

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COUNTY FACILITIES

Key Issues in Infrastructure and County Facilities

- Telecommunications (page 5)
- Heartland Bus Express (pages 5, 17)
- Water and Water Treatment (pages 7 – 8)
- Transportation Infrastructure (pages 13 – 17)
- County Buildings (pages 17 – 20)

Countywide Goals

- Continue to develop the telecommunications industry in order to enhance sustainability of the County.
- Increase overall effectiveness of the Heartland Bus Express.
- Continue to support the upgrading of septic sewer systems to citywide sewer systems.
- Continue to provide and plan for an adequate transportation system composed of highways, rail, aviation, and increased public transit as need warrants.
- Establish a Countywide facilities commission in order to ensure the vitality of the overall system.

Introduction

In this section of the Comprehensive Plan, background information is provided on those public, and semi-public facilities, which provide various services to Nobles County residents. These services include parks and recreation areas, water and sewer service, educational facilities, medical facilities, transportation infrastructure, and county owned buildings. This section reveals those services that county residents believe are currently functioning with inadequacies. It also provides goals and policies that will help to solve these problems and it provides sound planning for meeting future needs.

Issues Summary

The location and construction of new amenities throughout the County, as well as their overall necessity, was identified as an important issue. Many rural citizens voiced concerns that some of the current projects are not only increasing taxes, but they are also primarily benefiting the main urban areas. Residents pointed out that during the hard times currently being experienced by most farmers, more careful spending procedures should be implemented.

Transportation infrastructure throughout the County brought up a fair amount of discussion at both the community meetings, as well as the transportation issue meeting. Many pointed out that funding, which is essential for the upkeep of all roads within the County, as well as correcting problems with load weight restrictions, is critical to the County's sustainability. Some fear of the state spending too much money on the light rail project instead of road improvements was expressed. It was felt that some of the County roads that serve as mainstream travel for small

communities should continue to be properly maintained, as these roads are important to all rural areas.

The availability of water and the condition of many of the septic systems in rural areas continue to be important issues. Residents expressed concerns over the Lewis and Clark water project. They realize that there will not be a guaranteed amount of water coming from the project and even with it up and operational, the County will still be in need of water. Several communities throughout the County are currently served by septic sewer systems that are aging and beginning to fail. There are those rural communities that will have to be upgrading in the near future and so education regarding regulations, costs, time constraints, as well as other requirements, will greatly benefit many communities. Water is discussed further in the Conservation, Parks, and Recreation Section.

Others wanted to know how long can the landfill stay open and what would happen to its usage if the private ownership were to be changed. Residents also discussed improved telecommunications and the overall effectiveness of the Heartland Bus. Additional marketing was recommended to promote it, and many thought the bus service should be expanded.

Some issues briefly discussed involved the museum located in the War Memorial Building, a closed County maintenance shed, and a proposed recycling center. Residents felt that the museum is not functioning properly in the space that they currently have. An issue pointed out was that the museum does not have the proper amount of space necessary to keep required records and other important documents, so restructuring of the museum is required. Residents also indicated that the existing recycling shed works fine, but if another one is required it should be simple and convenient to use.

Police protection is based on a cost schedule saying police protection is determined by a flat rate, not community size. Many rural areas can't afford the cost associated with having the sheriff's department patrol in their area and they feel that this should be covered by the amount of taxes they pay. Some felt the cost of contracting for law enforcement with the communities must be improved, possibly by instituting a new form of payment such as paying for per capita or per hour services. This might be a better option for the rural areas as opposed to the flat fee.

Consideration must be taken as to how the area would continue to support any new projects if the population continues to decline. Another topic that raised concerns as to the effectiveness of the police and fire squads was the closing of a county shed that was used for storing snow removal equipment. It was believed by some of those in attendance that County residents have a longer period of waiting for snow removal on certain roads because of this closing. However, the County did not actually provide snow removal services for emergency response out of the Wilmont shop. The majority of roads in the Wilmont service area are paved and service is now provided out of Worthington. In addition, a vehicle is dispatched directly to the Wilmont Community from Worthington.

Other issues that were talked about at the community meetings dealt with area schools and the emergency 911 system. Residents expressed concerned over past and potential school closings and consolidations. Opinions given stated that consolidation is not always the best option when

dealing with declining enrollment. Better alternatives must be discovered because continually increasing the bussing distances (which also increases costs) that children must travel is not benefiting them or the schools. In regards to the emergency 911 system, many residents felt local governmental units should have to pay for the costs of the system. Maps of Nobles County Ambulance Areas and Fire Districts can be found in the Maps Section, Map #16 and Map #17.

Infrastructure and County Facilities Strengths

The new schools and the overall effectiveness of the current educational facilities are looked upon as a real strength for Nobles County. Residents within the County felt that children are currently receiving a good education and achieving high test scores due to the importance placed on education. Many within Nobles County communities also regard open enrollment and the area's public libraries favorably. The County library bookmobile received praise as most feel the library and its services are important to rural areas. Keeping the bookmobile adequately funded is in the County's best interests, as is the potential to add services or special presentations for children through usage of the bookmobile.

The many well maintained roads and bridges throughout the County are also viewed as a strength for Nobles County. The major transportation routes such as I-90, Highway 59 and Highway 60, as well as air and rail transports, are extremely important assets to the County and should continue to be properly maintained. The County should continue to do an excellent job of connecting all paved roads while maintaining an overall effective transportation system.

The potential for the Heartland Bus Service is also viewed as a strength in the County. It is well maintained and provides a beneficial service. It is an excellent option for seniors as well as a large number other people, as it is very affordable.

