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"In cooperation with our citizens, we improve the quality of life for individuals, families and communities by fostering a healthy economy and environment."

"Looking forward with purpose"

MEETING NOTICE

NOBLES COUNTY BOARD WORK SESSION
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29th, 2025 AT 8:30 A.M.
NOBLES COUNTY GOVERNEMENT CENTER
COMMISSIONER BOARD ROOM

Zoom Information:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89670622787?pwd=8LPy1ddQk5RZtAk5PybmBH2TnvMcvg.1
Call in Number: 1-312-626-6799
Meeting ID: 896 7062 2787
Password: 149700

Proposed Agenda

1. **Pledge of Allegiance**
2. **Drainage System Update – Projects & Improvements**
3. **Savi Presentation**
4. **Nobles County Comprehensive Plan 2050**
5. **Prairie Justice Center – Parking & Roadway Improvement Project**
6. **Other / Future Meetings**

Board Meeting – Tuesday, February 4th, 2025
9:00 a.m. Government Center Board Room, Worthington, MN
2025 County Drainage Conference – February 4th-6th
Arrowwood Conference Center, Alexandria, MN

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COMMISSIONER BRIEFING

JANUARY 29, 2025 WORK SESSION
DRAINAGE SYSTEM UPDATE - PROJECTS AND IMPROVEMENTS
LORETTA HALBUR, DRAINAGE SYSTEM COORDINATOR

Topic:
The Commissioners will receive an update of ongoing events related to the varied drainage ditch systems administered by the Nobles County Drainage Coordinator.

Discussion:
Drainage system maintenance and improvements are now a normal part of county activities. The Commissioners have requested monthly updates regarding events involving the drainage & ditch system. Commissioners utilize the update to offer questions and to stay abreast of future ditch procedures and expenses.

Options:
1.) Obtain the Drainage Coordinator update and engage in discussion to further knowledge
2.) Offer directives if an opportunity arises.

Recommendation:
Administration recommends the Commissioners obtain information from the Drainage Coordinator. This will offer the Commissioners knowledge regarding the ongoing ditch-system activities. Planning for additional resources or directives can respectively take place if an opportunity arises.

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JANUARY 29, 2025 WORK SESSION
EMPLOYEE BENEFIT OPTION
STUDENT LOAN ASSISTANCE PRESENTATION
TONY RAFFA, SAVI COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAM
VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE

Topic:
Public employers have access to tools to assist employees with their student loans. Savi offers benefit solutions to assist employees and their families identify loan-forgiveness options. The goal is to save employees money and to retain wealth for other lifetime goals.

Background:
Tony Raffa from Savi Solutions will provide the Commissioners with a presentation about the ability to assist personnel with their student loan debt. Savi is a social impact technology startup working as partners to solve the student debt crisis. Savi strongly believes in helping borrowers access federal repayment and forgiveness options, respectively.

Savi is founded on the principle that America's loan borrowers deserve help navigating the complex student loan system. Savi uses innovative technology and their team to help loan borrowers discover new repayment and loan-forgiveness options. As stated, Mr. Raffa will be available to answer questions to ascertain if Savi can assist Nobles County Employees.

Options:
- Ask questions and discuss the Savi services and whether this solution should be added as an employee benefit
- Do not take part in the discussion

Recommendations:
Administration recommends offering questions and engaging in discussion regarding Savi services. Many county positions require education and possible student loans. The Savi services may assist a great deal of Nobles County Employees in identify savings.

savi STUDENT DEBT SOLUTION

Student loan payments resumed in October 2023 for the first time in 3+ years. Savi is here to help get your employees on track.

Savi is a public-benefit social impact company founded by student loan experts and policymakers who understand the stress and hardship of student loans.
We're on a mission to help your employees take control of their student loans and build a path to loan forgiveness.

Savi is already providing an affordable benefit to more than 500 employers to date that are committed to the financial health of their employees. Savi's technology allows us to significantly improve and simplify the experience of student debt management for workers and strengthen employer benefits overall.

