout the county. This coordination should continue over the next decade in order to avoid the potential land use issues previously mentioned.

County and municipal officials should consider land use and transportation patterns when siting new school and educational facilities, but also changes in patterns that could result from growth in school enrollment. Both school districts currently have excess capacity that could absorb new growth. However, should the county grow more rapidly and physical expansions become necessary in the future, land may need to be set aside for new school siting, as future commercial or residential development may impede on the acreage requirements for the elementary, middle, and high schools. County and school officials should be cognizant of potential impacts, and prepare for all growth scenarios, as well as contingencies that may affect land use within Boone County in the future.

Education and Public Health

Education and childhood experiences can both positively and negatively affect the public health of Boone County’s population. A resident achieving higher education levels can lead to overall better health outcomes, however a resident experiencing stress, trauma, and abuse can lead to negative health outcomes. These events often times come in the form of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) which is when a child witnesses or becomes a victim of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. ACEs are more prevalent than previously known and can lead to significant long-term negative health outcomes of a population. In turn, this can affect the county’s workforce preparedness, demand on
social services, and likelihood of increased crime and substance abuse rates.\textsuperscript{13}

In an attempt to recognize and counter the effects of ACEs on children within Boone County, Belvidere School District 100 is in the process of becoming a trauma informed district. The district is actively taking steps to have more prepared, informed, and cognizant staff, parents, and students when it comes to recognizing and responding to someone who has been effected by traumatic stress.\textsuperscript{14}

This is just one attempt to counter the negative long-term health effects of ACEs on Boone County’s residents. This and other programs are extremely important to continue over the next decade in an attempt to continuously improve the county’s overall public health, develop a strong workforce, and provide sufficient social and public safety services overtime.

**Public Communication**

School districts and local governments share a symbiotic relationship. As a community grows, more resources are needed for the school system, and the better schools perform, the more attractive a community becomes for future growth. Despite this cyclical relationship, school systems and local governments - especially county governments - often operate independently. Additionally, though this chapter has referred to the region’s educational environment as a system, that system is made up of individual governmental and educational institutions who make their own decisions, are beholden to differing organizational and funding structures, and may have differing relationships with other municipal, regional, and state actors. Challenging as it might be, open communication and coordination between educational and governmental agencies can result in decisions that positively impact the community.

Schools can be a major source of community pride, and many initiatives within them lend themselves to be shared. Examples could include changes in leadership, student or community led initiatives, success stories, or new programs. Beyond just dissemination of news, effective communication can help to improve coordination of regional goals and solutions between municipalities and educational institutions. Other school-government communication improvements that could benefit the region include establishment of conflict resolution mechanisms should they arise, distribution of appropriate municipal and educational news through various traditional and technological means, and clarifying any boundaries that may impede cooperation. This type of communication currently takes place between representatives from Belvidere 100, North Boone 200, Boone County, the City of Belvidere, Township Representatives, Belvidere Park District, and the Boone County Conservation District. These meetings occur monthly, and should continue as a means to not only share information, but to discuss pressing regional issues affecting the educational system.

One additional challenge that can be addressed through increased communication between community leaders and educators are the changing demographics of the region. As Boone County continues to evolve, so do the schools by providing opportunities for integration. In particular, Latinx and Hispanic communities will likely keep increasing within the County, and by coordinating their integration efforts, those communities can be better served by the educational system. At meetings between public representatives, action items such as updates from the schools to the city in regards to their Language Immersion successes could help frame decision making at the municipal level.
# Education and Public Communication Goals, Objectives, & Strategies

## Goal 6.1 Increase the overall education and skill level of Boone County residents.

### OBJECTIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.</th>
<th>Continue to prioritize adult education in order to improve and build upon the skills of the county’s workforce.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Help current students gain the skills, education, and preparation needed for the existing and future job market.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Continue to develop and utilize partnerships between educational services and government agencies to most efficiently coordinate and provide services to county residents.</td>
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</tbody>
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### STRATEGIES

- Expand utilization of GED pathway programs by promoting existing programs or partnering on one specifically tailored for the Boone County population.
- Increase the utilization of school and other community buildings after hours for adult education opportunities.
- Prioritize and increase the number of English as a Second Language courses for adults.
- Utilize The Workforce Connection to identify the skills gap between the current Boone County workforce and local employers’ needs, and ways to address it.
- Promote increased usage of The Workforce Connection’s Belvidere facility and services for adults in the workforce to gain skills and education.
- Identify opportunities for increased adult training and education opportunities within Boone County, and/or increase access to opportunities in surrounding counties through partnerships with regional colleges, technical schools, and universities.
- Build on the success of the dual credit (Running Start) programs, developed by the school districts and Rock Valley College, to generate increased participation and local employer buy-in.
- Continue to identify and prioritize career readiness and career pathways in all school districts in order to strengthen students’ ability to fill the jobs that will be needed by employers.
- Increase the number of robotics and STEM programs in both school districts, and promote them to increase participation.
- Increase special education transitional services and their timeline of implementation.
- Expand or create new library service to include underserved and unserved Boone County residents.

- Identify service gaps and overlap between existing partnerships.
- Promote more connections between regional post-secondary education institutions and local government.
- Create new partnerships between the library and school districts.
### Education and Public Communication Goals, Objectives, & Strategies

**Goal 6.2 Establish equitable communication between public agencies and the community.**

#### OBJECTIVES

a. Develop a common communication vehicle that gets information to the entire community regarding public services provided and future opportunities.

b. Bridge the cultural divide between several demographic groups and local agencies.

#### STRATEGIES

- Better utilize diverse/multiple forms of communication in both English and Spanish by government agencies.
- Increase the types and amount of information provided to the public in an attempt to promote civic engagement by the community.
- Utilize all communication avenues to better connect the community with volunteer opportunities and generate increased interest in those programs/activities.
- Build on the successful model the school districts use to communicate with government agencies, non-profits, and private businesses on a regular basis through monthly meetings.
- Gather data on the demographic information of participants in different public programs and activities in order to tack level of use.
- Work with the Latinx and Hispanic community to build a leadership pipeline that fosters increased levels of communication with local agencies.
- Increase communication between local employers and diverse student populations on available job opportunities and skills required.
- Establish new and continue to increase the levels of partnerships between county government agencies and LULAC.
Chapter 6 Sources

Text

Figures
Chapter 7: Economic Development
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Economic development is the collective efforts of the public and private sectors to create wealth for a region’s residents and businesses, which in turn improves quality of life and strengthens the tax base. This is done through coordinated policies, initiatives, and marketing efforts to attract, retain, and grow job-creating companies, as well as connect residents to those jobs. Economic development grows wealth by focusing on “primary jobs,” which are those that create products and services that customers from outside the region want. That outside spending allows a region’s businesses and residents to then buy local products and services, causing growth in retail, entertainment, and service options. Economic development effects and is connected to all other topics discussed in this plan.

Boone County serves as a bedroom community for both the Rockford and Chicago metro areas, while also being a job center for the region’s manufacturing base. One of the largest businesses in Northern Illinois, outside of Chicago, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) calls the county home. Due to the scale of primary jobs associated with the automaker and its suppliers, the county has an economic development impact much larger than its small geographical size. However, because manufacturing makes up so much of the county’s economy, it’s important for Boone County to continuously pursue diversifying its economy in order to become less reliant on a single industry. This chapter explores Boone County’s current economic situation, key local and regional economic factors, and overarching economic development focus areas over the next decade.

Economic development in Boone County is a collective effort done by a wide variety of groups including local governments, Growth Dimensions, Region 1 Planning Council, Belvidere Chamber of Commerce, local and regional businesses, The Workforce Connection, and School District 100 and 200, to name a few. It’s the strong partnerships and collaboration between these groups that fosters the workforce development, business retention and attraction efforts, development and redevelopment projects, promotion of community assets, and utilization of a coordinated and unified economic strategy county-wide.

Boone County has long recognized that economic development is a key piece of its overall planning process. The county not only included economic development in its 1999 Comprehensive Plan, but has commissioned and/or participated in several economic development related plans in the past decade:

- The Rockford Region Strategic Diversification Plan (2012).
- The Boone County Enterprise Zone development plan (2014).
Current Economic Situation

As with most of the country, Boone County was hit hard by the Great Recession in 2008. Population growth and residential demand flattened, while unemployment spiked and job loss accelerated, particularly within the manufacturing sector. A significant portion of that job loss was the result of the county and region’s longtime economic anchor, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA), closing in 2009 as its parent company reorganized under bankruptcy protection. In addition, significant layoffs in surrounding communities further contributed to those trends. Fortunately, instead of closing for good, the FCA plant reopened, retooled, and brought back workers in the thousands over the subsequent years, eventually reaching pre-recession levels. Again in 2017, the company retooled and expanded. As with the rest of the region, unemployment fell and job totals rose. Unlike the rest of the region, however, Boone County has actually passed its overall pre-recession levels and now boasts record numbers of jobs, specifically manufacturing jobs.

Despite that recent growth, Boone County’s overall economic indicators virtually mirror the rest of the region because residents’ financial situations are so dependent on employers outside the county. Unfortunately, Boone County and the rest of the region still lags behind the state and nation in unemployment rate and per capita income. In fact, the entire Rockford MSA qualified under the U.S. Economic Development Administration definition of “economic distress” as of 2017 because unemployment rates stubbornly remain higher than the nation’s. Specific Census tracts in Boone County also qualify as economically distressed because of low per-capita income levels relative to the national average. The only indicator in which Boone County does not match the region is a poverty rate that’s lower than the MSA, state, and nation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE 7.2 KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unemployment Rate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boone County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Per Capita Income</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boone County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poverty Rate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boone County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population Age 25-44</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boone County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High School Graduate or Higher</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boone County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bachelor’s Degree or Higher</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boone County</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 7.3
AREAS MEETING EDA DISTRESS CRITERIA

KEY
- Unemployment Rate Distress
- Per Capita Income Distress

MUNICIPALITY
- Belvidere
- Caledonia
- Capron
- Cherry Valley
- Loves Park
- Poplar Grove
- Timberlane
- Boone County

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, StatsAmerica Distress Tool, 2018.
Another key economic indicator is affordability, and Boone County and the region at large have long been considered very affordable. Along with other factors, affordability helps attract and retain residents, strengthen the workforce, and boost tax proceeds for local government. The cost of living index (COLI), measures and compares the relative price for consumer goods/services between various areas of the country. The Rockford Region, including the majority of Boone County, had an index of 90 in 2017, meaning that it is a cheaper place to live than the average US region, all regions of Illinois except one, and all regions of Wisconsin. Another component that portrays affordability is living wage. The living wage in Boone County for two working adults with two children is $15.84 an hour, which is in line with the US average, but nearly a dollar lower than the Illinois average. Overall, it is important to maintain the affordability of the county, while also striving to increase overall wages. Successful economic development can work to accomplish this and increase the livability of the county-as-a-whole.

Workforce is an additional component of Boone County’s economy that plays an important role. The county has a strong primary job base because it draws workers from outside its borders. As part of the Rockford MSA, Boone County draws from a primary labor force of 165,000, the fourth-largest of Illinois metro areas. Unfortunately, that total has dropped more than 9% since 2010, reflecting overall population loss, discouragement of long-term unemployed, and an increasing wave of retirements. Boone County alone has lost a similar portion of its labor force, even as its population is virtually flat compared with its neighbor, Winnebago County. In addition, Boone County’s population is increasingly aging as the proportion of residents age 60+ increases and the number of residents 44 or younger decreases. Together, these are both significant concerns for the future.

As with the surrounding region, Boone County’s lack of workers with a college education limits efforts to attract higher-end technical jobs in manufacturing, healthcare, and engineering. As discussed further in Chapter 6 Education and Public Communication, these issues are being addressed with long-term efforts of the public K-12 system, as well as the numerous colleges and universities surrounding Boone County.

Boone County’s economy is significantly interconnected with those of surrounding communities. For example, The overwhelming majority of employed Boone County residents (75.9%) commute out of the County. Additionally, a similarly large share (70%) of jobs in Boone County are filled by residents of other counties. Overall, about 33% of Boone County workers commute west to Winnebago County, while more than 43% of Boone County jobs are filled by Winnebago County residents.

