



2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

DRAFT REVIEW PURPOSES ONLY

Last Revised: September 10, 2025

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

County Board Chair

Karl Johnson

County Board

Brian Schneider, District 1
Dave Cordray, District 1
Josh Shumaker, District 1
Dave Wiltse, District 1
Ryan Curry, District 2
Alisa Patterson, District 2
Tom Walberg, District 2
Dana Logsdon, District 3
Matthew Ragano, District 3
Rodney Riley, District 3
Marion Thornberry, District 3

Regional Planning Commission

Phil Newhouse, Chair
Johnathan Giesecke
Andrew Mertenich
David Rickabaugh

County Staff

Becky Tobin, County Administrator
Aaron Lewis, Deputy County Administrator
Jessica Roberts, County Planner

Thank you to all community members who shared their time and feedback at various points in the planning process. Community input played an integral role in the preparation of this plan.

Comprehensive Plan Task Force

Valerie Alt
Dave Balzer
Kevin Bunge
Anne Marie Cain
Gina DelRose
Neely Erickson
Pam Fettes
Craig Hale
Ken Hall
Kelly Hillan
Jen Jacky
Erin Marshall
Crystal Maxwell
Amanda Mehl
Andrew Mertenich
Nate Noble
Amy Ohlsen
Alisa Patterson
Carl Rudy
Josh Sage
Dave Wiltse

School Districts

Belvidere Community Unit School District 100
North Boone Community Unit School District 200

Planning Consultants

Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies
Egret & Ox Planning
Sightline Planning and Zoning
Chastain & Associates

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Boone County, Illinois is in the northern tier of Illinois counties that form the state's border with Wisconsin to the north. Boone County is well located within the Rockford metropolitan statistical area (MSA) and adjacent to the Chicago MSA's far northwest suburbs to the east. DeKalb County, home to Northern Illinois University and a growing industrial base, is adjacent to the south. Boone County, a strong agricultural area, is also home to seven incorporated municipalities,¹ the largest of which, Belvidere, has a population of over 25,000.

Boone County strives to balance its agricultural heritage while supporting its urbanized areas and small towns. Achieving this balance requires careful planning, managed growth, and collaboration with the other governing bodies in the county. The 2025 Boone County Comprehensive Plan is based on the input of county officials, county staff, municipalities, residents, business leaders, agricultural interests, conservationists, county organizations and service providers, and other stakeholders providing their thoughts and expertise to advance Boone County's future. The plan is designed to assist Boone County in maintaining its unique character, facilitating managed growth, and providing opportunities for compatible development over the next 20 years.

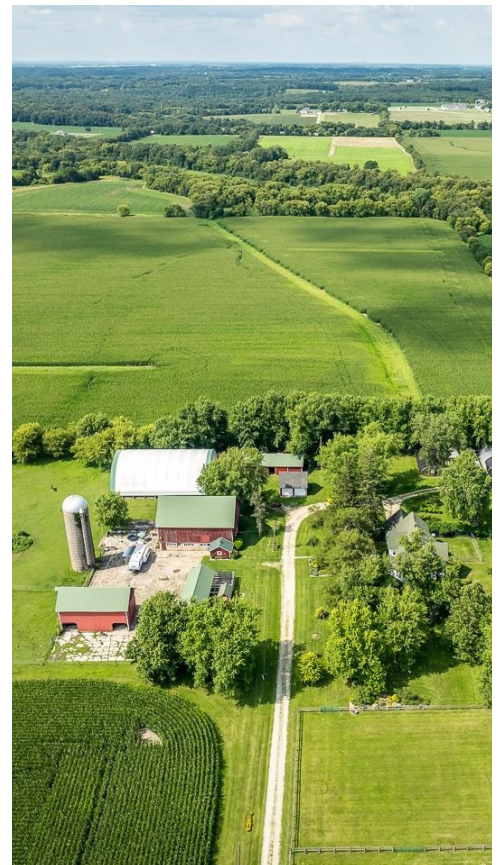
PLAN OVERVIEW

As a guide for future development, a comprehensive plan expresses the aspirations of residents and informs potential developers, businesses, and others of what the county finds desirable and how to shape their proposals to best fit the county's vision.

A comprehensive plan is a process as much as a document. Creating a comprehensive plan is an opportunity for county officials, residents, businesses, and other stakeholders to think about what they would like the future of the county to be and share those ideas with each other. The county did this by participating in a variety of community engagement activities, including a survey, open houses, focus groups, an interactive website, a task force, and other opportunities to share ideas. Community input is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Preparing the 2025 Comprehensive Plan has raised the awareness of land use issues and increased discussion of the future envisioned for Boone County. Therefore, the time period immediately following plan completion is an ideal time to seek continued involvement from residents and other stakeholders as the county begins implementation efforts.

¹ Two of the seven municipalities (Cherry Valley and Loves Park) are only partially located in Boone County; they are mostly located in Winnebago County to the west.



The plan focuses on physical attributes such as land use, access and mobility, and natural resources, but affects all aspects of the county. Topics such as healthcare, education, and recreation were factored into plan preparation with the intent of positively affecting quality of life for residents.

While this plan is presented as a final document, it should not be viewed as permanent. The plan should be reviewed regularly, typically every five years, to ensure that it still reflects the interests and conditions of the county. The plan can be modified at any time through Regional Planning Commission review at a public hearing and final approval from the County Board.

The 2025 Boone County Comprehensive Plan presents a vision that county officials and their partners will work towards in the coming years. The plan will guide the County Board in decision making as they review proposed developments and allocate resources for projects and improvements.

PAST PLANNING EFFORTS

Boone County’s past planning efforts have been carried out by the County and other county wide jurisdictions and include comprehensive planning and specialized planning for stormwater, open space conservation, agricultural preservation, economic development, transportation, healthcare, and corridor plans. The county’s most recent

comprehensive plan was adopted in 2019, reflecting the recommended five year timeframe for plan updating. Belvidere and Poplar Grove recently adopted municipal comprehensive plans. All these plans were consulted in preparing the 2025 Comprehensive Plan. It is anticipated that the County and the other planning jurisdictions in Boone County will collaborate to best bring all the plans to fruition.

PLANNING PROCESS

Preparing the 2025 Comprehensive Plan occurred over approximately 12 months and involved several major steps, as described below.

Inventory and Data Collection: Inventorying the current physical elements of the county and gathering information on the economy, population, built environment, natural resources, and other aspects of the county provide the basis for planning. Beginning with an extended tour of the county and meetings with county staff, this step also included interviews with stakeholders and review of data from numerous sources. The findings of the inventory and data collection are presented in Chapter 2 and integrated into each plan element in Chapter 5.

Public Input: To ensure that the plan reflects the needs and desires of residents, many opportunities were provided for public input. Public input is described in Chapter 3: Community Engagement. Additional information

can be found in the Appendix.

Task Force Meetings: A task force consisting of representatives of a cross section of interests in the county met regularly to develop the plan’s vision, goals and objectives, and review and revise the future land use map. The role of the task force is discussed in Chapter 3. Task force members are listed on the acknowledgements page.

Document Preparation: The planning team prepared the formal Comprehensive Plan document in consultation with county staff.

Final Review and Adoption: There is a required legal process for adopting a comprehensive plan. The first step is a public hearing held by the Regional Planning Commission. This hearing is another opportunity for the public to comment on the plan. Based on public comment and their discussions, the commissioners will request any revisions they think necessary and then recommend adoption by the County Board. The Board will discuss the plan at a regularly scheduled meeting and, pending any revisions they request, adopt the plan.



REGIONAL PLANNING

Boone County coordinates regional planning and programming with the Region 1 Planning Council (R1).

WEBSITE: <https://r1planning.org>

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

While the Comprehensive Plan will provide guidance to elected and appointed officials as they make land use related decisions, it also is useful to residents, businesses, municipalities, developers, and others interested in the county’s future. Below is the list of chapters that form the plan’s organization along with a brief description of what information can be found in each chapter. Numerous maps, including the Future Land Use Plan, can be found in the document. Survey findings, Comment Map results, and other information are in the Appendix.

<p>CHAPTER 2: County Profile</p> <p>This chapter provides an overview of the status and features of the county. It is helpful for understanding the basis for the elements of the plan that follow and is a useful starting point for implementing the strategies suggested in Chapter 6: Implementation.</p>	<p>CHAPTER 3: Community Engagement</p> <p>Along with the information on the county presented in Chapter 2, public input was a main element on which the plan was based. This chapter is a source for background information to understand why the vision, goals, and objectives are as presented.</p>	<p>CHAPTER 4: Policy Framework</p> <p>The plan framework includes the vision, goals, and objectives. Together, these elements provide the basis for any work program designed to implement a part of the plan, particularly the strategies provided in Chapter 6.</p>	<p>CHAPTER 5: County Plan Elements</p> <p>A detailed discussion of each of the following major elements of the plan and the Future Land Use Map can be found in this chapter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Use and Preservation • Livability • Environmental Sustainability • Economic Development • Housing • Transportation • Utilities and Infrastructure 	<p>CHAPTER 6: Implementation</p> <p>This chapter presents a general discussion of plan implementation followed by a detailed matrix of the goals, objectives, strategies and resources. The matrix also includes priority levels and a timeframe for each objective.</p>
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CHAPTER 2

COUNTY PROFILE

The Comprehensive Plan will guide Boone County as it works to meet the needs of existing and future residents, employers, and visitors. The data and information in this chapter provide insights into the characteristics of the county's residents, including considerations for the future.

LOCATION

Boone County is located on the far northern section of Illinois on the state border with Wisconsin, as shown on the Location Map in Figure 2.1. As listed on the right, Boone County is comprised of seven municipalities², nine townships, and multiple unincorporated communities.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Boone County is strategically located within the Rockford metropolitan statistical area (MSA) and adjacent to two other MSAs (Chicago MSA to the east and Janesville-Beloit MSA to the north). The Rockford MSA also includes Ogle, Stephenson, and Winnebago Counties.

Boone County is situated at the Illinois/Wisconsin state line. On the Wisconsin side, Boone County is bordered by Rock and Walworth Counties to the north. On the Illinois side, Boone County is bordered by McHenry County on the east, DeKalb County on the south, Ogle County on the southwest corner, and Winnebago County on the west.

² Two of the seven municipalities (Cherry Valley and Loves Park) are only partially located in Boone County; they are mostly located in Winnebago County to the west.

Municipalities

- City of Belvidere
- Village of Caledonia
- Village of Capron
- Village of Cherry Valley²
- City of Loves Park²
- Village of Poplar Grove
- Village of Timberlane

Townships

- Belvidere
- Bonus
- Boone
- Caledonia
- Flora
- Leroy
- Manchester
- Poplar Grove
- Spring

NOTE: Townships Map provided in the Appendix

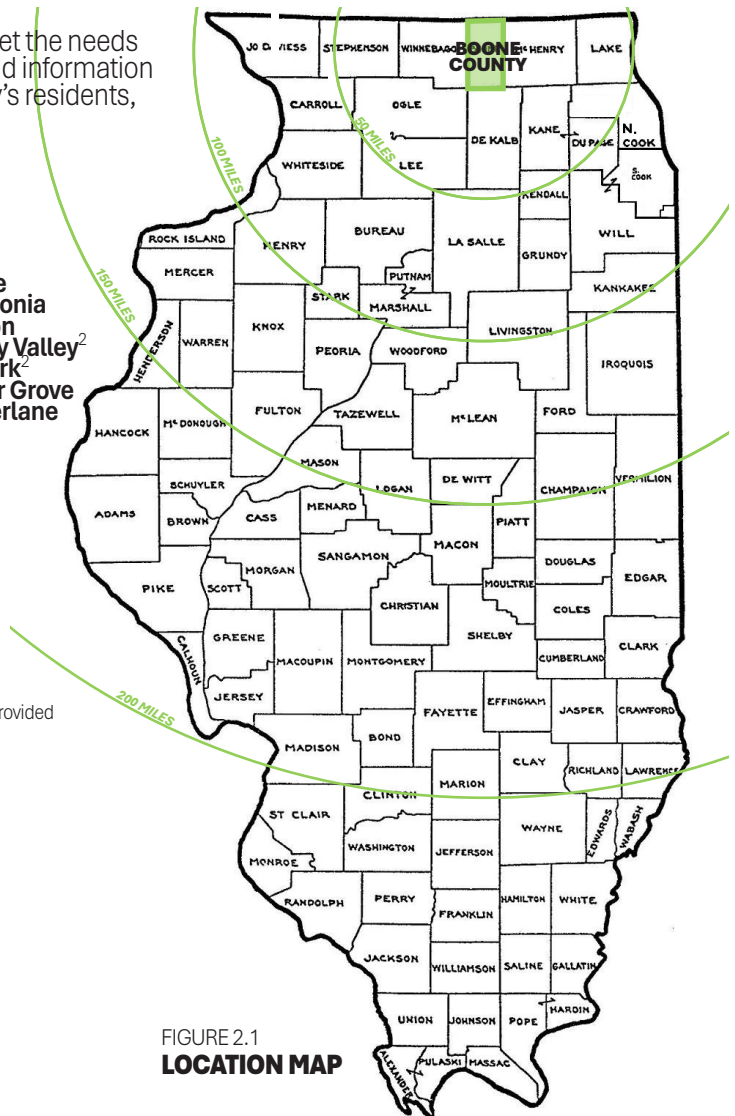


FIGURE 2.1
LOCATION MAP



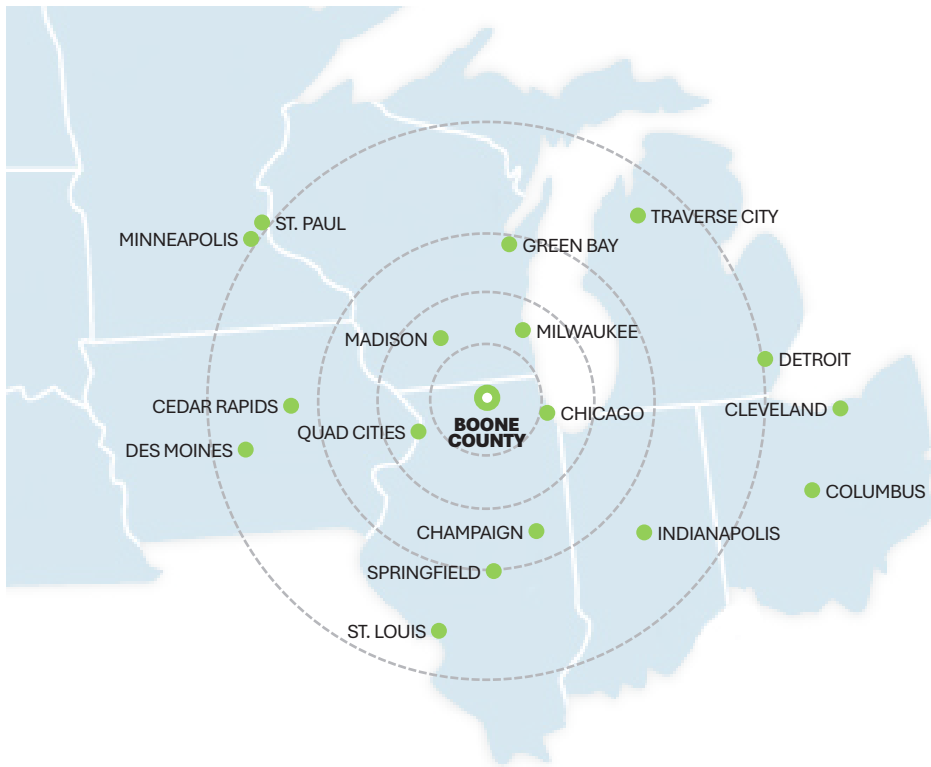


FIGURE 2.2
REGIONAL CONTEXT MAP
Source: Google Maps

DISTANCES TO MAJOR CITIES FROM BOONE COUNTY

CITY(S)	MILES
CHICAGO	73
MADISON	76
MILWAUKEE	98
QUAD CITIES	124
CEDAR RAPIDS	187
CHAMPAIGN	201
SPRINGFIELD	204
GREEN BAY	205
INDIANAPOLIS	255
DES MOINES	290
ST. LOUIS	301
MINNEAPOLIS / ST. PAUL	327
DETROIT	352
TRAVERSE CITY	388
CLEVELAND	414
COLUMBUS	428

EXISTING LAND USE

Historically, agricultural land and open space have collectively been the predominant uses in Boone County. That trend still exists today, even as the limited number of municipalities in the county have experienced population growth and development.

Since 2000, the amount of urbanized land area in Boone County has grown from 7% of the total land area to more than 10% today. Development has primarily come in the form of single-family residential subdivisions within and around the periphery of Belvidere, Poplar Grove, Timberlane, Loves Park, and the far western side of the county, which is commonly referred to as Boone County’s growth corridor.

In Boone County, over 80% of the total land area is unincorporated, with agriculture and open space the two most prominent uses. The opposite is the case of land uses within the incorporated areas of municipalities, which are mostly residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses.

The existing land use pattern in Boone County has been dramatically impacted by two transformative events since 1990: (1) the housing boom in the 1990s to the mid 2000s, and (2) the Great Recession after the housing bubble

burst in 2008. 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 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 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 Great Recession derailed the global economy in 2008, the demand for new homes considerably declined. Over fifteen years later, the housing market in Boone County continues to recover, with housing growth still below the levels experienced before the housing market fell in 2008.

The slow recovery has caused a ripple effect on many other facets of Boone County:

- Population totals have leveled off or even decreased.
- The diversity of the housing stock has stagnated with gaps in housing types to meet varying needs, budgets, and life stages.
- Numerous vacant subdivision lots sit empty awaiting development.
- Infrastructure is underutilized.
- Many aging utility lines need major upgrades or replacement.
- Government services and resources are spread thin and struggling to keep up financially.

Both the housing boom and Great Recession 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, conserve open spaces and natural resources, and strategically manage future growth.

For consistency and comparison purposes, the land use categories shown on the Existing Land Use Map in Figure 2.3 mirror the future land use categories described on pages 20-22.



FIGURE 2.3
EXISTING LAND USE MAP

LEGEND

- Agricultural
- Farmsteads
- Single Family Residential Rural
- Single Family Residential Exurban
- Open Space
- Institutional
- Commercial
- Business Flex
- Industrial
- Municipal
- Floodplain
- Water Bodies

Designated Agricultural Areas

- 1992 Designated Agricultural Area
- 1995 Designated Agricultural Area

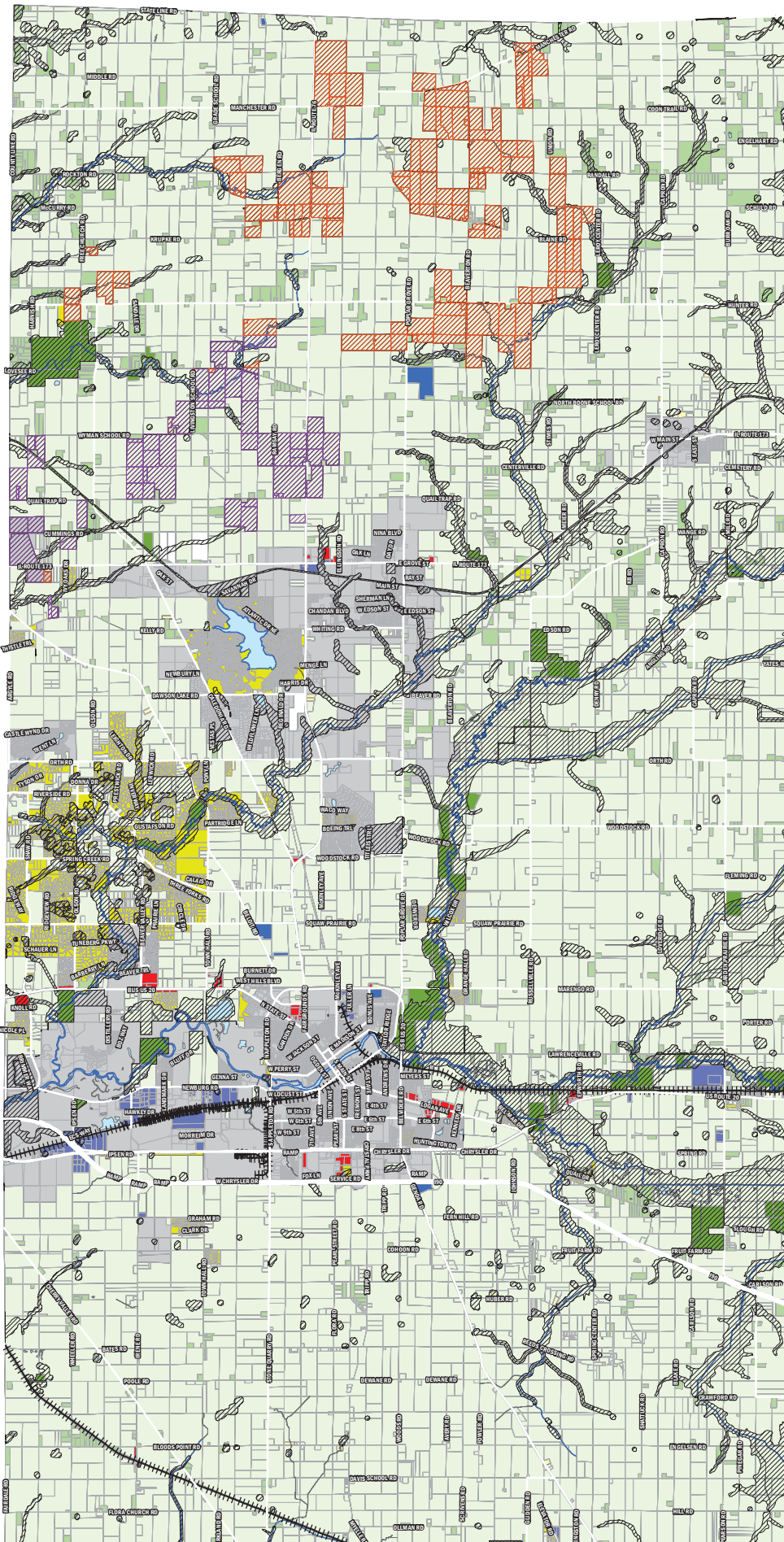
The Illinois Department of Agriculture passed the Agricultural Areas Conservation and Protection Act in 1980 providing landowners with the right to voluntarily enroll their property in a designated "Agricultural Area" (see page 24 for more details). This designation protects the land from development for an initial ten years. After re-evaluation of the property, the landowner can re-enroll their property every eight years after the initial ten years.

Boone County's participation in this agricultural land protection program is one of the largest in Illinois, including one Designated Agricultural Area established in 1992 and another Designated Agricultural Area set up in 1995. The 1992 and 1995 areas cover over 7,000 acres in total.

From the perspective of land use planning for Boone County, the Future Land Use Plan Map illustrates how the land within the 1992 and 1995 Designated Agricultural Areas will continue to be protected from development, including much of the land within close proximity to these two Designated Agricultural Areas.

Agricultural Conservation Easements (ACEs)

ACEs were created in 2006 to promote farmland preservation over the life of a renewable 99-year contract that stipulates the only types of development that can occur on a property (see page 25 for more details).



DEMOGRAPHICS

This section presents characteristics of Boone County residents, including insights into how community needs may affect how land is used.

Population Growth

Boone County' population grew rapidly from approximately 1990-2008, slowing with the nationwide Great Recession that started in 2008. Since then, population has declined at a slow rate, as shown in Figure 2.4. This decline may be due to aging residents and loss of jobs, as discussed below and in the economic development section in Chapter 5.

Population by Age and Sex

The graphics in Figure 2.5 illustrate the distribution of Boone County residents by age and compared to the state and nation. Boone County, like the state and nation, has an aging population. However, there is currently a large percentage of the population in the 18-64 age cohort, which typically represents the working years of most people.

Most of this group of actual and potential workers are age 40 or older, with a smaller percentage age 20-39. As the older workers move into typical retirement years, their needs may change. The 27% of residents now age 10-19 bode well for Boone County's future workforce, mirroring the 27% currently age 40-59.

Older residents can have positive implications for the county, with some having more disposable income as children become independent, and being reliable volunteers as they retire



FIGURE 2.4
BOONE COUNTY POPULATION GROWTH

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2023, Table B01001

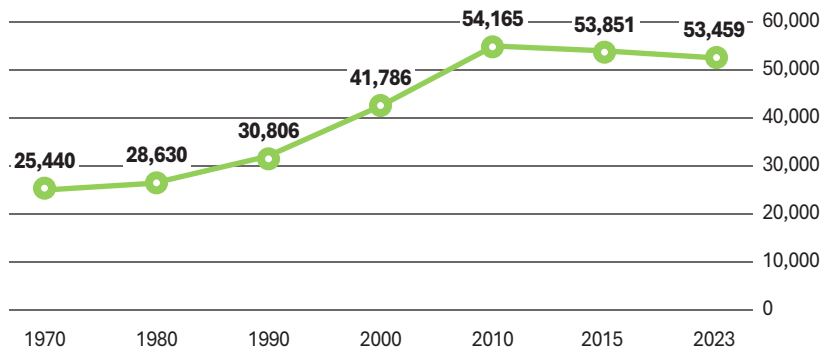


FIGURE 2.5
BOONE COUNTY POPULATION BY AGE

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2023

Age

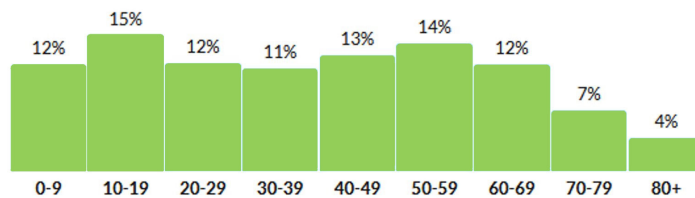
39.5 ±0.6

Median age

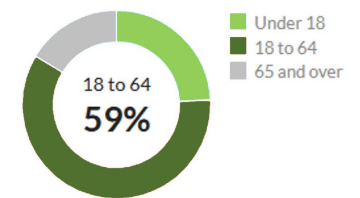
about the same as the figure in Illinois: 38.9 ±0.1

about the same as the figure in United States: 38.7 ±0.1

Population by age range



Population by age category



and have more free time. The county should consider those implications for future land use decisions.

The age group 45-69 is presently active and largely self-reliant. However, as residents in this group continue to age, they may seek different housing types and services. As plans for senior oriented development and services advance, it should be noted that older residents are concentrated in the southern half of the county, as shown on the map in Figure 2.6. Concentrating senior services where older residents live makes sense. However, if housing for older residents is sought in the northern half of the county, corresponding facilities and services should be planned and expanded into this area.

While Boone County is home to many older residents, the number of children under the age of 10 years is declining, which is a nationwide trend. Fewer young children may lead to less demand for space in schools and at other facilities designed for that age group. Households without children may also seek different housing types and sizes than those with children.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity

While nearly three-quarters of Boone County residents are white, a growing Hispanic/Latino population now accounts for nearly one in four residents, as summarized in Figure 2.7. Other racial groups remain at very small percentages of under 3%.

The Hispanic/Latino population may have differing thoughts on housing and other development. Interviews with representatives of this community indicated the need for single family homes, interest in combining home and work spaces, and a lesser need for housing specifically for older family members. That last point is often paired with housing options that can accommodate multigenerational households. These preferences should be considered in planning, particularly for housing.

Other Population Characteristics

Boone County residents experience a higher unemployment rate than the Rockford MSA and the state, as shown in Figure 2.8. Per capita income in Boone County is slightly higher than the MSA, but lower than the state. However, the poverty rate in the county is lower than in the other jurisdictions. The population in the key labor force age range of 25-44 is slightly lower than the MSA and state. Education levels in the county are similar to the MSA, but the percentage of residents with a bachelor's degree is lower than statewide.

FIGURE 2.6
BOONE COUNTY POPULATION BY AGE 65+

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2018-2022

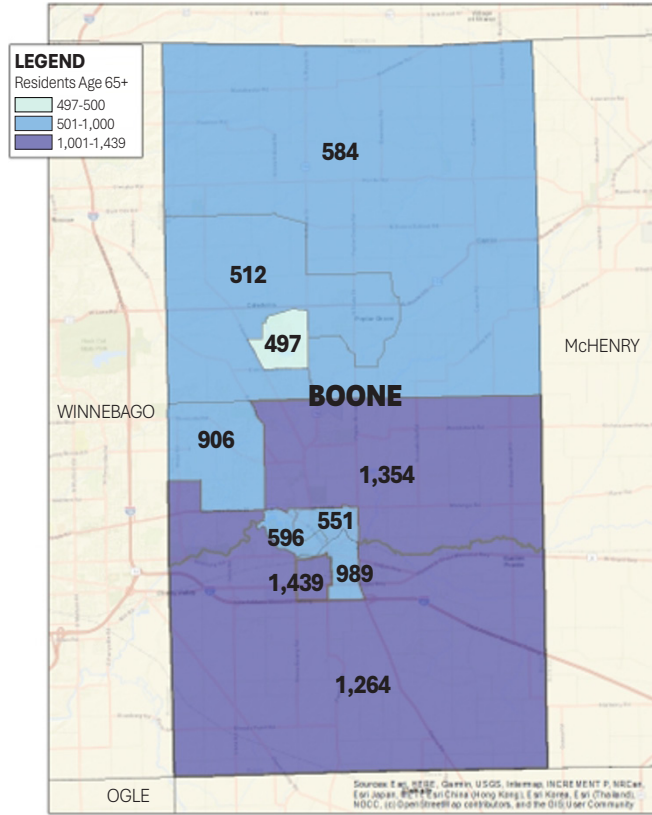


FIGURE 2.7
BOONE COUNTY POPULATION BY RACE

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 1-Year Survey, Table DP05, 2010 & 2022

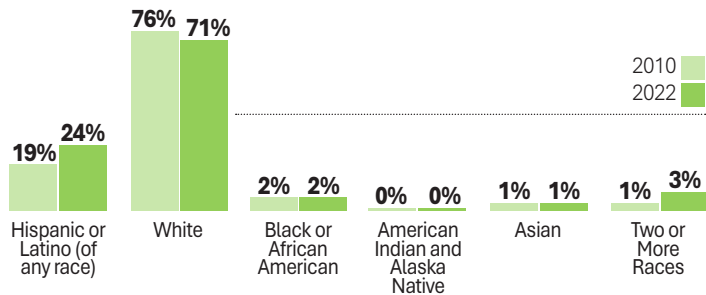


FIGURE 2.8
BOONE COUNTY POPULATION BY RACE

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2008-2022

	Boone County	Rockford MSA	State of Illinois
Unemployment Rate	7.0%	6.3%	4.5%
Per Capita Income	\$37,055	\$34,040	\$43,198
Poverty Rate	9.8%	15.1%	11.8%
Population Age 25-44	11.4%	12.0%	13.4%
High School Graduate	32.3%	31.3%	25.3%
Associate Degree	30.3%	32.8%	28.1%
Bachelor's Degree	15.1%	15.3%	22.0%



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CHAPTER 3

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

While inventorying existing conditions, consulting subject matter experts, and reviewing relevant plans and documents were important tasks in preparing the Boone County Comprehensive Plan, obtaining community input was among the most critical steps to develop a plan that reflects the needs and expectations of county residents. Community input was sought in several ways, as described in this chapter.