BENEFITS FOR YOU

Co-Branded Microsite

Educational Webinars

1:1 Support from Experts

Employer Dashboard with Impact Metrics

Automated Enrollment & Digital Forms

Turnkey Communications Resources

*Family members are also eligible for participation

Want to learn more? Contact our team today at tony@bysavi.com

500+
Participating Employers

1M+
Covered Employees

$2,245+
Average Yearly Savings Per Employee

$40K+
Average Projected Forgiveness per Employee

$3B+
Total Projected Forgiveness

savi STUDENT DEBT SOLUTION

EMPLOYER BENEFITS

When you offer Savi Essential to your employees, you add an attractive financial wellness benefit to your offerings:

Improve Efficiency

Savi automatically generates digital forms that can be signed and submitted directly through email and/or the Admin Portal.

Student Loan Expertise

Direct all of your employees' student loan questions to Savi. Savi delivers tailored recommendations based on each borrower's unique loan profile.

No Technical Integration

Savi Essential does not require any technical integration or data transfer. We can get your co-branded site up and running in **less than an hour.**

Real-Time Impact Dashboard

Employers have access to a real-time dashboard including powerful impact metrics like Total Debt Held and Total Projected Forgiveness, among others.

LOW COST *

Employers that pay for **Savi Essential** see **3x higher participation and impact.** The low cost benefit is discounted to only $75 per participant per calendar year.

Estimated usage based on employer size:

1,000 employees	40 - 100 users/yr
2,500 employees	100 - 300 users/yr
15,000 employees	600 - 1,500 users/yr

* If you're unable to cover the Essential Service this year, Savi Essential is also available on a per employee or voluntary basis. *Contact Savi to request more information.*

Want to learn more? Contact our team today at tony@bysavi.com

savi STUDENT DEBT SOLUTION

Join more than 500 employers who trust Savi to handle student loan support. We're building a better borrower and employer experience:

We know PSLF and Loan Forgiveness better than anyone. That's why we've found the most forgiveness for our users...

$3B+

Total Projected Forgiveness

> The program helps employees achieve meaningful savings both in their monthly budgets and in the overall cost of their college debt. An employee told us she was struggling to pay her rent but now she has that burden lifted. **It's really life changing!**
>
> *- Benefits Director, Boston Medical Center*

We're a widely trusted employer partner in healthcare and higher education. Our **customer support and attention to you** remains our top priority.

500+

Participating Employers; *select clients include:*

UPMC LIFE CHANGING MEDICINE

BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER — EXCEPTIONAL CARE. WITHOUT EXCEPTION.

University of Kentucky

University of Pittsburgh

The **only student loan benefit** that offers...

A MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

Over $1,800 in avg. annual savings per employee

> I was already working toward forgiveness, but found new savings. **My monthly payment went from $360 to $150** -- a reduction by more than half!
>
> *- client employee*

Want to learn more? Contact our team today at tony@bysavi.com

PUBLIC SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS

PSLF is a federal program designed to forgive the remaining balance on eligible federal student loans for borrowers who work full-time for qualifying public service employers after they make 120 payments.

As of August 2024, 2.3% of PSLF applications have been accepted since November 2020.

ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

1) Enroll into an **Income-Driven Repayment Plan (IDR)**
- Select best IDR plan for you
- Complete 10-page application
- Recertify enrollment annually

2) Complete the **Employee Certification Form**
- Complete 6-page application
- Have it Signed by Employer
- Recertify enrollment annually

3) Complete the **PSLF Application**
- Make 120 qualifying payments
- Submit 6-Page Application
- Signed by Employer

ACHIEVING FORGIVENESS WITH SAVI

Our Free Loan Calculator Tool
- Scans 150+ federal, state, and private repayment plans
- takes only 10 minutes to complete

Automated Enrollment
- Savi will automatically fill out and submit applications on behalf our Essential ($70 per year) and Pro ($180 per year)