Because Boone County is somewhat balanced in how many workers it imports and exports, it acts as both a job center and a bedroom community. Since most residents work elsewhere and most jobs are filled by those from other communities, it is critical that the economic development strategy for the county mirror the regional economic development strategy. The plan must both grow the job base within commuting distance and make the region attractive for workers to move to and stay within.

Boone County’s economic development opportunities lie in and around its municipalities, where utilities, transportation corridors, and population centers exist. Boone County leaders confirmed this when renewing and expanding their Enterprise Zone in 2016 to focus on portions of Belvidere, Poplar Grove, and Capron. Most of the zone is in and around Belvidere, including the existing industrial area between Newburg Road and U.S. 20; the majority of the I-90 corridor; downtown; and commercial areas on major corridors on the edges of the city. The zone also includes key commercial and small industrial areas in Poplar Grove and Capron, and opportunities for development along Illinois 76 and Illinois 173. The Zone was later further expanded to include a growing industrial park along U.S. 20 between Belvidere and Cherry Valley. The Zone’s boundaries clearly show the county’s anticipated future commercial and industrial growth area displayed in Chapter 10 Land Use.
Boone County’s economy is dominated by the manufacturing industry, but overall most industries have grown significantly over the past twenty years. While most followed a similar pattern, some had notable differences:

» Government jobs actually peaked in 2009 with 2,279, and have dropped since, as tax revenue lags economic cycles by several years.

» Retail Trade jobs have decreased overtime due to competition from surrounding areas and the Internet, with some occasional upward blips.

» Agriculture and related jobs continue to decline steadily. However, it should be noted that this dataset does not account for all farm payrolls, only certain occupations.

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**FIGURE 7.7 TOP 10 INDUSTRY SECTORS EMPLOYMENT CHANGE SINCE 2001 AND 2007**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>2016 Employment</th>
<th>Change Since 2001</th>
<th>Change Since 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>7,562</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>2,217</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1,434</td>
<td>-23%</td>
<td>-30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>1,842</td>
<td>-19%</td>
<td>-19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation, Warehousing, and Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>1,411</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>-9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Services</td>
<td>891</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>-8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>-9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 7.8

MAJOR EMPLOYERS

KEY

1. Acument Global Technologies
2. Americold Logistics
3. Android Industries
4. Belvidere Community Unit School District 100
5. Boone County Gov.
7. Cassens Transport Co.
8. City of Belvidere
9. Dean Foods
10. Fiat Chrysler Automobiles
11. Frankin Display Group
12. General Mills Inc.
13. Ipsen
14. Magna Exteriors
15. Maple Crest Care Centre
16. North Boone Community Unit School District 200
17. Northwest Pallet
18. Northwoods Care Centre
19. Piston Automotive
20. R & D Thiel Inc.
21. Syncreon North America
22. Walmart
23. Yanfeng Automotive

*See methodology and definitions in Appendix C

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
Boone County is the most manufacturing-intensive economy in the Rockford metro area, with 40% of its jobs in manufacturing, double the metro area (20%), and more than quadruple the state (9%). Nearly three quarters of those manufacturing jobs are tied to FCA and its suppliers, and that was before the impacts of FCA’s 2017 expansion and the ongoing expansion of its suppliers fully take hold. Other manufacturing sectors in Boone County include fabricated metal products, food processing, and wood products.

The FCA assembly plant in Belvidere opened in 1965 and has been the county’s largest employer since. As recently as 1980, manufacturing accounted for nearly 75% of the jobs in the county; through 1991 it was still at least half of the county’s jobs. Countywide employment has risen and fallen with the FCA plant, particularly during several different retoolings that briefly shut down production. During the retoolings, most recently in 2017, the county’s unemployment jumped from 6.4% to 11.9%, before settling back to 6.8% when FCA reopened. Regionally, a reliance on certain key manufacturing sectors – not just Automotive, but also Metalworking and Production Technology – makes it more susceptible to economic downturns. For example, during the Great Recession, the region lost almost 11,000 manufacturing jobs versus 17,000 jobs in all other sectors combined.

This lack of diversification has been a noted threat for the economy, most recently discussed in Moody’s letter downgrading Boone County to Aa3 to Aa2 in 2018. Moody’s concern is the county’s reliance on one major manufacturer, and that it needed a better economic mix to keep the economy – and thus county revenue – stable. Boone County’s economy, perhaps more than the rest of the region, relies heavily on things outside the control of local leaders – particularly consumer demand for automobiles. This trend was recognized throughout this and other regional planning processes, and diversifying industries in Boone County and across the Rockford Region is a region-wide economic development strategy moving forward.

Infrastructure

Future economic development prospects often depend on the ability to build and maintain the infrastructure necessary for business growth. This includes transportation assets, utilities like municipal water and wastewater as well as privately owned electrical and natural gas, broadband infrastructure, and available buildings and shovel-ready industrial parks. Perhaps most urgent is the lack of available buildings and shovel-ready industrial parks. As of the writing of this plan, the county only has one shovel-ready industrial park with more than 20 acres available. Efforts are being made in all of these fronts, but there is still significant work to do.

Boone County, particularly the Belvidere area, has consistently been a leader in developing new industrial parks, but much of its available space and buildings were filled by expanding FCA suppliers in recent years. Growth Dimensions, government officials, property owners, and developers have discussed the next steps needed to turn vacant land near existing industrial areas into shovel-ready parks. While this is mostly in and around Belvidere, there is at least one identified area in Poplar Grove and small-scale potential in Capron. An additional need is for spec buildings, as there are very few modern industrial facilities for companies seeking quicker moves.

A serious concern, however, is the fiscal constraints of local, state, and federal government regarding infrastructure. Government is often stuck in a “chicken and the egg” situation, with infrastructure dependent on tax revenue from business growth, while business growth is tied to having adequate infrastructure. This is particularly important in actively-developing counties like Boone. Government officials have to be prudent, investing in projects with the most potential return, by innovating, and by seeking public/private and intergovernmental partnerships.

Adequate transportation infrastructure is another important component of continued economic growth. The most significant roadway need for economic development is last-mile connections from major thoroughfares like I-90 and U.S. 20, particularly upgrades to Irene Road itself and connections to existing industrial parks in Belvidere. Other key corridors include Illinois 173 and Illinois 76, which both serve as commuter routes and potential business corridors. Another integral aspect of the transportation network to large industrial users is rail. Boone County currently has one Union Pacific
rail line that primarily serves FCA, with little other traffic. However, at least two industrial sites west of FCA in Belvidere have been identified as potential rail-served sites with Union Pacific improvements. Chapter 9: Transportation outlines specific county-wide issues related to the road network, including maintaining roads in a state of good repair, the efficiency of roads and intersections, and safety.

Additionally, last-mile needs with broadband connections are also a major development hurdle. Leaders from iFiber are exploring ways to provide expanded residential and commercial service in the county, and Growth Dimensions has worked with developers to identify the biggest last-mile issues for businesses.

Finally, utility infrastructure is dependant and driven by local municipal governments and private entities like ComEd and Nicor. Available utility infrastructure may not be controlled by the county, but is a necessary component to planning for, recruiting, and acquiring new development. A more detailed breakdown of the utility infrastructure is available in Chapter 4 Environmental Sustainability.

**Economic Development Agencies and Regional Collaboration**

Economic development requires public/private partnerships, as government cannot create wealth, but businesses need public infrastructure and services to succeed. As such, the key agencies and groups for economic development are those where the public and private sectors interact. They include Growth Dimensions, R1PC, government entities, The Workforce Connection, Belvidere Chamber of Commerce, and private businesses.

Growth Dimensions is the economic development organization serving Boone County. Its funded by a mix of public and private investors to serve as the county’s public face of business attraction and retention efforts. Growth Dimensions both markets the county externally to new businesses and internally connects existing businesses to services and assistance available. For example, Growth Dimensions has been active in identifying companies that need training help for their existing or prospective employees, including seeking ways for smaller companies to have shared training events in Boone County. They also partner with other economic development groups in surrounding counties through membership in Region 1 Planning Council (R1PC) and R1PC’s Economic Development Committee. In those forums, regional economic development organizations discuss how to market the wider region to businesses and how to collaborate on initiatives that benefit multiple communities. As part of that committee, Boone County has recently been added to the Northern Illinois Qualified Sites Program, promoting the first of what could be several shovel-ready industrial sites of at least 10 acres. Through this committee, Boone County will also explore ways to partner with neighboring counties on regional economic development marketing efforts that would help increase the pipeline of prospective companies for the entire region.

Boone County government, the City of Belvidere, and other municipal and township governments also play a key role in economic development, through funding of Growth Dimensions; providing public infrastructure and services; and coordinating tax, permitting, and incentive policies for business growth. Of particular note is the partnership between Boone County, City of Belvidere, and the villages of Poplar Grove and Capron to provide an Enterprise Zone, a state-backed incentive area that has proven key to the growth of major employers.

The Belvidere Chamber of Commerce is a voluntary association of business leaders and professionals that promotes both the civic and commercial progress of the community. It provides a key forum for new and existing businesses to plug into the community, find customers and suppliers, and have a greater voice in community efforts.

Boone County is also directly served by The Workforce Connection, the area’s publicly funded workforce development system, with an office in Belvidere that provides career counseling and technical resources for the unemployed or underemployed. The Workforce Connection is continuously increasing its public outreach efforts, holding hiring events around the area, and connecting with employers needing trained workers. The county has a significant role in this topic as the county board
chairman is one of the Chief Elected Officials of The Workforce Connection, and thus can help set workforce development policy and prioritize use of federal funds.

Boone County businesses also belong to regional, statewide, and national industry organizations that provide key voices and insights into the private sector’s needs. Larger firms, such as global manufacturers Fiat Chrysler Automobiles and General Mills, have specific economic development or community affairs representatives that bring national and global trends to local leaders’ attention. Additionally, another key private sector partner includes the economic development and community affairs representatives of utility providers ComEd and Nicor Gas, which help provide business-level insight and regional economic development perspective.

A prime example of the successful collaborative efforts of these various groups is the work that was done on the most recent update of the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The plan lays out regional initiatives for creating and retaining jobs, and regional collaboration was the first goal of the plan. Overall, the collaborative nature of the economic development work that is done in Boone County is a testament to the willingness of these groups to work together for the betterment of the county as a whole. Throughout the public participation phase it was emphasized how important these efforts are and the need for them to continue in order to increase cooperation, foster efficiency, and embrace transparency.

Economic Development Focus Areas

Through the public participation process, stakeholder meetings, regional forums, and analysis of best practices it was identified that there are two key areas of focus over the next decade:

» Expand existing businesses and become a more business-friendly county
» Attract new businesses and diversify the economy

Expand Existing Businesses and Become a More Business-Friendly

The first economic development focus area is fostering an environment for existing businesses to continually expand by becoming a more businesses friendly county. Currently, Boone County’s perceived business environment is a work in progress, meaning that there are both positives and weaknesses of the situation. Overall, there are many more positives elements to Boone County’s business environment that can be leveraged moving forward. Together, fostering long-term business expansion is directly connected to how easy it is to do business in the county.

Being a business friendly community is key to attracting new and retaining existing companies. In particular, the perceived value of business taxes paid, public services received, available incentives, and business experience with regulation and permitting processes are strategic ways Boone County government can create a more business-friendly environment. The county’s small size gives its government agencies the ability to respond quickly and personally to business requests, particularly zoning and permitting issues. Since most business development happens within municipalities, Boone County’s role is primarily related to its departments that provide services to businesses, including Building and Zoning, Health, Highway, and Planning, as well as ensuring that its taxes are in line with perceived value to customers. As other smaller communities have done, increasing the collaboration and efficiency of the development processes is key to increasing the perceived notion of being business friendly.

The state of Illinois’ poor business climate reputation hinders Boone County’s potential. For example, Illinois was ranked 40th in Forbes’ 2014 “Best States for Business.” Illinois’s budget constraints, corporate income tax, worker’s compensation rates, and local property taxes are frequently cited as weaknesses. Boone County and municipalities are then forced to increase property tax rates amid a declining tax base, reduced state support, and state issued mandates.