TASK FORCE

A project task force is a key source of input in plan preparation. The County assembled a task force consisting of thirty people representing different county stakeholders. A list of task force members can be found at the beginning of this plan. Their role was to :

- **Represent different voices in the community:** Task force members were drawn from local governments within the county, nonprofit organizations and service providers, economic stakeholders, and subject matter experts in different aspects of the county’s economy and community life.
- **Develop the vision, goals, and objectives:** After being presented with resident input through a survey and focus groups and information on existing county assets, task force members shared their expertise to develop the plan’s vision, goals, and objectives.
- **Assist with project outreach:** Task force members served as liaisons to the groups they represent and encouraged participation in the survey and open houses.

- **Review and comment on draft documents:** Task force members reviewed drafts of each component of the plan as it was developed and the final document.
- **Provide a bridge from planning to implementation:** The plan encourages partnerships between the county and other organizations to implement the strategies outlined in the plan. Task force members have the knowledge and contacts to assist in creating effective partnerships.

The task force met in person four times and participated in online tasks. Individual members were consulted at various points throughout the planning process to engage their subject matter expertise and insights.

PUBLIC INPUT

The thoughts of county residents were critical to developing the plan. The various means through which residents participated are described below

- Resident Survey
- Project Website
- Events: County Fair, Open Houses
- Targeted Outreach: High School (teens), Keen Age Center (seniors)



RESIDENT SURVEY

A survey was conducted primarily focused on residents of unincorporated Boone County. Residents of incorporated areas within the county also were able to participate but were not contacted directly. This was because the county government serves primarily those people living in unincorporated areas.

Highlights of the survey findings are as follows, with a few sample slides on the right and next page. The full survey findings are contained in the appendix.

- The survey was conducted mostly online. The project consultant team sent recruitment emails to a randomly selected sample of households in unincorporated Boone County. Additionally, Boone County publicized the survey and included a link to complete the survey.
- The questionnaire was available in English and Spanish.
- The survey ran from August 6, 2024, through September 19, 2024.
- A total of 338 completed surveys were received.
- 204 of these surveys were completed by residents of unincorporated areas of Boone County.
- Data in this presentation includes all respondents, unless there was a statistically significant difference between incorporated and unincorporated Boone County respondents. In that case, responses are identified as all, incorporated or unincorporated.

Boone County Government

Satisfaction with Services and Programs

Respondents were most likely to be very or somewhat satisfied with:

- Police and fire protection (75.9%)
- Snow removal (69.6%)
- Recreation areas and facilities (66.3%)
- County road maintenance (64.8%)

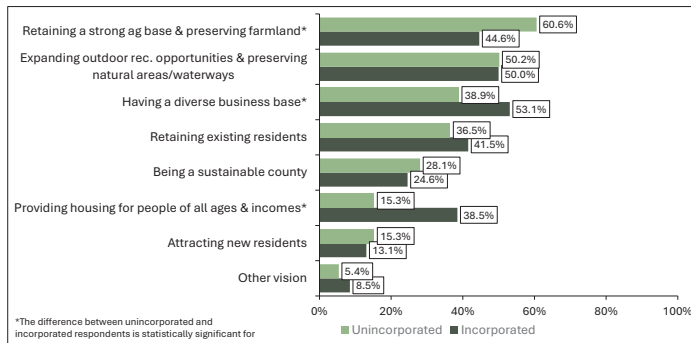
Respondents were most likely to be very or somewhat unsatisfied with:

- Ride share or public transportation (40.2%)
- Arts and cultural opportunities (35.6%)
- County permitting process for building and property improvements (30.8%)

Future Planning and Development

Vision for the Future of Boone County

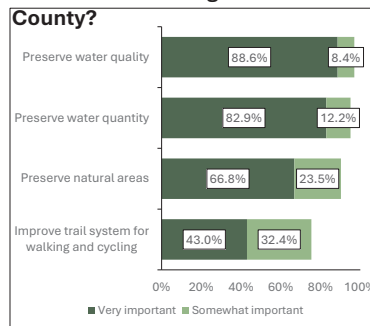
Thinking about what you would like Boone County to be like in 5-10 years, which of the following are most important? (Select up to 3)



Future Planning and Development

Importance of Preservation Initiatives

How important or unimportant is it to do the following in the County?



At least 9 of 10 respondents said it was very or somewhat important to:

- Preserve water quality (97.0% said this was very or somewhat important)
- Preserve water quantity (95.1%)
- Preserve natural areas (90.3%)

Three-quarters said it was very or somewhat important to:

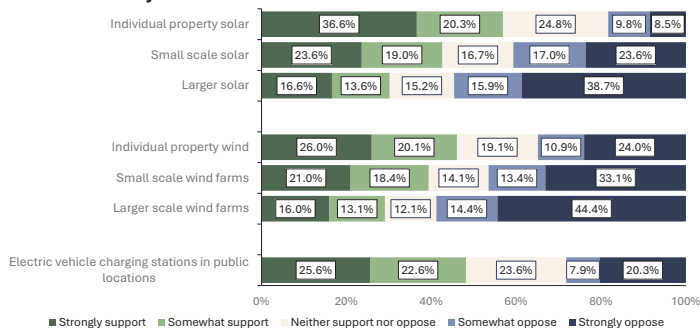
- Improve trail system for walking and cycling (75.4%)



Future Planning and Development

Support for Alternative Energy Sources

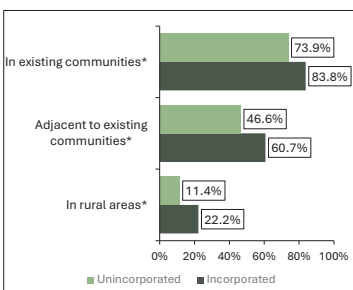
What is your opinion of the use of the following alternative energy sources in Boone County?



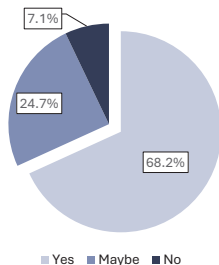
Future Planning and Development

Location of Future Development

Where should future residential growth occur? (Check all that apply)



Should open space in the form of farmland or natural areas be retained as separation between communities?



*The difference between unincorporated and incorporated residents is statistically significant for this item

Future Planning and Development

Vision for the Future of Boone County

What is your biggest concern for the future of Boone County?

Most common responses

1. **Unmanaged growth** of business and residential areas, suburbanization, overpopulation
2. **Loss of farmland** and open space
3. **Taxes** remain too high



PROJECT WEBSITE

A **project website** was created specifically for the Comprehensive Plan project. The website allowed people to keep up with the progress of the project, leave comments, access links to the survey and documents, and make notations on a map regarding concerns with specific locations. The website received over 700 visits.

EVENTS

Public feedback was collected at a few community events. A booth at the Boone County Fair provided an opportunity for people to learn about the plan, ask questions, and leave comments regarding the future of the county. In addition, two open houses were held for the public to review and comment on the draft future land use map.

TARGETED OUTREACH

Special efforts were made to reach several groups of residents who might be less well represented by survey responses. Meetings were held with **high school students**, senior residents, and the Hispanic community.

COUNTY OFFICIALS

Multiple meetings were held with the Regional Plan Commission and County Board to keep them informed and seek their input into the planning process. In addition, while complying with the Open Meetings Act, board members and plan commissioners participated in project task force meetings.

FORMAL REVIEW PROCESS

As required by law, the draft Comprehensive Plan was the subject of a public hearing before the Regional Planning Commission. After requested revisions and a recommendation of adoption, the plan was reviewed by the County Board at a regular board meeting for formal adoption.

Boone County Comprehensive Plan

Planning for the County's Future

Boone County Comprehensive Plan and Unified Development Ordinance / Boone County Comprehensive Plan

[Click Here for the UDO Page](#)

[Click Here for the Main Project Page](#)

Upcoming: Open House

March 18, 2025 3:30 pm

Public Open House

TIME: 3:30pm to 6:30pm

The open house will have a series of exhibit boards to view and provide comment. Exhibits will include a draft Future Land Use Plan and draft policy elements like a vision statement, goals, and objectives to guide future preservation, growth, and development in Boone County. Project consultants will be present to serve as a guide and answer questions. All are welcome!

> [Click for Open House Flyer](#)

NOTE: The Public Open House will be conducted at two sites across Boone County (see below). Both sites will be open from 3:30pm to 6:30pm. Please visit the site that is most convenient for you.

Site 1: North Boone High School
1783 Poplar Grove Rd
Poplar Grove, IL 61065

Site 2: Boone County Administration Building
1212 Logan Ave
Belvidere, IL 61008

Project Documents

Interim Report: Current Conditions and Opportunities
PDF (11.38 MB)
Posted on 11/14/24

Comp Plan Updates

Fri, February 21, 2025

Upcoming Public Open House in March

See details above for details on an upcoming Public Open House scheduled for March 18, 2025.

Thu, November 14, 2024

Interim Report: Current Conditions and Opportunities

An interim report for the Comprehensive Plan project is available for public review. The report provides a summary of current conditions and opportunities in Boone County, which lay the groundwork for future policy decisions and county planning strategies in the next phase of work. [Click here to download the Interim report.](#)

The project Tue, October 8, 2024

Project Task Force Currently at Work

The project Task Force has been meeting throughout the planning process. The first meeting was held on August 27, 2024, to identify preliminary issues to address in the Comprehensive Plan and UDO. The Task Force will convene for their second meeting on October 15, 2024.

The Comprehensive Plan will express Boone County's vision and expectations for future growth, development, and preservation. The plan will focus on a range of social, economic, and physical attributes, including land use, housing, economic development, access and mobility, community facilities, natural resources, utilities, and other elements that impact the county.

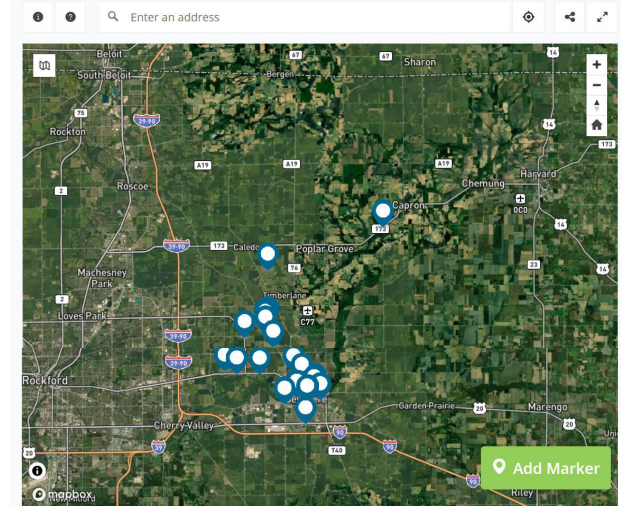
Multiple Ways to Participate

The project will provide for a variety of methods, both in-person and virtually, for community members to share their thoughts and ideas regarding future growth, development, and preservation in Boone County. We invite you to check out the different options to have your voice heard. Your feedback will help shape the planning documents.

Open Comment Map

Use the web-based map of Boone County below to share your thoughts and ideas in a visual format. Zoom and pan around to post comments about specific roads, key sites, or properties. Interact with comments left by others by sharing likes/dislikes (i.e., thumbs up/down) just like you would on social media. Click 'Add Marker' in the bottom right corner of the map to post a new comment. You may also click the question mark circle icon below for more detailed instructions.

22 contributions so far





CHAPTER 4

POLICY FRAMEWORK

The policy framework provided in this chapter forms the basis for the Future Land Use Plan and guides future growth, development, and preservation in Boone County. The Comprehensive Plan Task Force helped shape the vision statement, goals, and objectives, which form the policy framework that defines the future of Boone County.

As the policy framework graphic below illustrates, the goals are achievable outcomes that advance the vision, while the objectives are measurable steps to achieve each of the goals. The objectives also serve as the foundation for the Implementation Plan in Chapter 6, which outlines strategies and projects that county officials and their partners can undertake to achieve its vision. The Implementation Plan activates the 2025 Boone County Comprehensive Plan, transforming it into an actionable document that the county can build around and follow as a community blueprint today and into the future.

VISION STATEMENT

Boone County balances diverse communities, farmland, industry, and natural areas to provide a vibrant, prosperous, and high quality of life for all. Through future planning the county looks to thoughtfully embrace progress while strategically preserving its rural heritage, maintaining affordability, and building diversity through managed growth and sustainable development. Efficient and transparent countywide management and cooperation provides services for households at all stages of life, income levels, and backgrounds. The county prioritizes preserving natural areas, sustainability, and environmental stewardship.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

Goals and objectives are summarized in this chapter. Strategies for each objective are provided in Chapter 6: Implementation.

<p>GOAL</p> <p>An achievable outcome that supports a common vision.</p>	<p>» OBJECTIVE</p> <p>A specific, measurable step to achieve a goal.</p>	<p>» STRATEGY</p> <p>A project or action to meet the objective.</p>
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PRIORITIZING OBJECTIVES

Prioritized objectives guide the county when allocating resources, pursuing grants and funding, budgeting staff time, building community support, and laying the groundwork for subsequent tasks and projects.

The Task Force prioritized the objectives by considering the following factors:

- How achievable is this objective?
- How much positive impact would achieving this objective have on the county?
- How interested is the county in this objective?

Based on the goals and objectives outlined in this chapter, each objective was ranked within its goal category rather than across goal categories. The Task Force ranked each objective as high, medium, or lower priority.

- **HIGH PRIORITY**
- **MEDIUM PRIORITY**
- **LOWER PRIORITY**

However, objectives will not always be addressed in priority order if opportunities or obstacles arise that enter into the decision making process. All objectives are still important to achieving the county’s vision, regardless of their level of priority.

The prioritized objectives are shown in the following pages.



PLAN ELEMENT 1
LAND USE AND PRESERVATION

GOAL: Boone County will manage growth and development to provide a balanced mix of land uses that is compatible with the county’s rural heritage, sustains productive farmland, conserves the environment, and protects the water supply.

OBJECTIVES:

#	OBJECTIVE	PRIORITY
1.1	Locate new development strategically to best utilize existing assets and maximize open space and farmland protection.	●
1.2	Enforce the revised Unified Development Ordinance to guide managed growth and development.	●
1.3	Advocate for new, updated, or existing policies and tools to preserve productive farmland.	●
1.4	Use cluster and conservation development to preserve open space and protect environmentally sensitive areas while providing new housing opportunities.	●
1.5	Coordinate county and municipal plans for growth, development, and preservation, particularly with the recent comprehensive plan updates for Belvidere and Poplar Grove.	●
1.6	Promote connectivity of greenways throughout the county.	●
1.7	Identify potential sites and areas for future annexation by adjacent municipalities.	●
1.8	Support historic preservation efforts in unincorporated areas of the county.	●



PLAN ELEMENT 2
LIVABILITY

GOAL: Boone County will preserve its legacy as a family-oriented community that balances safeguarding the established rural culture and adapting to the beneficial qualities of a suburban lifestyle. The county strives to provide equitable access to high quality educational, recreational, health, and civic facilities, and opportunities that meet local needs and interests.

OBJECTIVES:

#	OBJECTIVE	PRIORITY
2.1	Coordinate programs and services offered by the county, nonprofits, and other agencies regarding recreation, health, and social services to pool resources, reduce duplication, and address growth impacts.	●
2.2	Pursue equal and convenient access to health and wellness services for all residents.	●
2.3	Support excellent educational opportunities for all students residing in the county.	●
2.4	Investigate potential expansion of healthcare options, including senior, specialty, and mental healthcare services.	●
2.5	Foster improved overall public health for Boone County residents.	●
2.6	Establish efficient communication between public agencies, the community, and individuals.	●
2.7	Maintain and continue to improve upon the high quality of public safety provided by Boone County.	●
2.8	Provide adequate and easily accessible recreation opportunities for all residents.	●

PLAN ELEMENT 3
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

GOAL: Boone County will advance initiatives that sustain the water supply, protect the Kishwaukee River, preserve valuable soils, protect sensitive environmental features, judiciously use natural resources, and implement sustainability practices that ensure current and future generations can experience and benefit from the natural environment.

OBJECTIVES:

#	OBJECTIVE	PRIORITY
3.1	Develop a sustainable water supply plan	●
3.2	Leverage state and regional policies to support county groundwater protection efforts.	●
3.3	Coordinate with Boone County Conservation District to continue conserving open space and protecting environmentally sensitive elements like wetlands, grasslands, savannas, and woodlands.	●
3.4	Protect flood-prone and environmentally sensitive areas.	●
3.5	Coordinate the future sustainable water supply plan with broader sustainability practices.	●
3.6	Encourage sustainable practices by property owners and tenants.	●
3.7	Protect fertile soil for continued agricultural use.	●
3.8	Review and, when necessary, develop new policies for renewable energy infrastructure.	●
3.9	Effectively reduce and manage waste to protect human and environmental health.	●

PLAN ELEMENT 4
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL: Boone County will support economic growth by protecting productive farmland, preserving natural resources, supporting existing business expansion, attracting new businesses, and promoting regional development.

OBJECTIVES:

#	OBJECTIVE	PRIORITY
4.1	Locate commercial and industrial growth areas within key transportation corridors.	●
4.2	Retain and expand employment opportunities and investment.	●
4.3	Increase workforce education and skill levels.	●
4.4	Encourage a diversified Boone County economy that compliments a thriving region.	●
4.5	Use a variety of incentives to grow economic opportunities.	●
4.6	Continue advancing agritourism opportunities and small rural businesses.	●
4.7	Consider existing or potential future public transit availability when planning for major employment centers.	●
4.8	Support opportunities for home-based businesses.	●



PLAN ELEMENT 5
HOUSING

GOAL: Boone County will encourage housing stock that protects the local rural heritage, supports county and municipal planning for growth, enables people to age in place, and meets the different needs, incomes, and life stages of all residents.

OBJECTIVES:

#	OBJECTIVE	PRIORITY
5.1	Promote build out of existing subdivisions with vacant lots.	●
5.2	Work with municipalities to strategically locate and develop sewer and water to support housing needs while meeting sustainability goals.	●
5.3	Locate new unplatted subdivisions strategically.	●
5.4	Encourage housing options and programs for residents in need of affordable housing.	●
5.5	Strive for a balance between housing demand and supply.	●
5.6	Prepare for and accommodate long-term population changes affecting housing needs.	●
5.7	Work with major employers to explore potential workforce housing.	●
5.8	Support innovative housing that facilitates home based businesses, multigenerational living, and new opportunities to address housing needs.	●

PLAN ELEMENT 6
TRANSPORTATION

GOAL: Boone County residents and businesses will have safe, accessible, and affordable infrastructure and services that support mobility for users of all ages, abilities, and transportation choices across the county and connecting with the region.

OBJECTIVES:

#	OBJECTIVE	PRIORITY
6.1	Coordinate future roadway improvements with capital improvement programs and potential grant funding.	●
6.2	Continue buildout of alternative transportation options, including increased opportunities to travel by bicycle.	●
6.3	Evaluate and implement roadway safety measures as traffic volume changes and safety considerations arise.	●
6.4	Coordinate designated truck routes with IDOT and municipalities.	●
6.5	Coordinate all proposed and existing transit services among providers and with stakeholders.	●

PLAN ELEMENT 7
UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

GOAL: Boone County will support utilities and infrastructure that efficiently and equitably meet the needs of residents, businesses, and property owners, with potential for expansion to accommodate growth and development, adapt to land constraints, respect private property rights, and respect the preservation of land, water, and other natural resources.

OBJECTIVES:

#	OBJECTIVE	PRIORITY
7.1	Expand broadband infrastructure to improve connectivity for residents and businesses and as an economic development incentive to attract new businesses.	●
7.2	Continue to improve stormwater management infrastructure in road rights-of-way, parking areas, and other areas to help reduce flooding and support groundwater recharge.	●
7.3	Encourage new development to connect to current or expanded municipal utilities, where feasible.	●
7.4	Protect agricultural drainage systems.	●
7.5	Coordinate with landowners whose property has constraints (e.g., topography, high or low water table, soil erosion, wetlands, etc.) that may impact private well and septic infrastructure.	●
7.6	Support and encourage infrastructure improvements through incentives.	●



CHAPTER 5

COUNTY PLAN ELEMENTS

This chapter provides the various plan elements that collectively serve as the core feature of the Boone County Comprehensive Plan. In particular, this chapter provides recommendations and supporting data and analysis for the seven primary plan elements that also represent the seven goals defined in the Policy Framework in Chapter 4. Building upon the community profile and policy framework in the previous chapters, the County Plan forms a blueprint for managed growth, sustainable development, and preservation in Boone County.

PLAN ELEMENTS

The seven primary plan elements relate to the following topics:

- Land Use and Preservation
- Livability
- Environmental Sustainability
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities and Infrastructure

CHAPTER STRUCTURE

For each of the seven primary plan element topics, the underlying goal and objectives are presented first to frame the following analysis of related data and background information. Strategic approaches are then summarized along with supporting maps, charts, and graphics, which lay the foundation for the strategies and resources outlined in the Implementation Plan in Chapter 6.



BOONE COUNTY PLAN

PLAN ELEMENT 1

LAND USE AND PRESERVATION



GOAL: Boone County will manage growth and development to provide a balanced mix of land uses that is compatible with the county’s rural heritage, sustains productive farmland, conserves the environment, and protects the water supply.

OBJECTIVES:

#	OBJECTIVE	PRIORITY
1.1	Locate new development strategically to best utilize existing assets and maximize open space and farmland protection.	HIGH ●
1.2	Enforce the revised Unified Development Ordinance to guide managed growth and development.	HIGH ●
1.3	Advocate for new, updated, or existing policies and tools to preserve productive farmland.	MEDIUM ●
1.4	Use cluster and conservation development to preserve open space and protect environmentally sensitive areas while providing new housing opportunities.	MEDIUM ●
1.5	Coordinate county and municipal plans for growth, development, and preservation, particularly with the recent comprehensive plan updates for Belvidere and Poplar Grove.	MEDIUM ●
1.6	Promote connectivity of greenways throughout the county.	MEDIUM ●
1.7	Identify potential sites and areas for future annexation by adjacent municipalities.	LOWER ●
1.8	Support historic preservation efforts in unincorporated areas of the county.	LOWER ●



PLAN ELEMENT 1: LAND USE AND PRESERVATION

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Future Land Use Plan positions Boone County to strike a delicate balance between a variety of near- and long-term outcomes:

- Managing sustainable growth
- Allowing for economic development
- Enhancing the housing stock
- Preserving prime farmland
- Conserving open space
- Protecting the regional water supply

Collectively, these outcomes will enhance the quality-of-life throughout Boone County and protect the region’s natural resources.

Future Land Use Plan Map

While the Future Land Use Plan Map in Figure 5.1 illustrates land use designations in the unincorporated parts of Boone County, it is important to understand the generalized nature of the map. Given the scale at which county comprehensive planning occurs, only broad areas of land use are indicated.

Certain exceptions may be appropriate for specific parcels of land. For example, a daycare center or small home-based office in a residential neighborhood may be permitted even though the Future Land Use Plan does not strictly

indicate a commercial use in the neighborhood. Such exceptions should be addressed on a case-by-case basis in accordance with Boone County’s Unified Development Ordinance.

In addition, new parks and open spaces are not specifically shown on the Future Land Use Plan Map, unless certain land is specifically earmarked by the Boone County Conservation District or other entities for future parks or open space. For instance, some of the future residential areas shown on the map might incorporate a park or dedicate open space for conservation, even if such uses are not depicted as open space on the map.

Coordination with Municipal Plans and Community Input

Creation of the Future Land Use Plan Map for Boone County was based on a range of coordination with municipal plans and community input:

- 2020 Boone County Land Use Plan
- 2024 Boone County Zoning Map
- 2024 Belvidere Comp Plan
- 2024 Poplar Grove Comp Plan
- 2017 Loves Park Comp Plan
- Findings from interim report that summarized existing conditions in Boone County
- Input from Task Force, county staff, and county officials

Annexation

The Future Land Use Plan Map shows land use designations in unincorporated parts of Boone County at the time of plan approval. Certain developments or individual parcels may find value in seeking annexation into a municipality. If a development or parcel is annexed, the land use plan, zoning map, and zoning regulations of that municipality will govern.

Annexation sometimes relates to the opportunity to tie into municipal water and sewer utility infrastructure. Other times, annexation may provide benefits to the municipality, such as enhancing their tax base or connecting new development better to existing neighborhoods or districts.

PRIORITY GROWTH AREAS

Preservation of agricultural land and conservation of open space and natural resources are paramount to the long-term future of Boone County. This requires a thoughtful approach to managing sustainable growth and development across the county.

One way to accomplish this is by establishing the Priority Growth Areas described below for residential, commercial, and industrial development. These Priority Growth Areas do not preclude residential, commercial, and industrial development to occur in other parts of Boone County, whether in unincorporated or incorporated areas. The related land use categories are described on the following pages.

Agricultural preservation and open space conservation are described in more detail on pages 24-25 in this subsection.

Residential Priority Growth Areas

Residential growth is prioritized on the outer edges of municipalities, including north and south of Belvidere, northeast of Poplar Grove, and all around Capron. The unincorporated residential areas northwest of Belvidere also provide opportunities to build out more housing in these areas through infill development.

Commercial Priority Growth Areas

Commercial growth is prioritized along major roadway corridors, including IL Route 173 in Poplar Grove and Capron, U.S. Business 20 north of Belvidere, and near I-90 interchanges south of Belvidere. In some cases like Poplar Grove and Capron, this helps to fill the need to boost economic development in smaller towns. In other cases like around Belvidere, this further builds out the capacity for businesses and services along the county’s two most prominent corridors, one of which also coincides with the industrial priority growth area (see below).

Industrial Priority Growth Area

Industrial growth is prioritized along the I-90 corridor south of Belvidere to build upon existing industrial sites, tie into municipal utilities infrastructure, and have close access to the interstate for regional delivery and transport. As noted above, one of the commercial priority growth areas overlaps with the industrial priority growth area.



PLAN ELEMENT 1: LAND USE AND PRESERVATION

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

The land use categories depicted on the Future Land Use Plan Map in Figure 5.1 are listed below and described in more detail on the right and following pages. The description of each land use category is accompanied by a short statement regarding the zoning district(s) that are most relevant to the land use category, per the Boone County Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

- Agricultural
- Farmsteads
- Single Family Residential Rural
- Single Family Residential Exurban
- Open Space
- Institutional
- Commercial
- Business Flex
- Industrial
- Municipal

LAND USE VS. ZONING

It is important to note that the Future Land Use Plan is not a zoning map. Zoning regulates specific aspects of development, such as yard dimensions and building height, in addition to the location of certain types of uses within districts. Thus, zoning is a useful tool for protecting the use of property and community character, even if the zoning map does not exactly align with the land use map.

On the other hand, the Future Land Use Plan is intended to guide where certain types of development are to be located and is not intended to restrict the use of land. A land use plan generally indicates the location of current and future uses of land for various types of development. It is meant to be a guide for establishing more finely-tuned regulations such as zoning and to guide decision making which may involve public or private investment in property development.

The degree to which a zoning map will conform to a land use map depends on two factors: (1) how finely-tuned the land use map is in terms of dividing land uses into those which conform to districts, and (2) how often the zoning map is amended. Since Boone County is preparing its Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) concurrently with the Comprehensive Plan, the zoning map and regulations in the UDO align with the land use and development policies outlined in the plan.

Typically, a land use map is changed much less frequently than a zoning map because it is intended to encompass a longer time frame, embody a broad community vision, and provide a more general guide for county growth, development, and preservation.

AGRICULTURAL

LAND USE: Agricultural land is generally used for crops, animal husbandry, pastures, and agritourism in a rural setting. In addition, agricultural land is suitable for certain infrastructure such as utility pipelines and renewable energy facilities like solar farms and wind turbines, where appropriate and allowable. Undeveloped land without any farming activity also counts as agricultural use. Any agricultural land with a housing structure is categorized as a farmstead (see separate land use category). A majority of unincorporated land in Boone County is categorized as agricultural.

ZONING: Agricultural uses are allowed in the agricultural (A-1, A-2) zoning districts, per the Boone County UDO.

FARMSTEADS

LAND USE: This residential category primarily includes single family houses that are located on a large agricultural lot, with some having active farming on the lot. Many farmsteads have an estate, very low density, or otherwise rural quality. In addition to the house, the farmstead may have barns, garages, machine sheds, grain storage (e.g., silos, bunker silos, and grain bins), sheltering for horses (in the R-E zoning district; no sheltering for other animals), or other structures generally relating to farm activities.

ZONING: Farmsteads are typically allowed in the agricultural (A-1, A-2) and residential (R-E) zoning districts, per the Boone County UDO.



PLAN ELEMENT 1: **LAND USE AND PRESERVATION**

SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL RURAL

LAND USE: This residential category includes residential uses located beyond incorporated areas, including existing or future residential areas that have an estate, low density, or otherwise rural quality. While this category name is indicative of primarily single family residential uses, other housing types like duplexes, triplexes, and townhouses are also included in this category. Multifamily residential options like condominiums, apartments, and housing for older adults may also be considered. However, housing options other than single family detached houses will likely occur sporadically, if at all in a rural setting.

ZONING: Residential rural uses are typically allowed in the residential (R-E, R-1) zoning districts, per the Boone County UDO.

SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL EXURBAN

LAND USE: This residential category includes residential uses located adjacent to or in close proximity to incorporated areas, including existing or future residential areas within municipalities. While this category name is indicative of primarily single family residential uses, other housing types like duplexes, triplexes, and townhouses are also included in this category. While multifamily residential options like condominiums, apartments, and housing for older adults are also included, such multifamily uses are more likely to be annexed by and built within a municipality.

ZONING: Residential exurban uses are typically allowed in the residential (R-E, R-1) zoning districts, per the Boone County UDO.

OPEN SPACE

LAND USE: Open space covers parks, conservation areas, golf courses, outdoor recreational facilities, camp grounds, and other spaces that cater to recreation or the enjoyment of the outdoors. Since some parks and recreational facilities are located within incorporated areas, they may not be properly depicted on the Future Land Use Plan Map (i.e., they may be shown in the gray areas depicting municipalities).