99%

of Savi Essential User applications were accepted

Join more than 500 partners who trust Savi to handle student loan support. We're building a better borrower and employer experience

Want to learn more? Contact Tony@bysavi.com

Cities & Counties Industry Data

$263.00
Average Monthly Student Loan payment in the industry

30%
Employees with Student Loan Debt

$ 300B+
Estimated Savings Available

$3 BILLION+
Total projected forgiveness amongst Savi Users

County Partner 1

695	$32,557,339	$101/mo
PREMIUM USERS	TOTAL DEBT MANAGED	AVG PROJECTED SAVINGS
866	$42,525	$21,687,732
REGISTRATIONS	AVG PROJECTED FORGIVENESS	TOTAL PROJECTED FORGIVENESS

County Partner 2

613	$16,492,149	$150/mo
PREMIUM USERS	TOTAL DEBT MANAGED	AVG PROJECTED SAVINGS
628	$39,946	$11,224,944
REGISTRATIONS	AVG PROJECTED FORGIVENESS	TOTAL PROJECTED FORGIVENESS

County Partner 3

70	$8,715,457	$114/mo
PREMIUM USERS	TOTAL DEBT MANAGED	AVG PROJECTED SAVINGS
194	$34,958	$4,544,480
REGISTRATIONS	AVG PROJECTED FORGIVENESS	TOTAL PROJECTED FORGIVENESS

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JANUARY 29, 2025 WORK SESSION
NOBLES COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2050
ACTIVITIES INVOLVED IN CREATING THIS PLAN
DISCUSSION AND DIRECTIVES WITH NOBLES COUNTY STAFF

Topic:
Nobles County has an expiring community based plan which guided the County into year 2025. This plan was developed in 1999. Many of the activities and events which occurred between 1999 and today were difficult to forecast. The Commissioners are going to discuss a new comprehensive plan which could guide the county into year 2050.

Background:
A Comprehensive Plan steers an entities planning development and zoning practices. Committees and citizens are involved in the development of this plan. As stated, this is long-term planning that involve nearly every facet of the County's goals for the next 25 years.

The Commissioners will be requested to discuss the process to create a plan which could guide county actions for the next 25 years. The plan could take up to two years to complete with other Nobles County local units being involved. Staff will be available to offer recommendations and to discuss the path to complete a proposed comprehensive plan.

Options:
- Discuss the various aspects of planning and creating a comprehensive plan
- Do not take part in the discussion

Recommendations:
Administration recommends the Commissioners engage in discussion and offer questions relevant to the activities related to providing Nobles County with a new comprehensive plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nobles County is authorized to prepare and implement a Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Chapter 394 of Minnesota Statutes, Planning Development, and Zoning. The County Board has the power and authority to adopt the plan by ordinance upon recommendation by the 2025 Committee and the Planning Commission. When so adopted, the Comprehensive Plan is required to be the basis for such official controls as the zoning and subdivision ordinances.

Nobles County has recognized that numerous changes have occurred over the past 15-20 years to warrant the update of the County's Comprehensive Plan. With funding from Minnesota Planning and the Southwest Minnesota Foundation, the County began to undertake activities found within the Community Based Planning (CBP) Act. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to identify problems, opportunities, issues and needs and organize public policy to deal with them in a manner that serves the best interests of the greatest number of people. Among other things, the advantages that go along with CBP, include:

- A stronger support for the plan and its implementation through broad involvement of citizens in the process
- A coordinated involvement of local governments and assistance from Minnesota Planning in getting greater involvement and help from state agencies
- A greater predictability to city and rural residents about when development will occur and when services will be provided through identification of urban growth areas
- An assurance that orderly annexation agreements will be developed prior to development and with the participation of the city, county and township
- A higher eligibility for funding for planning and technology activities

Nobles County recognized the importance of citizen participation in the development of the Comprehensive Plan. The 2025 Committee was established with 30 members representing cities, townships, other various committees, and individuals from the broader community. The expectations of this committee consisted of:

- Attending all required meetings
- Reading CBP updates
- Listening to the concerns of Local Units of Government and the public
- Helping out the facilitator during meetings
- Promoting issue discovery and discussion
- Visualizing future problems and possible solutions
- Reviewing what the people of Nobles County want and need
- Communicating conclusions to the Committee and doing the best possible job to insure that the plan accurately represents the conclusions of the Committee

A description of the comprehensive planning process is included in the following Introduction Section.