In the next decade, Boone County has a host of strengths that can be leveraged to foster economic growth. While property taxes are currently relatively high, the lower land values than those in
the Chicago region and other larger communities, reduce overall business costs for similarly sized parcels. Additionally, the state’s lack of an inventory tax and personal property tax benefits the transportation, distribution, and logistics sector and the manufacturing sector. Increased use of the Enterprise Zone, including the potential to use it to benefit smaller businesses, including storefronts, can help start-ups and expanding businesses. Finally, the return of a Small Business Development Center in the region, along with many of these other elements, can help foster business expansion in Boone County and change the perception of how business friendly it is.

During the public participation phase, stakeholders noted that while businesses being recruited to Boone County were offered many incentives and other assistance, existing businesses felt left out. However, the most significant assistance programs offered by the county are available for existing businesses too. Better promotion and sharing of information in regards to the Enterprise Zone, utility incentives, and business friendly permitting processes is a great opportunity for Boone County in the future.

Business Attraction and Diversifying the Economy

As noted earlier, Boone County has participated in several initiatives to understand opportunities to reduce its over reliance on the automotive manufacturing industry. Diversification efforts are led by economic development organizations and other business development groups, with support from county government and other public and private partners. While this includes marketing the county to businesses, it is vital to first understand the best opportunities and what different sectors need in order to succeed. The “business-friendly environment” outlined above is a first step, followed by key infrastructure, workforce, and other investments, in addition to an analysis of targeted industries.

Generally, the county’s efforts to enact business-friendly permitting processes and fee structures; partnering with municipalities to provide infrastructure (in particular municipal utilities); and efforts to be an attractive community for workers to live are key to fostering success in these industries. With limited available manufacturing facilities, it is also key the county partner with municipalities and developers to ensure supply of shovel-ready industrial parks. The Irene Road area, in particular, has been considered by officials as a potential Advanced Manufacturing park.

ANALYSIS OF TARGETED INDUSTRY CLUSTERS

The Northern Illinois Region CEDS identified several Targeted Industry clusters to focus the Region’s efforts on attracting and retaining primary jobs, as well as diversifying the regional economy. These clusters include:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution
- Agriculture and Food Processing
- Production Agriculture
- Healthcare and Medical Sciences

In addition to the analysis of Targeted Industry clusters, this section also discusses Retail and Leisure and Hospitality opportunities for the county. While the primary way the county can assist with growth of those sales-tax-generating sectors is the primary job strategy, it is important to note the ways the county can specifically attract Retail and Leisure and Hospitality businesses and understand which ones provide opportunities.
Advanced Manufacturing Clusters

Advanced Manufacturing is one of Boone County’s best opportunities to attract new businesses over the next decade because of the existing large established cluster of these types of companies in Boone County and throughout the Rockford Region. It will be important for the county to leverage the existing successes of advanced manufacturing companies in the region in order to continue to attract new companies in the future.

There are seven Advanced Manufacturing clusters that are well suited for Boone County:

» **Automotive:** The cluster is of course the largest manufacturing cluster in Boone County, but does provide some additional diversification opportunities. While another automobile assembly plant is unlikely, Growth Dimensions has explored attracting suppliers to other motor vehicle manufacturers, including companies that supply FCA and others. Additionally, the Region has some companies that supply various parts of the trucking industry. Boone County benefits as a proven location for companies like this.

» **Metal and Metal Products:** The cluster is Boone County’s second-largest Advanced Manufacturing cluster, with several significant manufacturers. This diverse sector includes machine shops, heat-treating facilities, and others that provide a needed support to many other manufacturing clusters in the Region. The cluster also benefits from access to I-90 because much of the metal it uses comes from Wisconsin or the Chicago area, as well as the large number of potential customers along the corridor.

» **Aerospace and Defense Production:** The cluster is overwhelmingly in Winnebago County, with major suppliers UTC Aerospace Systems, Woodward, and GE Aviation, as well as many smaller companies that supply the larger ones. Boone County’s opportunities are primarily in attracting small- and mid-size suppliers who want to be close to the larger companies in Winnebago County, as well as other parts of the supply chain in the rest of Illinois and southern Wisconsin. Any of the current or planned industrial parks in Boone County could serve this industry, particularly ones near I-90 and U.S. 20 in Belvidere. This industry could also be a target for Poplar Grove’s proposed industrial area, with Woodward’s new Rock Cut Campus only 10 miles away. Additionally, the area around Poplar Grove Airport could be attractive to aviation maintenance, testing, and technological development businesses.

» **Production Technology and Heavy Machinery:** The cluster is the Region’s largest manufacturing cluster by employment, but is concentrated in Winnebago County’s larger industrial buildings. This cluster would be predominantly a target for new, larger buildings on currently vacant parcels due to the size of product created. This cluster could also be a target for any buildings vacated by FCA suppliers when there is turnover in the supply chain. Unfortunately, the maturity of this industry and foreign competition make it a more difficult growth area.

» **Metalworking Technology:** The cluster is also concentrated in Winnebago County, and has similar threats as above. However, there are more opportunities, as manufacturers in this sector could locate in smaller facilities. Additionally, Boone County’s adjacency to the Chicago Region could make it attractive to companies looking to partner with the growing Metals cluster there.

» **Plastic Products:** The cluster is small in Boone County. Development strategies are focused on connecting existing plastics companies with supply chains in the region, and attracting additional plastics manufacturers to grow the cluster. Because Boone County is adjacent to the Chicago Region, it might benefit from the growth of that cluster in the northern suburbs.

» **Chemical Products:** The cluster does not exist in Boone County after the closure of BioVantage Fuels. As more research is done, Boone County may find opportunities
for growth here to diversify its economy.

**Wood Products:** The cluster is not one of the Region’s Targeted Industries, however it is particularly prominent in Boone County, and could be a target for other attraction opportunities.

**Transportation, Logistics and Distribution Cluster**

Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution is another key cluster for Boone County because of its excellent interstate access and central location amid major Midwestern markets. At the same time, it is in direct competition with neighboring counties and states. Growth Dimensions has promoted the county for these kinds of businesses by noting the success of Americold, XPO Logistics, Pierce Distribution, and General Mills’ distribution operations. The new Irene Road interchange provides increased opportunities for this cluster along the I-90 and U.S. 20 corridors, and portions of the Illinois 173 corridor. The county’s biggest role in attracting these companies is in partnership with municipalities and the Illinois Department of Transportation to maintain strong last-mile road access, as well as partnering with developers and municipalities to ensure quality shovel-ready land is available.

**Agriculture & Food Processing Clusters**

These clusters are particularly important to Boone County, as they build on the county’s long history of farming and food production, leverage the county’s location and highway access, and provide opportunities for diversification through the growing potential of agricultural-related business growth, including farming equipment design and manufacturing and agritourism. There are two types of Agriculture and Food Processing clusters that are important areas of focus for Boone County: Production Agriculture and Food Processing and Manufacturing.

**Production Agriculture Cluster**

During the public participation phase, residents and other stakeholders were passionate about protection of the county’s prime farmland and recognition of the economic benefit of agriculture and related businesses. As a result, the county’s economic development strategy will be focused on maintaining land dedicated to agricultural production in order to protect the rural culture; this is not contrary to business attraction because new businesses are likely to be interested in being near municipal utilities, major transportation corridors, and areas accessible to many workers and customers. There are three key ways that Boone County can leverage its agricultural assets to foster future economic growth.

First, is untapped economic potential beyond traditional production agriculture. One example of this is that specialty crops like Boone County’s existing fruit and vegetable farms and nurseries that sell directly to consumers. This practice generates higher retail market prices. An opportunity for this industry is to coordinate distribution into Chicago to maximize profits. Second, is the opportunities in agritourism, which is a form of commercial enterprise that links agricultural production and/or processing with tourism in order to attract visitors onto a farm or other agricultural business for entertainment and/or education. Agritourism would both help farmers retain their farms and develop small businesses in rural parts of the county, providing more employment opportunities, especially for young people. Examples of agritourism-related businesses and existing related events showcasing them can be found in Chapter 3: Livability and Recreation. This could open and provide the opportunity for businesses that make machines and equipment for the agricultural industry. More research is needed to see this opportunity develop.

**Food Processing and Manufacturing Cluster**

General Mills is one of the county’s largest employers, and has been for quite some time. The Belvidere facility has continually expanded and evolved, with different parent companies investing in the facility to keep it competitive. Most recently, the company finished a $60 million investment in 2016 that continues to add jobs. In addition, Dean Foods also produces dairy products and provides stable employment in for some Boone County residents. The demonstrated success of these
companies, as well as others in surrounding counties, signals to other businesses that Boone County can be a good home for them. The strength of transportation infrastructure and market access that makes Boone County attractive for transportation, distribution, and logistics businesses is also key for this cluster. Moreover, there may be opportunities to attract businesses looking to process and package food grown in surrounding areas. However, one barrier for Boone County and the region-as-a-whole, is that food companies typically need clean, newer space, which the county currently lacks. It would likely need more build-to-suit or spec facilities to grow this cluster.

**Healthcare and Medical Sciences Clusters**

Boone County continues to benefit from the growth of the Region’s Healthcare cluster. In 2009, SwedishAmerican Medical Center/Belvidere opened, ending a decade without a hospital in the county. In addition, the region’s other two health systems, OSF HealthCare and Mercyhealth, have recently expanded clinic facilities in the county. Traditionally seen as a “local” cluster that serves residents of the region, its growing into a “traded” cluster that brings money from outside the region by attracting outside residents through larger “destination” facilities with increasing specializations. These health systems are also key in attracting and retaining younger and more educated workers, particularly because of the growing healthcare educational facilities. Having well-regarded healthcare facilities, even in neighboring counties, makes Boone County more attractive for residents. These benefits will be particularly notable with the new Mercyhealth hospital opening in northeast Rockford in 2019, just one mile from Boone County. The hospital has the ability to spur related clinic and specialty medical businesses along Illinois 173 to the north or Business U.S. 20 to the south, and potential residential growth in the county over the next decade.

The Medical Device and Supplies Manufacturing cluster is a smaller but growing cluster in the Region, though there is not yet a significant presence in Boone County, and the cluster needs more study to identify opportunities for growth potential, including whether the Region’s growing Healthcare providers could be a market for this cluster.

**Retail Trade and Leisure and Hospitality Sectors**

Another key sector that was both identified during the public participation phase and through previous planning efforts is retail, leisure, and hospitality. Currently, Boone County has an outsized demand for retail (17%) compared to its share of the region’s population (16%), but this is somewhat misleading because much of the retail demand is serviced by neighboring counties. Meanwhile, Boone County only represents 8% of the MSA’s retail sales.

If population growth occurs over the next decade, there are a few key retail sectors that may be promising for Boone County; grocery stores, food services and drinking places, or general/specific merchandise retailers. However, there are several regional stores in neighboring Rockford, Machesney Park, and Cherry Valley that may already be servicing the demand for these stores within the county. Moving forward, the true threat to the traditional retail stores region-wide is the expansion of online shopping, which will continue to grow in popularity in the future. This is something to keep in mind as Boone County continues to prepare for and adapt to the modern economy.

The most significant retail sectors where Boone County actually has more sales than its population

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**According to a U.S. Department of Agriculture report, fruit and vegetable farms that sell into local markets employ 13 full-time employees per every $1 million in sales, versus three employees for farms that sell into global commodity markets.**
demands, meaning they draw shoppers from outside the county is gasoline stations. This is largely due to the Illinois Tollway oasis, as well as the significant commuting population.

Not represented on the ESRI retail analysis are hotels and other lodging facilities, which is an identified need within the county. There have already been conversations with developers about a possible hotel or hotels along I-90, either at the new Irene Road interchange or at the Belvidere-Genoa Road interchange. Such facilities would mostly cater to interstate travelers, but could also benefit visitors to the county. In turn, they would likely lead to increased retail and restaurant development at the interchanges. There are also efforts to bring boutique hotels to downtown Belvidere that could benefit small-town and rural attractions.

Overall, the combination of a business friendly environment, available and sufficient infrastructure and workforce, established connections between targeted industry clusters, active collaboration between economic development agencies, and utilization of targeted investments will result in the most positive economic growth for Boone County over the next decade. It is incredibly important for stakeholders, organizations, governments, businesses, and the public to continue the work that has already been done in identifying key industries, attracting new companies, and retaining existing businesses to most efficiently and effectively diversify Boone County’s economy, build its tax base, and leverage its assets moving forward.