ZONING: Open spaces are typically allowed in the agricultural (A-1, A-2), residential (R-E, R-1), and floodplain overlay (FPO) zoning districts, per the Boone County UDO.

INSTITUTIONAL

LAND USE: Institutional uses generally include: schools; libraries; churches; cemeteries; museums (three private and one public); fairgrounds; airports; public safety buildings; public utilities; facilities used by federal, state, county, township, and municipal governments; and other civic uses. Many institutional uses are located within incorporated areas, so they may not be properly depicted on the Future Land Use Plan Map (i.e., they may be shown in the gray areas depicting municipalities).

ZONING: Institutional uses vary in type as noted above and are typically allowed in various zoning districts, per the Boone County UDO.



PLAN ELEMENT 1: LAND USE AND PRESERVATION

COMMERCIAL

LAND USE: Commercial uses include retail, restaurants, services, lodging, and other business uses. Office uses like medical and professional offices are also categorized as commercial, particularly if such offices are within a commercial area or block that includes other businesses. Business flex, which is a subset of offices, is a separate land use category as described in the next column.

ZONING: Commercial uses are typically allowed in the B-1 Business zoning district, per the Boone County UDO.

BUSINESS FLEX

LAND USE: The business flex land use category is consistent with the similarly named business flex land use category defined by the 2024 Belvidere Comprehensive Plan. Business flex includes uses that combine flexible office/retail space with a warehouse or storage area. For the Boone County land use plan, the business flex category mostly applies to land on the immediate outskirts of Belvidere.

ZONING: Business flex uses consistent with the business flex approach are typically allowed in the B-1 Business and I-1 Industrial zoning districts, per the Boone County UDO.

INDUSTRIAL

LAND USE: Industrial uses typically encompass manufacturing, factories, warehousing, storage, trucking and logistics, and any other large scale production. While offices are often located in industrial areas, they are usually related to the industrial uses. Limited commercial uses may also be located in industrial areas in accordance with the Boone County UDO.

ZONING: Industrial uses are typically allowed in the I-1 Industrial zoning district, per the Boone County UDO.

MUNICIPAL

LAND USE: Municipal uses primarily include incorporated land that is annexed by one of the municipalities: Capron, Poplar Grove, Belvidere, Caledonia, Timberlane, and the portions of Cherry Valley and Loves Park that cross over into Boone County. Some of these municipalities each has its own municipal comprehensive plan that guides land use planning within incorporated areas.

ZONING: Land uses that are situated within incorporated areas are subject to the zoning regulations of the municipality in which they are located.



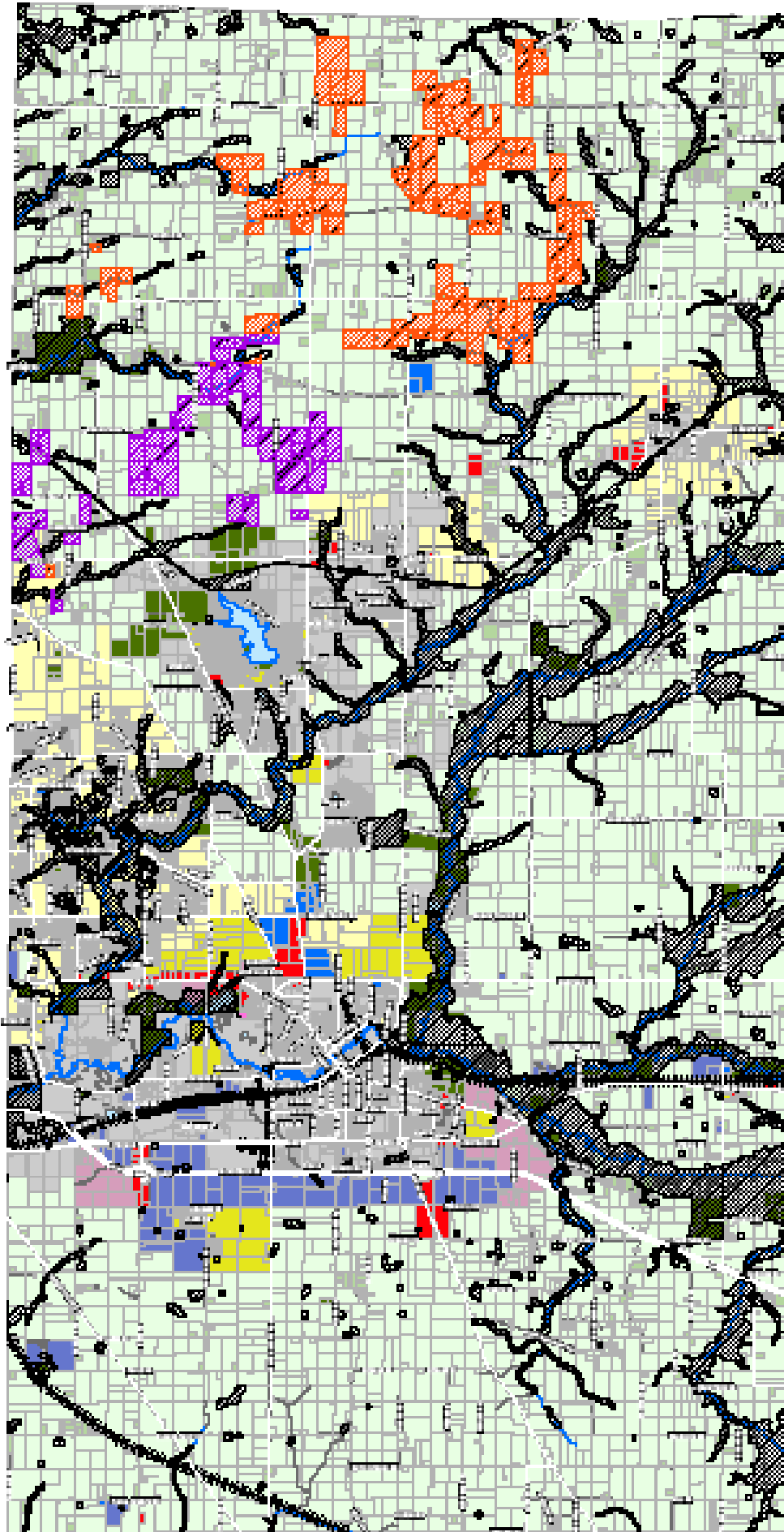


FIGURE 5.1
FUTURE LAND USE PLAN MAP

LEGEND

- Agricultural
- Farmsteads
- Single Family Residential Rural
- Single Family Residential Exurban
- Open Space
- Institutional
- Commercial
- Business Flex
- Industrial
- Municipal
- Floodplain
- Water Bodies

Designated Agricultural Areas

- 1992 Designated Agricultural Area
- 1995 Designated Agricultural Area

The Illinois Department of Agriculture passed the Agricultural Areas Conservation and Protection Act in 1980 providing landowners with the right to voluntarily enroll their property in a designated “Agricultural Area” (see page 24 for more details). This designation protects the land from development for an initial ten years. After re-evaluation of the property, the landowner can re-enroll their property every eight years after the initial ten years.

Boone County’s participation in this agricultural land protection program is one of the largest in Illinois, including one Designated Agricultural Area established in 1992 and another Designated Agricultural Area set up in 1995. The 1992 and 1995 areas cover over 7,000 acres in total.

From the perspective of land use planning for Boone County, the Future Land Use Plan Map illustrates how the land within the 1992 and 1995 Designated Agricultural Areas will continue to be protected from development, including much of the land within close proximity to these two Designated Agricultural Areas.

Agricultural Conservation Easements (ACEs)

ACEs were created in 2006 to promote farmland preservation over the life of a renewable 99-year contract that stipulates the only types of development that can occur on a property (see page 25 for more details).

PLAN ELEMENT 1: **LAND USE AND PRESERVATION**

AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION

Boone County has historically been defined by agricultural land and open space. About 80% of county land is classified as prime agricultural soil, which provides for productive farmland that continues to be a major part of the county’s economy and identity.

Urbanization over the past several decades has altered the land use composition of the county. The amount of urbanized areas in Boone County increased from about 7% of total land area in 2000 to 10% by the mid 2010s. Today, that percentage is certainly greater, particularly with the commercial and industrial growth along the I-90 corridor and build out of new housing over the past decade.

Urbanization gradually chips away at the dominance of agricultural land in Boone County. The Future Land Use Plan Map shown in Figure 5.1 still maintains agricultural land as the most prevalent land use across the county, even as future pockets of residential growth are established and the I-90 corridor continues to experience commercial and industrial growth.

Housing growth and economic development will still be part of Boone County’s future. However, preservation will be just as important as growth and development to offer a balanced mix of land that protects prime farmland, the regional water supply, and the county’s natural resources.

The following approaches are intended to preserve agricultural land in Boone County as best as possible.

Unless located within a municipal planning area, allowed as a special use, or noted otherwise on the Future Land Use Plan Map, no development shall be allowed on land if designated as agricultural area, agricultural conservation easement, or zoned A-1 Agricultural Preservation District.

Designated Agricultural Areas

The Illinois Department of Agriculture passed the Agricultural Areas Conservation and Protection Act in 1980 providing landowners with the right to voluntarily enroll their property in a designated “Agricultural Area.” This designation protects the land from development for an initial ten years. After re-evaluation of the property, the landowner can re-enroll their property every eight years after the initial ten years.

Boone County’s participation in this agricultural land protection program is one of the largest in Illinois, including one Designated Agricultural Area established in 1992 and another set up in 1995.

From the perspective of land use planning for Boone County, the Future Land Use Plan Map in Figure 5.1 illustrates how the land within the 1992 and 1995 Designated Agricultural Areas will continue to be protected from development, including much of the land within close proximity to these two Designated Agricultural Areas.

OUTCOMES OF PRESERVATION

Agricultural land is considered one of Boone County’s key natural resources, particularly with a significant amount of rural land and active farms. In addition, agriculture contributes to the diversification of the county’s economy. The protection of agricultural land has multiple outcomes including:

Growth Management. Taking a proactive approach to the preservation of agricultural land throughout the county will create de facto growth management that protects agricultural resources, curtails sprawling development, and encourages infill and adaptive reuse of existing properties.

Economically Viable Farming. Supporting research and technology needed to cultivate new uses of agricultural products will help keep farming viable by developing markets and attracting industry that support agriculture in the region.

Farm-to-Table Local Food Sourcing. Providing locally sourced food from Boone County fields to stock the kitchens of restaurants in the region and enable small food vendors to sell products at farmers markets, local shops, and online.

Farm-Style Design. Catering to Boone County’s rural heritage provides opportunities for a farm-style aesthetic in architectural and site design practices, which are becoming more prevalent to create a unique identity rooted in the history and culture of the county.

NOTE: It is important to note that land which is currently agricultural in nature will remain that way until a property owner is willing to sell their land for the purposes of new development, even if the Future Land Use Plan designates such land for non-agricultural purposes like residential, commercial, or industrial.

7,100
acres of land enrolled in the state’s designated agricultural area program, which is one of the largest in Illinois

523
acres of permanently protected land via agricultural conservation easements (ACEs)

Source: Boone County



PLAN ELEMENT 1: LAND USE AND PRESERVATION

OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION

Conservation of open space is also a high priority in Boone County, which has a substantial network of green infrastructure. This green infrastructure includes a variety of open spaces comprised of an interconnected system of parks, prairies, forests, paths, trails, wetlands, riparian areas, and lands within the floodplain. Also referred to as greenways, Boone County's open space system has significant biodiversity, which accentuates the importance of preserving natural habitats, wildlife, and environmentally sensitive areas.

The county's open spaces are shown on the Future Land Use Plan Map in Figure 5.1, the Community Facilities and Assets Map in Figure 5.8, and the Environmental and Natural Resources Map in Figure 5.10. These maps serve as guides to local agencies -- particularly the Boone County Conservation District, Belvidere Township Park District, and municipalities -- to identify

priorities for land acquisition and open space conservation efforts.

Open space conservation steps may include prairie restoration, use of native plantings, creation of conservation parks and nature preserves, wetland protection, and development approaches like cluster housing and conservation design. Strategies for open space conservation should be coordinated with the Boone County Conservation District Strategic Plan.

From a regional perspective, the R1 Regional Planning Council is currently creating its **2026 Greenways Plan as an update to its 2021 plan** for Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties. The Greenways Plan is a useful resource to understand the benefits of greenways across the region and plan for more localized strategies to conserve open space, expand the trail network, and better plan for context sensitive land use development.

2021 Greenways:

A Greenways Plan for Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties



Final Report
April 2021



BOONE COUNTY PLAN

PLAN ELEMENT 2

LIVABILITY



GOAL: Boone County will preserve its legacy as a family-oriented community that balances safeguarding the established rural culture and adapting to the beneficial qualities of a suburban lifestyle. The county strives to provide equitable access to high quality educational, recreational, health, and civic facilities, and opportunities that meet local needs and interests.

OBJECTIVES:

#	OBJECTIVE	PRIORITY
2.1	Coordinate programs and services offered by the county, nonprofits, and other agencies regarding recreation, health, and social services to pool resources, reduce duplication, and address growth impacts.	HIGH ●
2.2	Pursue equal and convenient access to health and wellness services for all residents.	HIGH ●
2.3	Support excellent educational opportunities for all students residing in the county.	HIGH ●
2.4	Investigate potential expansion of healthcare options, including senior, specialty, and mental healthcare services.	MEDIUM ●
2.5	Foster improved overall public health for Boone County residents.	MEDIUM ●
2.6	Establish efficient communication between public agencies, the community, and individuals.	LOWER ●
2.7	Maintain and continue to improve upon the high quality of public safety provided by Boone County.	LOWER ●
2.8	Provide adequate and easily accessible recreation opportunities for all residents.	LOWER ●



PLAN ELEMENT 2: LIVABILITY

QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATORS

The quality of life for Boone County residents varies by geographic area, as shown in Figure 5.2 showing the **Area Deprivation Index (ADI)** regarding income, education, employment, and housing quality. The reasons for these variations are not always clear. For example, the least deprived area of Boone County is adjacent to a more deprived area of neighboring Winnebago County. Deprivation is most concentrated in and near Belvidere.

The **AARP Livability Index** compares different jurisdictions on a number of quality of life indicators to arrive at an overall score and show local strong points and shortcomings. In the table in Figure 5.3, Boone County is compared to adjacent DeKalb and Winnebago Counties and the U.S. county median. Boone County's overall score is 50, being exactly in the middle. The county scores well on environment and opportunity, and less well on engagement, health, housing, and neighborhood. In general, Boone County scores as well or better than the comparison counties. Definitions for these categories can be found in the appendix of this document.

FIGURE 5.2

- **AREA DEPRIVATION INDEX (ADI)** | INCOME, EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND HOUSING QUALITY
Source: UW-Madison and the Health Resources and Services Administration

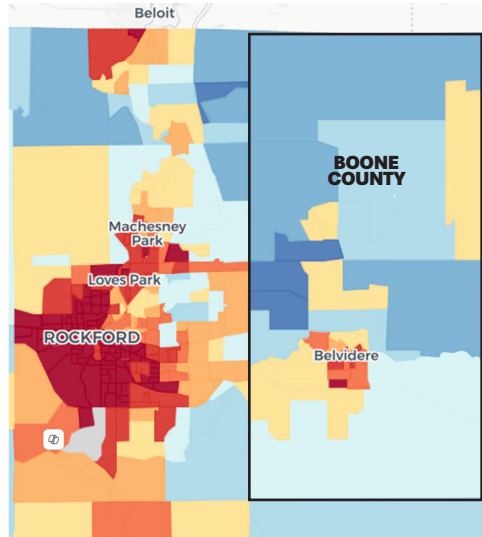


FIGURE 5.3

- **AARP LIVABILITY INDEX**

Source: AARP Livability Index



	DeKalb County	Winnebago County	Boone County	2024 Median U.S. County
Overall Score	49	48	50	50
Housing ⓘ	47	56	47	59
Neighborhood ⓘ	46	45	46	36
Transportation ⓘ	49	57	49	44
Environment ⓘ	52	62	60	61
Health ⓘ	44	36	46	40
Engagement ⓘ	46	44	44	47
Opportunity ⓘ	60	40	60	50



PLAN ELEMENT 2: **LIVABILITY**

EDUCATION

Education is an investment in the future of a community built on a strong school system that provides opportunities to local students who will contribute to the current and future livability of the region. Quality schools are attractive for families who want to provide their children with the best opportunities available. Similarly, a strong educational environment is attractive for business and industry that seek to recruit an educated and skilled labor force.

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 needs regarding infrastructure, programming, and facilities. As a result, the county has a role in driving the positive community impacts of quality education.

K-12 School System

Boone County is served by a strong school system with two community unit school districts (CUSDs) that provide seventeen (17) total schools from grades PreK through 12, as listed below. Belvidere Community Unit School District 100 (CUSD100) serves Belvidere, Caledonia, and the rural areas in the southern half of the county. The service area for North Boone Community Unit School District 200 (CUSD 200) includes Capron, Poplar Grove, and the northern rural areas of the county. The School District Boundaries Map is provided in the Appendix.

Belvidere CUSD 100 and North Boone CUSD 200 have both experienced some decline in their enrollment over the past several years. While both school districts continue to perform around or just below the state level on the the statewide standardized test per the resulting PARCC scores, the two districts have graduation rates that align with the overall state average. By these measures, Boone County’s school districts are well-performing with room for improvement.

7,407
2024 school enrollment for Belvidere CUSD 100, down from recent high of 8,012 (2019)

1,484
2024 school enrollment for Belvidere CUSD 200, down from recent high of 1,635 (2018)

Preparation Beyond the Classroom

Like many school districts across the country, CUSDs 100 and 200 look beyond these test scores and graduation rates by emphasizing the importance of helping students either prepare for the workforce or continue on with postsecondary 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 participate in Running Start and Running Start Engineering. These programs have

Belvidere Community Unit School District 100

- Belvidere High School
- Belvidere North High School
- Everest Satellite High School
- Belvidere Central Middle School
- Belvidere South Middle School
- Caledonia Elementary School
- Lincoln Elementary School
- Meehan Elementary School
- Perry Elementary School
- Seth Whitman Elementary School
- Washington Academy

North Boone Community Unit School District 200

- North Boone High School
- North Boone Middle School
- North Boone Upper Elementary School
- Capron Elementary School
- Manchester Elementary School
- Poplar Grove Elementary School



PLAN ELEMENT 2: **LIVABILITY**

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. Students participating in PLTW can earn college credit hours as they get exposed to engineering, computer, and environmental concepts. Programs like these should continue to be expanded and promoted.

These initiatives demonstrate a commitment within the district to experiment with new educational ideas. Both school districts should continue with this adaptive mentality to prepare for a changing regional and national economy.

Additional Education Resources

Day cares are a valuable part 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 several private childcare providers and in-home daycares located across the county. 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 examples, 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. Located in Belvidere and primarily serving the city’s residents, the Ida Public Library is open to all 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. Ida Public Library is also home to historical and genealogical community records.

There is an expressed interest in expansion of the library’s service area by creating a countywide district. Such an approach would require several state-prescribed processes. The state and Illinois Library Association offer resources and guidance.

The four museums (three private and one public) in Boone County also offer educational resources.

Post-Secondary and Adult Education

The only college or university located in Boone County is the Rock Valley College Advanced Technology Center in Belvidere. However, county residents benefit 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 main campus of Rock Valley College, which

is the region’s community college. 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. It also plays a major role in regional workforce development efforts, providing local high school coursework.

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 organizations.

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



Colleges and Universities within Close Proximity to Boone County

- Rock Valley College
- Rockford University
- McHenry County College
- Kishwaukee College
- Saint Anthony College of Nursing
- Northern Illinois University
- Beloit College
- Blackhawk Technical College
- Rasmussen University
- Northern Illinois University (Rockford)
- University of Illinois at Chicago’s Health Science Campus (Rockford)



PLAN ELEMENT 2: **LIVABILITY**

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 economy in Boone County in the long term. As a result, 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. The aforementioned Rock Valley College initiatives, vocational programs within the public school system, and other community resources, serve as quality examples. Two others are the region’s two economic development agencies: 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 Growth Dimensions and the Workforce Connection promote.

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 continues to target, including manufacturing and healthcare. Many of those who go through these certifications/programs have found careers because of their training, and the programs have also been well received by employers.

of all incomes have to travel, level of participation in extracurricular events, and parent involvement.

- 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.

North Boone and Belvidere School District superintendents are also active in a variety of planning processes throughout the county. This coordination with School Districts 100 and 200 should continue over time 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 to prepare for different growth scenarios, including contingencies that may affect future land use in Boone County.

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, the county will need to consider 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



Growth Dimensions provides a progressive and cooperative environment which improves the quality of life by advancing a coordinated economic development strategy to create jobs, promote community assets, and stimulate capital investment.

 <https://www.growthdimensions.org>



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.

 <https://www.theworkforceconnection.org>



Workforce development will continue to be a coordinated effort between regional economic development organizations and educational institutions.



PLAN ELEMENT 2: **LIVABILITY**

PARKS AND RECREATION

Boone County is served by a wide-ranging network of parks, open space, and recreational facilities. Many are located within the county itself, while others are large facilities near Boone County that draw from across the broader region.

Boone County Parks and Recreational Assets

The Boone County Conservation District and Belvidere Township Park District are the two main agencies that manage parks and recreational facilities in Boone County. Between the two agencies, they operate and maintain over 30 miles of multi-use paths and trails, over 4,700 acres of parks and open space, and organize and host various events, activities, camps, leagues, and programs each year.

Most of these recreational opportunities are located in or around the City of Belvidere. In addition to the parks managed by the Belvidere Township Park District, this includes their recreational facilities: the Historic Baltic Mill, Riverside Ice Arena, Rivers Edge Recreation Center, and the Special Recreation Facility. There is also an array of open spaces and trails located throughout the county that are primarily managed by the Boone County Conservation District. Boone County has Big Thunder Park, while the Lions Clubs in Capron and Poplar Grove also manage their own park space.

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.

The parks, recreational facilities, and trails serving Boone County are shown on the Community Facilities and Assets Map in Figure 5.8.

Regional Parks and Recreational Assets

In addition, the coverage area of the Rockford Park District, which is the region’s largest operator of parks and open space, extends into Boone County via the eastern portion of the City of Loves Park which overlaps both Boone and Winnebago Counties. Over the past 25 years, the Rockford Park District prioritized building new large-scale regionally-significant indoor and outdoor recreational facilities like UW Health Sports Factory, Mercyhealth Sportscore, and Sportscore, which serve the county and larger region.

Loves Park, which is partially located in Boone County, offers two major recreational facilities: the recent expansion of the Mercyhealth Sportscore and Rock Cut State Park, which are both situated near Boone County’s western boundary. Long Prairie Trail offers regional access to Rock Cut State Park.

4,700+
acres of parks and open space located across Boone County

30+
miles of shared use path, including 14.2 miles along Long Prairie Trail

Future Parks and Recreation

As new housing gets developed in Boone County whether within municipalities or in unincorporated areas, there will be the need to add to the regional network of parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities. New parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities should be located in an equitable manner to ensure they are spread across the region so people of all ages, abilities, and modes of transport can access them.

While the Community Facilities and Assets Map in Figure 5.8 only shows a limited amount of future parks and open space conservation areas, it is presumed that the future residential areas shown on the Future Land Use Plan Map in Figure 5.1 will accommodate a certain level of parks and open space. Some of the commercial and industrial areas may also contribute new open spaces, whether as part of a stormwater management facility or some other form on the site.

These large recreational facilities that draw users from across the region should continue to play an important role in boosting tourism in Boone County. Visits to parks and recreational facilities in Boone County and vicinity can be part of a larger economic development approach that provides trail access to downtowns, local businesses, restaurants, and other attractions that extend park visits into full day experiences.

Future parks, recreational facilities, and related open spaces should be coordinated with the Boone County Conservation District Strategic Plan and Belvidere Park District Strategic Plan.



PLAN ELEMENT 2: LIVABILITY

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Healthy and safe residents are cornerstone traits to a prosperous and thriving county. 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, healthcare and access to fresh and healthy food. Collectively, the physical environment, built environment, and social construct of the community contribute to the overall public health of Boone County residents.

Public Health

A topic that has often been overlooked in previous comprehensive planning efforts is public health. However, the 2020 Comprehensive Plan and this 2025 Plan Update aim to change that in part because of the emphasis the community continues to place on the importance of public health.

While the county currently ranks 14th in the state for overall health outcomes, there are still certain needs within the population and gaps in the services provided to improve public health. Improvements to overall physical health of the population, mental health services, and access to health services are the primary issues that the county continues to address to

improve the delivery of health services to impact overall public health needs. Boone County is remodeling the Health Department to increase space and provide better services.

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 healthcare providers in the community, and the array of social services provided. A healthy population generally helps to reduce the demand on public services and increase the livability of the community. Overall, a physically healthy population is in the best interest of all residents, businesses, taxpayers, and governments.

Like any community, Boone County experiences positive and negative trends that point to areas that have improved and areas in need of improvement. For example, the 2020 Comprehensive Plan indicated an increase in life expectancy in Boone County, which was a positive trend. On the other hand, 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, particularly with regard to nutrition and exercise.

There are several agencies and organizations that make up the public health services network serving the people of Boone County:

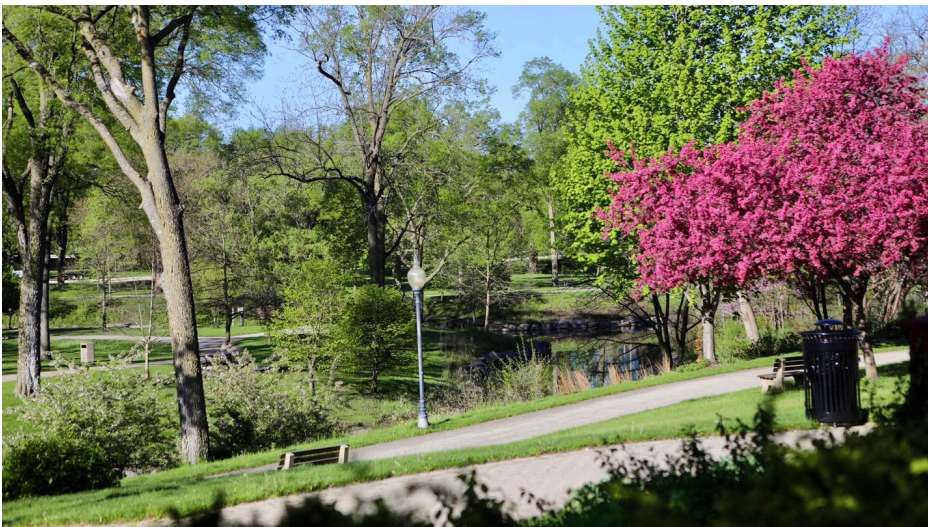
- **Boone County Health Department**
- **Health clinics**
- **Immediate care facilities**
- **Social service organizations**
- **Mental health facilities**
- **Schools**
- **Food pantries**
- **Parks and recreation facilities**
- **Other county government services**

Mental Health

Boone County has acknowledged that increasing mental health services is a high priority, particularly regarding addiction and substance abuse. The most traditional forms of these issues are usually associated with tobacco and alcohol use; however, opioids has increasingly become a significant issue to the point where it is deemed a public health emergency at the federal level.

Many different agencies, organizations, and partnerships are working to combat addiction and other mental health issues. Boone County, along with Winnebago County and the City of Rockford, have filed different lawsuits against several large pharmaceutical companies for compensation because of the role they played in producing opioids and pushing them to doctors and patients. In addition, the Boone County Drug Coalition and the Boone County Behavioral Task Force are coordinating their efforts to tackle substance abuse issues.

There are various other resources in Boone County that address other substance abuse and mental health issues. Boone County maintains website links to many of these resources on the county website, as linked below.



CLICK HERE FOR ONLINE RESOURCES
[Boone County Public and Mental Health](#)



PLAN ELEMENT 2: **LIVABILITY**

Public Health Indicators

Several indicators of public health from the Boone County IPLAN 2024 prepared by the Boone County Health Department are relevant to the Comprehensive Plan. The first indicator in Figure 5.4 shows that Boone County has a higher number of residents per provider for several types of healthcare than is found statewide. This is significant for resident access to healthcare and may be something to consider when planning for healthcare facilities.

Another indicator is access to healthy foods, as shown in Figure 5.5. County residents have slightly less access to healthy foods than statewide or nationally. Additional food outlets could be a plus for the county when considering retail development. Access to local fresh food might be increased through additional support for county farms. While most county farms focus on row crops, those that currently grow fruits and vegetables or might wish to in the future, including new farms, could be encouraged by planning for broader local distribution of locally grown food.

The last indicator is adult obesity, as shown in Figure 5.6. County residents are more likely to be obese than Illinois residents or US residents. This may be related to healthy food access which could be helped as discussed above. It also should be considered when planning for recreation opportunities and walk/bike options for getting places.

The Boone County IPLAN 2024 included a Community Health Assessment Data Table displaying factors that contribute to overall health outcomes in Boone county. The chart in Figure 5.7 compares Boone County to the State of Illinois, which highlights the disparities based on race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, age, or gender. The chart points out a number of issues that are related to the Comprehensive Plan.