Each chapter contains data that serves as the foundation on which the Plan is based. This data includes projections, which are reasonable, however, they are estimates and are subject to conditions of change. Because of this change, the Comprehensive Plan should be viewed as a dynamic document, which should be examined and amended periodically. The following is a list of the Plan's chapters containing relative background data:

- Demographics
- Land Use
- Infrastructure and County Facilities
- Conservation, Parks & Recreation
- Historic and Cultural Facilities
- Industrial/Economic Development
- Community Development
- Housing

The primary objective of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide a coordinated set of goals and policies that will guide decisions regarding land use by both the public and private sector. Decisions made in the past and in the future will have an effect on the need for public expenditure and taxes, environmental quality, the consumption of energy and land, and other resources. Stability of property values can also be impacted. The Goals and Policies that follow each background section are the result of a great deal of citizen involvement. It will be important to review these Goals and Policies in order to respond to changes in area conditions, needs, and policies.

INTRODUCTION

The last Comprehensive Plan for Nobles County was completed in 1966. Change has occurred in both the cities and townships during the last 20 years to warrant an update to the Comprehensive Plan. This plan endorses many strong elements of the previous plan, while recognizing the many challenges that the County faces during the next 25 years and beyond.

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to not only set forth the research and information assembled through the project and the goals, policies, and recommendations that are the heart of the plan, but also to document the planning process that was conducted during the development of the plan.

The background includes the findings of all of the research that was completed by the Southwest Regional Development Commission and Nobles County staff during the planning process. This includes research findings related to demographics and housing. It also includes information related to economic conditions within the County's communities and other issues related to economic development. Historic information is included in this section, along with an analysis of the environmental features within the County. In addition, data collected on land use, transportation, and county facilities is included.

OVERVIEW

A major goal of Nobles County was to ensure that the residents had opportunities to voice their opinion regarding the Comprehensive Plan. The first step was to solicit members to serve on the 2025 Committee, which was established to guide the County and the consultant during the planning process. This Committee will also recommend the Comprehensive Plan to both the Planning Commission and the County Board for final approval.

The 2025 Committee was created with 30 members that represent various cities, townships, and county boards in Nobles County. On April 13, 1999, an orientation was held for the 2025 Committee members to describe the concept of CBP and to focus on the issue of sustainability. In addition, a timeline was provided to the Committee for the project.

On May 24, 1999 various individuals presented some of the current issues and trends facing Nobles County that should be addressed as the County planned for its future. A subsequent meeting was held on June 10, 1999 to conduct an issue discovery and discussion that would provide a framework for the community meetings. Local community meetings were held from June 1999 to September 2000 and specific issue meetings covering Transportation, Ground Water Resources, Housing, Feedlots and Economic Development, were held from April 2000 to September 2000.

From October 2000 to January 2001, the 2025 Committee has met monthly to develop the final draft of the Comprehensive Plan. Every Committee member has had the opportunity to provide his or her ideas and suggested changes at each one of these meetings. This has led to a great deal of ownership of the plan by Committee members.