Rural water systems are those that pipe drinking water to rural homes, or in some instances, to whole municipalities. Three systems: Lincoln-Pipestone Rural Water; Red Rock Rural Water; and Rock County Rural Water, are currently operating in Southwest Minnesota. Lincoln-Pipestone Rural Water provides a large amount of quality drinking water to the area, and this should be considered a limited resource that is to be preserved and protected. Money must be secured in the form of grants and other loans in order to refurbish and upgrade water and sewer systems as they continue to age.

Other strengths that were noted by residents in the County included the presence of adequate police coverage in most areas, strong medical facilities, and also pride in the job that the County residents do in their recycling efforts. Presently, the County's recycling center is highly used, and this can be attributed to the education plan covering recycling techniques made available to Nobles County residents.

Infrastructure and County Facilities Weaknesses

As with many of the following issues, both the school system and library system have generated concerns, even though many residents in the County view them as overall strengths. In general, both the school system and library system present many positive attributes and benefits for the

County. However, certain aspects of each are cause for concern. Due to the declining overall population within the County, many residents feared the enrollment levels in the County's schools are also declining. These feelings are inaccurate, however, as pointed out earlier in the Demographics Section. The enrollment rates in Nobles County for the 1999 – 2000 school year have actually increased from the 1998 – 1999 school year.

Citizens also expressed concern on overall attendance at the various public libraries in Nobles County. Residents would like to see operating hours that allow working parents the opportunity to take their children to the library without having to take time off from work.

Transportation issues in this section deal with recreation trails. While many in the County view these trails as a positive and beneficial resource for the County to develop, there are those that feel the project is weakened by the fact that the trails are limited to the county road system and are not taking full advantage of all natural areas.

Final concerns were also raised as to the lack of an adequate airline service for Nobles County and many felt that the airport currently has a poor access.

The Future of Infrastructure and County Facilities

The County's education system is of great concern in terms of future planning in Nobles County. Many issues need to be addressed. One of these issues was the ability for a student and his or her family to choose between public and private schools. Rural residents voiced their opinions at several meetings stating that they will continue to oppose the idea of a countywide school as increased busing distances and travel times are not appealing to rural residents. Some residents noted that they feel that there are school facilities that are aging and in danger of becoming dilapidated or abandoned. They would like to see funding for the rehabilitation of distressed facilities. While some school districts have already taken care of these problems in various ways, education is extremely important for attracting high-tech employment to the area, and all future school planning should keep this in mind.

Some residents feel that the historical society, library, and arts center, (which are located in the basement of the War Memorial Building) will need more room in order to adequately carry out their services. The rural delivery of library services should be preserved since many people take advantage of the bookmobile. The cost effectiveness of the bookmobile has been under question. Ideas for improvement ranged from expanding its activities to include plays, and puppet shows, to other type of activities such as increased technology use (Internet), making it more cost effective.

Roads and road conditions throughout the County will remain a high priority for residents. The expansion of Highway 60 to a four-lane roadway was viewed as the most important opportunity in terms of transportation within Nobles County. Residents stated that the reconstruction of Highway 60 could increase the potential for economic prosperity. Residents voiced their opinion in that the City of Bigelow, for example, should prefer the bypass option because the other option would raise economic and safety concerns within the City.

The closeness of Interstate 90 and the potential for commuter rail were also important to some of those attending the issue meeting. At the community meetings, many voiced their concerns regarding future paving of gravel roads that lie within established communities. Many felt that the paving of all streets within small communities is important to those communities. While it does increase storm water management needs, it can help to make those communities more attractive to homeowners and help to attract business. Some of those in attendance wanted to see the County rebuild problem roads and then develop partnerships with the townships for maintenance. Others showed great concern in the current number of low maintenance roads feeling that more roads within the County may have to be labeled this way. Questions also arose as to whether or not closing these roads would be the best answer or if residents were willing to have a raise in taxes in order to keep them operational.

Another item discussed concerning future infrastructure planning was the importance of telecommunications. Residents felt that the rural areas need better telecommunication services to stay competitive with the more urban areas. The proper telecommunications infrastructure is necessary to attract certain businesses. Small communities can often be left out of these opportunities due to the fact they do not have the ability to receive these required infrastructure updates. Effort should be made to keep the rural areas competitive.

Public transportation and the Heartland Bus generated discussion for future planning in Nobles County. Residents reiterated that they would like to see public transportation being able to pick people up at their homes so they would not have to get in their car and drive to a designated pick-up area. Ideas for improving the bus also included furthering the development of an established bus route system and then publishing this schedule in as many highly visible places as possible. These areas of high visibility include local newspapers, grocery stores, city halls and senior centers. The more the coverage of Heartland is expanded, the more effective it will be. Further information on transportation can be found later in this Section.

The idea of combining both City and County services was brought up frequently at many meetings. Residents felt that combining services and buildings in rural areas such as community centers or meeting rooms, could reduce demand for construction of new (infrequently used) buildings. By combining all possible services, costs will be saved because newly added infrastructure will not be required. In addition, Capital Improvement Programs are instrumental in providing adequate planning and ensuring adequate funding for all large-scale future growth.

Water concerns remain a priority with residents in the County. The overall feeling at most meetings was that water quality in the County is good, but in actuality there many bodies of water with high nitrate problems, natural hardness and too high of sulfates. Questions also remain on the potable supply. Residents felt that every effort should be made to protect available water supplies. In addition, there are cities (and unincorporated areas) that are still served by individual septic systems and will be requiring citywide sewer upgrades in the near future. Efforts should be taken to secure grant and low interest loans for these types of improvements.

Other ideas for future planning included finding more appropriate means of reaching the needs of the sick and elderly. Small town hospitals may continue to play an increased role in these

situations and assisted living facilities will have to continue to provide more services. High quality medical facilities will continue to remain extremely important.