For example, according to ESRI, nearly 2% of Boone County residents’ retail purchases – $14.4 million – are from Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order House.
Economic Development Goals, Objectives, & Strategies

Goal 7.1 Strengthen the existing business community to retain and expand employment opportunities and investment.

**OBJECTIVES**

- a. Promote business assistance programs for existing employers.
- b. Improve communication between businesses and local government, as well as within the business community.
- c. Promote small-business ventures and a culture of entrepreneurship.
- d. Leverage the county’s agricultural strength for business development.

**STRATEGIES**

Update marketing materials highlighting Enterprise Zone benefits and share information with eligible businesses through calls, e-blasts, and visits.

Partner with utility providers to share information on economic development and energy-efficiency incentives and programs.

Encourage commercial and storefront redevelopment.

Provide expedited permitting and seamless processes for existing employers with projects to retain or add significant numbers of workers.

Use existing partnership between Growth Dimensions, ComEd, and The Workforce Connection to expand business interviews and outreach visits.

Identify the specific needs of the major industries in Boone County, and use frequent communication so government can assist with those needs.

Enhance the work of Growth Dimensions’ business development committee to understand business needs and opportunities.

Expand networking opportunities, such as Wired Wednesdays and Chamber of Commerce events, with a special focus on connecting business owners of diverse backgrounds and from various parts of the county.

Increase the use of the Small Business Development Center and other existing resources.

Examine the feasibility of small-business finance mechanisms, such as Revolving Loan Programs.

Assist the Latinx and Hispanic community and other underrepresented groups in building and developing small businesses.

Streamline regulatory processes to help small businesses.

Research community interest in and feasibility of setting up business incubators within the county.

Conduct an impact study of the agritourism industry.

Identify Boone County’s role in the potential for developing food hubs for aggregation of regionally grown produce for delivery to the other regions.

Identify locations suitable for urban agriculture and assist companies and individuals with such projects.
Goal 7.2 Attract businesses that diversify the Boone County economy and complement a thriving region.

OBJECTIVES

a. Promote Boone County as a destination for businesses as part of regional and county-specific marketing.

b. Analyze workforce needs to understand Boone County needs and match them with targeted businesses.

c. Diversify and increase Boone County’s sales tax base and visitor volume through retail, hospitality, and downtown development.

d. Match targeted industries to shovel-ready sites and available buildings in strategically located areas of the county.

STRATEGIES

Promote Boone County’s special ability to provide timely, hands-on business assistance to ensure on-time and on-budget projects.

Boost promotion of Boone County and the Northern Illinois Region in targeted business publications and at trade shows.

Participate in matchmaking events with targeted industries.

Conduct developer-led outreach directly to targeted companies and brokers, including phone calls, e-blasts, website promotion, real estate listings and arranged site visits.

Develop a laborshed and commuter study to realize the existing need and identify gaps.

Monitor workforce data on quarterly unemployment data, participation rates, median household income, etc.

Conduct retail market analyses to identify location-specific development opportunities.

Partner with key developers and property owners to conduct targeted retailer and commercial outreach for sites along I-90 and other major transportation corridors.

Explore hotel development near major roadways like I-90, U.S. 20, and Illinois 173.

Partner with land owners and developers of new and expanding industrial parks to make them shovel-ready and competitive.

Explore creative public-private partnerships or other alternative financing for providing necessary infrastructure for development.

Conduct a targeted industry study with regional partners and identify the property, utility, and other needs for those industries.

Update, maintain, and promote buildings and sites in Growth Dimensions’ Featured Properties database and other online listing services.

Work with broadband providers to expand and connect business-level service to key areas.

Goal 7.3 Become more cooperative, efficient, and transparent in economic development efforts.

OBJECTIVES

a. Coordinate with partners and stakeholders in economic development planning and business attraction and retention initiatives.

STRATEGIES

Continue to communicate and collaborate with other government entities in Boone County and the wider region on economic development initiatives, incentives, and plans.

Engage residents and seek their input on economic development strategies and initiatives, creating a forum for them to communicate ideas and ask questions.

Provide links and shared information on Boone County, municipal, and Growth Dimensions websites to ensure similar economic development messaging.

Partner with economic development agencies in surrounding areas and with the state on shared initiatives.
Chapter 7 Sources

Text

Figures
Chapter 8: Housing
Housing Vision

A COUNTY WITH A DIVERSE HOUSING STOCK THAT STRATEGICALLY PROVIDES A SUFFICIENT SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE, QUALITY HOUSING THAT ATTRACTS NEW RESIDENTS, WHILE ALSO ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF BOTH THE YOUNGER AND AGING POPULATIONS.

Introduction

Housing choice, affordability, and availability are a few of the most important factors to retaining existing and appealing to new residents. It also plays a vital role in the overall livability of an area because when a resident chooses to live and buy a home in a given location it represents one of the biggest investments they can make in a community’s future.

Housing encompasses the different types, patterns, and uses of structures in which people choose to live. Overall, the topic is integrated and connected to almost every other chapter in this plan. Housing influences traffic patterns, walkability, distribution of utilities/infrastructure, stormwater management, urbanization, and it also drives commercial growth, tax base distribution, the construction industry, institutional demand, and overall population growth. This chapter explores Boone County’s existing housing stock, housing affordability, and its future residential needs.

Some of the organizations and agencies that focus on housing in Boone County are municipalities, Belvidere Relators Association, Boone County Housing Authority, Habitat for Humanity, Keen Age Center, and Growth Dimensions.

Existing Housing Stock

Historically, Boone County’s housing stock was predominantly made up of small single-family farmsteads scattered throughout unincorporated agricultural areas and smaller lot, higher density housing units in Belvidere. Much of that is still true today. Almost all smaller and higher density housing units are still located in the City of Belvidere and the unincorporated areas of the county are still mostly small single-family farmsteads. However, a new form of residential development has also emerged over the past thirty years, medium (0.5-1 acre) and large lot (1+ acre) residential subdivisions. This type of development has dominated the urban fringes of various municipalities and in general the western and central sections of the county since 1990. In part, its led to owner-occupied single-family homes being the principal type of residential development in Boone County. Today, there are nearly 20,000 total housing units in the county, 81% are owner-occupied and 83% are single-family residences, both much higher than the overall state at 66% owner-occupied and 66% single-family.¹

During the county’s housing boom in the 1990s and 2000s, the number of new housing starts dramatically increased. Nearly half of the county’s current housing stock was built during that time period. However, the Great Recession abruptly ended the boom and subsequently the tremendous residential development demand. This dramatic market change resulted in an abundance of vacant platted residential parcels within subdivisions scattered throughout Boone County. In fact, there have been no new residential subdivisions built anywhere in the county since 2009.
FIGURE 8.3 HOUSING UNITS BY TYPE

- SINGLE FAMILY: 83%
- MULTI-FAMILY: 11%
- MOBILE HOME OR OTHER: 6%

FIGURE 8.4 YEAR HOUSING UNIT WAS BUILT

- PRE 1939: 18%
- 1940-1989: 36%
- 1990-1999: 22%
- 2000-2009: 23%
- 2010-2015: 0.4%

FIGURE 8.5 NEW HOUSING STARTS 1990-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>Belvidere</td>
<td>1,179</td>
<td>1,613</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>2,874</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unincorporated Areas</td>
<td>2,211</td>
<td>988</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3,271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,390</td>
<td>2,601</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>6,145</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
FIGURE 8.6
UNINCORPORATED RESIDENTIAL GROWTH

KEY
NEW UNINCORPORATED HOUSING STARTS
- 2000 - 2017
- Currently Unincorporated Residential
- Incorporated Parcels
- Townships

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
Current Housing Situation and Affordability

The housing market in Boone County is yet to fully recover from the Great Recession, and most likely will never reach the height it previously had. Additionally, the sprawling nature of medium and large lot subdivisions scattered throughout the county has left serval overarching issues in its wake: increased automobile dependency, a decentralized tax base, an over reliance on private well and septic systems, and a significant growth in urbanized area. Though these concerns are not unique to Boone County, many other rural and suburban areas are now experiencing similar problems due to the type and scale of residential development that occurred during the housing boom.

There are also now two different generations taking center stage in the Boone County housing market, Millennials (age 18-35) and Baby Boomers (age 60+). Combined, these two groups make up nearly 40% of the county’s overall population. In general, Millennials are an age cohort that has different preferences from previous generations. Specifically, many individuals are waiting longer to get married and have children, resulting in many of them favoring apartments, townhomes, or duplexes until later in life. In turn, this has contributed to driving down demand for new family-oriented medium and large lot single-family homes. In addition, the Baby Boomer generation, as it ages, is becoming increasingly reliant on assisted living facilities, senior-oriented housing, and generally smaller, denser housing types. Together, these two groups and their choices have played a part in the slow housing recovery experienced in Boone County because of the dominance of only one available housing type.

Boone County has traditionally been a very affordable area to live, especially in terms of housing costs. Today, that is still true. The median monthly renter cost is only $722 per month and the median monthly homeowner costs is only $1,423. However, the combination of historic growth patterns, the housing boom, the Great Recession, a long economic recovery, shifting demographics, and increasing poverty have led to changes in housing affordability over the past ten years. Together, these changes have put many residents in a difficult financial situation where they are now considered a cost burdened household, meaning that they spend over 30% of their total income on housing costs. Today, over a third of all Boone County homeowners and nearly 40% of all renters are considered cost burdened in the county.

One of the weaknesses of the past twenty years, identified through the planning process, was that the majority of new residential development in Boone County did not include affordable housing. In addition, when residents were asked about what is the most important future housing priority for the county, their consensus was availability of affordable, safe, and clean housing options. Due to the hard economic situation felt by almost every resident during and after the Great Recession, these subjects were actively brought up and discussed throughout the process.

Over the next decade, there are multiple approaches that the county and municipalities can take to retain and improve the affordability of housing county-wide. First, is the adoption of inclusionary zoning ordinances. These ordinances require that a share of new construction be affordable for people with low to moderate incomes, rather than exclusively market-rate housing. Second, the diversification of housing types is critically important to allowing a mix of people with different socio-economic backgrounds to live within a given area. Ultimately, this method is market-driven, but can be further promoted and prioritized by local agencies in Boone County moving forward. Finally, in order to help the people that need affordable housing the most; it’s particularly important to better coordinate efforts, leverage resources, and increase overall communication with local and regional agencies and HUD. This can be done through maximizing the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) and Veterans Assisted Supportive Housing program participants, finding opportunities to leverage Low Income Housing Tax Credits to construct or rehab affordable housing, helping to establish a Regional Housing Initiative, and utilizing the streamlined processes afforded through the Moving To Work designation given to the Winnebago County Housing Authority. In sum, each approach offers opportunities for different organizations and government entities throughout Boone County to be involved in retaining and improving the affordability of housing.

Three key housing trends took place over the past ten years that affected affordability: tightened financial lending practices post-recession, a low supply of available housing stock, and lack of diversity in owner and rental units county-wide.
Future Needs

As generational preferences transform, demographics shift, the economy changes, and the housing market fluctuates, the traditional medium and large lot subdivisions of the past thirty years should no longer be the only new housing type implemented. It is critically important for the continued viability and livability of Boone County to diversify the available housing stock and prioritize infill residential development over the next decade.

During the public participation phase, over 200 total residents of all ages took part in an activity that ranked which housing types they preferred and would want to live in over the next decade. The results were a collection of different residential development forms including: traditional farmsteads, conservation-oriented subdivisions, multifamily duplexes, senior housing, 1 acre lots, and ½ acre lots. The needs of the community have not only changed, but they are also diversified. In addition, in order to retain future generations and accommodate the existing population in the future, it’s imperative to provide alternative housing choices around the county.

Residential infill development is the most productive way to leverage the existing housing conditions in Boone County. There are 750 acres of vacant platted residential parcels in unincorporated Boone County alone and a plethora within incorporated areas. A prioritized effort to develop these parcels is the most effective way to utilize existing infrastructure, service future demand, create more livable communities, reduce sprawl, and increase the residential tax base. In order for infill development to be most productive it should also take the form of and complement the existing character of its surroundings in order to enhance the neighborhoods and home values county-wide.