FIGURE 5.4
RATIO POPULATION PER PROVIDER

Source: Boone County IPLAN 2024

Provider Type	Boone County	State of Illinois
Mental Health Providers	2,510:1	370:1
Primary Care	1,850:1	1,230:1
Dentists	2,780:1	1,220:1

FIGURE 5.5
LIMITED ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS

Source: Boone County IPLAN 2024

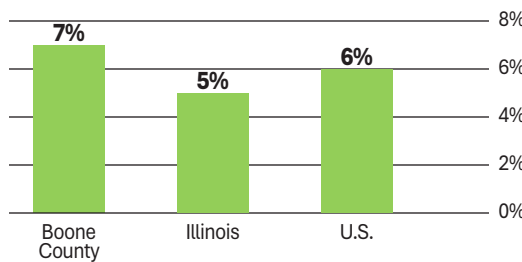
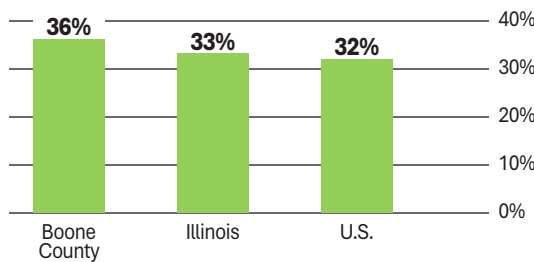


FIGURE 5.6
ADULT OBESITY

Source: Boone County IPLAN 2024



PLAN ELEMENT 2: **LIVABILITY**

FIGURE 5.7
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO HEALTH OUTCOMES

Source: Boone County IPLAN 2024, page 41

Identified Community Needs in Boone County		Voiced by community	Boone Data compared to State		Data shows disparities
			Better	Worse	
Health outcomes	Infant mortality		X		X
	Low birth weight babies		X		X
	Death rate due to stroke		X		
	Incidence rate of diabetes		X	X	X
	Death rate due to heart disease		X		X
	Incidence rate of (all) cancers			X	X
	Obesity prevalence			X	X
	Asthma prevalence			X	X
	Mental health conditions	X		X	X
	COVID-19 Death Crude Rate		X		X
Unhealthy Behaviors	Tobacco use	X		X	
	Youth E-Cigarette Use	X			
	Physical Inactivity	X		X	X
	Excessive drinking	X		X	
	Substance Use	X	X		X
	STI Incidence		X		X
	Insufficient Sleep		X	X	X
	Access – insurance		X		X
	Access – providers	X		X	X
	Access – dental	X		X	
Clinical Care	Access – mental health care	X		X	X
	Access – location	X		X	
	Access – Substance Use Treatment services	X		X	
	Access to higher education	X		X	X
	Access to public transportation	X	X		
	High School graduation			X	X
	Domestic Violence	X	X		X
	Child Abuse		X		X
	Access to good paying jobs	X		X	X
	Access to healthy food	X		X	
Social/Economic	Discrimination	X			X
	Childcare Cost Burden	X		X	
	Firearm injuries	X	X		X
	Severe Housing Cost Burden	X	X		
	Access to exercise opportunities			X	X
	Safe, affordable housing	X	X		X
	Parks and Recreation			X	
	Walkable neighborhood			X	
	Access to Broadband Internet		X		
	Households with a Computer		X		
Physical Environment	Housing Units per person		X		
	Access to childcare centers	X		X	
	Insecure Housing	X			



PLAN ELEMENT 2: LIVABILITY

Access and Reducing Inequities in Public Health Services

While there are various resources, organizations, and institutions that comprise the public health services network serving Boone County, two of the most effective ways to improve public health outcomes is to increase access and provide more equitable services.

Locally, there are several small medical clinics located across Boone County. UW Health operates an outpatient facility with emergency room capabilities and forthcoming upgrades to the building. There are also several major hospital campuses in the region, particularly in Rockford to the west and McHenry County to the east. The clinics are conveniently located for a large portion of the county’s population. While they primarily provide routine-type check-ups, these clinics do not offer the more significant or specific health services that certain residents need.

This gap is generally filled by Boone County’s proximity to major medical centers in the region, which allows county residents to get top-notch, specialized services within a reasonable driving distance. 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. This also impacts younger and/or aging populations who cannot drive. As a result, these populations have significant obstacles when it comes to accessing medical care, social services, and nutritious foods.

In addition to physical barriers, cultural and language barriers also contribute to inequities in access to public health services. This is particularly accentuated by more than one-quarter (26.3%) of Boone County’s population being comprised of residents who identify as Hispanic or Latino, which includes a significant portion 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 Health Department, has made a concerted effort to reach the Latino and Hispanic community through the hiring of bilingual staff, translation of most written departmental materials into Spanish, community outreach targeting the Latino and Hispanic population, and engagement of community leaders. These steps are critical to improve equitable access to public health services and other publicly available resources in Boone County.

The Boone County Health Department posts its annual reports online, as linked below, which highlight their work to improve public health access and outcomes.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Boone County
Health Department**



CLICK HERE FOR ONLINE RESOURCES
[Boone County Health Dept Annual Reports](#)



PLAN ELEMENT 2: **LIVABILITY**

PUBLIC SAFETY

Public safety is critically important to the livability of a community. The public safety services in Boone County include:

- 911 Call Center
- Boone County Sheriff's Department
- Boone County Fire Districts 1-5 (Fire District Boundaries Map is provided in the Appendix)
- 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
- Belvidere Police Department

Since Boone County is a primarily rural county, many public services are shared or consolidated for efficiency. Such partnerships between certain shared services and departments yield effective results with a high level of public safety.

Two additional groups partner with the Boone County Emergency Management Agency focusing on more specific elements of emergency management planning: the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program (PHEP) centers on public health effects of emergencies, while the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) focuses on hazardous material incidents, natural disasters, and terrorist attacks.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic preservation continues to be a priority in Boone County. The Boone County Museum of History plays an important role in preserving the community's history. The majority of historical elements and the historical museum itself are located in Belvidere. However, the programs, initiatives, and projects of the Boone County Museum of History are viewed as a strength of Boone County overall.

Pettit Memorial Chapel (110 N. Main Street in Belvidere) is one of the notable historic sites in Boone County. Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, the historic chapel property is listed on the National and Illinois Registers of Historic Places.

While the chapel is just one historic site, there are certainly structures and sites across Boone County that have historic value that should be considered as part of any county preservation efforts. For example, the historic Funderburg House was donated to the Boone County Historical Society and is well preserved as a community artifact.

OTHER COMMUNITY AGENCIES AND SERVICES

The quality of life and livability of Boone County depend on the services, programming, and other resources offered by the social, educational, recreational, and civic agencies and organizations described in this section. Boone County maintains website links to many of these key agencies and organizations on the county website, as linked below.



CLICK HERE FOR ONLINE RESOURCES

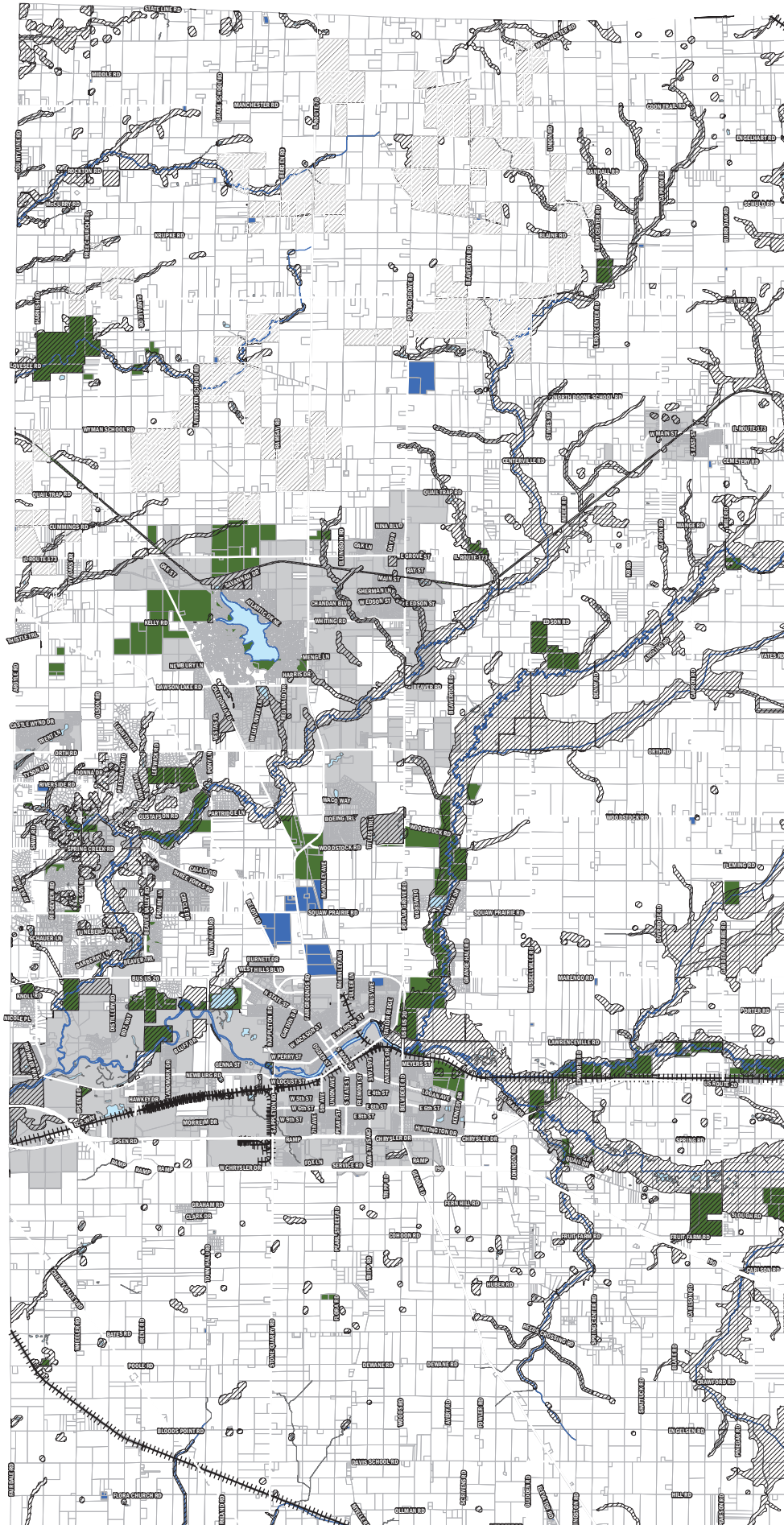
[Boone County Community Organizations](#)



FIGURE 5.8
**COMMUNITY FACILITIES
AND ASSETS MAP**

LEGEND

-  Open Space
-  Institutional
-  Municipal
-  Floodplain



 **CLICK FOR ONLINE RESOURCES**

**Belvidere Community Unit School
District 100 Strategic Plan**

Source: Belvidere CUSD 100

[https://www.district100.com/
about-d100/strategicplan](https://www.district100.com/about-d100/strategicplan)

**North Boone Community Unit School
District 200 Strategic Plan**

Source: North Boone CUSD 200

[https://www.nbcusd.org/district/
strategic-plan/](https://www.nbcusd.org/district/strategic-plan/)

**Boone County Health Department
Strategic Plans and Resources**

Source: Boone County Health Department

[https://www.boonecountymissouri.gov/
government/departments/health-
department/data.php](https://www.boonecountymissouri.gov/government/departments/health-department/data.php)

BOONE COUNTY PLAN

PLAN ELEMENT 3

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



GOAL: Boone County will advance initiatives that sustain the water supply, protect the Kishwaukee River, preserve valuable soils, protect sensitive environmental features, judiciously use natural resources, and implement sustainability practices that ensure current and future generations can experience and benefit from the natural environment.

OBJECTIVES:

#	OBJECTIVE	PRIORITY
3.1	Develop a sustainable water supply plan	HIGH ●
3.2	Leverage state and regional policies to support county groundwater protection efforts.	HIGH ●
3.3	Coordinate with Boone County Conservation District to continue conserving open space and protecting environmentally sensitive elements like wetlands, grasslands, savannas, and woodlands.	HIGH ●
3.4	Protect flood-prone and environmentally sensitive areas.	HIGH ●
3.5	Coordinate the future sustainable water supply plan with broader sustainability practices.	MEDIUM ●
3.6	Encourage sustainable practices by property owners and tenants.	MEDIUM ●
3.7	Protect fertile soil for continued agricultural use.	MEDIUM ●
3.8	Review and, when necessary, develop new policies for renewable energy infrastructure.	LOWER ●
3.9	Effectively reduce and manage waste to protect human and environmental health.	LOWER ●



PLAN ELEMENT 3: **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

RIPARIAN AREAS

The Kishwaukee River is the most prominent riparian area in Boone County, primarily running through the southern half of the county. As a primary tributary into the Rock River, the Kishwaukee River offers a range of habitats for plants and animals and benefits to humans.

Boone County also has multiple creeks:

- Piskasaw Creek
- Spring Creek
- Coon Creek
- Mosquito Creek
- Geryune Creek
- Beaver Creek
- North Kinnikinnick Creek
- Trimble Run

Segments of the Kishwaukee River and Piskasaw Creek are recognized as “unique aquatic resources” by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) due to their extensive biodiversity and environmental benefits.

These riparian areas provide economic, recreational, and intrinsic value to Boone County and region. As an abundant source of clean water, protection of riparian areas is necessary to sustain multi-generational crop farms, manufacturing and food processing industries, and use by county residents, plants, and animals.



The Kishwaukee River and local creeks are shown on the Environmental and Natural Resources Map in Figure 5.10.

WATERSHEDS

Most of Boone County is covered by the Kishwaukee River Watershed, while the northwestern section of the county is covered by the Upper Rock River Watershed. The entire Kishwaukee River Watershed is designated as both a Conservation Opportunity Area and an Illinois Resource Rich Area by IDNR, meaning the watershed supports various threatened and endangered plant and animal species.

OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES

In addition to the Kishwaukee River, Boone County has other natural resources as described below.

Wetlands

As defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), a wetland is “an area where water covers the soil or is present at or near the surface for varying periods of time during the year, including the growing season.” Along with prairies and woodlands, wetlands are among the 4,000+ acres of open space managed by the Boone County Conservation District. While Boone County Conservation District manages many of the wetlands, they do not have regulatory authority regarding wetland protection; such authority is typically held by state and federal agencies. Wetlands are located throughout the county, as shown on the Environmental and Natural Resources Map in Figure 5.10.

The protection and mitigation of wetlands is typically coordinated by the Boone County Conservation District, along with the Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District, two state agencies (Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency), and three federal agencies (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and U.S. Department of Agriculture/ Natural Resources Conservation Service).

Floodplain

The 100-year floodplain, which indicates a 1% annual chance of a flood event as defined by FEMA, primarily covers the Kishwaukee River and the various creeks that wind through Boone County. About 8% of the county’s land is covered by floodplain. The Boone County UDO outlines zoning regulations that deter new development within the floodplain, per the Floodplain Overlay (FPO) District. The floodplain is shown on the Environmental and Natural Resources Map in Figure 5.10.

Trees

Tree coverage in Boone County is most prominent along the Kishwaukee River, along other creeks, and within conservation areas, parks, prairies, nature preserves, and other open spaces. Trees play myriad roles in environmental sustainability:

- **Shade relief** to reduce heat island effects in areas with extensive use of impervious surfaces like concrete and pavement.
- **Natural habitats** to provide natural homes to local animals and plant life to maintain the ecosystem.
- **Water conservation** to regulate natural water cycles, prevent soil erosion, improve water quality, and aid in stormwater management. In particular, native trees, especially oak species, support groundwater infiltration by intercepting and slowing precipitation in the canopy. Native oaks create a multidimensional leaf litter and organic matter on the soil surface. These characteristics in conjunction with root systems develop soil structures such as root channels and other macropores that enhance water infiltration into the soil and deeper horizons.
- **Air purification** to filter particulate matter and other pollutants to help reduce air pollution.

Protection of tree coverage across Boone County is crucial to maintain these natural functions. This includes adding more trees wherever possible, even when older or unhealthy trees require removal and replacement.



PLAN ELEMENT 3: **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Prairies

Almost all Boone County Conservation District sites include either a wet or dry prairie as part of the habitat management area. Two prairies of note include:

- **Flora Prairie** is part of a 10-acre nature preserve that the Conservation District co-manages with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. Located in the southwestern section of the county, Flora Prairie is a remnant dolomite prairie and oak savanna with unique ecology.
- **Green Giant Prairie** is a 13-acre prairie preserve located along the Kishwaukee River north of Belvidere. The prairie was gifted to the Conservation District by the Green Giant Company.

Prairie restoration and preservation should continue as a means to continue protecting natural resources, particularly native plant life and animal habitats.

SUSTAINABLE WATER SUPPLY

Since surface and ground water are connected, it is important to plan and manage a sustainable water supply, including protection of water resources, water quality, and natural water systems.

Water Planning Groups

Boone County Regional Stormwater Management Committee consolidates and establishes minimum stormwater management practices, particularly through the development and adoption of the Boone County Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan, as described on the next page. Committee membership includes three County Board members and three municipal representatives.

Northern IL Regional Groundwater Protection Planning Committee (NRGPPC) is another group leading water planning efforts in the region, including groundwater protection in Boone County. One of the primary focus areas of the NRGPPC is education

of youth around the region on the importance of groundwater recharge to the vitality of the area.

NRGPPC has made progress in their areas of focus over the past few years. In addition, NRGPPC applies for water planning grants to secure funds to be used for a study of the current quality of the region's groundwater to establish a baseline for potential contaminants. This led to funding for a 3D geological mapping and ground water modeling study, as described below.

3D Geological Mapping and Ground Water Modeling Study

Boone County is undertaking a two-year 3D geological mapping and ground water modeling study to better understand water issues and develop strategies for a more sustainable water supply. The study will be conducted by the Illinois State Geological Survey, with the study identifying sources of Boone County's water supply and how it is replenished. The last mapping study was conducted in the 1980s.

SUSTAINABLE WATER SUPPLY PLAN

A Sustainable Water Supply Plan will be a standalone planning document that will be completed independent of the Comprehensive Plan. One current action that will also help inform the Sustainable Water Supply Plan is the two-year 3D geological mapping and ground water modeling study described on this page.

Overall, the people of Boone County believe that it is imperative to protect the county's water supply to ensure the quantity and quality of water is preserved for future generations to use and enjoy. In addition, multiple local, county, and state environmental planning agencies have taken critical steps over the past several years to proactively address concerns over the protection and conservation of invaluable water resources.

WATER PLANNING GROUPS



Boone County Regional Stormwater Management Committee



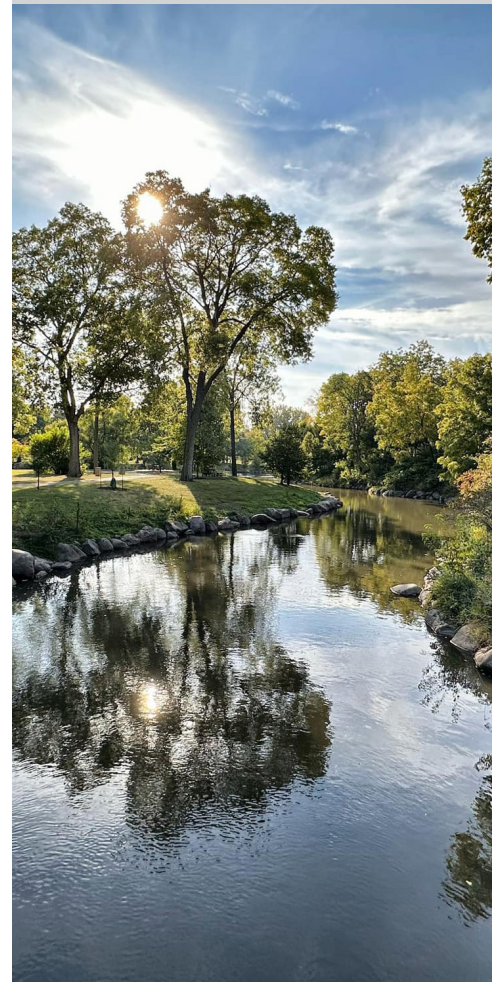
https://www.boonecountyil.gov/government/departments/planning_department/boone_county_regional_stormwater_management_planning_committee.php



Northern IL Regional Groundwater Protection Planning Committee (NRGPPC)



<https://www.facebook.com/people/Northern-IL-Regional-Groundwater-Protection-Planning-Committee/100064573694592/>



PLAN ELEMENT 3: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The study would also assess the quantity of water in the region and the unsustainable depilation practices both in and around the Boone County. By using local data to build a computerized interactive 3D model, the modeling approach would help planners and elected officials make more informed decisions regarding water planning in Boone County.

Regional Water Plans

The following regional water resource plans and studies are influential to planning for a sustainable water supply in Boone County:

- **Regional Greenways Plan:** This plan was prepared by the Region 1 Planning Council in 2021 covering Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties. Municipal and county officials utilize the Regional Greenways Plan to identify critical habitat areas and offer public officials a tool for reviewing proposed land development and acquiring grants.
- **Boone County Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan:** The Boone County Regional Stormwater Management Committee created a technical subcommittee to prepare this plan as a means to consolidate stormwater regulations through stormwater programs, regulatory standards, and watershed planning.
- **McHenry County Water Resources Action Plan:** This plan evaluated the water resources of McHenry County, upstream from many of the water resources of Boone County. The main takeaway for Boone County was that the 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 McHenry County’s current water practices.
- **Winnebago County Natural Resources Inventory and Kishwaukee River Corridor Green Infrastructure Plan:** These two plans identify and analyze 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.

- **Strategic Plan for Habitat Conservation and Restoration in the Kishwaukee River Watershed:** This plan comprehensively addresses the threats to the health of the river and watershed, especially rapid urban growth and construction.

Sensitive Aquifer Recharge Areas

As shown in Figure 5.9, a majority of Boone County is covered by sensitive aquifer recharge areas (SARAs), which are pieces of land that have the potential to experience decreased water quality if such land is developed. From a solely water protection perspective, development should be restricted on any area designated as a SARA. This is not always practical in any area or region that is planning for future growth and development. However, certain steps can be taken to maximize the protection of all environmentally sensitive areas, whether they are designated as SARAs, located within floodplains, or characterized by other features like creeks, wetlands, and wooded areas.

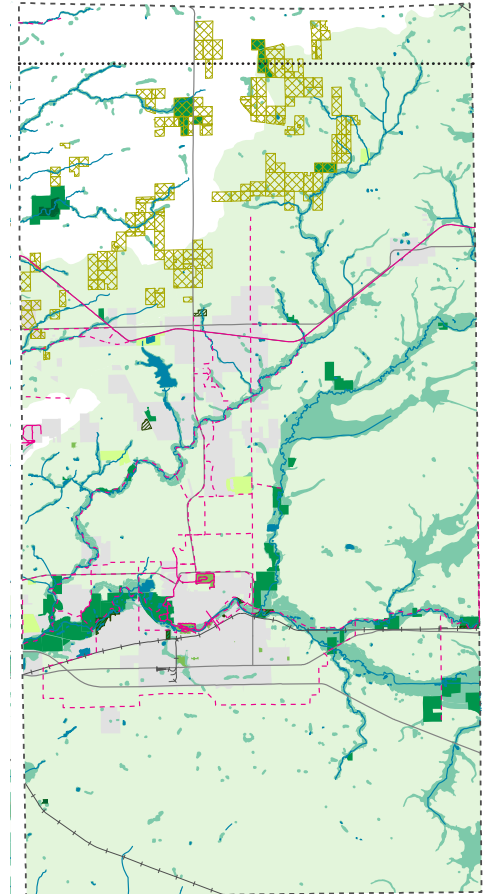
From the perspective of land use planning for Boone County, the map in Figure 5.9 overlays the SARAs onto the Future Land Use Plan Map to illustrate how future land use designations within unincorporated areas relate to SARAs across the county. Since a majority of unincorporated areas will continue to maintain their current agricultural or open space designations, these areas clearly protect SARAs, which will collectively help to protect Boone County’s long-term water supply.

While unincorporated land that show the potential for future land use development will certainly reduce the efficacy of the SARAs on those pieces of land, the water supply protection strategies outlined in this Comprehensive Plan will play a crucial role in county-wide water protection and lay the groundwork for a sustainable water supply plan for Boone County.

 **CLICK HERE FOR ONLINE RESOURCES**

<https://r1planning.org/planning/greenways-plan/>

The **2021 Regional Greenways Plan** includes a **Greenway Network Map for Boone County**, as shown below. Greenway elements like open spaces, riparian areas, and other natural resources are described throughout the Comprehensive Plan. These elements help protect the local water supply.



LEGEND

County Boundary	Publicly Protected Lands
Municipalities	Municipal Parks
	Preserves & State Parks
	Publicly Owned Lands
Infrastructure	Privately Protected Lands
Existing Paths & Trails	Agri. Preservation Areas
Future Paths & Trails	Golf Courses
On-Street Bikeways	Privately Owned Lands
Railroads	
Major Highways	Critical and Sensitive Areas
	Bodies of Water
	Illinois Natural Area Inventory
	Priority Protection Areas
	Conservation Opportunity Areas



PLAN ELEMENT 3: **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

HAZARD MITIGATION AND CLIMATE RESILIENCY

Hazard mitigation encompasses any sustained action intended to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to human life and property by lessening the impact from naturally occurring disasters. Climate resiliency planning is the ability to adapt to changing conditions, withstand the impacts of those changes, and quickly recover from disruption due to complex climate and environmental challenges.

Hazard mitigation and climate resiliency is most effective when guided by the implementation of a comprehensive long-term mitigation plan. Local governments engage in hazard mitigation planning to identify risks and vulnerabilities associated with natural disasters and the impacts of climate change. In response, they develop long-term strategies to protect people and property from future events. A mitigation plan is crucial to breaking the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. Development of a hazard mitigation plan enables local governments to:

- Increase education and awareness around threats, hazards, and vulnerabilities.
- Reduce risks by building partnerships between government, organizations, businesses, and the public.
- Identify long-term, broadly-supported strategies to reduce risk.
- 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.
- Plan for more severe or intense storms using interventions like storm shelters, buffered floodplains, etc.

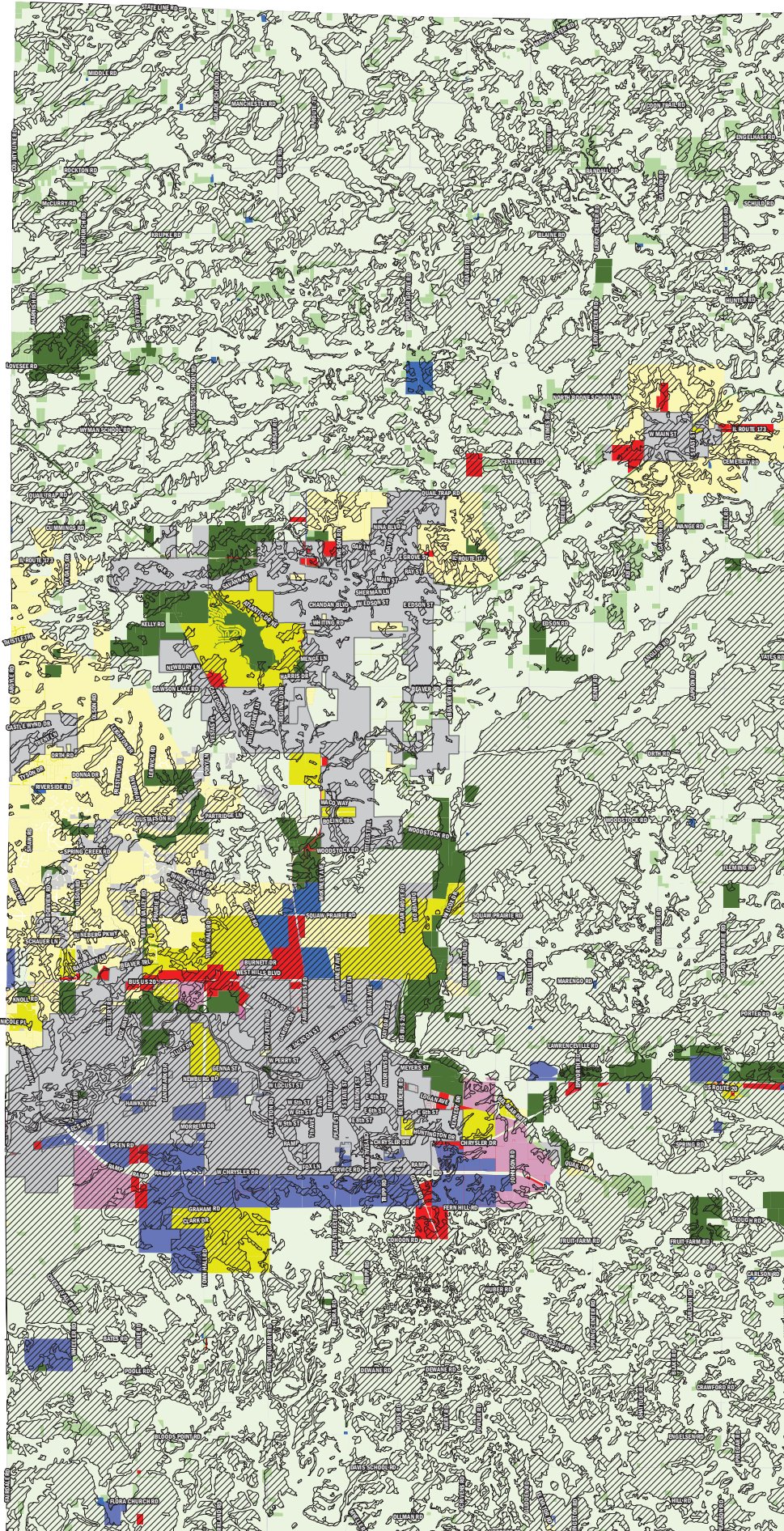
Boone County does not currently have a county-wide hazard mitigation or climate resiliency plan. However, it does have a variety of different plans and groups focused on working together to address hazard mitigation and resiliency planning. The Boone County Emergency Management Agency (EMA), the Boone 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.



FIGURE 5.9
**SENSITIVE AQUIFER RECHARGE
AREAS (SARs) MAP**

LEGEND

- Agricultural
- Farmsteads
- Single Family Residential Rural
- Single Family Residential Exurban
- Open Space
- Institutional
- Commercial
- Business Flex
- Industrial
- Municipal
- Water Bodies
- Sensitive Aquifer Recharge Areas (SARs)



PLAN ELEMENT 3: **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Energy generation and consumption that are environmentally responsible should be considered as Boone County seeks to grow and develop in a sustainable manner. While renewable energy approaches can be incorporated at the larger county scale, they also enable individual property owners to play a stewardship role regarding energy conservation and upholding other sustainable practices.

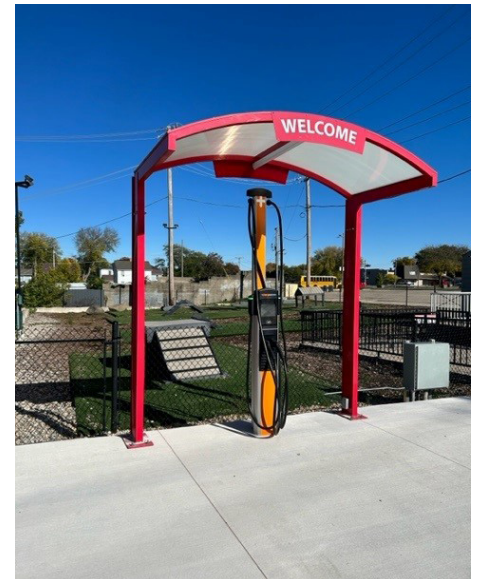
State Legislation

The State of Illinois signed the Wind and Solar Facility Resident Protection Act (Public Act 102-1123) into law in 2023. The legislation refines the ability of county governments to establish regulations for new commercial wind and solar energy facilities, particularly ensuring counties have the authority and tools to protect residents, farmland, and surrounding environments as development of renewable energy infrastructure continues to expand across Illinois.