Parks and Recreation

There are approximately 400 acres of parkland in Nobles County. Of those 400 acres, 175 acres (43.8%) make up the 8 parks owned by the County. The cities, towns and townships within the County own the remaining 225 acres. In addition, Nobles County has one State Scientific and Natural Area (Compass Prairie) but no State Parks.

Park and recreation areas in Nobles County provide attractive amenities for those who not only live within the County but also for those who may be passing through. These facilities may be both rest areas and recreation areas, which will increase overall enjoyment of visitors to Nobles County. There is also support throughout the County for adding to or building new trails and trail systems. An effort should be made to link all current bike and pedestrian trail systems together. The trails should attempt to avoid busy roads and highways, link with other trails, and include new developments such as Prairie Expo. Although there are barriers to accessing DNR lands with trails, attempts should be made to utilize wildlife and scenic areas wherever possible.

Total park and recreation areas in the County should provide sufficient amounts of area and attractions to serve both present and projected County population. These areas should be designed to fill the specific demand and needs of County residents. Nobles County owns an on site home for the caretaker of the Nobles County parks, and the following is a list of each individual park owned by the County (a map of all parks and historical sites can be found in the Map Section, Map #18).

1. Maka - Oicu Park. This park is located on West Graham Lake in Northeastern Nobles County and is approximately 46 acres in size. Maka – Oicu Park offers picnic and shelter grounds, playground equipment, a beach and a swimming area, a boat landing, dump station, 29 electric sites and 9 non-electric sites. This park provides bath and shower facilities, water hydrants throughout the park as well as a rental cabin. The possibility of adding nine new campsites is also being considered in the near future.
2. Fury's Island Park. This park is located on East Graham Lake and is approximately 10 acres in size. It offers 20 electric sites and 11 non-electric sites. It has a restroom and shower facility, water hydrants, picnic shelter and grounds, playground equipment and two boat landings.
3. Hawkeye Park. This park is located on Indian Lake and consists of approximately 41 acres. It has two boat landings and a picnic shelter in addition to playground equipment.
4. Sunrise Prairie Park. Located in Little Rock Township, this park consists of 4 acres of original prairie and an adjoining 18 acres consisting of many native prairie plants. This park also has a pioneer cemetery.

5. Midway County Park. Located in Larkin Township, this park is made up of 45 acres of wildlife area. It also has a gravel pit pond.
6. Pickeral Point Park. This is a four-acre site on Ocheda Lake and includes a boat access area.
7. Sportsman's Park. This is a seven-acre tract of land on Ocheda Lake that is mainly used for hunting but also includes a boat access.
8. Adrian Springs. This spring is currently closed to the public, but was once a popular attraction for well water. Once road construction has been completed in the area, future plans for this spring include designating it as a historic site. Its historical significance comes from the time of early settlement when pioneers used it as a watering spot.

Infrastructure

Nobles County has put in a great deal of effort the past 30 years to improve the sewer and water service. Ten communities in Nobles County currently provide public water supplies through groundwater appropriations. These communities are Adrian, Bigelow, Brewster, Dundee, Ellsworth, Lismore, Round Lake, Rushmore, Wilmont and Worthington.

Any new urban development within Nobles County, which will not be served by central sewerage or a municipality, should be prohibited from locating upon land that is not suitable for septic tank usage. The location of soils that are not suitable for this type of usage can be obtained from the NRCS or from soil borings and tests of a particular site. The main types of soils to avoid are silt loam soils, clayey soils, shallow water table or saturated soils, and wetland soils. These types of soils have a low permeability, which do not allow adequate downward drainage.

The County is limited in the amount of urban areas that it has lying outside of municipalities. The two exceptions are the unincorporated communities of Reading and Leota. Leota has recently completed a community sewer system, but Reading is currently being served by individual septic systems. Reading has only had 2 housing developments in the past 33 years, making conversion to a central sewage system a minor issue. If significant growth were to occur, due to Reading's close proximity to Worthington, a central sewage system would be required. In the meantime, significant housing development should be prohibited until a community-wide sewer system is developed.

Public Ditches

A statewide study conducted in 1986 entitled Minnesota Public Drainage Systems shows that Nobles County has 72 miles of public drainage ditches. In addition, Nobles County records show 46 miles of open ditches and 284 miles of County tile. Nobles County maintains these systems.

Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103E states that a 16.5-foot (one rod) grass strip must extend from the ditch back on both sides. Approximately half of the ditches in Nobles County only have the required grass strip on one side according to the 1997 Comprehensive Water Plan. The County, DNR or watershed district should take enforcement action in order to preserve the required grass strip buffer.

There is a need for practical planning related to the County's drainage system. Through a proactive planning process, solutions to ditch problems could be reached before they occur. Practices such as wetland restoration can cost effectively improve ditch conditions by reducing load throughout the ditch system relative to the wetland restoration area.

Educational Facilities

The Educational Facilities section comprises information on public day care centers, elementary schools, secondary education, parochial schools, and post high school education at Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Worthington Campus. Presently, children within Nobles County attend school in the Ellsworth, Adrian, Worthington, Brewster, and Round Lake School Districts. Children from Nobles County also attend school in Rock County (Luverne School District), Pipestone County (Edgerton School District), and in Murray County (Murray County Central [MCC] School District and Fulda School District).

A map of Nobles County school districts can be found in the Map Section, Map #19. The following information can be used as a guide for describing recent trends, current construction projects and implications for future years.

Facility Inventory

Licensed Day Care Centers and Pre-Schools within Nobles County consist of the We Care Day Care Center (Worthington), Sunny Days Preschool (Worthington), Lismore Preschool (Lismore), Kids Konnection (Adrian), Worthington Montessori School Inc. (Worthington), Hi-Ho Nursery School (Worthington), Rushmore Preschool (Rushmore), and Kids-R-It Day Care (Worthington).