Any new residential development should take into consideration the following key attributes:

- Promote development within close proximity of other compatible uses, to aid in reducing the cost of services to County residents, and to manage and preserve the County’s resources and rural character.
- Expand the housing stock for all income levels and promote affordable housing.
- Encourage high-quality housing with good design, solid construction, and that maximizes energy efficiency.
- Support the use of cluster housing and conservation design techniques to preserve open space and environmentally sensitive areas.
- Locate any new senior-oriented housing or assisted living facilities in areas accessible to commercial, recreational, medical, and other necessary facilities and services.
- Prioritize and incentivize infill development.
- Encourage mixed-use development.
- Diversify the housing stock to meet the needs of future and existing populations.
- Promote residential growth in areas that can make utility connections to existing municipal services.

Housing plays a critical role in a successful future for Boone County. Currently, the county consists of both vibrant rural and urban components, but a careful consideration of the issues and opportunities discussed in this chapter will lead to a well-planned and highly livable community in the future.
## Housing Goals, Objectives, & Strategies

### Goal 8.1 Prepare for and accommodate to changing long-term population housing needs.

#### OBJECTIVES

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Maintain overall housing affordability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Meet the future housing needs of an increasingly aging population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Meet the housing needs of younger and more diverse populations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### STRATEGIES

- Advocate for mixed income housing to be included in new residential development.
- Repurpose underutilized housing to better accommodate alternative housing options for a variety of residents.
- Attract new multi-family affordable housing options and advocate for the adoption of inclusionary zoning ordinances.
- Encourage repairing and updating dilapidated housing.
- Foster new connections between local developers, realtors, property managers, the Housing Authority, and HUD.
- Prioritize senior-friendly housing and assisted living facilities to accommodate Boone County’s aging population.
- Prioritize walkability, interconnected land uses, and age-friendly design in future residential growth.
- Allow all populations to use and access services.
- Expand the variety of housing types and options available.
- Match future residential growth areas with existing community assets to tie social, economic, and transportation fabric together.
Chapter 8 Sources

Text

Figures
5. City of Belvidere and Boone County Building Department, 2018.
Chapter 9: Transportation
Transportation Vision

AN EFFICIENT, SAFE, RELIABLE, AND INTERCONNECTED MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM THAT EMPHASIZES THE COUNTY’S STRATEGIC ECONOMIC LOCATION IN THE REGION AND FACILITATES CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENTS IN THE EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM.

Introduction

Transportation encompasses not only the roadway infrastructure within Boone County but also the connectivity of the multimodal network for those who live, work, or visit Boone County. Integration of all modes of the transportation system is vital to Boone County’s future as shifts in demographics and travel preferences occur over the next ten to twenty years. This chapter addresses the current roadway infrastructure and the County’s public and active transportation options. It also explores how connectivity to local, regional, and intercity travel will continue to remain an important aspect of the County’s transportation system in the future.

Transportation infrastructure and programs are shaped and influenced by many other elements of this plan including land use, economic development, health and wellness, and social values. The distribution and density of residential, commercial, and industrial uses have direct impacts on how the current transportation network is used and what additional transportation options may be needed in the future. The alternative transportation options detailed in this section also effect other topic areas within this plan, such as environmental sustainability, public health, and safety.

The strategies and recommendations found within this chapter are generally consistent and coordinated with regional transportation plans. The Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning (RMAP) partners with Boone County, as well as the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), townships, and the cities and villages within the County to ensure there is a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process within the Rockford Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). The MPA consists of the current and forecasted urbanized areas of Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties. Boone County is represented on the RMAP Policy Committee, RMAP Alternative Transportation Committee, and the RMAP Technical Committee, which together support the development of several regional transportation planning activities including the Transportation Improvement Program and Long Range Transportation Plan.

Roadways

One of the County’s primary attributes is vehicular accessibility through its extensive network of 775 miles of roadway. Historically, the area has been a destination for many businesses and residents due to its proximity to major urban centers as well as the numerous major highways that traverse the county.
FIGURE 9.1
ROADWAY REFERENCE MAP

KEY
- Interstate
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Local
- Municipality
- Water
- Public Conservation Land
- Park/Open Space

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
Roadways serve two functions: to provide mobility and to provide access. These two functions lie at opposite ends of the spectrum; most roads provide some combination of both. Higher speeds and fewer intersections are preferred for mobility, while lower speeds and more frequent intersections support access. A roadway is classified by the role it plays in the overall transportation network, known as Functional Classification. This hierarchy is divided into Arterial, Collector, and Local. Arterials provide the highest level of mobility; local roads provide mostly land access; and collectors have a balanced combination of both. While mobility and access are important to assigning functional classification, several other factors are also considered including efficiency, speed limit, route spacing, usage, number of lanes, and regional significance.

During the public participation events, residents of Boone County identified three primary concerns with the roadway network: maintaining the roads in a state of good repair, the efficiency of the roads and intersections, and the safety of users on the roadways.

Maintenance

One of the most noticeable aspects of roads, and one of the largest areas of concern for motorists in Boone County, is surface quality. The ability to have a smooth, comfortable drive greatly improves resident's satisfaction with the roadway network. Pavement condition plays a large role in ensuring the ride-ability and safety of the roads. However, maintaining all of the roadways in a state of good repair is and will continue to be one of the largest challenges facing Boone County, particularly in the unincorporated areas.

Pavement condition can be affected by a wide range of factors, including climate, traffic volumes, and vehicle weights. As pavement condition weakens or the shoulder deteriorates, the required maintenance costs increases. While the transport of agricultural machinery from one field to another or to a storage facility is essential to Boone County’s economy, the weight and axle loads of the agricultural equipment and other large vehicles cause high pavement stresses on the roadways. To minimize these effects, agricultural equipment and heavy truck operators are encouraged to utilize the designated truck routes throughout the county. These routes are designed to withstand heavier weights and/or oversized vehicles.

Routine maintenance of the roadways, such as crack pouring, surface treatments, milling, and overlays can greatly improve the overall condition of the pavement surface for ride-ability, safety, and environmental protection, as well as improving the roadway’s design lifespan. The task of maintaining the roadway network is distributed between the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Boone County Highway Department, the nine townships, and the local municipalities.

IDOT is responsible for all marked and unmarked state routes, as well as US Routes, while the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority (Illinois Tollway) is responsible for Interstate 90. Boone County Highway Department is responsible for all county roads, which may exist in both the corporate limits of a city or village as well as unincorporated areas. Townships, or Road Districts, have responsibility for all township roads within its borders. Unlike county roads, township roads cannot exist within the corporate limits of a city or village. The final authority with jurisdictional responsibility over roadways in Boone County are cities and villages. Cities and villages are responsible for all public streets within the corporate limits, except any State or county roads.
FIGURE 9.4
ROADWAY BY JURISDICTION

KEY

JURISDICTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

- IDOT
- County
- Municipality
- Private (incl. Toll Authority)
- Adjacent Township
- Township
- Water
- Public Conservation Land
- Park/Open Space
- Municipality
- Boone County

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
As mentioned previously, Boone County has the responsibility of maintaining all county roads, which includes approximately 93 miles of roadway and fourteen bridges. Boone County Highway Department has developed a short-range plan, known as their Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), to identify capital projects that are planned to begin within the next five years. For Boone County’s 2018 – 2022 CIP, the following projects are listed:

- 2018 - Manchester Road from Winnebago County line to Salt Box Road (Wisconsin jurisdiction).
- 2019 - Poplar Grove Road Bridge over the Kishwaukee River.
- 2019 - Poplar Grove Road & Lawrenceville Road intersection improvements.
- 2019 - Poplar Grove Road Kishwaukee River to US 20 Bridge.
- 2020 - Genoa Road from US Route 20 to the I-90 bridge.
- 2021 - Woodstock Road from Poplar Grove Road to McHenry County line.
- 2022 - Garden Prairie Road from US Route 20 to I-90 Bridge.
- Other Anticipated Bridgework: Replace the bridge on Woodstock Road over the Piscasaw Creek. Anticipated remaining life is five to ten years. This project would include realigning Woodstock Road to intersect with the south Woodstock Road and Poplar Grove Road intersection, by Timber Pointe Golf Club.

**Capacity**

Efficient traffic flow, particularly at intersections, is another priority for the residents of Boone County. Efficiency of travel on a roadway can be determined by comparing the demand and supply of the roadway, known as the volume-to-capacity ratio (V/C). Demand of the roadway is determined by the volume of traffic, or annual average daily traffic (AADT). Supply of the roadway is determined by its capacity, which is based on the design and engineering of that road. The lower the V/C ratio, the more efficient the traffic flow is on that road. The travel demand model (TDM), managed by RMAP, is used to calculate both the current and projected V/C.

According to results produced by the TDM, Boone County’s roads are operating efficiently. A majority of the roads are operating at or below half of their designed capacity, with the exceptions of:

- U.S. Hwy 20 Business: Olson Road to Doc Wolf Drive.
- U.S. Hwy 20 Business: Olson Road to Doc Wolf Drive.
- U.S Hwy 20: Logan Avenue to County Line Road.
- Irene Road: U.S. Hwy 20 to I-90 Interchange.
- Town Hall Road: U.S. Hwy 20 to the Belvidere Assembly Plant.
- Pearl Street: south of U.S. Hwy 20.

Looking ahead at the projections produced by the TDM, Boone County is expected to see a slight increase in the V/C ratio on certain roadways by 2040. Projected increases are expected for the roadways in the County that are already experiencing a higher ratio of V/C, including the road segments identified above. However, additional road segments that may experience higher V/C ratios, include:

- I-90: County Line Road to Boone-Winnebago County Line.
- U.S Hwy 20: Boone-Winnebago County Line to Poplar Grove Road.
- Newburg Road: Irene Road to S. Appleton Road.
Volume-to-capacity ratio can also represent the efficiency of an intersection. While the calculation of an intersection’s V/C is similar to that of a roadway, additional intersection characteristics come into play, such as speed limits and functional classification of each of the roads entering into the intersection. Other factors may also affect the efficiency of an intersection, such as influence of pedestrians, signal timing, accidents, and inclement weather.

According to results produced by the TDM, all intersections in Boone County are operating adequately. Intersections along Riverside Road are currently experiencing the highest V/C ratios in the County. Looking ahead at the projections produced by the TDM, Boone County is expected to see a slight increase in the V/C ratio at several more intersections by 2040. It is expected that intersection traffic flows will remain efficient even with the projected increases in V/C.

**Safety**

In addition to maintaining and ensuring efficiency, roadway safety is a primary concern of the residents. Throughout the public participation activities, stakeholders identified that continued collaboration and partnerships between each roadway jurisdiction in the county is the best way to ensure safety for all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists. However, monitoring high incident areas and actively pursuing infrastructure-oriented safety treatments (safety countermeasures) and enforcement strategies should also be the county’s priority to increase roadway safety.

Crash data collected over a five-year time period between 2010 and 2014 show that there were over 4,300 crashes in Boone County, an average of roughly 860 crashes per year. Approximately 26% of those crashes resulted in an injury or fatality and the remaining crashes involved property damage only. Additionally, around 40% of those crashes had occurred at intersections. With a projected increase in roadway demand over the next 10 years, it will be increasingly important to implement additional proven strategies to increase Boone County’s roadway safety.
FIGURE 9.7
ROADWAY VOLUME/CAPACITY RATIO
2015 BASELINE TRAVEL DEMAND MODEL

KEY

0.0 - .40
.41 - .50
.51 - .60
.61 - .70
.71 - .86
.861 - .96

0 1.5 3 6 Miles
1 in = 4 miles

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.

*See methodology and definitions on Page X.
FIGURE 9.8
INTERSECTION VOLUME/CAPACITY RATIO
2015 BASELINE
TRAVEL DEMAND MODEL

KEY

- 0.0 - 0.40
- 0.41 - 0.50
- 0.51 - 0.60
- 0.61 - 0.73

*See methodology and definitions on Page X.

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
Alternative Transportation

In 2014, more than 85% of commuters in Boone County drove alone in a motor vehicle. While a majority of trips have historically been single-occupant motor vehicles, there has been a growing interest in improving alternative transportation options in Boone County. A community with a robust alternative transportation network that balances the needs of all roadway users offers a variety of benefits including: economic, environmental, health, quality of life, and transportation. Access for all community members to high-quality and reliable transportation is essential for residents to be able to get to and from work, school, health care, social activities, and shopping.