NOBLES COUNTY MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Nobles county is to improve the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities by fostering a healthy economy and environment while maintaining fiscal responsibility and quality services

NOBLES COUNTY 2025 COMMITTEE

Dan Greve	Mike Perkins	Steve Brake
Les Johnson	Jim Knips	Dan Horn
Jan Larson	Hardy Rickbeil	Laura Raedeke
Chris Keilblock	Jim Gruye	Donna Reimer
Linden Olson	Matt Widboom	LaDean Fletcher
Larry Janssen	Pat Boots	Steve Prins
Joyce Engelkes	Lisa Onken	Tim Freking
Doug Wasmund	Juan Valencia	Scott Rall
Irene Swanson	Dale Kremer	Sisoumang Rattassitthi
Bruce Pass	Gary Johnson	Ron Lorenz

NOBLES COUNTY PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Rallah Madison	Steve Hansberger	Joseph McCarvel
Ronald Lawrence	Ken Jansen	James Gruye
Roger Rohrer	Larry Hyink	Paul Schilling

NOBLES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

First District
Mike Peil

Second District
Diane Thier

Third District
David Benson

Fourth District
Norm Gallagher

Fifth District
Claire Gerber

COMMUNITY BASED PLANNING

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Nobles County will hold public meetings to discuss and receive input on the draft version of the Nobles County Community Based Plan on the following dates:

Monday, March 19, 2001 at 7:00 p.m.
Round Lake City Hall, Round Lake, MN

Tuesday, March 20, 2001 at 7:00 p.m.
Farmers Room, Nobles County Courthouse, Worthington, MN

Tuesday, March 27, 2001 at 7:00 p.m.
Bigelow Fire Hall, Bigelow, MN

Thursday, March 29, 2001 at 7:00 p.m.
Lismore Fire Hall, Lismore, MN

Monday, April 2, 2001 at 7:00 p.m.
Adrian City Hall, Adrian, MN

Monday, April 9, 2001 at 7:00 p.m.
Ellsworth Fireman's Room at City Hall, Ellsworth, MN

Tuesday, April 10, 2001 at 7:00 p.m.
Brewster City Hall, Brewster, MN

Tuesday, April 17, 2001 at 7:00 p.m.
Farmers Room Nobles County Courthouse, Worthington, MN

Your participation is encouraged and appreciated.

Comments may be forwarded to Wayne Smith at: wsmith@co.nobles.mn.us
or by calling Environmental Services at 507-372-8227

NOBLES COUNTY COMMUNITY BASED PLAN

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NOBLES COUNTY COMMUNITY BASED PLAN

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ACRONYMS

ADA - American's with Disabilities Act
ATV - All Terrain Vehicle
BMP - Best Management Practice
CBP - Community Based Planning
CR - County Road
CRP - Conservation Reserve Program
CSAH - County State Aid Highway
DNR - Department of Natural Resources
ECFE - Early Childhood Family Education
FAA - Federal Aviation Administration
FSA - Farm Service Agency
GIS - Geographic Information System
HRA - Housing and Redevelopment Authority
ILS - Instrument Land System
ISTS - Individual Sewage Treatment System
MCC - Murray County Central
MnDOT - Minnesota Department of Transportation
MSW - Municipal Solid Waste
NAE - Northern Alternative Energy
NRCS - Natural Resources Conservation Service
NRHP - National Register of Historic Places
PJC - Prairie Justice Center
PK - Pre-Kindergarten
RIM - Reinvest in Minnesota
SMOC - Southwest Minnesota Opportunity Council
SWCD - Soil and Water Conservation District
UGB - Urban Growth Boundary
WMA - Wildlife Management Area
WPA - Waterfowl Production Area
WIC - Woman, Infant and Children
WREDC - Worthington Regional Economic Development Corporation

DEMOGRAPHICS

Key Issues in Demographics

- Population Loss (pages 2 – 4)
- Increasing Aging Population (pages 4 – 5)

Countywide Goals

- Stabilize younger population numbers.
- Prepare for and preserve the quality of life for the increasing aging population.
- Educate the Community about the benefits derived from a culturally diverse population base.

Introduction

Demographic data is an important component of the comprehensive planning process. It provides a framework to assist the County with decisions in regards to housing, business development, community facilities and services, environmental impacts, and transportation. This information provides valuable information about the facilities, services, and planning that will be required in the future.