Private Schools within Nobles County consist of the Leota Christian School (Leota), St. Mary's Catholic School (Worthington), Worthington Christian School (Worthington), and the Faith Christian High School (Bigelow).

Public School facilities within the County include District 511 (Adrian), Ellsworth Public School (Brewster/Round Lake Schools), and District 518 (Worthington). In addition, the following school districts also reach into Nobles County: Edgerton, MCC, Fulda and Luverne, but their facilities are located in surrounding counties.

Minnesota West Community and Technical College-Worthington Campus, was established in 1936. The college was then known as Worthington Junior College. This College occupied portions of the Worthington Junior and Senior High Schools until 1966 when a new campus at the west edge of the City was provided.

Enrollments

Listed below are enrollment figures for all schools during the 1999-2000 school year in Nobles County.

Day Cares

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Current Enrollment</u>
Kids-R-It Day Care	110
We Care Day Care Center	120
Hi-Ho Nursery School	62
Rushmore Preschool	6
Sunny Days Preschool	36
Worthington Montessori	20
Lismore Preschool	19
Kids Konnection	18

Private Schools

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Current K-6 Enrollment</u>	<u>Current 7-12 Enrollment</u>
Faith Christian High School		19 (9-12)
Leota Christian School	46 (K-8)	
St. Mary's Catholic School	137	
Worthington Christian School	75 (K-8)	
Home Schooling	22	

Public Schools

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Current K-6 Enrollment</u>	<u>Current 7-12 Enrollment</u>
Independent School District 511	438 (K-7)	248 (8-12)
Sioux Valley/Round Lake/Brewster	182	205
Ellsworth Public Schools	9	116
Independent School District 518	1,169	1,355

Recently Completed Projects

School construction projects that have been completed in recent years within Nobles County include work on the following facilities:

District 511 – The 511 School District (Adrian area) developed a preschool program known as Kids Konnection during the Fall of 1999. This program is located in a 2,400 square foot facility located just east of the elementary school. In addition to Kids Konnection, the District's Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) Program and Nobles County Head Start also utilize this facility. Also within the 511 District, construction of a 45,000 square foot addition to the elementary school took place in August of 2000. Also, 5,500 square feet of remodeling was done in the 1954 addition. Students moved into the new facility in September of 2000.

The elementary facility serves students in grades K-5, and consists of 17 classrooms, as well as new administrative offices, a media center, technology lab, cafeteria, and art and music classrooms. A middle school was created in the Fall of 2000 for students in grades 6-7, and the 8th grade will be added to the middle school during the 2001-2002 school year. Currently the middle school is housed in the high school facility.

In December of 2000, the voters of District 511 approved a gymnasium addition to the high school facility. Construction of this 26,000 square foot addition is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2001, with an anticipated completion date in the Spring of 2002. The addition will consist of an 800-seat two-station gymnasium, as well as a fitness center, locker rooms, a wrestling practice room, and a lobby with concession facilities. Approximately 3,000 square feet of remodeling of the high school is also included in this project.

Sioux Valley/Round Lake/Brewster – Remodeling within the Round Lake and Brewster buildings has recently been completed in order to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) specifications. The Round Lake gym was totally remodeled and received an installation of new bleachers.

Independent School District 518 (Worthington area) - Renovations to both the senior and junior high schools have recently been completed.

Projects Currently in Development

District 518 (Worthington area) - Construction on the new Prairie Elementary School is under way and will be the largest elementary school in Minnesota at just over 146,000 square feet. The facility should be finished in the Spring of 2001. The new school will be divided among age groups, but they will share common spaces such as the administrative offices, the cafeteria, the gymnasium, and the media center. The existing West and Central elementary schools did not meet codes regarding classroom space, ventilation, the ADA, and other structural deficiencies. To meet these codes, the elementary building is being built. During the 2000 – 2001 school year, the Worthington Junior High School will become Worthington Middle School and a 6,000 square foot addition will provide more classroom space, 6 classrooms in all. The Senior High School, now known as Worthington High School, has 42,440 square feet in new construction and 32,186 square feet in remodeling.

Specialty Schools

In the past, Nobles County and the surrounding area was served by the only public tax-supported residential school for children who were severely disabled. The institution eventually became known as Lakeview School and now it serves primarily mentally and emotionally challenged individuals. It has since moved from that facility and its attendees now inhabit 5 individual, 4 bedroom group homes, which are all located throughout the City of Worthington. A full-time director of special programs works in District 518 with the residential special education program. Day-to-day services have been contracted through Community Options and Resources, which is based in Sherburn, MN.

District 518 also offers the ECFE Program for parents with children ages 0-5. In the 1999-2000 school year, 286 preschool aged children and 263 parents were in regular attendance. In the ECFE program, 32 children ages 0-5 were served. Education through the District's Adult Basic Education Program served 658 adults during a 12-month period beginning July 1, 1999.

Colleges

Residing within Nobles County is a two-year Junior College. The College, Minnesota West Community and Technical College-Worthington Campus, was established in 1936. The college was then known as Worthington Junior College. From an initial student body of 150, enrollments have increased to a current level of 2,778 students (all campuses). Presently, Minnesota West has campuses in five different communities including: Worthington – 802 students, Canby – 301 students, Granite Falls – 386 students, Jackson – 914 students, and Pipestone – 319 students. Minnesota West also has a special site in Springfield where it enrolls 56 students in the College's nursing program.

Minnesota West provides students with the opportunity to earn an Associates Degree, Diploma, or Certificate. Offerings include short-term programs in many technical areas.