Transportation Access

Due to the fact that Boone County is very rural, the transportation system and built environment have been predominantly designed for many decades to accommodate a single form of transportation, automobiles. However, not all residents have the ability to own or operate a personal vehicle because of physical, financial, medical, or other issues. This makes it very difficult for these individuals to have the access they need for various essential life functions. Without alternative forms of transportation available, these populations would not be able to live in Boone County.

The two main forms of alternative transportation in the area are public and active transportation. Both play a vital role in providing access to local and regional destinations. Traditionally, alternative transportation options have not been as highly prioritized as other transportation investments and subsequently seen less funding over time. However, without these essential alternatives the county could be negatively affected in a variety of ways: long-term physical and mental public health issues, decreasing environmental quality, increasing inequity, loss in economic vitality, decline in quality of life, and less attractive to new residents. It is important to consider transportation access as a necessary component of a long-term future that serves the entire county population.

Public Transportation

There are two transit providers operating within the County, Boone County Public Transportation and Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD). Both of these agencies provide an alternative transportation option for residents to access both local and regional destinations.

Boone County Public Transportation operates a county-wide door-to-door demand-response service that is available to all residents of the County, regardless of age. Service is provided Monday through Friday between the hours of 7:45 AM and 4:30 PM. Rides are scheduled by calling the Boone County Council on Aging 24 hours in advance of the need for service. Boone County Public Transportation can also provide transportation to medical appointments in neighboring counties with advanced notice.

RMTD has one fixed route in Boone County. It runs in Belvidere, helping to connect Boone County to the neighboring cities of Rockford and Loves Park, as well as the Village of Machesney Park. This route begins and ends at the East Side Transfer Center in Rockford and provides four round trips daily.

Over the next decade, public transportation in Boone County is facing three major challenges: the image of public transportation, the efficiency of public transportation options, and making connections to more regional destinations.

The first challenge is the promotion and perception of the Boone County Public Transportation service. Many residents have the perception that Boone County Public Transportation is exclusively a senior-oriented bus service. This perception has risen from the Boone County Public Transportation connection with the Boone County Council on Aging (BCCA) because the two agencies are housed together at the Keen Age Center in Belvidere and share a main telephone line. Steps are currently being taken to promote Boone County Public Transportation as an option for all residents of the County through furthering the delineation between the BCCA and Boone County Public Transportation. In addition, there is a language barrier for some residents because the majority of materials and functions do
not include a Spanish language option. Moving forward, new marketing will be needed to further separate the two agencies and increase the inclusiveness of services, including modernizing and diversifying the public transportation brand.

The second challenge facing public transportation in the County is efficiency. Inefficiencies in the current system include: the amount, the timing, and the number of stops of the RTMD Belvidere route service, the number of transfers needed to reach destinations, and trip length. In total, there are only four round trips of the RTMD Route #24 per day. Beginning at the RMTD East Side Transfer Center, the Belvidere route (Route #24) service provides 10 total stops in Boone County starting at the BCCA and ending at Belvidere City Hall. Departures from the East Side Transfer Center are at 8:40 AM, 11:40 AM, 1:40 PM, and 4:40 PM. The service does not accommodate the majority of people who live in one county and work in the other due to the limited service schedule.

Additionally, in order to reach the various amenities within neighboring Winnebago County, several transfers may be needed depending upon the final destination. Currently, four routes depart/arrive at the East Side Transfer Center, Route #11 (E. State Street), Route #18 (Bell School), Route #19 (Cherryvale), and Route #24 (Belvidere). Routes #18 and #19 run north and south along Bell School Road, respectively. Route #11 is the only route to travel west into downtown Rockford. Any destination beyond State Street and Bell School Road corridors in Winnebago County would require additional transfers.

The above mentioned inefficiencies can be large deterrents for Belvidere residents in utilizing RMTD’s public transportation services, as can the amount of time it would take residents to reach their final destinations. For example, to reach RMTD’s Downtown Transfer Center from the BCCA, it would take a resident 90-minutes to complete the trip with one transfer and a 30-minute wait at the East Side Transfer Center.

Timing and hours of operation are not only a limiting factor for the RMTD Belvidere route service, it is also viewed as a limiting factor for Boone County Public Transportation. The current service hours of 7:45 AM to 4:30 PM do not accommodate most work schedules and are not conducive for using the service for recreational purposes on evenings and/or weekends.

Due to these factors, many residents currently do not view public transportation as a viable option. However, elderly residents, individuals with disabilities, and low-income individuals have limited transportation options and rely on these alternative transportation options. Additional funding for public transportation in Boone County and RMTD is the largest obstacle for improving efficiency.

Connectivity is the final challenge for public transportation, specifically connectivity to Rockford and Chicago. In 2013, 67% of workers in Boone County worked outside of the County, 34% of workers commuted to Winnebago County and 28% commuted into the Chicago Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). With such large portions of residents commuting outside of the county, providing an affordable and efficient commuting option, outside of a single-occupant vehicle, has become a strong desire for many residents. These options include ride share programs, park-and-ride facilities, and bus rapid transit.

Active Transportation

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in increasing bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Boone County. During the public participation activities, new multi-use paths, sidewalks, and on-street bicycle facilities were prioritized the most out of the infrastructure categories presented. As of 2018, Boone County has 28 miles of existing bicycle facilities, all of which are shared use paths, as well as 104 miles of proposed shared use paths. Figure 9.12 shows the existing and proposed bicycle network. Shared use paths are considered a system of off-road transportation routes that extend and complement the roadway network. However, for a successful bicycle network to be a viable alternative transportation option, shared use paths should not preclude on-street facilities. Rather, they should act as a supplement to a network of on-street facilities, such as bicycle routes, shared lanes, and bicycle lanes. These on-street facilities provide greater access and efficiency to major destinations, such as commercial and employment centers, as well as being more cost effective.
than shared use paths are to implement. A balanced and interconnected network of both on-street facilities and shared use paths affords and promotes bicycle ridership for recreation, commuting, and everyday trips. This trend can have many positive impacts including: public health outcomes, environmental quality, congestion management, facility maintenance, and improved livability.

In 2017, the Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning (RMAP) adopted the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the Rockford Metropolitan Area. This plan provides a framework for improving connectivity, safety, convenience, and attractiveness of bicycle and pedestrian networks throughout the Rockford Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA), which is comprised of the urbanized portions of Boone and Winnebago and portions of northeast Ogle County. The plan addresses the development of a region-wide system of on-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities to connect with existing shared use path facilities and public transportation services. The plan recommends the promotion and encouragement of bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly growth through programming and engineering.

It should be noted that it will be up to local government agencies with roadway jurisdiction to determine which bicycle facilities should be prioritized, as they are responsible for the development and construction of the facilities. However, the prioritization process created by RMAP serves as a guide to recommended facilities that should be built in the near future to increase the connectivity of the regional bicycle and pedestrian network. The plan has identified three roadway corridors in Boone County as priority bicycle corridors:

- Squaw Prairie Road: Winnebago-Boone County Line to Beloit Road.
- Beloit Road: Squaw Prairie Road to Belvidere North High School.
- Town Hall Road: Squaw Prairie Road to Newburg Road.

*Boone County Public Transportation is an on-demand service that covers the entire county.*
Transportation Goals, Objectives, & Strategies

Goal 9.1 Improve transportation infrastructure and services that will be accessible, efficient and reliable for both people and goods.

OBJECTIVES

a. Increase residents’ use of public transportation options in the county.

b. Utilize the county’s central location to major transportation hubs.

c. Maintain the efficiency of roadways.

d. Increase active transportation access and safety across the county.

STRATEGIES

Promote the Boone County Public Transportation’s demand-response service as an option for all residents, regardless of age.

Pursue delineation between the Boone County Public Transportation and the Boone County Council on Aging.

Build upon the existing Rockford Mass Transit District partnership to increase service efficiency for Boone County residents.

Expand public transportation services to include direct routes to commercial centers and regional medical facilities.

Expand services to Chicago and O’Hare via nearby commuter rail stations and express bus services.

Improve public transportation service efficiency to Chicago Rockford International Airport and downtown Rockford.

Pursue park-and-ride facilities to support efficient multimodal travel to surrounding communities.

Maintain surface transportation assets in a state of good repair.

Improve the efficiency and safety of high traffic intersections through multijurisdictional coordination on traffic control devices and safety countermeasures.

Identify and address maintenance issues on roadways with high usage of agricultural equipment.

Improve the connectivity of bicycle facilities and shared use paths within the county, as well as to surrounding counties.

Expand the existing active transportation network with on-street bicycle facilities, such as wide paved shoulders.

Incorporate multimodal transportation options into future development to improve walkability, bikeability, and transit options for current and future residents.
Chapter 9 Sources

Text
1. Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning/IDOT IRIS File.

Figures
1. RMAP GIS, 2018.
5. Boone County Highway Department, 2018.
7. R1PC Travel Demand Model and GIS, 2018
8. R1PC Travel Demand Model and GIS, 2018
Chapter 10: Land Use
Land Use Vision

A LAND USE PLAN THAT’S PROACTIVELY WORKING TO PRESERVE AGRICULTURAL LAND AND OPEN SPACE THROUGH CONCENTRATING DEVELOPMENT, COORDINATING EXISTING LAND USES, PROTECTING RESOURCES, UTILIZING GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES, AND INTEGRATING ALL TOWNSHIP AND MUNICIPALITY LAND USE PLANS.

Introduction

Land use planning is an essential function of both local and county governments because of its direct connection to resident’s health, safety, and wellbeing. Good planning can protect and conserve resources, promote economic and population growth, prioritize infrastructure, and allow communities to capitalize on future opportunities. The foundation of any well-functioning and highly livable community is the use of proactive, consistent, strategic, and well-thought-out planning. In total, land use planning encompasses all decisions made in relation to both the built and physical environment, and it directly influences all other topics discussed in this plan. This chapter details the existing state of land use in Boone County, along with projecting, prioritizing, and planning for future land use decisions.

It is important to note that this plan, unlike previous Boone County Comprehensive plans, does not include land use planning for any parcel within the corporate boundaries of any local municipality. It strictly plans for the future land use of properties currently within unincorporated Boone County. However, it is imperative to consider, analyze, and incorporate all land use plans within each municipality’s extraterritorial jurisdiction, especially adjacent to the periphery of each municipality. There are three reasons for this.

» The majority of future growth in Boone County is expected to occur along the edges of existing municipal borders because of the proximity to population, attractions, utilities, and infrastructure.

» The majority of new development is going to require water or sewer connections, which can only be done within incorporated parcels in Boone County.

» Each municipality has the power to annex any land desired within its extraterritorial jurisdiction, which extends 1.5 miles in all directions from its current borders.¹

Overall, there are two key agencies in Boone County that focus on land use the: Boone County Planning Department and the City of Belvidere Planning Department. Together, in compliance with city and county zoning codes, these two departments make the majority of current and future land use decisions county-wide. However, the Village of Poplar Grove, Caledonia, Timberlane, Capron, Cherry Valley and the City of Loves Park make all of their own planning decisions internally.

Existing Land Use

Historically, Boone County has been dominated by agricultural and open space land uses. The same can be said today. Over the last 30 years, however, the county has seen significant urbanization taken place. Since 2000, the amount of urbanized land area in Boone County has grown from 7% of the total land area to 10% in 2016.² This new development has predominantly been in the form of single-family residential subdivisions within and along the periphery of Belvidere, Poplar Grove,
Timberlane, Loves Park, and the far western side of the county, commonly referred to as the growth corridor.

In Boone County, 87%\(^3\) of the total land area is unincorporated and predominantly used for agriculture, open space/recreation, or other infrastructure. As expected, the opposite is true of land uses within municipal borders, which are mostly residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses.

The existing land use pattern county-wide has been dramatically effected by two overarching events since 1990: the housing boom and the Great Recession. During the housing boom of the 1990s and first half of the 2000s, Boone County grew rapidly in the form of mainly residential subdivisions. The associated growth in population additionally drove increased commercial, institutional, transportation, and infrastructure demand. The result was municipalities and other taxing bodies growing fairly rapidly both geographically and financially. The combination of good planning, continuous public involvement, forward thinking leadership, and some good fortune yielded a much more concentrated residential growth patterns than other similar rural and suburban counties experienced during that time period. As a result, urban sprawl was contained, and a greater amount of farmland and open space acres were preserved.