Issues Summary

The primary issue facing Nobles County centers on the County's continual loss of population, particularly of young people. The County has experienced population declines since the 1960 Census. Population estimates in 1998 and 1999 show a decrease in the rate of loss. Residents felt initiatives should be undertaken to retain or bring youth back to the area.

As the trend for young people leaving the County continues, the County's aging population continues to grow. As the residents of Nobles County continue to age, consideration must be taken as to how the County will provide necessary, adequate, and affordable services to the senior population.

Demographic Strengths

Many residents identified the ethnic and cultural diversity of the County as a strength. The diverse nature of the County's residents gives Nobles County many advantages. The more culturally diverse an area is, the more educated an area becomes as members of different cultures learn to live together, appreciate each others heritage, ancestry, customs, way of life, and become more aware of everyone's place in our society.

Many in the County have strong work ethics and this is a major asset to prospective employers when deciding to construct a new business in an area. This advantage should be built on, as this work ethic is one of the major reasons the County's young people are able to leave the County in order to find better jobs. The County must continually attempt to find ways to provide these kinds of high paying jobs in order to help retain the younger population.

Demographic Weaknesses

One key weakness identified was the loss of the younger population and many in the County expressed a sincere desire to do what it takes to reverse this trend.

Future planning needs to reflect the number of senior citizens within the County so it can adequately determine the level of services required by the elderly population. As the number of elderly increase, there is also an increase in disabilities and special care requirements. Special housing, such as nursing homes for the frail and assisted living, congregate care and independent living facilities, will be needed by seniors who are no longer able to maintain single-family housing units.

While the cultural diverseness of the County was pointed out as a strength, it was also pointed out as a concern as many feel that there are often times misunderstandings among different cultures. Education is a key factor to encourage harmony and understanding.

The Future of Demographics

As noted above, Nobles County should continue to work to curb the rate at which young people leave the County, and continue to meet the changing needs of the area's aging population, and to educate the community about the benefits derived from a culturally diverse population base.

Population

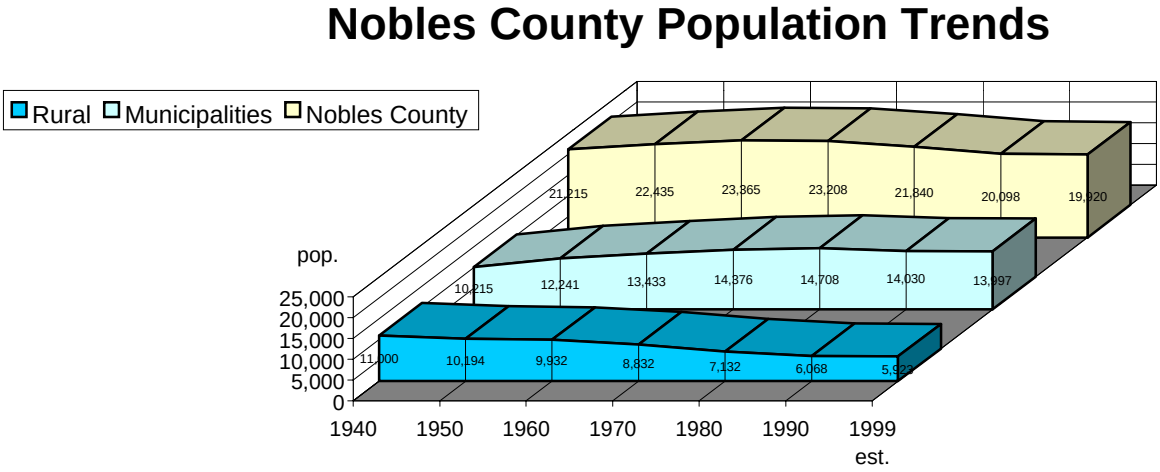
Table 1 illustrates population changes from the 1940 Census to the 1990 Census and the 1999 population estimates. The trend (Chart 1) shows that Nobles County reached a high population in 1960 with 23,365. From 1960 to 1990, the County population decreased 14%. The 1999 population estimate shows less than a 1% decrease from the 1990 population, and may be indicating a leveling off. The Southwest Region also decreased in population from its high in 1960, to its 1999 estimate. This loss (17%) was higher than that of Nobles County (15%) for the same time frame.