Summary

Even though the County is not directly responsible for operating and governing educational facilities that are located within the County, the County is directly affected by the efficiency of the system. County authorities, as well as residents, should take action, in order to provide a high quality education system. This system should place a priority on providing the opportunity for all residents to obtain a high level of education. The opportunities should emphasize education at the elementary, secondary, and post high school levels, and should also include continuing education for adults.

Medical Facilities

Hospitals and Nursing Homes

Medical facilities inventoried in Nobles County consist of hospitals, nursing homes, chiropractic clinics, dentists, orthopedic clinics, and other specialty clinics. Nobles County has two hospitals, which include the Worthington Regional Hospital and the Arnold Memorial Health Care Center.

The Arnold Memorial Health Care Center in Adrian has 41 licensed nursing home beds and 9 licensed hospital beds. The Worthington Regional Hospital has 66 licensed hospital beds and 12 licensed infant bassinets. The hospital has recently added 12,000 square feet of new space. The new space will provide increased health services for women. The project was completed during the Summer of 2000.

Clinics

Within Nobles County, there are five chiropractic clinics (all in Worthington), ten dentist offices (nine in Worthington and one in Adrian), two orthopedic clinics (Worthington), one urology specialist (Worthington), one eye clinic (Worthington), and three specialty clinics (all in Worthington).

Health Care

Table 12
Assisted Living Facilities
Within Nobles County

NAME	TYPE OF HOUSING	NUMBER OF UNITS	TYPE OF SUBSIDY	ENTRANCE FEE	AVAILABLE TO
PARKVIEW MANOR Ellsworth, MN	Skilled Nursing Home	60	Medicare and Medicaid Approved	None	General Occupancy
ARNOLD MEMORIAL HEALTH CARE CTR Adrian, MN	Assisted Living	12 Beds	N/A	None	General Occupancy
CROSSROADS CARE CENTER Worthington, MN	Skilled Nursing Home	52	Privately Owned	None	General Occupancy
SOUTH SHORE CARE CENTER Worthington, MN	Nursing Home	88	N/A	None	Prefer persons 55 years and older
PRAIRIE HOUSE Worthington, MN	Board and Lodging with Special Services	23 + 4 at Annex	N/A	None	General Occupancy
THE MEADOWS OF WORTHINGTON Worthington, MN	Assisted Living & Congregate	14 - Assisted Living, 52 - Apartments	N/A	None	Seniors & Handicapped
RIDGEWOOD Worthington, MN	Intermediate Care Facility and Mentally Handicapped	15	Medical Assistance (MA) and Medicare	None	General Occupancy
OKABENA TOWERS Worthington, MN	Subsidized	60	Section 8	30% of Monthly Income	62 years old or older
OAKWOOD APARTMENTS Ellsworth, MN	Subsidized	12-11 with Rental Assistance	Rural Development/ Section 8	One Months Rent and Utility Amount	Elderly, Handicapped, Disabled or Younger Singles
HALTER MANOR I Round Lake, MN	Subsidized	16-All with Rental Assistance	Rural Development	Yes	Elderly, Handicapped and Disabled
SUNSHINE CONGREGATE APARTMENTS Worthington, MN	Subsidized	46	Rural Development	None	62 and Older, Handicapped and Disabled
MCMILLIAN HOME Worthington, MN	Intermediate Care Facility and Mentally Handicapped	8	N/A	None	Disabled Persons 18 and Older
HOMESTEAD Worthington, MN	For Purchase	32	N/A	None	55 or Older

Table 12 identifies the specific types of assisted living facilities in Nobles County with the number of units. Overall, there are 494 units in the County: 394 in Worthington, 72 in Ellsworth, 16 in Round Lake and 12 in Adrian.

The County should continue to encourage the provision of generally high quality medical facilities and services to area residents. In particular, the County should support the provision of adequate facilities for the aged, especially in accommodations that serve a lower level medical need. These needs include nursing homes, elderly housing, boarding and lodging, and special boarding care facilities.

Transportation

A complete and sufficient transportation system is vital to the economic stability of a County. It provides a means by which agricultural, industrial, and commercial products can be transported or effectively marketed. Changes in the transportation system can have both positive and negative impacts. Communities that cannot attract economic activities because of transportation deficiencies cannot afford to pay for facility (streets, sewer, water, etc.) improvements. These improvements would normally be paid by the tax base, which is supported not only by a strong economic community but also by people that are attracted to a community because of potential employment. Communities that suffer from an insufficient tax base are generally economically depressed. However, the expansion or reconstruction of a transportation system could, in effect, improve the economic stability of a city. At the same time, the community will improve its chances to expand its economic community, and thus, the opportunity to provide jobs for people.

The economic well being of Nobles County lies with the production, processing, marketing, and transportation of basic agricultural products and tourism-generated activities. The County is dependent on the transportation system to reach the region, state, national, and international markets. The transportation corridors provide vital links between the people and businesses within Nobles County, and the people, social events, cities, businesses, recreational facilities, and health services, outside of the County. Transportation is important to both the economic well being of the area as well as providing access for the residents. A transportation map is provided in the Map Section (Map #20).

Existing Highway System

The existing highway system within Nobles County is a gridiron pattern, and generally follows the basic land survey section lines. The exceptions are where physical characteristics, such as lakes and terrain or other considerations, provide obstacles and cause deviations in the pattern. Overlaying the basic gridiron pattern is State Highways 266 and 60. State Highway 266 runs northwest out of Worthington until it reaches Wilmont, where it ends. State Highway 60 begins south of the Minnesota border and runs northeast through Bigelow, Worthington and then through Brewster.