When the Recession derailed the global economy in 2008, the demand for new homes flat lined. Ten years later, the housing market in Boone County is still working to recover, but demand has not yet approached the levels seen between 1990 and 2005. The lack of recovery has caused a ripple effect on many other facets of Boone County:

- Population totals have leveled off or even decreased.
- Numerous vacant subdivision lots sit empty awaiting development.
- Infrastructure is underutilized.
- Governments/services are spread thin and struggling to keep up financially.

Both the housing boom and Great Recession have profoundly influenced the views of Boone County residents. Many people have observed both the positive and negative effects of increasing development, urbanization, and population. These experiences have paved the way for the renewed county-wide focus on working together to maximize existing land uses, mitigate consumption of farmland, and concentrate future growth. Throughout the public participation process these common themes were widely recognized as some of the most important issues facing the county’s future.

Boone County’s existing land uses are categorized into ten classifications. These classifications are based on what each current parcel is almost entirely being used for:

For example, development was occurring and was anticipated to continue at such an intense rate that a new school complex northwest of Belvidere was built to serve the increased demand. The new 176-acre campus consisting of Belvidere North High School, Belvidere Central Middle School, and Seth Whitman Elementary School were all built in the early and mid-2000s.
### Agricultural Production
Land used for row crops, animal husbandry, pastures, or agritourism in rural locations. In most cases there are no dwelling units located on the lot and the parcel is classified as a designated farm by the Boone County Assessor’s Office.

### Agricultural Residential
Land used for single-family homes oriented toward agricultural uses.

### Commercial
Land used for retail, restaurants, hotels, office space, or a similar use. Some parcels contain dwelling units in the highest density areas, and in general they range anywhere from a small 0.1-acre parcel downtown to a 40+ acre big box store.

### Extraction
Land used for mines or quarries on a collection of parcels usually greater than 40 acres.

### Industrial
Land used for manufacturing, factories, warehouses, storage, or large-scale production of a product. The majority of these uses are located on sites exceeding 1 acre.

### Institutional
Land used for churches, schools, fairgrounds, airports, assisted living facilities, government or public safety buildings, public utilities, cemeteries, or other civic-oriented land uses. There are very few dwelling units located on these parcels and they can range from 0.1 acre to 100+ acres.

### Open Space/Recreation
Land used for parks, conservation areas, golf courses, campgrounds, other outdoor recreation facilities. There are no dwelling units located on these parcels and many sites exceed 10 acres.

### Other Infrastructure (ROW, Utility, Rail Road)
Land used for transportation or private utility infrastructure, usually in a collection of 1-10 acre parcels.

### Residential
Land used for single-family homes, duplexes, apartments, senior housing, or townhouses ranging anywhere from 68 dwelling units per acre (most urban) down to 0.1 dwelling units per acre (most rural).

### Vacant
Land used for platted parcels with no structures or paved surfaces and can be of any future land use classification. Many vacant parcels are 1 acre or smaller (mostly residential), however there are some large parcels exceeding 10+ acres (mainly commercial and industrial).
**Land Use Policies**

Counties in Illinois do not have the power to expand their borders, and subsequently do not have the same ability to dictate growth patterns as municipalities. That’s why it’s so important for Boone County to promote sustainable and strategic growth through coordinated future planning and land use policies. A few of those policies utilized by municipalities, counties, and the state are: boundary agreements, separation areas, annexation agreements, and planning areas. For more detailed definitions and local context for each type, please see Appendix F.
FIGURE 10.5
1990S AND 2000S GROWTH CORRIDOR

KEY
- Growth Corridor
- Public Conservation Land
- Park/Open Space

MUNICIPALITY
- Belvidere
- Caledonia
- Capron
- Cherry Valley
- Loves Park
- Poplar Grove
- Timberlane
- Townships
- Boone County

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
FIGURE 10.6
BOUNDARY AGREEMENTS, COMMUNITY SEPERATION AREAS, PRE-ANNEXED PARCELS, AND MUNICIPAL PLANNING AREAS
KEY
- Community Separation Areas
- Boundary Agreements
- Pre-Annexed Parcels
- Municipal Boundaries

MUNICIPAL PLANNING AREAS
- Belvidere
- Caledonia
- Capron
- Cherry Valley
- Loves Park
- Poplar Grove
- Townships
- Boone County

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
Growth Areas vs. No Growth Areas

In a variety of forms, the question of how and where to grow was the most discussed issue of this planning process. During the public visioning phase, Boone County and its residents focused on one pivotal land use approach moving forward, to preserve the county’s rural culture through protecting farmland and open space. During the public workshops and high school engagement sessions, “preserve prime agriculture land and open space” was the most prioritized land use strategy for the future. And finally, after compiling all responses from the public engagement process, the highest ranked and most discussed topics were land use, growth management, and farmland preservation.

Overall, it was understood that the general consensus of participants were in favor of protecting key land uses. Nevertheless, it was also agreed upon that in order to maintain services, promote job growth and economic stability, increase livability, and have a prosperous future, growth and development still needs to occur. In order to achieve this, it is imperative to strategically determine where future growth should be focused.

Growth Areas

There are a few key areas in Boone County where future growth is desired. These growth areas were identified because they are:

- Near existing utilities.
- Contiguous to common land uses and municipal borders.
- Adjacent to established destinations, attractions, and services.
- Easy to access via transportation infrastructure.
- Not within prime farmland or greenways/open space areas.

Boone County’s future strategic growth areas are delineated into four different categories: residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed-use commercial and industrial.

Residential

In Boone County, new future residential growth should be focused almost entirely on infill development of vacant parcels in existing platted subdivisions within both incorporated and unincorporated neighborhoods. Almost all of these platted parcels are located within the incorporated neighborhoods of the City of Loves Park, City of Belvidere, and Village of Poplar Grove.

Secondarily, while this plan prioritizes infill as the main focus of new residential development, it is also important to consider that some new greenfield development may be necessary or market dictated. The areas where new residential development should take place are within the planning areas of the City of Loves Park, City of Belvidere, and Village of Poplar Grove.

Commercial

Future commercial growth areas in Boone County should be concentrated along existing transportation corridors in three particular areas. The first is the US Business 20 corridor between the Cities of Rockford and Belvidere. This corridor is heavily traveled and within close proximity to existing utility infrastructure, municipalities, and anticipated future residential growth. It has a variety of developable land available and the potential to attract commercial development at many different scales. As part of the previous comprehensive planning process, Boone County created a zoning overlay district along the corridor to promote higher end development patterns. While the significant commercial development that was anticipated never came to fruition, the potential for future commercial growth in this area remains high.
Second, is along the corridors of Highway 173 and Highway 76, which run through the middle of Boone County. The area is ideal for future commercial growth because of its location near other established commercial land uses, close proximity to existing utility capacity, adjacent to a main arterial connection point, and close to future residential growth areas. The corridors were also identified in the Boone County Highway 173 Corridor Plan. Even though there has been little growth to this point, the corridors are very attractive for new small to medium sized commercial users in the future.

Third, is an area south of US Route 20 and north of Interstate 90 between Genoa Road and Johnson Road. A portion of this corridor is already developed with Walmart, commercial strip centers, and several commercial out lots, all of which are located within the City of Belvidere. However, the land directly to the east of those parcels is unincorporated and presents a great opportunity because of its visibility, access, and proximity to transportation and utilities. With large contiguous tracts of land available, this area could see a wide range of future commercial development.

While this plan is primarily focused on commercial growth areas that are located outside of municipal boundaries, it is expected that the areas that will see the most consistent commercial growth over the next decade are corridors within the City of Belvidere and Village of Poplar Grove.

**Industrial**

Almost all industrial development in Boone County is located in and around the City of Belvidere, mainly between Newburg Road, US Route 20, and Interstate 90. This area is ideal for continued industrial development because it already has a significant number of industrial users, transportation access is plentiful, and it is next to existing utility infrastructure. The location is set to see small and mid-sized industrial developments continue to locate over the next decade.

**Commercial and Industrial Mixed Use**

Mixed use is traditionally thought of as higher density developments with commercial and residential collocated, which has had little demand in Boone County over time. However, just south of Belvidere a different type of mixed use development is primed to occur, a combination of commercial and industrial. Between the Irene Road and Genoa Road interchanges, just south of Interstate 90, is an abundance of undeveloped farmland. This area is strategically located along the most traveled roadway in the region, adjacent to the City of Belvidere’s municipal limits and utility infrastructure, and has a significant amount of contiguous developable land available for any size development desired. These factors make the area ideal for a wide variety of both commercial and industrial users.

This classification offers the flexibility for a developer to construct new industrial, business, or office parks, in addition to developing individual parcels for large single users in strategic locations. Other municipalities in the region use similar flexible future land use classifications for land along I-90 because of its unique development potential. It makes the most sense to continue this type of growth along the identified corridor to foster regional continuity and to offer the most long-term flexibility.
FIGURE 10.7
GROWTH AREAS
KEY
- Infill Residential
- New Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Commercial And Industrial Mixed Use
- Boone County
- Townships
- Municipal Boundaries

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2019, Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
No Growth Areas

Land where development should not be located over the next decade is just as important as determining where future growth should be concentrated. The primary purpose of the no-growth areas is to identify land that should be protected and where future development should be discouraged. This includes Boone County’s prime farmland, open spaces, and greenways.

Agricultural Land Protection Policies

A-1 Zoning - Agricultural Preservation Area District

A-1 is a zoning classification within the Boone County Zoning Code. Its purpose is to maintain, enhance, and conserve prime agricultural soils, protect sensitive natural features, and prevent nonagricultural development. This classification is very restrictive because it only allows agricultural uses and one single-family home on a lot of record. This layer of farmland protection helps curb development pressures and is used the most frequently in Boone County. The majority of unincorporated parcels are zoned A-1.

Agricultural Areas Program

The Illinois Department of Agriculture passed the Agricultural Areas Conservation and Protection Act in 1980 which gave landowners the right to voluntarily enroll their property in an “Agricultural Area.” This designation protects the land from being developed for an initial ten years, and then after a reevaluation the property can be reenrolled every eight years.

Agricultural Conservation Easement

In 2006, the Boone County Board created the Boone County Agricultural Conservation Easement and Farmland Protection Commission. An Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACE) is a 99-year contract with automatic renewal between landowners and a public entity. The contract stipulates the only types of development that can occur on the property. The Farmland Protection Commission is tasked with promoting farmland preservation and creating ACEs. The commission has taken two steps to achieve this. One, was the establishment of an Intergovernmental Agreement with the State’s Attorneys Office and the Boone County Health Department to ensure ACEs are protected from future disputes and other agencies will be around to monitor and accept them. Second, was a Text Amendment to the ordinance which encouraged land owners to donate their land as an ACE. Currently, there are two ACEs in Boone County.

Land Evaluation and Site Assessment System (LESA) Process

Anytime a landowner applies to rezone or obtain a special use permit on an unincorporated parcel, a LESA score for that parcel is calculated to evaluate if it should be considered prime farmland or not. The score is a product of a detailed land evaluation conducted by the Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District and an assessment by the Planning Department. The score and assessment become major components of the Boone County Planning Department’s Advisory Report when the landowner is going through the development process. This practice provides decision makers with a quantitative and comparative analysis to offer an additional layer of protection for agricultural land, while also preventing leap frog development.

In order to preserve agricultural land, all land should be considered a no-growth area if it is within an Agricultural Area, Agricultural Conservation Easement, or zoned A-1. In particular, the northern most and southern most sections of Boone County should see no future development over the next decade. The only exception to be excluded from the no-growth designation is the land within each municipality’s planning area and the previously mentioned residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed commercial and industrial growth areas.
Other Land Protection Policies

Greenways and Floodplains

Greenways are the network of existing green infrastructure and open spaces including parks, prairies, forests, paths, trails, wetlands, riparian areas, and land within the 100-year floodplain. These areas are extremely important to protect because they have high biodiversity and are vital to the protection of natural habitats, wildlife, and environmentally sensitive areas. In addition, they are a form of natural stormwater management, which protects existing development from flooding. There are over 33,000 acres of land in Boone County that have been identified on the Regional Greenways Map and any new development near these areas should incorporate preservation of these lands to avoid building in flood prone and environmentally sensitive locations.