Wind and Solar Energy

The Boone County UDO provides zoning regulations that provide guidance to balance a commitment to renewable energy with the protection of the county's agricultural land and rural landscape. UDO regulations include mitigation of the visual impact of renewable energy facilities on adjacent properties, including updated screening regulations to ensure landscaping is planted to conceal the appearance of solar farms.

Solar farms also offer the opportunity to provide functions beyond clean electric energy generation. One particular opportunity is called agrovoltaics that combines agricultural production and ecological benefits by planting native plant communities with these systems. Agrovoltaics may also offer enhanced groundwater infiltration while providing landowners with new economic opportunities.



Electric Vehicles

Electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and related infrastructure are increasingly becoming significant elements to consider not only as part of the transportation network but also a means to boost economic development (i.e., EV drivers visit local businesses as they wait for their vehicle to charge). The UDO includes standards that support the construction of EV charging stations in appropriate locations.

Local Energy Saving Measures

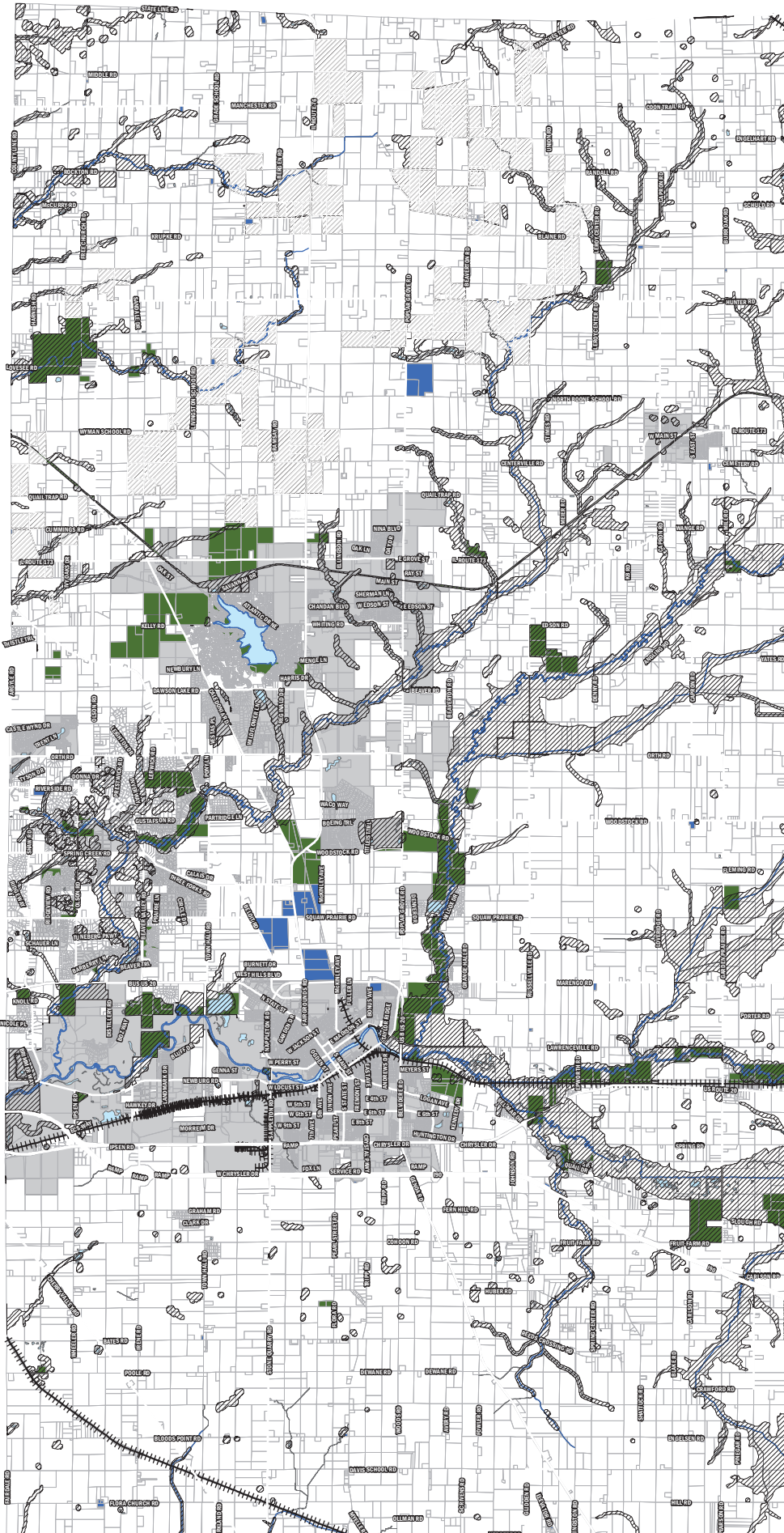
The shift towards communities and individuals taking energy conservation measures is driven not only by cost savings but also a concerted effort to decrease the carbon footprint at home, at work, and broadly in the community and region. Boone County residents and businesses continue to make efforts that lower the energy consumption of their households and structures, particularly by employing alternative energy sources, seeking new technologies, improving energy efficiency, monitoring usage, and educating each other on their energy conservation practices. Schools and other civic organizations also embrace these energy saving measures.



FIGURE 5.10
**ENVIRONMENTAL AND
NATURAL RESOURCES MAP**

LEGEND

-  Open Space
-  Institutional
-  Municipal
-  Floodplain
-  Water Bodies



 [CLICK FOR ONLINE RESOURCES](#)

**Boone County Conservation District
Master Plan**

Source: Boone County Conservation District

<https://www.bccdil.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/BCCD-Master-Plan.pdf>

**Region 1 Planning Council Integrated
Water Resource Management**

Source: Region 1 Planning Council

<https://r1planning.org/planning/water/>

BOONE COUNTY PLAN

PLAN ELEMENT 4

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



GOAL: Boone County will support economic growth by protecting productive farmland, preserving natural resources, supporting existing business expansion, attracting new businesses, and promoting regional development.

OBJECTIVES:

#	OBJECTIVE	PRIORITY
4.1	Locate commercial and industrial growth areas within key transportation corridors.	HIGH ●
4.2	Retain and expand employment opportunities and investment.	HIGH ●
4.3	Increase workforce education and skill levels.	HIGH ●
4.4	Encourage a diversified Boone County economy that compliments a thriving region.	HIGH ●
4.5	Use a variety of incentives to grow economic opportunities.	MEDIUM ●
4.6	Continue advancing agritourism opportunities and small rural businesses.	MEDIUM ●
4.7	Consider existing or potential future public transit availability when planning for major employment centers.	LOWER ●
4.8	Support opportunities for home-based businesses.	LOWER ●



PLAN ELEMENT 4: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

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. Outside spending allows a region’s businesses and residents to then buy local products and services, causing growth in retail, entertainment, and service options.

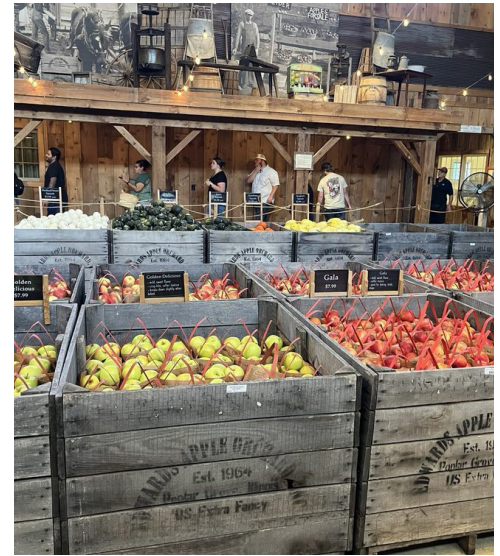
Boone County is a job center for the region’s manufacturing base and also a residential option for workers employed in the Rockford and Chicago metro areas. The county is home to Stellantis, which is one of the largest businesses in

Northern Illinois outside of the Chicago region. 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 is important for Boone County to continuously pursue diversifying its economy in order to become less reliant on a single industry.

Economic development in Boone County is a collective effort guided 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 Districts 100 and 200, to name a few. The strong partnerships and collaboration between these groups foster workforce development, business retention and attraction efforts, development and

redevelopment projects, promotion of community assets, and utilization of a coordinated and unified economic strategy countywide.



ECONOMIC INDICATORS

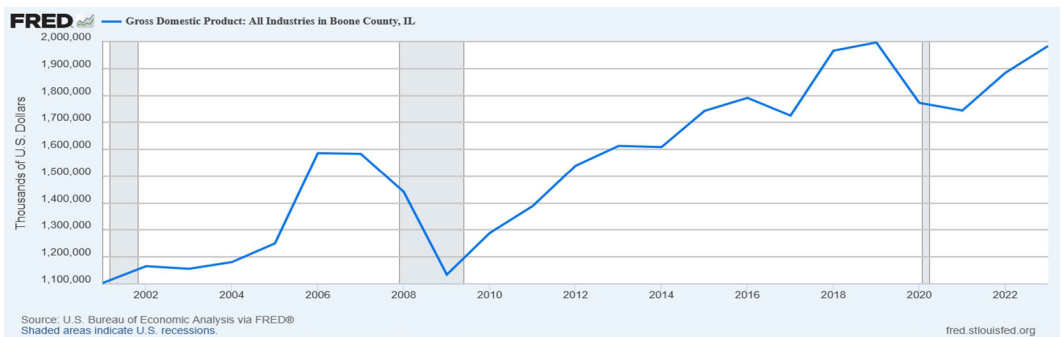
Economic indicators can show how the county is growing and what the needs of employers and workers may be. These factors can then be considered so the county is prepared to meet the needs of businesses and industry.

Economic Growth

Boone County’s economy has trended up since the Great Recession of 2008. After a pandemic related dip, the county has regained lost growth, as shown in Figure 5.11.

FIGURE 5.11
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT: ALL INDUSTRIES IN BOONE COUNTY

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis via FRED



PLAN ELEMENT 4: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Employer Base

The county’s employers are diverse as shown in Figure 5.12. The Northern Illinois Region CEDS lists targeted industry clusters as:

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

Agricultural Sector

While agriculture is not a large employer within Boone County, it is an important element of the economy. Figure 5.13 presents key agriculture statistics for Boone County based on the last U.S. Census of Agriculture conducted in 2022. The data show growth in the value of agricultural production and net cash farm income even while farm-related income declined and expenses increased.

Employment Base

While the county’s overall GDP has grown, some sectors have experienced growth and other declined in terms of jobs, as shown in Figure 5.14.

FIGURE 5.12
EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Source: ESRI, 2023-10-17, Growth Dimensions

NAICS Category	Number Employed	NAICS Category	Number Employed
Agriculture/Forestry/Fish/Hunt	77	Professional/Scientific/Tech Service	494
Mining	18	Legal Services	58
Utilities	22	Mgmt of Comp/Enterprises	0
Construction	2,277	Admin/Support/Waste Mgmt	333
Manufacturing	5,850	Educational Services	1,519
Wholesale Trade	1,363	HealthCare/Social Assist	1,093
Retail Trade	1,260	Arts/Entertainment/Rec	1,578
Transportation/Warehouse	1,222	Accommodation/Food Services	988
Information	107	Other Service excl Pub Admin	752
Finance & Insurance	200	Auto Repair/Maintenance	199
Real Estate/Rent/Leasing	240	Public Administration Emp	688

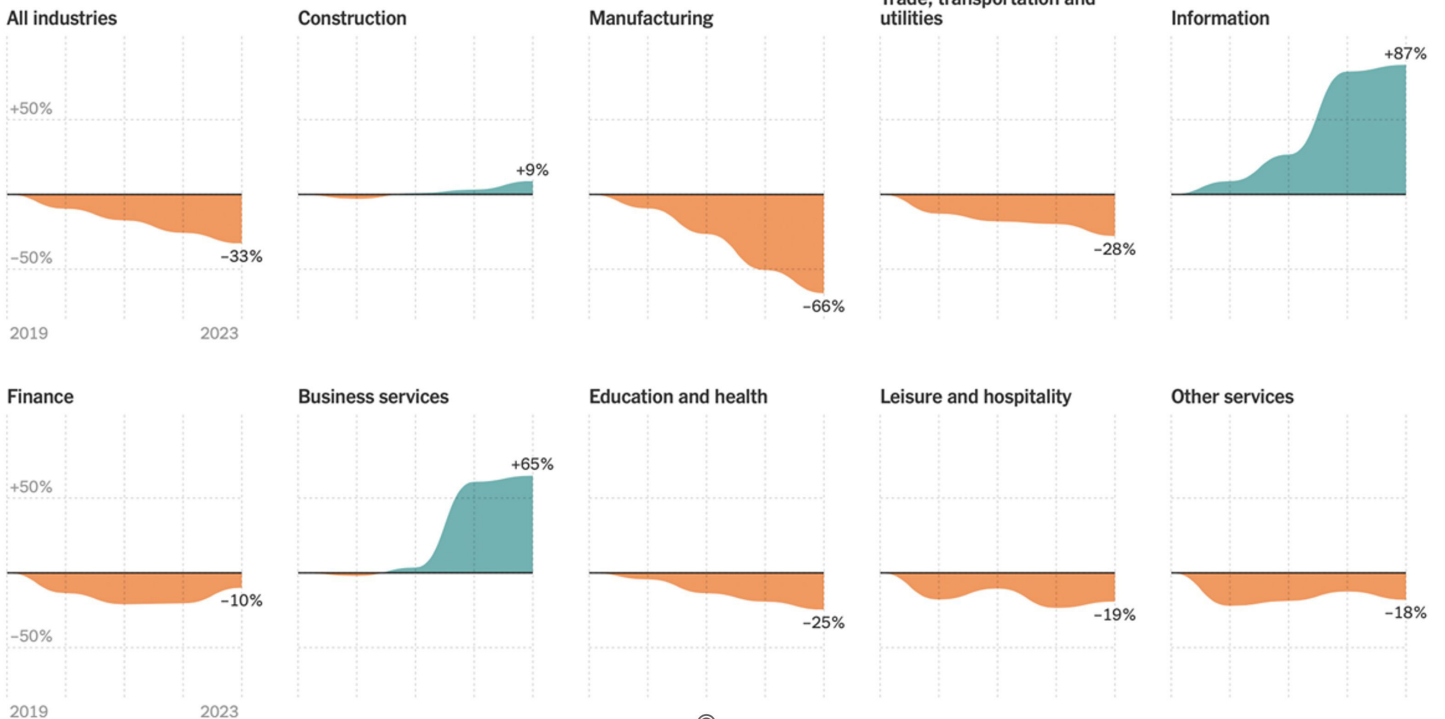
FIGURE 5.13
COUNTY AGRICULTURE PROFILE

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture County Profile 2022

Category	2022	% Change 2017-2022
Number of farms	416	-9%
Land in farms (acres)	124,244	+9%
Average size of farm (acres)	299	+20%
Market value of products sold	145,765,000	+86%
Government payments	634,000	-81%
Farm-related income	6,037,000	-26%
Total farm production expenses	103,838,000	+37%
Net cash farm income	48,599,000	+251%

FIGURE 5.14
QUARTERLY CENSUS OF EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics



PLAN ELEMENT 4: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Tourism

Tourism, particularly related to agriculture and outdoor recreation, is a sector with growth potential. The Boone County Fair is a major draw, as shown in Figure 5.15. Attendance has been steadily increasing since 2021, with 2024 attendance reaching a record high of 242,072 visitors. In addition, over ten farms located in the county participate in agritourism.

Salary Levels

Salary levels, when combined with trends in employment categories, are helpful in projecting housing price ranges that may be successful in the market area. Advertised salaries in Boone County for open positions are shown in Figure 5.16. Over half of all job postings have an advertised salary of under \$45,000. Advertised salaries are widely divided with the next largest category at \$70,000. There are few jobs advertised between \$45,000 and \$70,000.

Commuting

While 10,428 workers commute into Boone County, 15,132 residents commute out for work and 3,667 workers both live and work in the county (see Figure 5.17), making Boone County a net exporter of workers. Remote workers are an opportunity to increase the number of people both living and working in the county.

FIGURE 5.15
BOONE COUNTY FAIR ATTENDANCE

Source: Boone County Fair

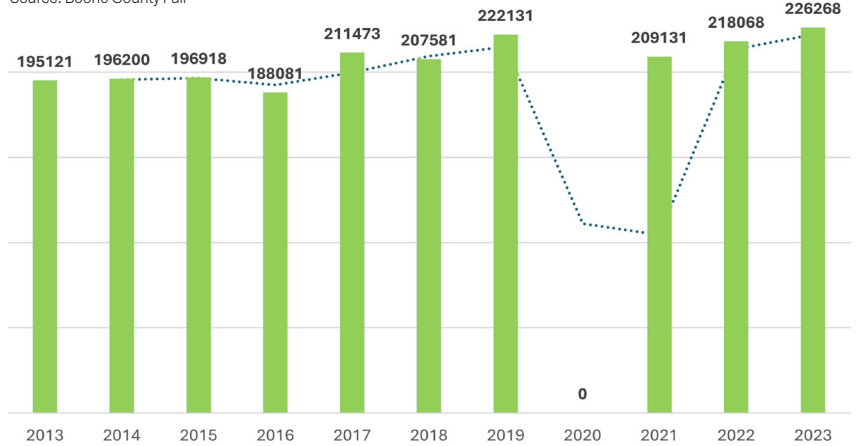


FIGURE 5.16
ADVERTISE SALARIES BY UNIQUE JOB POSTING

Source: Lightcast, 2023

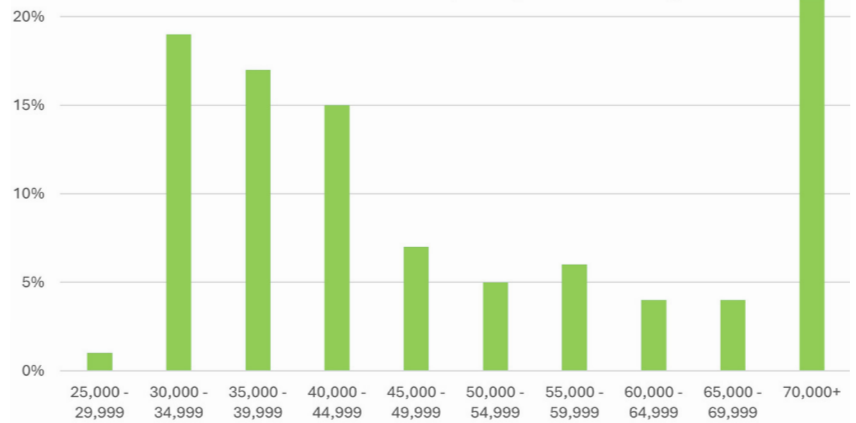
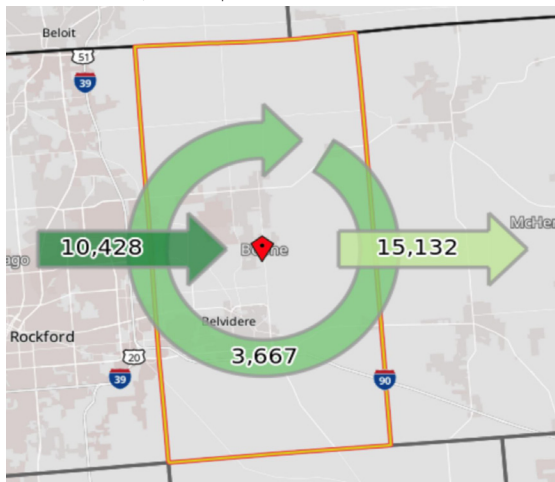


FIGURE 5.17
COMMUTING IN AND OUT OF BOONE COUNTY

Source: U.S. Census, On The Map



PLAN ELEMENT 4: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Boone County Enterprise and Opportunity Zones

Boone County has designated Enterprise and Opportunity Zones, creating incentives for development and investment in specific areas (see Figure 5.18). Growth Dimensions, the economic development organization that serves Boone County, provides easily accessible information on both zones on it's website (<https://www.growthdimensions.org>).

Priority Commercial and Industrial Growth Areas

The Land Use and Preservation section of this chapter discusses the use of Priority Growth Areas for residential, commercial, and industrial development as a means to protect agricultural land and conserve open space and natural resources. These Priority Growth Areas also help to concentrate residential, commercial, and industrial development in parts of Boone County that are most practical in terms of access to transportation and utilities infrastructure. The Commercial and Industrial Priority Growth Areas are shown on the Commercial and Industrial Areas Map in Figure 5.19.

FIGURE 5.18
ENTERPRISE AND OPPORTUNITY ZONES IN BOONE COUNTY

Source: Boone County

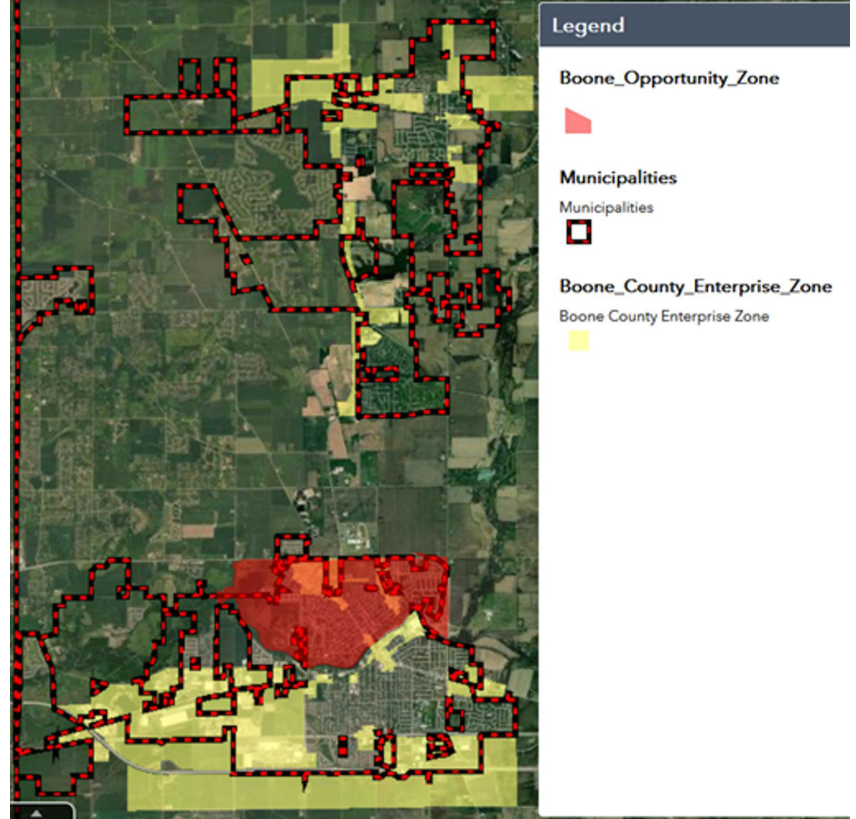


FIGURE 5.19
COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL AREAS MAP

LEGEND

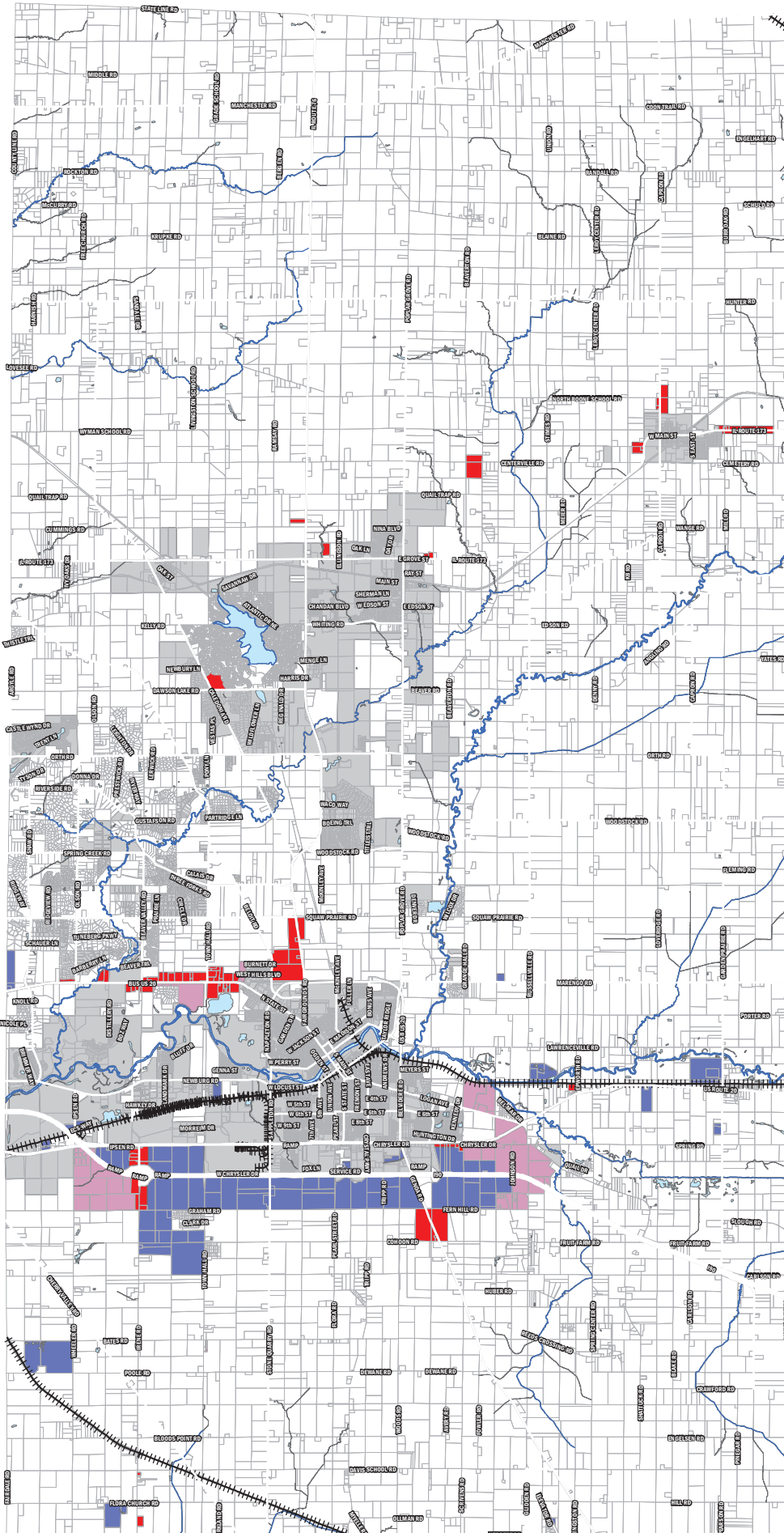
- Commercial
- Business Flex
- Industrial
- Municipal

Commercial Priority Growth Areas

Commercial growth is prioritized along major roadway corridors, including IL Route 173 in Poplar Grove and Capron, U.S. Business 20 north of Belvidere, and near I-90 interchanges south of Belvidere. In some cases like Poplar Grove and Capron, this helps to fill the need to boost economic development in smaller towns. In other cases like around Belvidere, this further builds out the capacity for businesses and services along the county's two most prominent corridors, one of which also coincides with the industrial priority growth area (see below).

Industrial Priority Growth Area

Industrial growth is prioritized along the I-90 corridor south of Belvidere to build upon existing industrial sites, tie into municipal utilities infrastructure, and have close access to the interstate for regional delivery and transport. As noted above, one of the commercial priority growth areas overlaps with the industrial priority growth area.



BOONE COUNTY PLAN

PLAN ELEMENT 5
HOUSING



GOAL: Boone County will encourage housing stock that protects the local rural heritage, supports county and municipal planning for growth, enables people to age in place, and meets the different needs, incomes, and life stages of all residents.

OBJECTIVES:

#	OBJECTIVE	PRIORITY
5.1	Promote build out of existing subdivisions with vacant lots.	HIGH ●
5.2	Work with municipalities to strategically locate and develop sewer and water to support housing needs while meeting sustainability goals.	HIGH ●
5.3	Locate new unplatted subdivisions strategically.	MEDIUM ●
5.4	Encourage housing options and programs for residents in need of affordable housing.	MEDIUM ●
5.5	Strive for a balance between housing demand and supply.	MEDIUM ●
5.6	Prepare for and accommodate long-term population changes affecting housing needs.	MEDIUM ●
5.7	Work with major employers to explore potential workforce housing.	LOWER ●
5.8	Support innovative housing that facilitates home based businesses, multigenerational living, and new opportunities to address housing needs.	LOWER ●



PLAN ELEMENT 5: HOUSING

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 element in this plan. Housing influences traffic patterns, walkability, bikeability, distribution of utilities and infrastructure, stormwater management, urbanization, agricultural preservation, and open space conservation. From an economy perspective, housing drives commercial growth, tax base distribution, available jobs, commuting, the construction industry, institutional demand, and overall population growth.

This section explores Boone County's existing housing stock, housing affordability, and future residential needs.

HOUSING HISTORY

Historically, Boone County's housing stock was predominantly comprised of small single-family farmsteads scattered throughout unincorporated agricultural areas, along with 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 Belvidere, while the unincorporated areas of the county are still mostly small single-family farmsteads.

Beyond Housing on Small Lots

However, new forms of residential development have emerged over the past 30+ 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, it has led to owner-occupied, single-family homes being the principal type of residential development in Boone County.

Housing Trends

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.

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 several overarching issues in its wake:

- Increased automobile dependency
- A decentralized tax base
- Reliance on private well and septic
- 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.

Generational Impacts on Housing

The housing market is being influenced by five generational groups. Each of these groups presents different housing challenges, as discussed below.

- **Silent Generation:** The oldest generation, often called the Silent Generation, was born 1928-1945. With increasing longevity, many members of this group are still an important part of the housing market. They are likely to be increasingly interested in housing that offers some living assistance, whether this is a designated senior housing location or in multigenerational homes where younger family members can provide some care. The shortage of formal senior housing from rental apartments to nursing beds may keep this group in their homes past the time that the homes meet their needs, resulting in a poor quality of life and deteriorating housing conditions.

- **Baby Boomers:** Baby Boomers (born 1946-1965) are currently active retirees or considering leaving the workforce in the foreseeable future. This group owns a large portion of existing homes. While many Boomers may be interested in retirement housing with lower maintenance or amenities, others plan to stay in their homes as long as they are able. This group, along with members of the Silent Generation still living in single family homes, is a factor in the small inventory of houses available for younger households to acquire.

- **Generation X:** Generation X (born 1966-1980) is a smaller generation often now raising families or empty nesters. This group achieved home ownership at a time when the market was more open to first time buyers. However, some households such as single parents and individuals living alone show interest in lower density multifamily housing options, whether to rent or buy.