A feasibility study is currently being conducted for a proposed expansion along Highway 60. The expansion covers a ten-mile stretch of highway between Worthington and Bigelow. Currently, MnDOT is collecting public input and studying 11 expansion or course-plotting

possibilities. Ideas include renovating the current highway or bypassing the City of Bigelow with either an east or west bypass option.

Road Jurisdiction

The jurisdiction of roads entails determining who is responsible for the construction and maintenance of them. Currently, almost all roads under state jurisdiction were established 70 - 80 years ago. The 1921 New Road Law passed by the Minnesota Legislature created four systems of roads:

1. **Trunk Highway System.** Statewide, 70 routes were established under a 1920 Constitutional amendment (6,877 miles). In Nobles County, these State and US highways include: 59, 60, 91, 264, and 266.
2. **County Roads (CR).** These roads are established, constructed, and improved by the County Boards. They are under the sole authority of the County Board.
3. **Township Road.** A road established by and under the authority of the town board, or reverted to township jurisdiction by the County Board. These roads are constructed and maintained by town boards.
4. **City Street.** Any street under the jurisdiction of a municipality not otherwise designated as a Trunk Highway, County State Aid Street/Highway or County Highway.

The State Aid Road System was established in 1957.

1. **County State Aid Highways (CSAH).** These are roads or streets that were established and designated under county jurisdiction in accordance with Minnesota Statutes Chapter 162. The state provides funding assistance to maintain the CSAH system.

Functional Classification

The Functional Classification System classifies each roadway as to its role in moving traffic. Highways and streets are grouped in classes according to the character of service they are intended to provide. These categories are:

- **Principal Arterial.** Serve statewide and interstate corridor movements having trip lengths and travel density characteristics indicative of statewide or interstate travel. Also serve all urbanized areas and a large majority of the small-urban areas with a population under 25,000 people. There are 31 miles of Principal Arterial roads in Nobles County and another 29.69 miles of Interstate.
- **Minor Arterial.** Link cities, larger towns, and other traffic generators, such as major resort areas. Consistent with population density, and are spaced so that all developed areas of the state are within a reasonable distance of an arterial highway. This classification constitutes 19.2 miles of road within Nobles County.

- **Major Collector.** These routes provide service to the larger towns not served by higher systems and other traffic generation of equivalent intra-county importance such as consolidated schools and county parks. They also link these places with nearby large towns or cities or with other arterials and they serve important intra county travel corridors. In Nobles County, 206.13 miles of the CSAH's make up the Major Collectors but this number also includes a portion of the of the CR System.
- **Minor Collector.** At intervals consistent with population density, these routes collect traffic from local roads and bring all developed areas within a reasonable distance to a collector road and provide service to the remaining small communities. In Nobles County, this includes 153.35 miles of the CSAH system and some CR's.
- **Local.** These roads serve as access roads to and from Minor Collectors. But they also serve as access to Collectors and Arterials. Most often these roads are under township jurisdiction. These are roads not classified as arterial or collectors and include some county roads and most township roadways. In Nobles County, there are 989,441 miles making up the township roads and the municipal streets.

Railroads

The two railroads within Nobles County are an important element in the County's transportation system. Railroads continue to provide a significant amount of service in the movement of freight to and between ports and other major urban areas.

The Minnesota Southern Railway, formerly the Nobles Rock Railroad, was established in 1993 and is owned by the Buffalo Ridge Rail Authority. The railroad operates in southwestern Minnesota, having track that runs 41.5 miles from Worthington to Manley, SD The main office for the Railroad is located in Luverne, MN.

The second rail line running through Nobles County is the Union Pacific Railroad. Union Pacific operates two main corridors within Minnesota, constituting 724 miles of track. The line running from the Twin Cities and through Nobles County continues through Sioux City, IA and Omaha, NE. This rail line serves unit train shippers located in prime agricultural areas producing both corn and soybeans. This also includes flourmills, malt houses, soybean processors and numerous rail-to-transfer stations. Within the state of Minnesota, Northern States Power, Unimin, and traffic destined for Dairyland Power Cooperative in Wisconsin constitute Union Pacific's top three customers.

Airport

Since 1944, the Worthington Municipal Airport, which is a general aviation airport, has operated from its present location. It is located one mile north of Interstate 90 along Highway 59. In the beginning, the Airport's layout consisted of three sod strips but since 1947, it has operated with a bituminous runway and taxiway. The Worthington Airport has two runways. Runway 11-29 is 5,506 feet long and 150 feet wide and is aligned NW/SE. Runway 17-35 is 4,200 feet long and 100 feet wide and is aligned N/S. Runway 11-29 is equipped with an Instrument Land System (ILS), which allows airplanes to land in adverse weather conditions. The Airport has a terminal

that provides a lounge/planning area, weather computer, and restroom facilities. There is a 14,000 square foot hangar for larger and/or transient aircraft in addition to 18 T-hangars for rent to local aircraft owners. There are 20 aircraft based in Worthington.

It was announced on August 4, 2000, that the Worthington Municipal Airport would be receiving a grant for the third and final stage of improvements to be made to runway 11-29. The grant, totaling \$1,896,786 from Federal sources, will be used to finish the reconstruction and runway improvements.

During the past, many different airlines have operated within the Worthington Municipal Airport. The most recent service was provided by Great Lakes – United Express, but since 1995 when Great Lakes discontinued its service, Worthington Municipal no longer has any scheduled commercial service. There are businesses throughout the area that benefit from the airport. The Worthington Municipal Airport reports the following:

Primary business users are:

- Swift and Company
- Intervet
- Bedford Industries
- Conveyor Company, Sibley, IA
- Huisken Meat Center, Chandler, MN
- Basin Electric, Bismarck, ND

Services provided are:

- Pilot Instruction
- Aircraft Rental/Sales
- Aircraft Maintenance
- Charter Operations
- Fueling Services and Pilot Supplies
- Written FAA Examination Testing
- Courtesy Car

Local users of the Airport are:

- Medical Emergency Aircraft
- Law Enforcement
- Various professionals
- Civil Air Patrol
- Aircraft owners, local pilots, and pleasure use

Source:Worthington Municipal Airport – General Information, website

While there are 138 publicly-owned airports within the State of Minnesota, there are only 24 “key system” airports. A key system airport has a runway that is at least 5,000 feet long and is both lighted and paved. Since Worthington Municipal Airport meets these criteria, it retains a more regional impact.