Furthermore, the Boone County Zoning Code has a specific ordinance to deter all new development within the 100-year floodplain. Chapter 3.13 details the Floodplain Overlay District which essentially prohibits the development of any type of building within these designated areas. The creation of the ordinance was a recommendation of the previous comprehensive planning process and is incredibly important to maintain over the next decade in order to avoid reoccurring flood damage and protect natural habitat.
FIGURE 10.9
NO GROWTH AREAS

KEY
- Public Parks
- Conservation Area/
Public Preserve
- Privately Protected
- Critical/Sensitive Area
Priority Acquisition
- Municipal Boundaries
- Agricultural Preservation
Areas
- Lakes & Ponds
- Rivers, Streams & Creeks
- Illinois Protected Natural Area/Preserve
- Agricultural Production
- Designated Growth Area

*See methodology and definitions in Appendix F

The Critical/Sensitive Areas includes property in the floodplain, steep slopes, 150ft buffer around all hydrology, and any special areas identified as priority for acquisition.

Source: Boone County GIS Department, 2015; Region 1 Planning Council, 2018.
Projections

In order to determine the amount of new development demand that Boone County might see over the next decade, a series of projections were calculated. Due to the fact that there have been dramatic and variable growth patterns county-wide over the past thirty years, a variety of projections were utilized. This offers both the municipalities and the county an opportunity to adjust to the demand of the market as the economy inevitably changes over time.

Population projections were calculated in three tiers: a low, medium, and high growth scenario. The low growth projection displays a stagnant population progression county-wide from 2018-2030, which is essentially what Boone County has experienced over the last decade. The medium growth projection illustrates a 0.5% population increase per year to 2030. This is much slower growth than the county experienced during the 1990s and early 2000s, but represents an uptick in post-recession recovery growth. The high growth projection represents a little over 1% population growth per year between 2018-2030. This is a more standardized projection percentage used in the comprehensive planning process, but is again much lower than the housing boom years yielded.

The same three low, medium, and high projection percentages were used in the calculation of future employment within Boone County because they represent the same types of trends that effected the determinations of the population projections.

While the three tiers of projections for both population and employment attempt to offer guidance for the amount of growth the county may experience over the next 12 years, it is recognized that there is the possibility that the high projection totals may be supplanted. Recently, the number of jobs in Boone County has grown much faster than any of the previous years since the Recession. If that trend continues, it is possible for both the population and employment projections to exceed the high growth scenarios predicted.

Future residential and commercial land use demand is dictated by a wide variety of factors. However, simply using the population and employment growth scenarios above can provide a quantifiable estimate of future acreage demand. For a detailed description of the methodology used for all of the following equations see Appendix F.

Below is each incorporated area’s individual projected population, residential acreage demand, and commercial acreage demand using the same methodology, equations, and growth scenarios as the county-wide estimates.
**Future Land Use**

A future land use map guides and directs development to designated areas in which the elected officials, government staff, and general members of the public have identified and prioritized. The amount and type of each land use category is carefully examined and analyzed in an attempt to strike a balance between future need and future desire. Each category is defined to illustrate the desired future development type, size, and density.

The 2019 Boone County Future Land Use Map has been adopted as the county’s new official future land use map. It is referenced within the County Zoning Code and must be formally changed in order for a future development to occur in a given parcel if the development type does not fall within the definition of the parcel's given future land use category. According to Illinois State Statute 65 ILCS 5/11-12-5, a comprehensive plan focuses on all land within the corporate boundaries of an entity, plus the mile and a half extraterritorial jurisdiction of the given incorporated area. The plan for these areas can address design standards, public improvements, size of lots, identify areas suitable for annexation, and the recommended zoning classification for that land. All land that is located outside of the designated planning areas of each municipality is planned for through the county’s comprehensive plan future land use map. The 2018 Boone County Future Land Use Map addresses these areas.

For the most part, the 1999 Boone County Comprehensive Plan still functions as the future land use map and strategy for the majority of unincorporated parcels in Boone County. However, there have been several municipalities who have completed comprehensive plans and corridor studies over the past twenty years. In addition, several municipalities took this planning process as an opportunity to update and modernize their land use approach. In combination, the previous plans and this planning effort contributed to various updates of the future land use map. This plan now functions as an update to the overall strategy and map for all land that is unincorporated within Boone County.

Through a combination of public participation events, data analysis, examination of historic growth patterns, and coordination of all incorporated area’s future land use strategies, a future land use map was created. There are ten total development types identified on the map and each category is defined on the following page.

**TABLE 10.12 PROJECTED POPULATION AND LAND USE BY MUNICIPALITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Belvidere</td>
<td>25,070</td>
<td>25,070</td>
<td>26,574</td>
<td>28,830</td>
<td>0-60 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Loves Park</td>
<td>23,413</td>
<td>23,413</td>
<td>25,813</td>
<td>26,913</td>
<td>0-300 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village of Capron</td>
<td>1,345</td>
<td>1,345</td>
<td>1,426</td>
<td>1,547</td>
<td>0-50 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village of Cherry Valley</td>
<td>3,087</td>
<td>3,087</td>
<td>3,272</td>
<td>3,550</td>
<td>0-111 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village of Caledonia</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>0-8 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village of Poplar Grove</td>
<td>5,054</td>
<td>5,054</td>
<td>5,357</td>
<td>5,812</td>
<td>0-130 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village of Timberlane</td>
<td>952</td>
<td>952</td>
<td>1,009</td>
<td>1,095</td>
<td>0-34 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NO EXISTING COMMERCIAL LAND USE IN BOONE COUNTY
**EFFECTIVELY NO COMMERCIAL LAND USE WITHIN ITS GIVEN INCORPORATED LIMITS PRODUCED A ZERO CHANGE
### Agriculture

Land used for growing of farm crops, truck garden crops, animal and poultry husbandry, apiculture, aquaculture, dairying, floriculture, horticulture, nurseries, tree farms, sod farms, pasturage, viticulture, and wholesale greenhouses when such agricultural purposes constitute the primary activity on the land. This also includes agritourism and all single-family agriculturally oriented parcels.

### Business Park Industrial (BPI) Mixed Use

Land used for a mixed assortment of retail/restaurants, office, hospitality, light manufacturing, technology, and warehousing uses with higher design standards. The majority of these uses will exceed 1 acre in size and may be developed on their own or in conjunction with a larger business or industrial park development.

### Commercial

Land used for retail, restaurants, hotels, office space, or a similar use. Some parcels contain dwelling units in the highest density areas, and in general they range anywhere from a small 0.1-acre parcel downtown to a 40+ acre big box store site.

### Extraction

Land used for mines or quarries on a collection of parcels usually greater than 40 acres.

### Industrial

Land used for manufacturing, factories, warehouse/storage, or large-scale production of a product. The majority of these uses are located on sites exceeding 1 acre.

### Institutional

Land used for churches, schools, fairgrounds, airports, assisted living facilities, government or public safety buildings, public utilities, cemeteries, or other civic-oriented land uses. There are very few dwelling units located on these parcels and they can range from 0.1 acre to 100+ acres.

### Open Space/Recreation/Greenways

Land used for parks, conservation areas, golf courses, camp grounds, other outdoor recreation facilities, or located within a greenway. A greenway is the 100-year floodplain plus other natural areas, open space, or water body. There are no dwelling units located on these parcels and many sites exceed 10 acres.

### Other Infrastructure (ROW, Utility, Rail Road)

Land used for transportation or private utility infrastructure, usually in a collection of 1-10 acre parcels.

### Residential Rural

Land used for only low density single-family lots or subdivisions that are 3 acres per dwelling unit or greater, typically rural estate oriented with on-site well and septic utilities.

### Residential Urban

Land used for subdivision developments that are a combination of low, medium, or high density housing ranging from single-family detached housing (less than 8 dwelling units per acre) to multi-family housing (1.5+ dwelling units per acre). All new development in this classification should be connected to off-site water and sewer services.

### Traditional Mixed Use

Land used for both commercial and residential uses simultaneously. Can be multiple dwelling units and/or multiple businesses. Almost all located in downtowns, which are some of the highest density areas of the county.
## Figure 10.16 Future Land Use Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use Category</th>
<th>Whole County</th>
<th>Incorporated*</th>
<th>Unincorporated**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Park Industrial</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraction</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space/Recreation</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Infrastructure</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Mixed Use</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Residential</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Urban</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage of Total Land</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentage of total incorporated land in each land use category*

**Percentage of total unincorporated land in each land use category
Land Use Goals, Objectives, & Strategies

Goal 10.1 Strategically locate new development that best utilizes existing assets and maximizes land protection/conservation.

OBJECTIVES

a. Preserve prime agriculture land and open space.

b. Center future commercial and industrial growth around several main arterial roadway corridors.

c. Increase the communication between government agencies and organizations on all future development.

STRATEGIES

Center future development towards the existing built areas of the county and away from the far northern and southern sections.

Protect greenways and open space, especially around waterways and in biologically diverse locations.

Focus new development away from any land located within the 100-year floodplain or sensitive groundwater recharge areas.

Develop and utilize a cost-benefit analysis to weigh the potential benefits of new growth with the negative impacts of taking land out of agricultural production and open space.

Concentrate industrial growth in the existing industrial areas along Newburg Road, U.S. 20 and I-90.

Focus commercial growth along Illinois 173 (between Caledonia and Poplar Grove), U.S. Business 20 (between Rockford and Belvidere), Illinois 76 (between Belvidere and Poplar Grove), and I-90 (near existing interchanges).

Leverage regional bike facilities and connections as assets to focus new development around (Long Prairie Path).

Conduct a corridor study on Illinois 76 (from Poplar Grove to Belvidere).

Collaborate and co-locate similar institutional uses.

Coordinate future development with existing and future transportation plans.

d. Strategically plan for all future residential development by prioritizing growth in specific areas.

e. Prepare for multiple growth scenarios over the next 10 years.

STRATEGIES

Prioritize residential growth that occurs in areas within vacant platted subdivisions, as infill development.

Secondarily, focus residential growth to the areas around Loves Park, Belvidere, and Poplar Grove.

Promote higher-density and smaller-lot residential development.

Conduct a more detailed housing needs assessment for the county.

Prepare for the possibility of future rapid growth by supporting and utilizing growth management techniques such as impact fees.

Prepare for the possibility of little to no growth by prioritizing key areas where development should be concentrated.
Land Use Goals, Objectives, & Strategies

Goal 10.2 Create more efficient development processes in the county.

OBJECTIVES

a. Assess the efficiencies of existing processes, procedures, and zoning codes.

STRATEGIES

Center future development towards the existing built areas of the county and away from the far northern and southern sections.

Evaluate the development process to identify and eliminate redundancies, while also focusing on maximizing efficiency.

Analyze the zoning code and update according to best practices and the specific needs and demands of the

Reevaluate existing and develop new overlay corridors to simplify and concentrate certain development types.

Periodically evaluate the county's regulatory programs, including a regular survey of businesses about their experiences and suggestions.

Ensure that all relevant codes and regulations are easily accessible and communicated clearly.
Chapter 10 Sources

Text

1. Illinois Compiled Statutes, Illinois General Assembly §§ (65 ILCS 5/11-12-5) (from Ch. 24, par. 11-12-5).-Sec. 11-12-5.-Sec. 11-12-5. (2015).

Figures

2. Boone County Assessor’s Office and GIS, 2018. R1PC GIS, 2018
3. Boone County Assessor’s Office and GIS, 2018. R1PC GIS, 2018
4. Boone County Assessor’s Office and GIS, 2018. R1PC GIS, 2018
5. Boone County GIS, 2018. R1PC GIS, 2018
6. Boone County GIS, 2018. R1PC GIS, 2018
7. R1PC GIS, 2018
9. Boone County GIS, 2018. R1PC GIS, 2018
10. See Appendix F.
11. See Appendix F.
12. See Appendix F.
13. See Appendix F.
14. See Appendix F.
15. R1PC GIS, 2018
16. R1PC GIS, 2018
17. Boone County GIS, 2018. R1PC GIS, 2018