- **Millennials:** Millennials (born 1980-1996) upon reaching adulthood showed a preference for multifamily living, particularly in urban areas. As this group has moved into household formation, with or without children, they desire to buy homes. These households are struggling to buy first homes due to low inventory of homes for sale, high mortgage interest rates, and low new home construction, compounded by the large size of this age group. As a result, many have remained renters, helping to create a tight rental market.

- **Generation Z:** The older members of Generation Z (born 1997-2012) are now in their 20's and looking for housing. Most are in the rental market, further tightening the supply and resulting in higher rents. The oldest members of this group are approaching age 30 and as they age, they will join the Millennials searching for a home to purchase.

As shown in Figure 2.4 on page 6, Boone County's population is nearly evenly divided amongst the above generational groups. Therefore, a varied approach encouraging different types of development and turnover of existing housing is needed to address needs.



PLAN ELEMENT 5: **HOUSING**

HOUSING STOCK

Boone County’s housing supply affects resident quality of life, the available workforce, the ability to attract new employers and residents, and the property tax base. A description of the housing supply follows.

Housing Tenure and Type

Most homes in Boone County have historically been owner occupied and that trend has accelerated in recent years, as shown in Figure 5.20, where 84% of housing is owner occupied. This is considerably higher than the statewide portion of 67%.

When most housing is owner occupied, it is also likely to consist mostly of single-family homes. This is true for Boone County where 83% of housing units are single-family, representing nearly all the 84% of owner occupied units as shown in Figure 5.21. Most multifamily units are in small buildings with less than 20 units (83%), making larger rental developments rare in the county.

As shown in Figure 5.22, Boone County’s housing stock is aging, with over one-third (1/3) more than 50 years old. Approximately one-quarter (1/4) are less than 25 years old, mostly built 2000-2009.

Overall, the existing housing supply offers few options for renters or for any household looking for something other than a single family house. Households seeking a newer single family house also have a small selection from which to choose.

Market Conditions

Boone County is part of the Rockford regional market which includes Boone, Winnebago, and Ogle Counties. The region has seen an increase in number of sales, sales prices, and units available for purchase, as summarized in Figure 5.23. However, the Boone County market may be diverging from the region, with declining sales in May 2025 over May 2024 as prices continue to rise, mortgage interest rates remain high, and inventory remains low.

FIGURE 5.20
OWNER VS RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2022

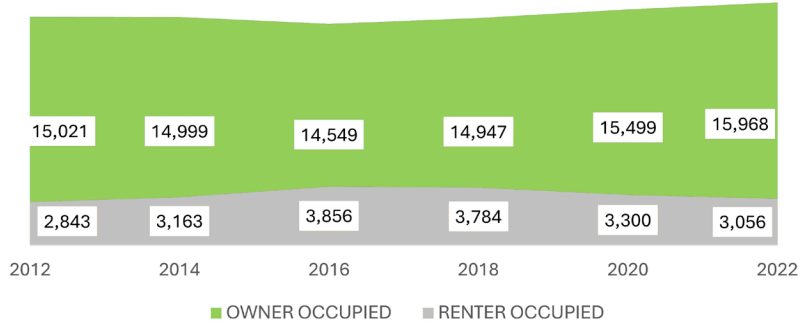


FIGURE 5.21
HOUSING BY TYPE

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2022

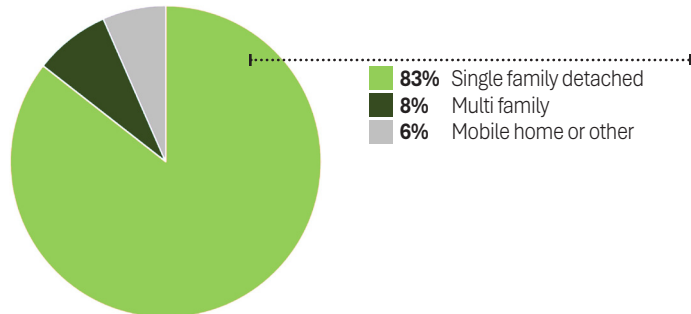


FIGURE 5.22
HOUSING BY TYPE

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2022

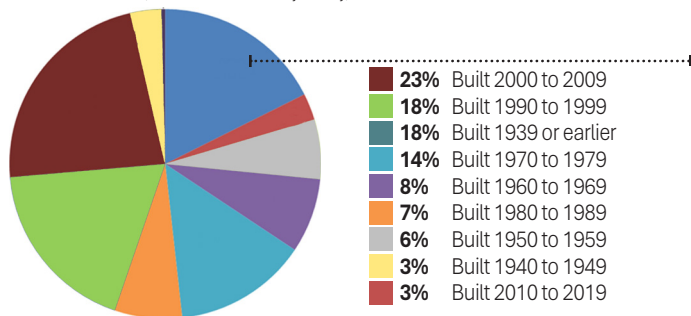


FIGURE 5.23
ROCKFORD REGION RESIDENTIAL MARKET DATA

Source: Northwest Illinois Alliance of Realtors, April 2025

Statistics	April 2024	April 2025	Difference
Residential Properties Sold	290	311	7.2%
3-Month Rolling Average Selling Price	\$204,500	\$219,379	7.3%
New Listings	344	363	5.5%
Monthly Inventory	175	141	-19.4%
Sales Pending	387	267	-31.0%
Absorption Rate (months)	0.54	0.43	-20.4%
Distress Properties (% of total sales)	2.00%	1.00%	-
Interest Rates (30-year fixed)	6.99%	6.73%	-3.7%



PLAN ELEMENT 5: HOUSING

GROWING THE HOUSING SUPPLY

As provided earlier in this section, available data and input from real estate professionals indicate that housing options in Boone County are not meeting demand. A combination of building new housing and turning over existing housing is needed to reach a balance of supply and demand.

New housing construction could help alleviate this shortage and there are potential sites within Boone County’s unincorporated areas appropriate for housing at gentle density levels, such as small scale multifamily buildings or cluster designs. However, homes located in unincorporated areas rely on private well and septic systems for water and sewer utilities as the county is not well equipped to provide public water and sewer. This reliance on small scale private systems limits the ability to build anything other than single family homes on relatively large lots.

This obstacle to residential development could be surmounted if the county and municipalities work together through strategic annexation. Boone County can identify potential sites currently located in unincorporated areas and encourage annexation into an adjacent municipality. Incentives and assistance provided by the County might make this annexation more attractive.

To be considered is that recent municipal planning indicates a concerted effort to maintain clear boundaries between communities and retain open space. Discussions between county and municipal officials may hasten working agreements on planning for new housing construction that could include gentle density concepts while respecting municipal desires for open space retention in critical areas. The availability of public

water and sewer may play a crucial role in attracting home builders and expanding Boone County’s housing options.

Recycling housing is another way that homes become available for new households. Ideally, turning over existing housing happens naturally as older households sell their homes to younger buyers. However, natural turnover has slowed in recent years due to the high cost of borrowing for a mortgage, high sales prices due to low supply, and the scarcity of choices for older households looking for smaller, lower maintenance options. Each of these issues must be addressed, but the one the county is perhaps best positioned to address is providing more options for older households looking to sell their current homes.

The county should encourage the development of more options for older households such as those indicated in the County’s UDO, including but not limited to:

- Accessory dwelling units
- Multifamily rental apartments
- Townhouses
- Smaller low maintenance single family homes
- Homes designed for multigenerational households



Once older households have these options, they should be assisted as necessary to improve their current homes to attract to younger buyers. This might include technical assistance for repairs, referrals for professional tradespeople, and information on funding sources for home improvements. Likewise, potential younger buyers should be made aware of similar options for improving older homes they may purchase. By encouraging turnover of existing housing, older residents will be able to age comfortably and stay in the county if they wish, and younger residents will find the homes they need to settle in Boone County.

The Residential Priority Growth Areas shown on the Residential Areas Map in Figure 5.24 represent sections within unincorporated areas where the county can focus additions to the housing supply.



A combination of building new housing and turning over existing housing is needed to reach a balance of supply and demand.



PLAN ELEMENT 5: **HOUSING**

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Boone County has traditionally been a very affordable area to live, especially in terms of housing costs. While the Rockford region and Boone County are relatively affordable when compared to other areas of northern Illinois, the average price of a home in Boone County has been increasing. According to the Northwest Illinois Alliance of Realtors, the average home price in Boone County reached \$296,087 as of May 2025.

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 since the housing bubble burst in 2008. 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.

The data provided on the right indicates that housing affordability in Boone County is mostly in line with Illinois and the Rockford metro area and has improved over the past ten years. However, this should not dismiss the cost burden and affordability crunch felt by certain residents, including approximately 19.4% of homeowners and 44.3% of renters who are characterized as being cost burdened.

The growing cost burden of households is further accentuated by the lack of affordable housing units incorporated in a majority of new residential development in Boone County.

There are multiple approaches that Boone County and municipalities can take to retain and improve the affordability of housing county-wide. 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.

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.

Diversification of housing types.

Diverse housing options are 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.

Coordination of efforts and resources.

Coordination may include: increasing overall communication with local, regional, and federal agencies; maximizing voucher and veterans assistance programs; leveraging Low Income Housing Tax Credits; and establishing a Regional Housing Initiative.

From the perspective of housing affordability, a household is characterized as being cost burdened when it pays 30% or more of its household income on housing costs, including mortgage or rent, utilities, and related expenses. If it pays 50% or more, then the household is considered severely cost burdened.

HOMEOWNERS

19.4%

Homeowners who are cost burdened by housing costs, compared to 31.5% ten years prior

22.1% Illinois
18.6% Rockford Metro

9.6%

Homeowners who are severely cost burdened by housing costs, compared to 11.4% ten years prior

9.2% Illinois
7.8% Rockford Metro

16.7%

Percent of homes that are likely affordable for a 4-person family, compared to 15.3% across Illinois

RENTERS

44.3%

Renters who are cost burdened by housing costs, compared to 49.0% ten years prior

43.9% Illinois
45.2% Rockford Metro

18.2%

Renters who are severely cost burdened by housing costs, compared to 23.0% ten years prior

22.4% Illinois
23.2% Rockford Metro

66.8%

Percent of two-bedroom rental units that are likely affordable for a 4-person family, compared to 33.9% across Illinois

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2018-2022



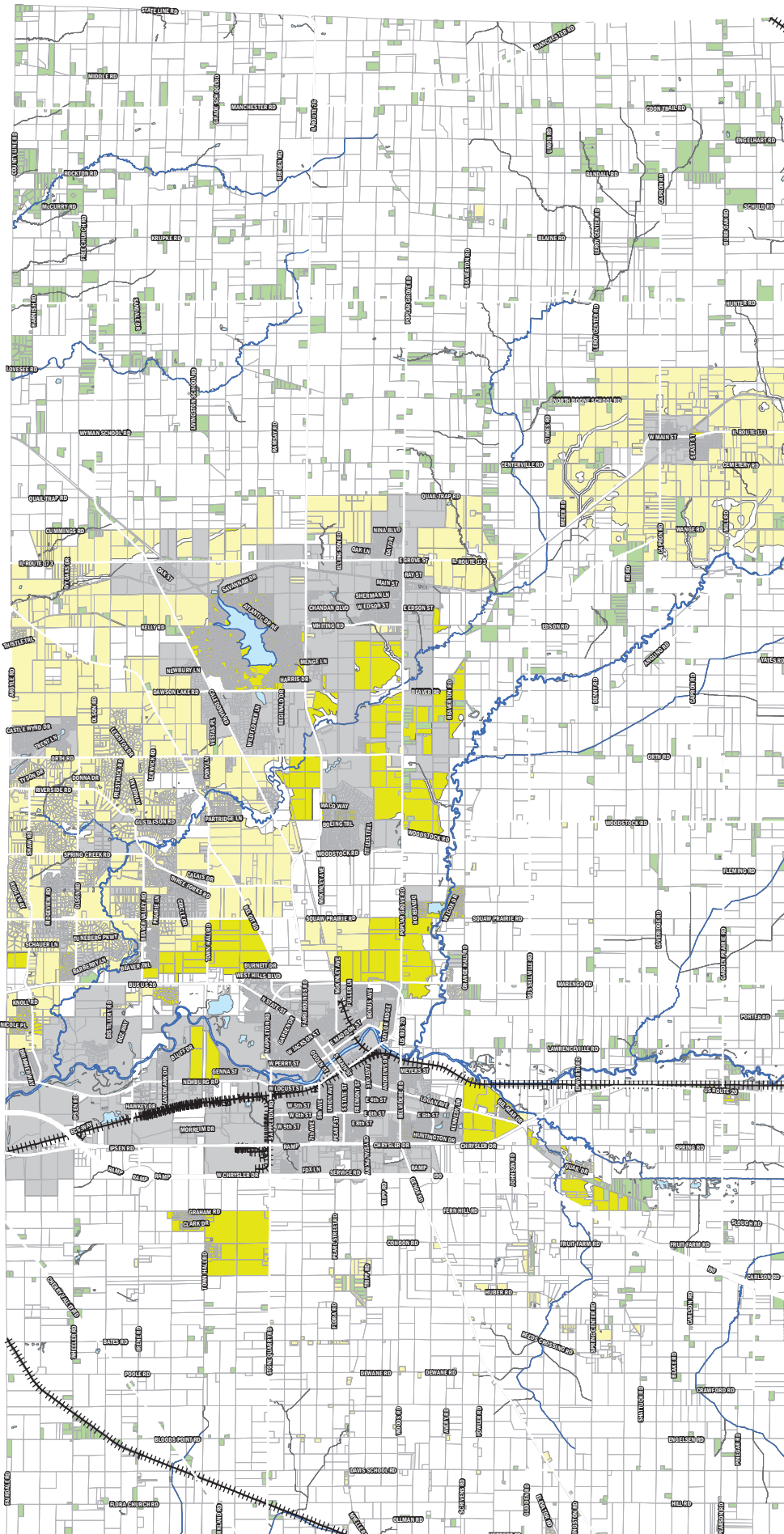
FIGURE 5.24
RESIDENTIAL AREAS MAP

LEGEND

- Farmsteads
- Single Family Residential Rural
- Single Family Residential Exurban

Residential Priority Growth Areas

Residential growth is prioritized on the outer edges of municipalities, including north and south of Belvidere, northeast of Poplar Grove, and all around Capron. The unincorporated residential areas northwest of Belvidere also provide opportunities to build out more housing in these areas through infill development.



BOONE COUNTY PLAN

PLAN ELEMENT 6

TRANSPORTATION



GOAL: Boone County residents and businesses will have safe, accessible, and affordable infrastructure and services that support mobility for users of all ages, abilities, and transportation choices across the county and connecting with the region.

OBJECTIVES:

#	OBJECTIVE	PRIORITY
6.1	Coordinate future roadway improvements with capital improvement programs and potential grant funding.	HIGH ●
6.2	Continue buildout of alternative transportation options, including increased opportunities to travel by bicycle.	HIGH ●
6.3	Evaluate and implement roadway safety measures as traffic volume changes and safety considerations arise.	MEDIUM ●
6.4	Coordinate designated truck routes with IDOT and municipalities.	LOWER ●
6.5	Coordinate all proposed and existing transit services among providers and with stakeholders.	LOWER ●



PLAN ELEMENT 6: **TRANSPORTATION**

ROAD NETWORK

Boone County is a major regional crossroads with the Chicago region to the east, Rockford to the west, and Wisconsin to the north. The road network is comprised of a system of federal, state, county, and local roadways, as summarized below. Roadway safety and truck traffic are two major issues also described below.

Roadway Hierarchy

Boone County has over 775 miles of roadways with a range of road jurisdictions: IDOT, Illinois Tollway Authority, Boone County, townships and municipalities, and private ownership. As illustrated on the Transportation Plan Map in Figure 5.25, the roadway hierarchy generally includes:

- **Interstate:** I-90
- **Principal Arterials:** US Route 20, US Route Business 20, IL Route 76, IL Route 173
- **Minor Arterials:** State St*, Lincoln Ave*, Fairgrounds Rd*, McKinley Ave*, Logan Ave*, Pearl St*
- **Major Collectors:** Manchester Rd, Hunter Rd, Woodstock Rd, State Line Rd, Capron Rd, Poplar Grove Rd, Caledonia Rd, Garden Prairie Rd, Cherry Valley Rd, Stone Quarry Rd, Genoa Rd
- **Minor Collectors:** Multiple
- **Local:** Multiple

*NOTE: Mostly located in Belvidere

Proper roadway classifications ensure safe and efficient movement of vehicles to accommodate current traffic volumes and anticipate increases as new development occurs in Boone

ROADWAY JURISDICTIONS

JURISDICTION	MILES	% OF TOTAL
IDOT	51.0	6.6%
County	92.9	12.0%
Municipality	193.5	25.0%
Private	44.8	5.8%
Township	392.9	50.7%
TOTAL	775.1	100.0%

County. It also helps to inform capital improvements programming, such as the county's road and bridge rebuilding program.

Truck Routes

Of the 775+ miles of roadways traversing Boone County, about 85 miles (11%) are designated as truck routes. Truck routes will need to be monitored as industrial growth continues, particularly south of Belvidere along I-90. This includes monitoring and addressing any truck cut-through traffic in neighborhoods or areas that are not designated as truck routes. Coordination with IDOT will be necessary to properly designate any roadways as truck routes, including the promotion of the new routes with trucking companies and posting of adequate directional signage.

Roadway Safety

Road safety is increasingly becoming a major issue as development and local attractions generate more traffic. Speeding can be an even more significant issue in rural areas where long stretches of road with little to no traffic can lead to speeding vehicles. That places a greater emphasis on an increasing need for traffic calming and road safety measures that are effective with minimal impact on Boone County's rural quality of life.

The county should pursue traffic calming measures in areas that may be dealing with speeding or other related issues. This includes coordination with any related roadway jurisdictions. In addition, affected residents and businesses should be consulted for their feedback to ensure any traffic calming measures are appropriate for the area to minimize adverse impacts on quality of life and commerce.

Future Improvements

The Transportation Plan Map in Figure 5.25 highlights planned roadway improvements as part of Boone County's 10-, 25-, and 50-year plans for improvement. Other roadway improvements may be necessary as new developments get built, bike trails

are added, and transportation patterns and needs change.

Conditions of roads and bridges are amplified by increasing truck traffic and the prevalence of farm vehicles around the county. These impacts will also need to be monitored to ensure future improvements are planned to ensure Boone County's system of roads and bridges are kept in a state of good condition for safety and efficient transport of people and goods.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Boone County has about 28 miles of existing bike trails, all of which are presently off-street shared use paths. The regional trail network is gradually being built up, including a 14.2-mile rails-to-trails project and potential future trails in the northern part of the county. The Transportation Plan Map in Figure 5.25 show existing and potential trails across Boone County.

Agencies that play a role in building up the regional trail network: IDOT, Region 1 Planning Council, Boone County, Boone County Conservation District, Belvidere Township Park District, townships, and municipalities. Private developments like subdivisions and business parks can also tie into local sidewalk and regional trail networks. It is the discretion of each agency to determine the priorities of future trails and infrastructure to advance safe



PLAN ELEMENT 6: TRANSPORTATION

access and mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists.

TRANSIT

People seeking to use public transportation in Boone County have two options at the moment that serve the county and immediate vicinity. There is potential for two additional options in the long-term offering transit service at a regional level via Amtrak and Metra.

Local Transit Services

Boone County is presently served by Boone County Transit. Boone County Transit enables residents to reserve bus rides for convenient door-to-door transit service, typically within 24 hours with limited same-day service. In addition, Boone County Transit offers transportation to medical appointments in neighboring counties with advanced notice.

Boone County Transit makes connections to RMTD at the East Side Transfer Center in Rockford with no transfer fees in either direction. This service represents the on-demand approach, which is a common option in rural or underserved areas using accessible vans or small buses.

Future Amtrak Service



One of the long-term transit plans is the extension of Amtrak service into Boone County with a station in Belvidere. This extension is part of a \$500M state appropriation for two new Amtrak service routes from Chicago to the Quad Cities and Rockford with future extension to Dubuque, Iowa. A \$50M carve out from this State appropriation would be dedicated to fund bike and pedestrian infrastructure to access the transit station.

Future Metra Service

In addition to extension of Amtrak service, another long-term transit plan is a planned commuter rail station in Belvidere along the proposed Metra Rockford Intercity Passenger Rail service. This proposed rail line would be a continuation of Metra’s current UP-W Line from the Big Timber Road station in Elgin westward with stops in Huntley, Belvidere, and Rockford. Support would

come from \$275M in state funding via the Rebuild Illinois capital plan.

TRANSIT CHALLENGES

Transit continues to face challenges to gain traction not only in Boone County but across the state. Transit has historically faced three major challenges:

(1) Image of public transportation. There is a common conception that Boone County Transit is exclusively a bus service for older adults, which is partly attributed to the transit service being housed in the same building as the Boone County Council on Aging (BCCA) Keen Age Center. Efforts like social media posts (see graphics below) continue to promote Boone County Transit as an option for all residents, regardless of age or other potential barrier like language.

(2) Efficiency of public transportation. Issues with transit efficiency typically relate to the amount of service, timing of pickups/dropoffs, number of stops, number of transfers needed to reach destinations, and trip length. These are multiple variables a potential transit rider must weigh before deciding whether a transit trip is worthwhile, as opposed to taking a car instead. Barring the expansion of service (see lack of funding below), the limitations of transit service may not make public transportation an efficient option for many people, unless they plan their trip well ahead of time and adjust to these limitations.

(3) Lack of funding. Limited funding to support transit has historically been a major obstacle to not only make public transportation more efficient but also provide adequate routes and facilities like bus shelters and safe access routes. Since a significant portion of Boone County residents commute beyond the county for work and other needs, providing an affordable and efficient transportation option other than driving continues to be an important goal for many residents. However, funding for transit continues to be a major issue, which has been exacerbated by juggling the state budget and managing the transit funding fiscal cliff. Since Boone County Transit and RMTD receive funding from IDOT and federal grants, the ability to maintain and expand a reliable public transportation network continues to be a challenge. That places increased importance on alternative transportation options like regional bike trails, ride share programs, and park-and-ride facilities to other transit systems.

BOONE COUNTY TRANSIT

NUEVO SERVICIOS COMIENZO 1 DE JULIO DE 2024

Reminder!

We can take you grocery shopping and to the doctor on the same day.

Did You Know

You can book a ride for yourself or on behalf of someone else!

- Horario extendido y sábados
- No hay transferencias de tarifas entre BCT y RMTD
- Servicio de respuesta a la demanda para el centro de transferencia del lado este de RMTD
- Servicio de transporte médico para personas mayores y paratransito puerta a puerta



FIGURE 5.25
TRANSPORTATION PLAN MAP

LEGEND

- Open Space
- Institutional
- Municipal
- Floodplain
- 1992 Designated Agricultural Area
- 1995 Designated Agricultural Area
- Trails
- Interstate
- Arterial Roadway
- Collector Roadway
- Proposed Long-Range County Transportation Improvements

10-YEAR PLAN

- Townhall/Woodstock Road Connection
- Woodstock Road Realignment

25-YEAR PLAN

- Manchester Road Realignment
- Woodstock Road Realignment
- Townhall Road Connection

50-YEAR PLAN

- Free Church/Caledonia Road Realignment
- Capron Road Realignment
- Graham/Fern Hill Road Connection

[CLICK FOR ONLINE RESOURCES](#)

2025 Boone County Traffic Safety Action Plan

Source: Region 1 Planning Council

<https://www.dropbox.com/sc/fi/8hfo9wmd5mid6ix1hfs/FINAL-Boone-Co-Traffic-Safety-Action-Plan-6.24.2025-1.pdf>

Region 1 Planning Council Transportation Plans and Studies

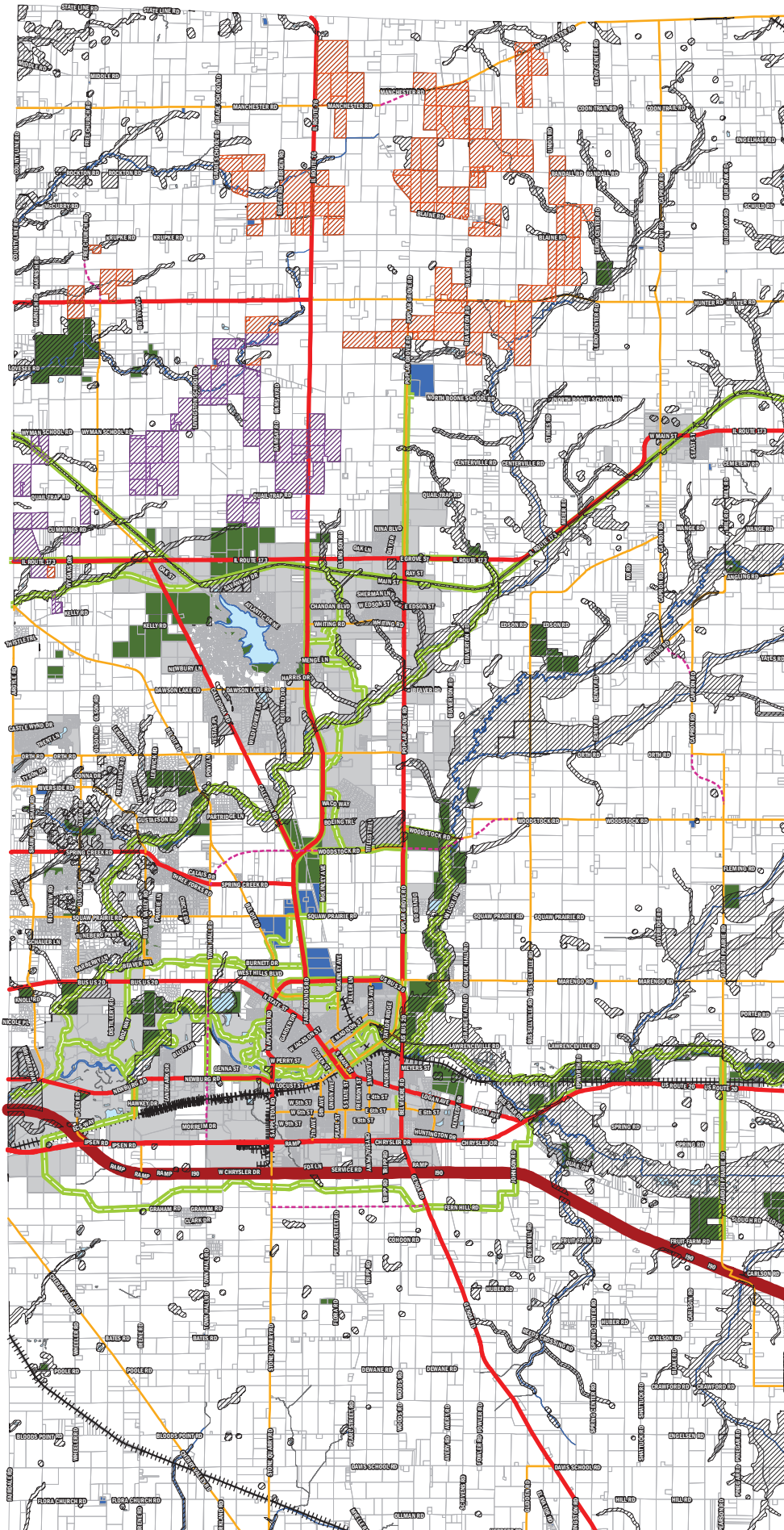
Source: Region 1 Planning Council

<https://r1planning.org/planning/transportation/>

Region 1 Planning Council Transportation Improvement Program

Source: Region 1 Planning Council

<https://r1planning.org/planning/transportation-improvement-program/>



BOONE COUNTY PLAN

PLAN ELEMENT 7

UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE



GOAL: Boone County will support utilities and infrastructure that efficiently and equitably meet the needs of residents, businesses, and property owners, with potential for expansion to accommodate growth and development, adapt to land constraints, respect private property rights, and respect the preservation of land, water, and other natural resources.

OBJECTIVES:

#	OBJECTIVE	PRIORITY
7.1	Expand broadband infrastructure to improve connectivity for residents and businesses and as an economic development incentive to attract new businesses.	HIGH ●
7.2	Continue to improve stormwater management infrastructure in road rights-of-way, parking areas, and other areas to help reduce flooding and support groundwater recharge.	HIGH ●
7.3	Encourage new development to connect to current or expanded municipal utilities, where feasible.	MEDIUM ●
7.4	Protect agricultural drainage systems.	MEDIUM ●
7.5	Coordinate with landowners whose property has constraints (e.g., topography, high or low water table, soil erosion, wetlands, etc.) that may impact private well and septic infrastructure.	LOWER ●
7.6	Support and encourage infrastructure improvements through incentives.	LOWER ●



PLAN ELEMENT 7: UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

As new development is constructed, water and sewer utility service will primarily be provided by the nearest municipality, which would require annexation. Whether public or private, municipal water is primarily drawn from subsurface aquifers through wells and pumping stations.

As new developments are considered, municipal utility improvements will be necessary to ensure adequate capacity for growth in new households, businesses, and others needing water and sewer utility service. Some considerations for future municipal utilities planning:

- **Belvidere:** Per the 2024 Belvidere Comprehensive Plan, the city is expanding and updating its aging water and sewer utility infrastructure to accommodate future growth. This includes a need for new sewer lift infrastructure on the city's west side.
- **Poplar Grove:** The 2024 Poplar Grove Comprehensive Plan recommends that the village create a long-range facilities improvement plan to ensure public facilities and utilities "are in a state of good repair and can serve the current needs." However, current utilities capacity is not able to serve the amount of platted lots, which accentuates the need for this facilities improvement plan to understand potential plans to expand or update village utilities.
- **Capron:** Capron is in significant need for investment to improve and extend its existing utilities infrastructure, as well as repair to the village's roads. Capron is actively coordinating with engineering firms to secure grants for these infrastructure improvements.
- **Others:** While Cherry Valley and Loves Park are mostly located in neighboring Winnebago County, they each have portions that are located in Boone County. These two municipalities both provide water utility service. Water utility and sewage treatment are also provided within the boundaries of Candlewick Lake by a private water utility.

While these future improvements to municipal utilities infrastructure are outside the purview of Boone County's efforts, coordination is still important to help evaluate municipal capacity for annexation and utilities service. Otherwise, future developments that stay unincorporated in the county would have to rely on private well and septic systems, as discussed next.

PRIVATE WELL AND SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Since developments connected to municipal water and sewer utilities are primarily annexed into a municipality, unincorporated residential properties rely on private on-site well and septic systems. Well and septic infrastructure requires certain soil conditions that are suitable for proper treatment.