General aviation airports do not simply benefit only the people that use them. They provide a social and economic benefit to the city, county, and region that they are located in. Raymond J. Rought, Director, MnDOT Office of Aeronautics, said, “for every aviation dollar spent at the airport alone, \$1.52 comes back to the area.”(Source: Minnesota Flyer Magazine, March 1995) This is due to the fact that people who use the airport also buy fuel and oil, stay in local motels, eat in local restaurants, rent cars, and use area entertainment attractions.

Public Transportation

Public transportation opportunities in Nobles County are an important aspect in achieving economic vitality. In September 1998, the consultant teams of LJR, Inc. Transportation Planners and Consultants and G.C. Bentley Associates, Inc., were hired to provide a Transportation Study and System Design Alternatives for the City of Worthington and Nobles County. This program was initiated in order to ensure that Nobles County and its residents would continue to have an admirable transportation network.

On June 8, 1999, Nobles County and the City of Worthington created the Nobles County Joint Powers Transit Authority. This joint powers board will control both the Nobles County Heartland Express and the Worthington Taxi Service. In order to meet service goals and increase ridership, the board is establishing a shared dispatch facility that will create a one-stop action possibility for transit services. In addition, the county route service will be expanded and will include a rideshare program. This initiative will enable more Nobles County residents to use the services, as it will greatly increase accessibility.

County Buildings

Buildings owned by the County include the County courthouse, jail, Family Service Agency building, several highway and storage buildings, and a memorial building. The War Memorial Building was constructed in the City of Worthington in 1963 and serves as a Library, County Historical Society, and County Art Center.

County Library

The Nobles County Library benefits the residents through its various services and programs. In addition to being able to check out books, public access to the Internet is also provided. Plus, one may send faxes, use the photocopier or the microfilm reader, and have access to projectors and projector screen rentals.

The Nobles County Library offers library service to residents of rural Nobles County using the Heartland Express as a delivery vehicle. In addition to books, residents can request magazines, books on cassette, puppets, and videos. These materials are sent via the Heartland Express to the requester’s community, once a week.

Reading programs provided by the Nobles County Library consist of the following:

- Storytimes: This program is designed for pre-schoolers but is also open to parents, siblings and day-care groups. The program allows youngsters to get familiar with the process of using their library cards and checking out books.
- Reading Buddies: This program is designed for 1st through 5th grade students. Encourages reading together, with a friend and in small groups. Also provides assistance to those having trouble reading.
- Read for the Fun of it: This program is designed for 6th, 7th and 8th grade students. This is a new program at the library featuring book reviews, talks, and ratings by students.
- Super Saturdays: This is a once a month library program for all ages featuring stories, games, crafts and fun activities designed to promote user-ship of the library.

While the Library's headquarters are located in the memorial building, a major branch outlet in Adrian is housed in a building constructed in 1963. Additionally, there are three station offices located in Brewster, Wilmont, and Rushmore.

County Historical Society

Since 1963, the Historical Society has been stationed in the lower level of the War Memorial Building. The Historical Society's goal is to continually expand its museum of historical artifacts. However, due to the remodeling that took place in 1997, which was designed to maximize handicap accessibility and accommodate the expanding library, 39% of the display and storage area was lost.

The Historical Society sponsors a free museum devoted to local and regional history. In addition, users of the museum are able to do research of local history and genealogy. Many of the Society's artifacts are on display at Pioneer Village, which is located at the Fairgrounds site.

In addition to the display area within the museum, the Historical Society sends out a newsletter to approximately 460 members. However, due to the past remodeling and loss of space, the museum does not serve as many people as it used to. With this loss, regional schools that used to schedule guided tours no longer see the benefit. Being located in a basement is not an ideal location for a museum. In addition to humidity threatening old and delicate artifacts, the museum lacks visibility, meaning the public does not easily see it.

County Art Center

The Nobles County Art Center was organized in 1960 and is the third permanent user of the War Memorial Building.

Law Enforcement Center

The Minnesota Department of Corrections began construction of a new law enforcement center within Nobles County in August of 2000. The facility, known as the Prairie Justice Center (PJC), is a combination jail, law enforcement center and courts facility. It is being constructed on a 25 acre lot between U.S. 59 north and Worthington Municipal Airport. Phase I construction, the site work, began at a cost of \$184,205.

Members of the Worthington City Council had passed a resolution giving the Commissioners of Nobles County the authority to award bids for construction of Phase II on September 19. Constructing the footings, foundation, steel and precast concrete made up the Phase II process. On December 19, 2000, the footings and foundations were completed for the court's facility, as was the prisoner transfer tunnel from the jail to the courts.

With the construction of Phase II complete, the facility has spent 10.5 percent of the budget for the entire project, which is expected to cost \$19.5 million. Worthington's share of the project is estimated to be around \$2.5 million.

On January 11th, 2001, Nobles County Commissioners approved bids for Phase III of the project. This bid came in nearly \$860,000 over the projects budget. Several engineering changes have been identified that will keep production costs within the 19.55 million dollar budget. These changes include using a lower quality of wood finishing. However, the project manager has said that any cost cutting moves will not affect the function of the PJC according to its original blueprints. Completion is expected in May of 2002.