Private water systems are required to adhere to requirements set forth by the Boone County Health Department, including submittal of a private water plan before obtaining well permits. Septic systems are required to adhere to county requirements, including the submittal of septic plan for review. The Boone County Health Department also advises on the maintenance and cleaning of septic systems.

FARM WATER USE

In addition to individual residential properties, farm operations use a significant amount of water for daily crop production and animal care. Farm water use is mostly drawn from private on-site water wells and distributed to crop fields via irrigation systems.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Stormwater management in Boone County is directed by the 2012 Regional Stormwater Plan. Natural stormwater management is handled by the flow of water via floodplains, which primarily follow the Kishwaukee River and local creeks. The floodplain and wetland systems in Boone County are part of three watersheds: Kishwaukee, Upper Rock, and Turtle Creek. Open spaces along the Kishwaukee River and creeks

offer natural stormwater management capacity to protect groundwater for a sustainable water supply.

Residential, commercial, and industrial developments can incorporate stormwater management best practices like the use of native plantings, bioswales, rain gardens, permeable pavers and materials, and others to play their part in managing the flow of stormwater and protecting the regional water supply.

Farms can also play a role utilizing best practices like No-Till or Conservation Till, grassed waterways, riparian filter strips, field tile (drainage tile) maintenance, cover crops, bioreactors, and other natural plant buffers, which all serve as effective techniques to minimizing the various effects of agricultural runoff.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

A strong telecommunications system has progressively become a critical component of a community's infrastructure. This is increasingly apparent with more people working and learning from home, which requires reliable internet service to ensure residents, workers, businesses, and students can interact and access resources.

From an economic development perspective, internet service is an important infrastructure element that supports existing businesses and employers, as well as attracts new ones, to support their day-to-day activities and steadfast commerce. Stable and reliable internet service is crucial for on-site business operations that enable them to connect with clients, suppliers, customers, and third party web-based services.

The overall strength of internet service across the region, particularly serving a growing industrial market in Boone and Winnebago Counties, is an indicator that the network can boost pockets of low service levels in less urbanized parts of Boone County.



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CHAPTER 6

IMPLEMENTATION

The Policy Framework in Chapter 4 presents a series of goals and objectives intended to achieve the vision statement for Boone County. This chapter brings together all the goals, objectives, strategies, and resources in one place. Strategies activate the Comprehensive Plan with projects and tasks that Boone County and its partners can pursue to implement the plan. Potential resources and funding sources are identified to serve as initial steps in pursuing strategies and setting up long-term options as projects progress beyond the startup stage.

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be dynamic, rather than overly prescriptive, to enable the county and its partners to adapt the strategies as conditions evolve, funding and resources become available, and needs and expectations change.

County officials should consider the plan's vision, goals, objectives, and strategies when evaluating development proposals and county improvement efforts. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan establishes a policy and land use planning context for Boone County when coordinating with other governmental bodies and local organizations to serve residents, businesses, and stakeholders.



KEY PARTNERS FOR PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Achievement of Boone County's vision and goals will be more successful when key partners collaborate and pool resources to implement the plan. These partners and their roles are described below.

Boone County Board: The County Board sets policy for Boone County. Their approval is necessary to establish ordinances, allocate funds, enter contracts, and take other actions that support development and improvements. Board members should be familiar with the plan and consider whether proposed actions will move the county towards achieving its vision and goals.

Boards and Commissions: The Regional Planning Commission (RPC) makes recommendations regarding county growth, development, and preservation. They should be familiar with the plan and refer to it regularly in their deliberations. In addition, the RPC should educate developers and others who come before them on the relevance of the Comprehensive Plan and encourage applicants to create proposals that align with the plan's vision and goals. The Zoning Board of Appeals, while dealing more exclusively with zoning issues, should be familiar with the Comprehensive Plan and its role regarding the

» Unified Development Ordinance. » The Agricultural Conservation Easement and Farmland Protection Commission also has an role in plan implementation.

Residents: Support and involvement of residents are important to plan implementation. The county should keep residents well informed on planning related issues and encourage their participation in discussions, workshops, and service on committees to share their time, skills, or expertise.

Business Community: Local businesses can support plan implementation by communicating their needs and plans to foster effective public/private partnerships. Local financial institutions can support the plan by financing projects that align with it. Corporations can support the plan through their own site development and growth plans, as well as supporting the county's projects. Real estate professionals and developers should be mindful of projects that align with the plan.

Other Countywide Agencies: Countywide agencies like School Districts 100 and 200, Boone County Conservation District, Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District, Winnebago-Boone Farm Bureau, Boone County Housing Authority, Boone County Council on Aging, and others represent key stakeholders and have specialized knowledge to support plan implementation.

Municipalities and Townships: Municipalities and townships have powers and jurisdictions that overlap those of the county. Coordination and cooperation with these other jurisdictions will promote managed growth and coordinated operations with the county.

State Agencies: State level agencies control specific roadways, lands, and resources within the county. The state is also a source of funding and expertise for implementation.



COUNTY ACTIONS

While many of the strategies will require collaboration with multiple partners as listed on the sidebar on the previous page, the county will lead many of the strategies, including internal actions that align with the day-to-day actions of county staff and officials. These actions may include the following:

- Preparing capital improvement plans (CIPs) with appropriate county and municipal departments that consider projects and initiatives that align the strategies detailed in this chapter with county and municipal budgets.
- Implementing the Unified Development Ordinance to support the Comprehensive Plan, particularly land use and development recommendations.
- Creating or commissioning more detailed plans, studies, designs, and engineering documents as recommended in the implementation strategies.
- Working directly with local partners to implement relevant strategies.
- Assisting with any site improvement or land acquisition efforts for county facilities, public safety facilities, other public space enhancements, and potential development projects.
- Securing funding sources to support any strategies.
- Working with property owners, local businesses, and industries on development opportunities.
- Creating and leveraging incentive programs to catalyze investment and development.

FUNDING

There are several broad categories of funding that may be appropriate for implementing specific elements of the Comprehensive Plan:

- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Enterprise and Opportunity Zones
- State and federal grants
- State agency tax incentives
- Foundation and nonprofit partners
- Developer fees
- Permit fees
- Small percentage sales tax
- Private sector partners such as developers and property owners to realize tax and other savings that help make projects financially feasible

Where applicable, the implementation plan matrix in this chapter identifies potential funding sources that will help advance the related strategies.

ANNEXATION

There will be situations when it makes sense for certain unincorporated properties to be annexed into a municipality to capitalize on water and sewer utilities, municipal services, and other infrastructure. Boone County should coordinate with municipalities to encourage growth and management around and within incorporated areas. Each property considered for annexation should consider providing an annexation study to identify and evaluate the associated costs to the municipality and property owner(s) within the proposed annexation area. In addition, each annexation should consider the following aspects:

- The municipality's ability to provide services and utilities, including water and sewer access, police and fire protection, etc.
- Any potential impact of the annexed property on adjacent land, the character of the immediate neighborhood or area, and overall character of the municipality.
- The fiscal impact on the municipality, School District, Conservation District, police and fire, library, parks, and other districts and entities that would be impacted by growth and development.

The Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed regularly, typically every five years, to ensure that it still reflects the interests and current conditions of the county. Additionally, the plan can be modified at any time by the Regional Planning Commission at a public hearing and final approval by the County Board.



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

PLAN ELEMENT 1

LAND USE AND PRESERVATION



GOAL: Boone County will manage growth and development to provide a balanced mix of land uses that is compatible with the county’s rural heritage, sustains productive farmland, conserves the environment, and protects the water supply.

#	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	PHASING	PARTNERS	RESOURCES
1.1	Locate new development strategically to best utilize existing assets and maximize open space and farmland protection. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	1.1.1: Consult the Comprehensive Plan during the development review process to ensure proposed developments meet the various goals, objectives, and strategies outlined throughout the document, not just adherence to the land use plan. 1.1.2: Prioritize infill development and fringe development on the periphery of municipalities for connectivity to existing utilities infrastructure. 1.1.3: Encourage buildout of existing sub-divisions with platted but vacant parcels. 1.1.4: Assist with any municipal needs and coordination of resources and expertise with smaller communities to help steer development away from designated agricultural areas, prime soils, and sensitive aquifer recharge areas (SARAs) to protect prime farmland and regional water resources.	Ongoing ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Municipalities	
1.2	Enforce the revised Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to guide managed growth and development. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	1.2.1: Consult the UDO during the development review process. 1.2.2: Ensure the UDO is readily available on the county website for public access by property owners, developers, builders, and others. 1.2.3: Share the UDO with municipalities so that they have it on hand for reference during their municipal development review processes, particularly for land that is being annexed.	Ongoing ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs	County Municipalities	
1.3	Advocate for new, updated, or existing policies and tools to preserve productive farmland. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	1.3.1: Establish a regular forum with local farmers and agricultural landowners to discuss their needs and thoughts regarding development in the county. 1.3.2: Coordinate farmland advocacy and preservation efforts with the Winnebago-Boone Farm Bureau. 1.3.3: Encourage municipalities to incorporate language in boundary agreements with each other and the county to emphasize agricultural preservation and the use of agricultural land and open space as a growth management tool. 1.3.4: Support use of conservation easements to protect productive farmland.	Ongoing ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Municipalities Winnebago-Boone Farm Bureau Boone County Agricultural Conservation Easement Farm Protection Planning Commission Boone County Farmland Protection Project	

PLAN ELEMENT 1: **LAND USE AND PRESERVATION**

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

#	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	PHASING	PARTNERS	RESOURCES
1.4	Use cluster and conservation development to preserve open space and protect environmentally sensitive areas while providing new housing opportunities. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	1.4.1: Research best practices and local or regional examples of cluster and conservation development. 1.4.2: Coordinate with residential developers to consider cluster and conservation development design principles.	ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Boone County Conservation District Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District Developers	
1.5	Coordinate county and municipal plans for growth, development, and preservation, particularly with the recent comprehensive plan updates for Belvidere and Poplar Grove. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	1.5.1: Consult the future land use plans for the county and relevant municipalities during the development review process. 1.5.2: Include municipal representatives as part of the county's development review process, particularly to discuss an appropriate approach when plans conflict.	Ongoing Ongoing	County Municipalities	
1.6	Promote connectivity of greenways throughout the county. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	1.6.1: Implement the use of R1's Greenways Plan for Boone, Ogle, and Winnebago Counties. 1.6.2: Coordinate with the alternative transportation strategies, particularly trails, under Objective 6.2.	LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Boone County Conservation District Belvidere Township Park District Local road jurisdictions Other trail providers	
1.7	Identify potential sites and areas for future annexation by adjacent municipalities. PRIORITY: LOWER ●	1.7.1: Maintain communication with municipalities regarding sites that are being considered for annexation. 1.7.2: Maintain and update a map of potential annexation sites.	Ongoing LT: 4+ yrs	County Municipalities	
1.8	Support historic preservation efforts in unincorporated areas of the county. PRIORITY: LOWER ●	1.8.1: Form a group of interested residents to coordinate and guide county preservation efforts. 1.8.2: Educate staff and property owners on types and characteristics of significant buildings, voluntary designations, tax incentives, and connection to tourism. 1.8.3: Develop an illustrated list of significant buildings suitable for use by residents and visitors. 1.8.4: Prepare a display for the county fair. 1.8.5: Provide information on historic preservation incentives on the County website or elsewhere.	ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Boone County Museum of History Property owners	

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

PLAN ELEMENT 2

LIVABILITY



GOAL: Boone County will preserve its legacy as a family-oriented community that balances safeguarding the established rural culture and adapting to the beneficial qualities of a suburban lifestyle. The county strives to provide equitable access to high quality educational, recreational, health, and civic facilities, and opportunities that meet local needs and interests.

#	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	PHASING	PARTNERS	RESOURCES
2.1	Coordinate programs and services offered by the County, nonprofits, and other agencies regarding recreation, health, and social services to pool resources, reduce duplication, and address growth impacts. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	2.1.1: Identify relevant organizations and establish a point person for communication in each one. 2.1.2: Map overlapping service areas to better understand duplication and gaps in incorporated areas. 2.1.3: Increase the number of international and culturally inclusive events, including the removal of language and cultural barriers.	ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Nonprofits and agencies offering recreation, health, and social services	
2.2	Pursue equal and convenient access to health and wellness services for all residents. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	2.2.1: Work with local transportation providers to review available services. 2.2.2: Continue to pursue coordination and shared resources with other county health departments, health coalitions, and regional entities. 2.2.3: Encourage local businesses and organizations to establish and promote wellness programs. 2.2.4: Capitalize on Boone County's proximity to several regional medical facilities. 2.2.5: Encourage medical providers with expanding or locating services in the county. 2.2.6: Consider pop-up and permanent satellite locations for providing services. 2.2.7: Educate the public on the availability and use of telehealth. 2.2.8: Increase awareness and recognition of cultural differences by encouraging policies that improve service to all county residents regardless of age, ability, or other demographics. 2.2.9: Expand services regarding mental health, the homeless, drug addiction, food and nutrition, youth, and families.	ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Boone County Transit Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD) Healthcare providers	
2.3	Support excellent educational opportunities for all students residing in the county. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	2.3.1: Pursue new partnerships between the library and school districts. 2.3.2: Continue to prioritize adult education to improve and build upon the skills of the county's workforce. 2.3.3: Expand or create new library services to include underserved or unserved segments of the county population. 2.3.4: Encourage new development in areas that fall within the taxing jurisdiction of underfunded school districts. 2.3.5: Consider the impact on schools when reviewing plans and developing incentives.	ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County School Districts Ida Public Library Workforce Connection	

PLAN ELEMENT 2: **LIVABILITY**

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

#	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	PHASING	PARTNERS	RESOURCES
2.4	Investigate potential expansion of healthcare options, including senior, specialty, and mental healthcare services. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	2.4.1: Work with healthcare providers and property owners to identify potential new service locations. 2.4.2: Investigate use of Opportunity Zones to encourage new healthcare development.	LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Healthcare providers Growth Dimensions	
2.5	Foster improved overall public health for Boone County residents. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	2.5.1: Continue to promote the programs and services offered by the County Health Department and other local healthcare providers. 2.5.2: Work with Illinois Project for Local Area Needs (IPLAN) to identify local health priorities in Boone County.	Ongoing ST: 1-3 yrs	County Healthcare providers	
2.6	Establish efficient communication between public agencies, the community, and individuals. PRIORITY: LOWER ●	2.6.1: Keep websites and social media accounts current and easy to use. 2.6.2: Expand the number of links to other agencies on the county website as needed.	Ongoing ST: 1-3 yrs	County	
2.7	Maintain and continue to improve upon the high quality of public safety provided by Boone County. PRIORITY: LOWER ●	2.7.1: Maintain coordination and communication with municipal and regional public safety agencies. 2.7.2: Share the trends in incidents and activities of the Sheriff's Department with the public, discussing effective policies and procedures and plans. 2.7.3: Research and replicate existing public safety best practices from similar areas. 2.7.4: Maintain coordination and communication with municipal and regional public safety agencies. 2.7.5: Increase communication between public safety agencies and the public through social media and other effective forms. 2.7.6: Pursue technology upgrades to the 911 dispatch service. 2.7.7: Develop a hazard mitigation plan to build upon existing coordination of agencies and departments and educate the public.	Ongoing ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Sheriff's Office Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)	
2.8	Provide adequate and easily accessible recreation opportunities for all residents. PRIORITY: LOWER ●	2.8.1: Consider proximity to recreation opportunities in applications for new residential development. 2.8.2: Coordinate with the alternative transportation strategies under Objective 6.2.	Ongoing LT: 4+ yrs	County Boone County Conservation District Belvidere Township Park District Local road jurisdictions Other trail providers	

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

PLAN ELEMENT 3

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



GOAL: Boone County will advance initiatives that sustain the water supply, protect the Kishwaukee River, preserve valuable soils, protect sensitive environmental features, judiciously use natural resources, and implement sustainability practices that ensure current and future generations can experience and benefit from the natural environment.

#	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	PHASING	PARTNERS	RESOURCES
3.1	Develop a sustainable water supply plan. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	3.1.1: Complete the county’s two-year 3D geological mapping and groundwater modeling study. 3.1.2: Evaluate and update the county’s map of sensitive aquifer recharge areas (SARAs). 3.1.3: Utilize the findings from Strategy 3.1.1 as the basis to develop a Boone County Sustainable Water Supply Plan 3.1.4: Coordinate with municipalities to update local and regional ordinances and stormwater management practices that maximize groundwater recharge. 3.1.5: Coordinate with the Northwest Water Planning Alliance (NWPA) to potentially join the NWPA or start a similar alliance with neighboring counties (Winnebago and Ogle Counties in IL; Rock and Walworth Counties in WI) to work collectively on protection efforts ensuring a long-term dependable water supply. 3.1.6: Coordinate municipal, county, and regional water supply efforts with federal initiatives managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USF&WS), and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).	ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Municipalities Landowners Illinois State Water Survey Winnebago-Boone Farm Bureau Northwest Water Planning Alliance (NWPA) Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District WPPA Water sustainability experts	https://dnr.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/dnr/waterresources/
3.2	Leverage state and regional policies to support county groundwater protection efforts. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	3.2.1: Research state and regional groundwater protection policies and actions. 3.2.2: Coordinate with state and regional agencies with ongoing or proposed actions to protect groundwater. 3.2.3: Coordinate with the stormwater management strategies under Objective 7.2. 3.2.4: Establish a surface water protection zone in appropriate areas in the county.	ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Landowners Boone County Conservation District Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District Illinois State Water Survey Water sustainability experts	

PLAN ELEMENT 3: **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

#	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	PHASING	PARTNERS	RESOURCES
3.3	Coordinate with Boone County Conservation District to continue conserving open space and protecting environmentally sensitive elements like wetlands, grasslands, savannas, and woodlands. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	3.3.1: Coordinate with Boone County Conservation District with open space conservation and natural resource protection efforts in compliance with the BCCD 2025 Master Plan. 3.3.2: Update the wetlands database. 3.3.3: Work with future development sites to carefully integrate open space and natural resources into site design.	ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Boone County Conservation District Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District Developers	
3.4	Protect flood-prone and environmentally sensitive areas. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	3.4.1: Coordinate with Boone County Conservation District with flood-prone area protection efforts in compliance with the BCCD 2025 Master Plan. 3.4.2: Coordinate with FEMA to update floodplain maps. 3.4.3: Discourage development within the floodplain and flood-prone areas.	ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Boone County Conservation District Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District Belvidere Township Park District FEMA Developers	
3.5	Coordinate the future sustainable water supply plan with broader sustainability practices. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	3.5.1: Encourage developers to utilize permeable building materials and native plantings to maximize water filtration and minimize stormwater runoff. 3.5.2: Protect local groundwater by protecting riparian and water recharge areas.	LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Developers Landowners	
3.6	Encourage sustainable practices by property owners and tenants. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	3.6.1: Compile information on county and municipal sustainability practices like recycling, composting, alternative energies, etc. 3.6.2: Prepare brochures with the information from Strategy 3.6.1 to distribute to new homebuyers, renters, and tenants. 3.6.3: Prepare a Sustainable Boone County campaign with educational flyers, social media posts, and the brochures from Strategy 3.6.2.	ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Municipalities Realtors Property owners	
3.7	Protect fertile soil for continued agricultural use. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	3.7.1: Evaluate and update the county's map of soil types, particularly those that are fertile for active farming. 3.7.2: Coordinate with local farms and agricultural specialists to identify and implement soil protection efforts.	ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District Landowners and farmers Agricultural specialists	

PLAN ELEMENT 3: **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

#	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	PHASING	PARTNERS	RESOURCES
3.8	Review and, when necessary, develop new policies for renewable energy infrastructure. PRIORITY: LOWER ●	3.8.1: Examine case studies to adapt lessons learned to Boone County. 3.8.2: Educate the community on alternative energy sources. 3.8.3: Evaluate potential sites for solar and/or wind projects when proposed to the county. 3.8.4: Coordinate with major employers, industrial sites, and other businesses to identify their current or future activities to integrate alternative energy infrastructure on their sites. 3.8.5: Ensure local codes and ordinances are kept up-to-date to properly account for standards regarding alternative energy infrastructure, including large sites (e.g., a wind turbine on an industrial site or solar fields on farmland) and small sites (e.g., solar panels on a house).	ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Municipalities Landowners Local businesses Alternative energy providers	
3.9	Effectively reduce and manage waste to protect human and environmental health. PRIORITY: LOWER ●	3.9.1: Identify ways to streamline or improve trash, recycling, and composting efforts across the county in cooperation with local waste disposal companies. 3.9.2: Research case studies to adapt lessons learned to Boone County.	ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs	County Municipalities Trash, recycling, and composting companies	

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

PLAN ELEMENT 4

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



GOAL: Boone County will support economic growth by protecting productive farmland, preserving natural resources, supporting existing business expansion, attracting new businesses, and promoting regional development.

#	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	PHASING	PARTNERS	RESOURCES
4.1	Locate commercial and industrial growth areas within key transportation corridors. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	4.1.1: Designate areas along transportation corridors as commercial or industrial zones, where appropriate. 4.1.2: Encourage the listing of available sites and buildings, including those outside of Belvidere, on commercial property websites. 4.1.3: Consider listing sites in unincorporated Boone County on the county website.	ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs	County Growth Dimensions Commercial real estate brokers	
4.2	Retain and expand employment opportunities and investment. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	4.2.1: Coordinate with Growth Dimensions to support the existing business community. 4.2.2: Develop brochures that highlight the benefits, incentives, and other positive attributes that make Boone County a place to do business. 4.2.3: Maintain outreach partnerships with Growth Dimensions, ComEd, and the Workforce Connection.	Ongoing ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs	Growth Dimensions Belvidere Area Chamber of Commerce Workforce Connection SBDC DCEO	
4.3	Increase workforce education and skill levels. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	4.3.1: Coordinate with Growth Dimensions to garner input from businesses on the types of skills and knowledge they require for their workers, including emerging skills and knowledge to prepare for future workforce growth. 4.3.2: Connect with local colleges and public agencies that provide workforce training and educational opportunities. 4.3.3: Coordinate with local high schools to assess the potential to add vocational training elements in the classroom, including robotics and STEM subjects.	ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Growth Dimensions Local colleges Local high schools Public agencies with workforce training SBDC DCEO	
4.4	Encourage a diversified Boone County economy that compliments a thriving region. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	4.4.1: Coordinate with municipalities to prepare a detailed regional market analysis that identifies industry and business surpluses and gaps. 4.4.2: Identify appropriate areas around the county to locate potential new businesses to maximize their visibility, access, and potential for success.	ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Growth Dimensions Municipalities SBDC DCEO	
4.5	Use a variety of incentives to grow economic opportunities. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	4.5.1: Promote Opportunity and Enterprise Zones. 4.5.2: Evaluate potential to establish new TIF districts. 4.5.3: Coordinate with Growth Dimensions and municipalities to promote existing incentives. 4.5.4: Examine the feasibility of small business finance mechanisms, such as a revolving loan programs.	ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Growth Dimensions Municipalities SBDC DCEO	

PLAN ELEMENT 4: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

#	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	PHASING	PARTNERS	RESOURCES
4.6	Continue advancing agritourism opportunities and small rural businesses. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	4.6.1: Work with Enjoy Illinois to promote and develop county attractions. 4.6.2: Work with the Winnbago-Boone Farm Bureau to educate farmers on opportunities. 4.6.3: Provide information on Illinois Made. 4.6.4: Showcase Boone County’s agricultural resources and products at farmers markets and other agritourism venues or formats. 4.6.5: Coordinate with regional tourism efforts. 4.6.6: Promote outdoor recreational activities in the northern part of the county. 4.6.7: Investigate starting a Boone County Convention and Visitors Bureau.	ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Enjoy Illinois Winnbago-Boone Farm Bureau University of Illinois Extension Local agricultural businesses	
4.7	Consider existing or potential future public transit availability when planning for major employment centers. PRIORITY: LOWER ●	4.7.1: Craft and administer a survey of major employers, particularly along the industrial and commercial growth corridors south of Belvidere along I-90, to evaluate potential interest to expand Boone County Transit service. [Coordinate with Strategy 6.6.1] 4.7.2: Monitor long-term Amtrak and Metra transit services and coordinate economic development actions accordingly. [Coordinate with Strategy 6.6.4]	ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Municipalities Boone County Transit Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD) Local businesses Amtrak RTA Metra	
4.8	Support opportunities for home-based businesses. PRIORITY: LOWER ●	4.8.1: Consider flexibility in small business locations. 4.8.2: Provide resources that support home-based businesses, entrepreneurship, and startup business growth and development. 4.8.3: Evaluate potential for shared spaces aimed at entrepreneurial business growth to support local home-based businesses and entrepreneurs to expand beyond the home and potentially to their own spaces. - Coworking spaces - Business incubators - Ghost kitchens - Salon chair or suite rentals - Innovation hubs - Shared art studios	ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Growth Dimensions Municipalities Home-based businesses and entrepreneurs SBDC DCEO	

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

PLAN ELEMENT 5

HOUSING



GOAL: Boone County will encourage housing stock that protects the local rural heritage, supports county and municipal planning for growth, enables people to age in place, and meets the different needs, incomes, and life stages of all residents.

#	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	PHASING	PARTNERS	RESOURCES
5.1	Promote build out of existing subdivisions with vacant lots. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	5.1.1: Take inventory of residential lots in unincorporated subdivisions that are platted but remain undeveloped. 5.1.2: Coordinate with the original developers or builders of these vacant lots to determine whether they have plans to either : (a) develop them for housing, (b) transfer lot ownership to another developer or builder, or (c) utilize the lots for other uses other than residential. 5.1.3: Evaluate the fiscal and utility impacts of either building out the lots for housing or keeping the lots vacant for an indeterminate amount of time.	ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Original developers or builders of unfinished subdivisions	
5.2	Work with municipalities to strategically locate and develop sewer and water to support housing needs while meeting sustainability goals. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	5.2.1: Evaluate the water and sewer utility needs of new developments as part of the development review process. 5.2.2: Maintain communication with municipalities and unincorporated subdivisions to evaluate capacity levels and potential expansion plans for water and sewer utilities.	Ongoing Ongoing	County Municipalities Unincorporated subdivisions	
5.3	Locate new unplatted subdivisions strategically. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	5.3.1: Assess the unincorporated parts of the county to determine the optimal spots for unplatted subdivisions, including potential to expand or connect to existing subdivisions of similar nature. 5.3.2: Consider infrastructure and utility needs and the ease of providing ongoing services, particularly whether municipal utility linkages are available or private well and septic infrastructure is needed. 5.3.3: Evaluate impact on property tax revenue growth and school enrollment.	ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Municipalities Unincorporated subdivisions	
5.4	Encourage housing options and programs for residents in need of affordable housing. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	5.4.1: Educate residents on opportunities to renovate and repair existing housing. 5.4.2: Convene a focus group with local developers, home builders, and residential real estate brokers to discuss and gain an understanding of the local and regional housing market, including affordable and workforce housing. 5.4.3: Use updated UDO regulations to encourage affordable housing. 5.4.4: Investigate development incentives to encourage new affordable housing.	Ongoing ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Local realtors Local developers and builders Boone County Housing Authority	

PLAN ELEMENT 5: HOUSING

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

#	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	PHASING	PARTNERS	RESOURCES
5.5	Strive for a balance between housing demand and supply. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	5.5.1: Maintain regular contact with area realtors, property managers, local developers, and the Boone County Housing Authority to understand supply and demand. 5.5.2: Conduct a detailed housing needs assessment for the county. 5.5.3: Utilize tools like the Housing Supply Accelerator Playbook to boost diverse, attainable, and equitable housing supply across the county. 5.5.4: Provide housing maintenance programs and resources to support property owners to rehab and maintain their homes to modernize and preserve the longevity of the existing housing stock. 5.5.5: Repurpose underutilized or vacant housing to better meet changing housing needs. 5.5.6: Support gentle density, missing middle, and mixed income housing to expand housing options. 5.5.7: Preserve existing farmsteads to maintain unique aspect of housing supply.	Ongoing ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Local realtors Developers and builders Property managers Boone County Housing Authority Landowners	
5.6	Prepare for and accommodate long-term population changes affecting housing needs. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	5.6.1: Promote options for older adults at all levels of ability from independent to nursing care. 5.6.2: Encourage the turnover of existing homes from older owners to younger. 5.6.3: Encourage realtor boards to support local realtors to develop skills in working with seniors. 5.6.4: Prioritize walkability and age-friendly design in new residential developments.	Ongoing Ongoing ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Local realtors	
5.7	Work with major employers to explore potential workforce housing. PRIORITY: LOWER ●	5.7.1: Consider data on local wages and industry compensation trends when reviewing housing development opportunities. 5.7.2: Work with local employers to examine the location, housing type, and cost of where current employees live. 5.7.3: Educate employers on their potential role in creating housing supply.	Ongoing ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs	County Belvidere Area Chamber of Commerce Local employers Local realtors Local developers and builders	
5.8	Support innovative housing that facilitates home based businesses, multigenerational living, and new opportunities to address housing needs. PRIORITY: LOWER ●	5.8.1: Support homeowner interest in renovations to accommodate multiple generations. 5.8.2: Investigate innovative housing examples from elsewhere. 5.8.3: Provide information to realtors to inform them where home based businesses are allowed. 5.8.4: Ensure the UDO and local ordinances and policies allow for innovative housing.	Ongoing ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Municipalities Local realtors Local developers and builders	

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

PLAN ELEMENT 6

TRANSPORTATION



GOAL: Boone County residents and businesses will have safe, accessible, and affordable infrastructure and services that support mobility for users of all ages, abilities, and transportation choices across the county and connecting with the region.

#	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	PHASING	PARTNERS	RESOURCES
6.1	<p>Coordinate future roadway improvements with capital improvement programs and potential grant funding.</p> <p>PRIORITY: HIGH ●</p>	<p>6.1.1: Coordinate the county’s 10-, 25-, and 50-year long-range roadway improvement plans with capital improvement programs.</p> <p>6.1.2: Pursue applicable state and federal grants regarding roadway improvements.</p> <p>6.1.3: Update the county’s 10-, 25-, and 50-year long-range roadway improvement plans as new needs and opportunities arise.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>ST: 1-3 yrs</p> <p>LT: 4+ yrs</p>	<p>County</p> <p>Local road jurisdictions</p> <p>IDOT</p>	
6.2	<p>Continue buildout of alternative transportation options, including increased opportunities to travel by bicycle.</p> <p>PRIORITY: HIGH ●</p>	<p>6.2.1: Consider walkability, bikeability, and trail connectivity in development plan reviews.</p> <p>6.2.2: Pursue applicable state and federal grants regarding bicycle and trail infrastructure.</p> <p>6.2.3: Coordinate expansion of the regional trail network with the Boone County Conservation District, Belvidere Township Park District, roadway jurisdictions, and other trail providers.</p> <p>6.2.4: Coordinate with Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning’s (RMAP) 2017 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.</p> <p>6.2.5: Prioritize bicycle corridors along Squaw Prairie Road, Beloit Road, and Town Hall Road</p> <p>6.2.6: Encourage bike racks and related bike infrastructure along trails and areas that benefit from bike access like commercial areas, parks, recreation facilities, etc.</p> <p>6.2.7: Update county policies and ordinances to provide for proper regulations regarding electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and infrastructure.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>ST: 1-3 yrs</p> <p>LT: 4+ yrs</p> <p>LT: 4+ yrs</p> <p>LT: 4+ yrs</p> <p>LT: 4+ yrs</p> <p>LT: 4+ yrs</p>	<p>County</p> <p>Boone County Conservation District</p> <p>Belvidere Township Park District</p> <p>Local road jurisdictions</p> <p>Other trail providers</p>	
6.3	<p>Evaluate and implement roadway safety measures as traffic volume changes and safety considerations arise.</p> <p>PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●</p>	<p>6.3.1: Monitor traffic patterns before and after construction of major developments, including the requirement of traffic impact studies for all new proposed development applications.</p> <p>6.3.2: Pursue traffic calming measures where appropriate with proper consultation with affected residents and businesses and coordination with proper roadway jurisdictions.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>County</p> <p>Local road jurisdictions</p> <p>IDOT</p>	

PLAN ELEMENT 6: **TRANSPORTATION**

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

#	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	PHASING	PARTNERS	RESOURCES
6.4	<p>Coordinate designated truck routes with IDOT and municipalities.</p> <p>PRIORITY: LOWER ●</p>	<p>6.4.1: Monitor truck traffic along major roadways and areas that experience unwanted cut-through traffic.</p> <p>6.4.2: Coordinate with IDOT and other local road jurisdictions to develop and implement measures to minimize impacts of truck traffic.</p> <p>6.4.3: Work with IDOT to properly designate certain roadways as truck routes with adequate directional signage.</p>	<p>ST: 1-3 yrs</p> <p>LT: 4+ yrs</p> <p>LT: 4+ yrs</p>	<p>County</p> <p>Local road jurisdictions</p> <p>IDOT</p>	
6.5	<p>Coordinate all proposed and existing transit services among providers and with stakeholders.</p> <p>PRIORITY: LOWER ●</p>	<p>6.5.1: Craft and administer a survey of major employers, particularly along the industrial and commercial growth corridors south of Belvidere along I-90, to evaluate potential interest to expand Boone County Transit service.</p> <p>[Coordinate with Strategy 4.7.1]</p> <p>6.5.2: Coordinate with service providers to evaluate service adjustments as new residential development are built and may warrant changes.</p> <p>6.5.3: Monitor the potential to supplement existing Boone County Transit and RMTD services with emerging trends in on-demand microtransit, i.e., use of small vans or shuttles for ride request service (similar to Lyft and Uber).</p> <p>6.5.4: Pursue park-and-ride facilities to support efficient multimodal travel to surrounding communities, including regional transit facilities from Metra and Pace.</p> <p>6.5.5: Monitor long-term Amtrak and Metra transit services and coordinate local actions accordingly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposed plans for extension of Amtrak service into Boone County with a station in Belvidere - Proposed plans for Metra Rockford Intercity Passenger Rail service through a continuation of Metra's current UP-W Line from the Big Timber Road station in Elgin westward with stations in Huntley, Belvidere, and Rockford 	<p>ST: 1-3 yrs</p> <p>NT: 4-6 yrs</p> <p>LT: 4+ yrs</p> <p>LT: 4+ yrs</p> <p>LT: 4+ yrs</p>	<p>County</p> <p>Boone County Transit</p> <p>Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD)</p> <p>Local businesses</p> <p>Amtrak</p> <p>RTA</p> <p>Metra</p>	

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

PLAN ELEMENT 7

UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE



GOAL: Boone County will support utilities and infrastructure that efficiently and equitably meet the needs of residents, businesses, and property owners, with potential for expansion to accommodate growth and development, adapt to land constraints, respect private property rights, and respect the preservation of land, water, and other natural resources.

#	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	PHASING	PARTNERS	RESOURCES
7.1	Expand broadband infrastructure to improve connectivity for residents and businesses and as an economic development incentive to attract new businesses. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	7.1.1: Craft and administer a periodic telecommunications survey to understand the internet, cellular phone, and telecommunication needs of local homes, businesses, schools, and other organizations. 7.1.2: Coordinate with internet, cellular phone, and telecommunication service providers in the region to evaluate their service areas and gaps, promote their current services, and provide community information on future upgrades. 7.1.3: Coordinate with Growth Dimensions and municipalities to include information on current and future telecommunications infrastructure in materials to attract new businesses to Boone County.	ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs	County Region 1 Planning Council Municipalities Unincorporated subdivisions School Districts Residents Local businesses Growth Dimensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illinois Office of Broadband • Illinois Broadband Lab • APA Planning and Broadband
7.2	Continue to improve stormwater management infrastructure in road rights-of-way, parking areas, and other areas to help reduce flooding and support groundwater recharge. PRIORITY: HIGH ●	7.2.1: Coordinate county stormwater management efforts with relevant strategies from municipalities, Illinois EPA, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 7.2.2: Expand the use of green infrastructure, including rain gardens, bioswales, prairie restoration, native plantings, green roofs, permeable pavers, etc. 7.2.3: Preserve natural habitats and native plantings wherever possible when implementing stormwater management best practices. 7.2.4: Coordinate with the Boone County Conservation District to update their County Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan. 7.2.5: Modernize the stormwater ordinance.	Ongoing ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Municipalities Unincorporated subdivisions Boone County Conservation District Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District Illinois EPA U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	
7.3	Encourage new development to connect to current or expanded municipal utilities, where feasible. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	7.3.1: Evaluate the water and sewer utility needs of new developments as part of the development review process. 7.3.2: Maintain communication with municipalities and unincorporated subdivisions to evaluate capacity levels and potential expansion plans for water and sewer utilities.	Ongoing Ongoing	County Municipalities Unincorporated subdivisions	

PLAN ELEMENT 7: UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

#	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	PHASING	PARTNERS	RESOURCES
7.4	Protect agricultural drainage systems. PRIORITY: MEDIUM ●	7.4.1: Evaluate existing soil conditions, drainage issues, and tile drainage systems across county lands. 7.4.2: Research and compile agricultural drainage best practices that are suitable for Northern Illinois. 7.4.3: Develop a countywide drainage maintenance strategy. 7.4.4: Encourage landowners to implement practices identified in the countywide drainage maintenance strategy.	ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Agricultural landowners Winnebago-Boone Farm Bureau University of Illinois Extension Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District Illinois Sustainable Ag Partnership	
7.5	Coordinate with landowners whose property has constraints (e.g., topography, high or low water table, soil erosion, wetlands, etc.) that may impact private well and septic infrastructure. PRIORITY: LOWER ●	7.5.1: Compile list of relevant landowners. 7.5.2: Communicate with relevant landowners to identify common issues and potential solutions regarding well and septic infrastructure in the county. 7.5.3: Direct landowners to information from local well and septic companies regarding the installation and maintenance of well and septic infrastructure on their properties.	ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs	County Boone County Soil and Water Conservation District Boone County Health Department Landowners with well and septic	
7.6	Support and encourage infrastructure improvements through incentives. PRIORITY: LOWER ●	7.6.1: Monitor how the use of state regulatory relief via local Enterprise Zones impact utilities infrastructure across the county, particularly the exemption on the state utility tax for electricity and natural gas. 7.6.2: Identify utility, roadway, or other infrastructure improvements that may be eligible for grants or incentive funding via TIF districts and Enterprise Zones. 7.6.3: Monitor current and anticipated fund levels in existing TIF districts to plan out potential spending of funds over time before the TIF district expires (with potential for renewal). 7.6.4: Coordinate with Growth Dimensions to evaluate and enhance incentives relating to utilities and public infrastructure, including: - Business Development Public Infrastructure Program (BDPIP) - Community Development Assistance Program for Economic Development (CDAP-ED) - High Impact Business (HIB) 7.6.5: Evaluate the potential to establish new TIF districts in conjunction with municipalities, including along major roadway corridors and in residential, commercial, and industrial growth areas.	Ongoing ST: 1-3 yrs ST: 1-3 yrs LT: 4+ yrs LT: 4+ yrs	County Municipalities DCEO TIF consultant Utility providers Roadway jurisdictions	

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APPENDIX

A: Resident Survey Findings	A2
B: Comment Map Summary	A6
C: AARP Livability Index Definitions	A7
D: Townships Map	A9
E: Fire Districts Map	A10
F: School Districts Map	A11



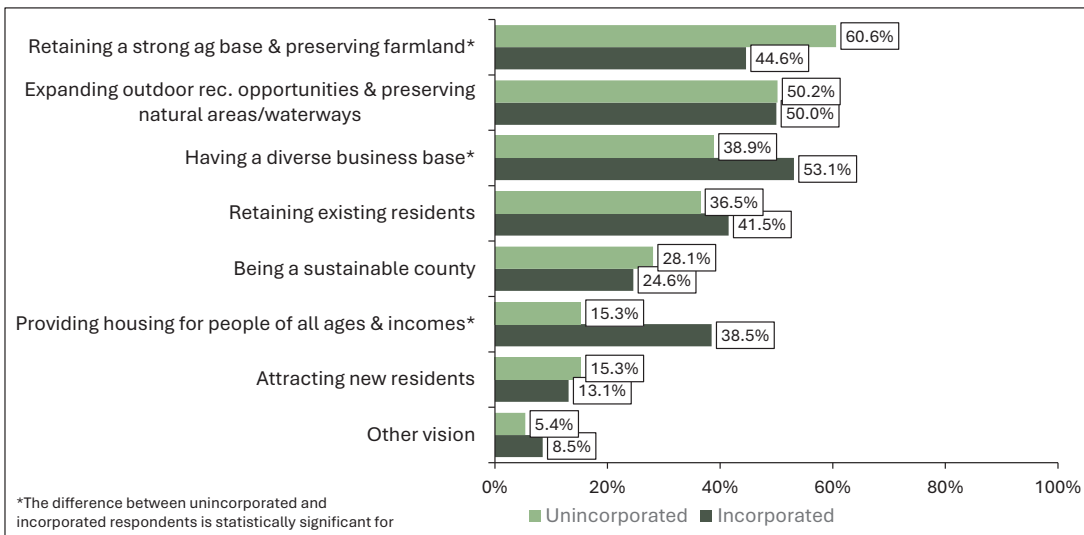
APPENDIX A: RESIDENT SURVEY FINDINGS



Survey Findings

Future Planning and Development *Vision for the Future of Boone County*

Thinking about what you would like Boone County to be like in 5-10 years, which of the following are most important? (Select up to 3)



APPENDIX A: RESIDENT SURVEY FINDINGS



Future Planning and Development

Vision for the Future of Boone County

• What is your biggest concern for the future of Boone County?

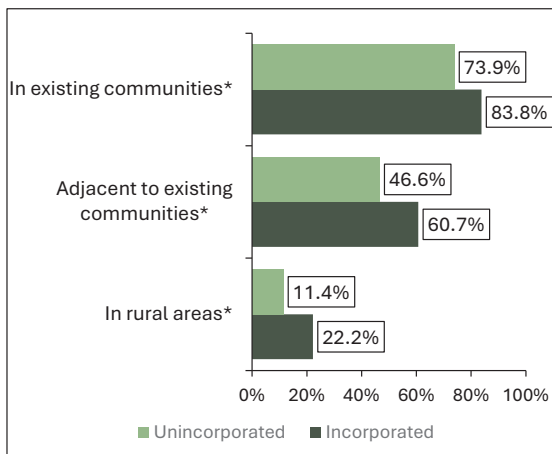
• Most common responses

- **Unmanaged growth** of business and residential areas, suburbanization, overpopulation
- **Loss of farmland** and open space
- **Taxes** remain too high

Future Planning and Development

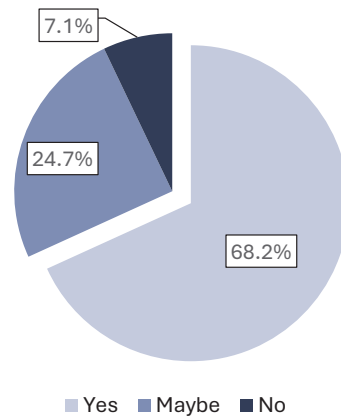
Location of Future Development

Where should future residential growth occur? (Check all that apply)



*The difference between unincorporated and incorporated residents is statistically significant for this item

Should open space in the form of farmland or natural areas be retained as separation between communities?



APPENDIX A: RESIDENT SURVEY FINDINGS

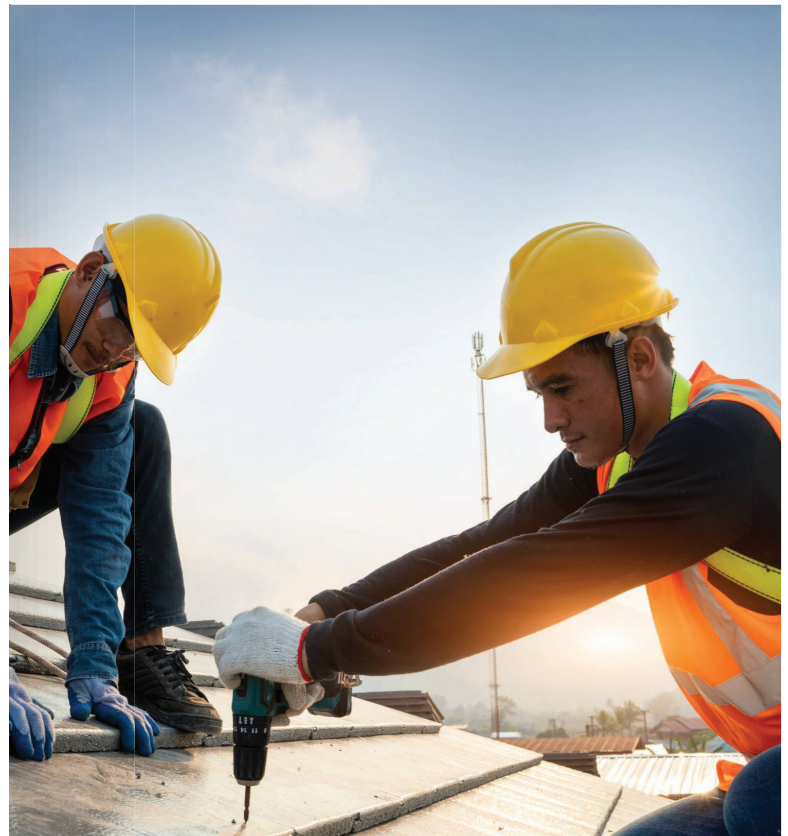


Future Planning and Development
Rating Current Amounts of Development Types

- Respondents were most likely to say there is **too little** of the following types of development:
 - **Hotels and other overnight accommodations** (65.2% of unincorporated residents and 88.0% of incorporated residents say there is too little of this type of development)
 - **Entertainment/cultural activities** (64.5% of unincorporated residents; 80.9% of incorporated residents)
 - **Retail shops, including grocery stores** (63.5% of unincorporated residents; 86.0% of incorporated residents)

Future Planning and Development
Rating Current Amounts of Development Types

- Respondents were most likely to say there is **too much** of the following types of development:
 - **Rental units** (37.2% of unincorporated residents and 13.6% of incorporated residents say there is too much of this type of development)
 - **Multi-family residential** (36.1% of unincorporated residents; 22.6% of incorporated residents)
 - **Single-family residential** (16.0% of unincorporated residents; 11.7% of incorporated residents)
 - **Industrial and warehouses** (14.4% of unincorporated residents; 29.1% of incorporated residents)

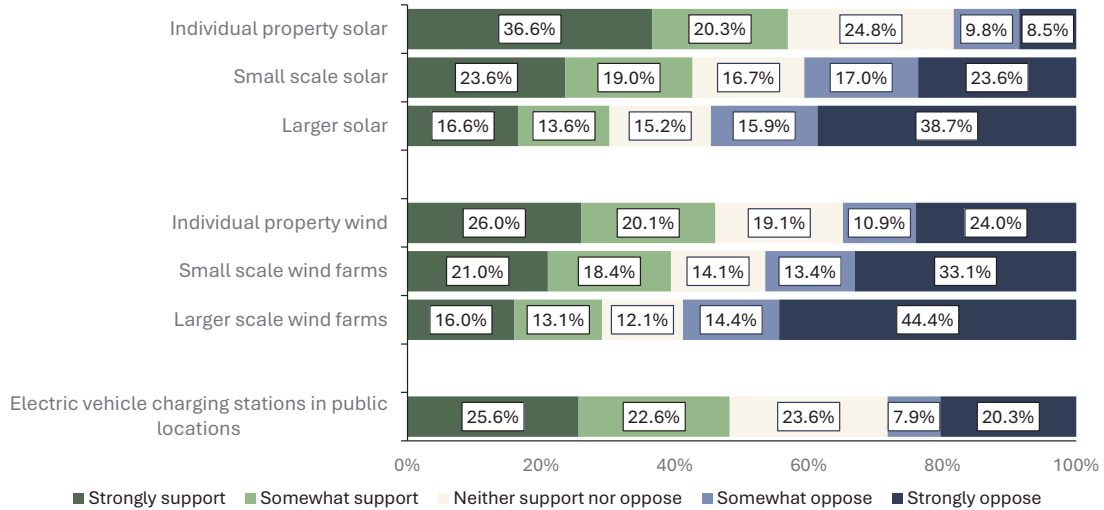


APPENDIX A: RESIDENT SURVEY FINDINGS

Future Planning and Development

Support for Alternative Energy Sources

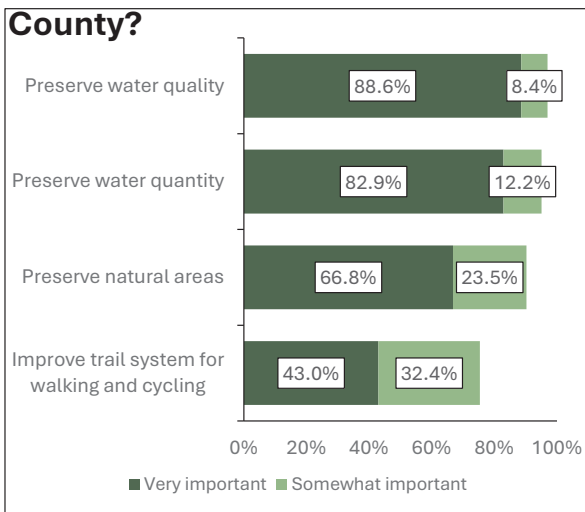
What is your opinion of the use of the following alternative energy sources in Boone County?



Future Planning and Development

Importance of Preservation Initiatives

How important or unimportant is it to do the following in the



At least 9 of 10 respondents said it was **very or somewhat important** to:

- **Preserve water quality** (97.0% said this was very or somewhat important)
- **Preserve water quantity** (95.1%)
- **Preserve natural areas** (90.3%)

Three-quarters said it was **very or somewhat important** to:

- **Improve trail system for walking and cycling** (75.4%)

APPENDIX B: COMMENT MAP SUMMARY

Jordan | 05 September, 2024

Your Comment
Extend the bike path from North High School to Beavercreek subdivision and add a small park in the field next to the subdivision entrance.

How do you rate this?
👍 👎
Select a rating



APPENDIX C: AARP LIVABILITY INDEX DEFINITIONS



Key Terms

The following are key terms and definitions of important concepts to understanding and engaging with the AARP Livability Index™.

Accessibility


Accessibility refers to community services, features, and amenities that take into account varying levels of physical mobility

Affordability

Affordability refers to features, services and amenities that are suitable for people at different levels of income.

Age-Friendly Communities

An age-friendly community supports and meets the needs of people of all ages.

[The AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities](#)  serves as a catalyst to educate local leaders (both elected officials and engaged residents) and encourage them to implement the types of changes that make communities more livable, especially older adults.

[Learn More and Join the Network](#) 

Attribute


Attributes refer to qualities or features regarded as a characteristic of a livable community. Examples of this include affordability, accessibility, safety, convenience, inclusion, prevention, quality, resilience and involvement.

Category

Categories refer to general topic areas that define the type of characteristics found within a community. AARP selected 7 livability categories that are critical to evaluating a community. They are: housing, neighborhood, transportation, environment, health, engagement, and opportunity. These categories are scored on a scale of 0-100 and each receive weight.

Learn more about the [7 AARP Livability Index™ Categories](#) and understand how they impact the overall [score](#).

Commitment To Livability

“Commitment to livability” is a cross-cutting policy that refers to membership in the [Network of Age Friendly States and Communities](#) . This policy appears under each category, contributing one point to the total score.

Community

A community refers to a town, city or larger collective of smaller neighborhoods.



APPENDIX C: AARP LIVABILITY INDEX DEFINITIONS

The General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) is the de facto data standard for public transit passenger information. The GTFS allows transportation service providers to share their geographic, schedule, fare and other data with traveler-facing applications, such as Google Maps, to aid customers with trip planning.

Imputed Data

Imputed data is an estimated value where actual data for that location is unavailable.

AARP imputes missing data by assigning estimated values in two ways:

- We may use the national average, which results in a neutral performance on an indicator.
- We may assign the state or rural average if that appears to be more accurate than the national average.

Livability

There is no one definition of livability—it means different things to different people.

Communities that are truly livable offer diverse features that appeal to people of all ages, incomes, and abilities.

AARP determines livability by evaluating how a community supports its members in seven critical categories: housing, neighborhood, transportation, environment, health, engagement, and opportunity.

[Take a deeper dive into Livability.](#)

Metrics

Metrics measure how livable communities are in the present. Each livability category contains 4-9 metrics and data is collected and analyzed from local, state, federal, and private sources.

Discover the [metrics](#) AARP uses for the AARP Livability Index™ and understand how they impact the overall [score](#).

Missing Middle Housing

Missing middle housing describes a range of multifamily housing types that are compatible in scale with detached single-family homes (e.g., duplex, fourplex, townhouse).

Neighborhood

A neighborhood refers to a census block group. Scores are built from the neighborhood level (census block group) up, a community is scored on the collective neighborhood scores within their boundaries.

Policies

Policies measure actions that communities can take now to improve livability over time. Each livability category contains 1-5 policies and policy data is publicly available and covers the entire US.

Discover the [policies](#) AARP uses for the AARP Livability Index™ and understand how they impact the overall [score](#).

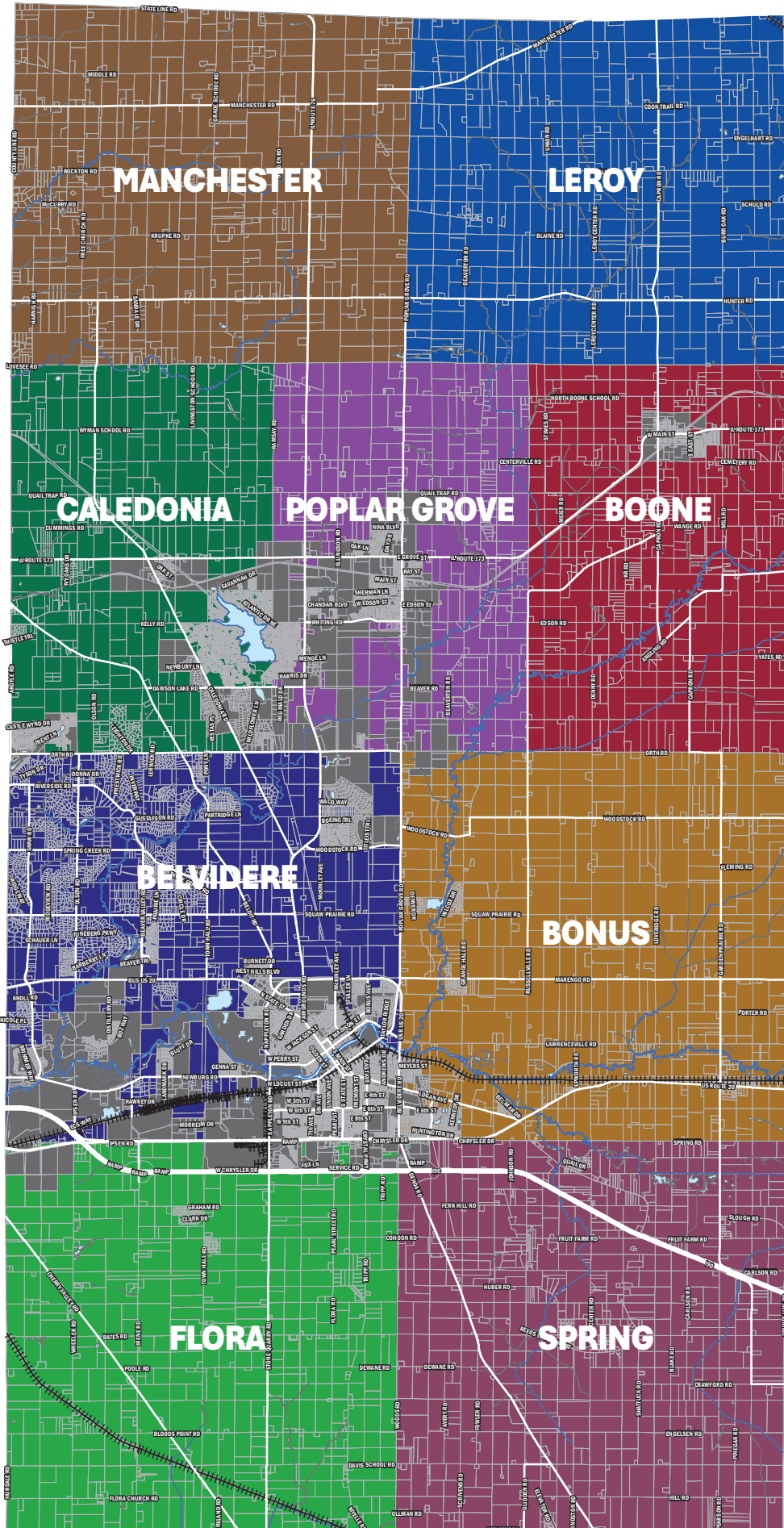


APPENDIX D

TOWNSHIPS MAP

LEGEND

- Belvidere Township
- Bonus Township
- Boone Township
- Caledonia Township
- Flora Township
- Leroy Township
- Manchester Township
- Poplar Grove Township
- Spring Township
- Municipalities

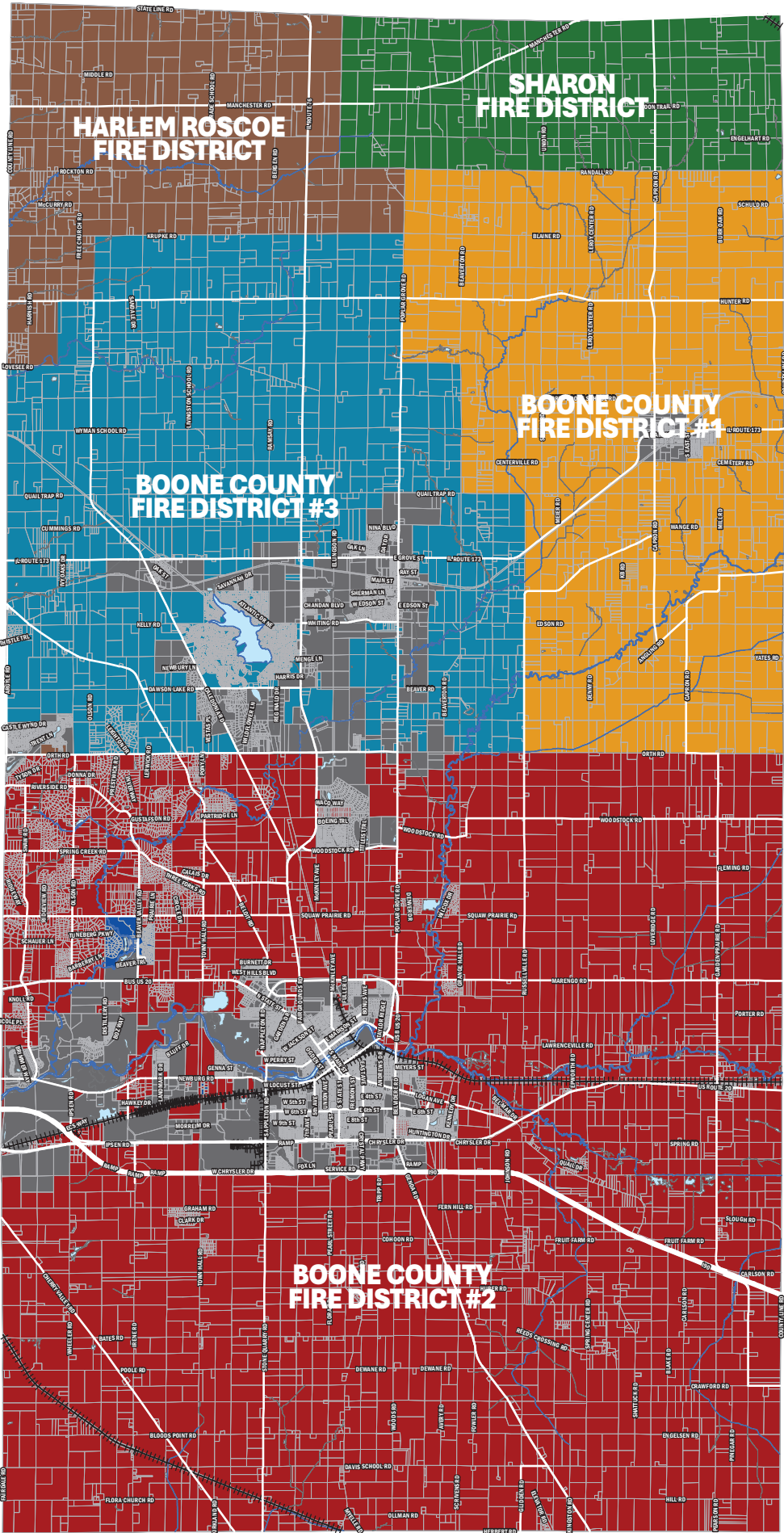


APPENDIX E

FIRE DISTRICTS MAP
FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICTS

LEGEND

- Boone County Fire District #1
- Boone County Fire District #2
- Boone County Fire District #3
- Harlem Roscoe Fire District
- Sharon Fire District
- Municipalities



APPENDIX F

SCHOOL DISTRICTS MAP

COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICTS (CUSDs)

LEGEND

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