Public Works Buildings

Nobles' Primary County Highway Building, which houses the County Engineer and various county vehicles, was constructed in 1950 and is located in Worthington. It received an addition in 1973 and another expansion will occur in 2001. The Public Works Department is adding approximately 17,420 square feet onto the existing facility located at the corner of Diagonal Road and Clary Street in the City of Worthington. This space will accommodate the Road and Bridge, Environmental Services, and Park operations. Construction is estimated to cost approximately \$1,220,000.00. Work will begin this Spring (2001) and is anticipated to be completed by December, 2001. The new addition will provide for office space, mechanics shop, locker rooms and a household hazardous waste recycling center.

The secondary buildings are located in the City of Adrian and Worthington Township.

Solid Waste Disposal Facility

The municipal solid waste (MSW) land disposal facility (Nobles County Sanitary Landfill) site is located on a 63.8 acre parcel in Dewald Township. Estimated garbage handling capacity of the site as of November 1998 was more than 340,000 cubic yards of solid waste and cover materials. In addition, the site accepts the following refuse: tires (as temporary storage before shipment), appliances and scrap metals (for temporary storage prior to recycling), and yard waste (for composting).

A proposed expansion (Phase V) will encompass 9.5 acres and be made up of four cells with total air space capacity of approximately 360,815 cubic yards. Estimates have indicated that this expansion could add as many as 12.3 years of useable life to the facility.

COUNTY FACILITIES

GOAL 1: Establish a Countywide facilities commission in order to ensure the vitality of the overall system.

(related goals/objectives: Infrastructure 6)

Objective: To achieve and maintain the best possible County facilities in the region.

Policies

1. Provide more space to the Historical Society and Art Center to develop excellent cultural education.
2. Ensure support of the bookmobile by providing financial means necessary for continuing valuable service.

Strategies

1. Support and actively seek financing for the Library and its services.
2. Explore possibilities for consolidating the Historical Society, Museum, Pioneer Village and Art Center, either as a group or in pairs, and move to existing vacant structures or newly constructed purpose-built structures that will address climate control needs.
3. Support the cooperation of cities and the County in joint planning and use of more facilities.

INFRASTRUCTURE

GOAL 1: Continue to develop the telecommunications industry in order to enhance sustainability of the County.

Objective: To ensure that residents, business and government have access to expanding technology.

Policies

1. Support legislation that enables telecommunication industries to increase services in rural areas.
2. Provide financial support to ensure that County Staff and the Board are trained in the use of new technologies.

Strategies

1. Continue to monitor all needs and possibilities in the County in order to implement any new and available technology.
2. Continue to implement Geographic Information Services (GIS) in the County.

GOAL 2: Continue to support the upgrading of septic sewer systems to citywide sewer systems.
(related goals/objectives: Residential 1)

Objective: Encourage development of citywide sewer systems in every feasible community.

Policies

1. Support and continually seek funding for citywide sewer upgrades.

Strategies

1. Identify grants and loan funds to pay for construction.

GOAL 3: Increase overall effectiveness of the Heartland Express Bus.
(related goals/objectives: Demographics 2)

Objective: Allow residents easy access to the County's public transportation system.

Policies

1. Develop a bus route allowing users to know exactly where and when they can conveniently board the bus.
2. Promote the Heartland Bus by advertising its features in highly visible areas.
3. Ensure regular service to all rural areas.

Strategies

1. Continue to work towards expansion of the system to increase ridership.
2. Promote the Heartland Bus, making its services known to all potential users within the County by sending out a Countywide mailing containing a schedule of services.
3. Continue the Heartland Bus' affordability.

GOAL 4: Continue to provide and plan for an adequate transportation system composed of highways, rail, aviation, and increased public transit as need warrants.

Objective: Provide for all transportation requirements of industry, commerce, and citizen travel.

Policies

1. Maintain and develop all highway projects that are required by the needs of the public while practicing environmentally sound techniques.

2. Support efforts to develop Trunk Highway 60 into a four lane divided expressway.
3. Ensure that both rail and aviation services are developed in order to meet the needs of the County and are done so while following all safety procedures and guidelines.
4. Provide all necessary forms of public transit to everyone in the County who requires it.

Strategies

1. Enhance all building practices that will limit future maintenance expenses.
2. Continue to provide pre-established periodic updates in all transportation planning.
3. Continue support of Nobles County Heartland Express.
4. Identify and maintain all state and federal sources of funding for transportation.

GOAL 5: Encourage the development and preservation of a recreational trail system throughout the County.

(related goals/objectives: Park and Recreation 2)

Objective: Continue to develop a regional recreational trail system that allows access to recreational and scenic areas.

Policies

1. Continue to build and maintain trails recognized as part of the system.
2. Serve as large a portion of the population as possible.
3. Encourage all scheduled upkeep construction activities and maintenance costs.
4. Coordinate with communities in order to connect all trails to the County system.

Strategies

1. Plan for and promote future additions to the current trail system.
2. Schedule required maintenance tasks in order to maintain a successful system.
3. Decouple funding for bikes from highway funds.

GOAL 6: Support cooperative efforts in purchasing or providing services, equipment or buildings.

(related goals/objectives: County Facilities 1)

Objective: To adequately provide for various needs for the County and effect financial savings.

Policies

1. Promote growth of urban, commercial and industrial sectors through reduced costs of various types of infrastructure.

Strategy

1. Coordinate efforts with various groups in order to yield optimum pricing.
2. Maintain a good rapport between the various units of local (townships), city and county governments.
3. Develop a Countywide central purchasing agency for all governmental services.
4. Improve method for municipalities' contracting for police protection.