TABLE 1
NOBLES COUNTY AND SOUTHWEST REGION
POPULATION CHANGE: 1940-1990 & 1999 estimate

	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	1999 est.
Nobles County	21,215	22,435	23,365	23,208	21,840	20,098	19,920
Municipalities	10,215	12,241	13,433	14,376	14,708	14,030	13,997
Rural	11,000	10,194	9,932	8,832	7,132	6,068	5,923
SW Region	148,666	149,116	149,277	141,532	137,039	123,359	123,300
Municipalities	64,246	72,053	76,373	80,007	83,647	78,933	79,845
Rural	84,420	77,063	72,904	61,525	53,392	44,426	43,455

Source: US Census, 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, & 1990; Minnesota Planning, 1999 estimates; and Southwest Regional Development Commission

Chart 1



The demographic trends for Nobles County municipality populations show that overall they increased in population and peaked in 1980. From 1980 to 1990 they experienced a 4.6% decrease (Table 2). The 1999 estimates also show less than 1% decrease from 1990. Municipalities in the Southwest Region also peaked in population with the 1980 Census.

The trend from the rural areas of the county (non-incorporated) demonstrates a continual decline in population both in Nobles County and the Southwest Region. Broad generalizations, such as rural residents moving to the municipalities, the 1980's farm crisis, and the exodus of youth to large population centers, explain much of the population loss in recent decades.

TABLE 2
NOBLES COUNTY AND SOUTHWEST REGION
PERCENT CHANGE PER DECADE

	1940-1950	1950-1960	1960-1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-1999 est.
Nobles County	5.75%	4.15%	-0.67%	-5.89%	-7.98%	-0.89%
Municipalities	19.83%	9.74%	7.02%	2.31%	-4.61%	-0.24%
Rural	-7.33%	-2.57%	-11.08%	-19.25%	-14.92%	-2.39%
SW Region	0.30%	0.11%	-5.19%	-3.17%	-9.98%	-0.05%
Municipalities	12.15%	6.00%	4.76%	4.55%	-5.64%	1.16%
Rural	-8.71%	-5.40%	-15.61%	-13.22%	-16.79%	-2.19%

Source: US Census, 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, & 1990; Minnesota Planning, 1999 estimates; and Southwest Regional Development Commission

Between 1990 and 1999, the population estimates reflect both increases and decreases in population. The population estimates that come from Minnesota Planning each year are derived from several components, including: natural increases (births minus deaths), migration, building permits, as well as major events (opening or closing of large employers). The population

estimates between 1997 and 1998 show a population decrease (Table 3) and reflect the closure of Campbell's Soup Company in Worthington.

The overall population decreased in Nobles County, from the 1990 Census to the 1999 estimates, by 0.9%. The population in the Nobles County municipalities decreased by only 0.2% while the population in the rural areas of the County decreased by 2.4%.

TABLE 3
1990 TO 1999 POPULATION ESTIMATES FOR NOBLES COUNTY

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Nobles County	20,098	19,991	20,140	20,192	20,346	20,408	20,578	20,570	20,276	19,920
Municipalities	14,030	13,963	14,165	14,237	14,273	14,321	14,481	14,516	14,309	13,997
Rural (Twps)	6,068	6,028	5,975	5,955	6,073	6,087	6,097	6,054	5,967	5,923

Table 4 illustrates Nobles County's population by age for 1980 and 1990, and it also shows the 1999 estimates. The percentage of persons in the 10-19 and 20-29 age groups show large decreases. The aging baby boomer generation has had an impact on these age groups and that, in turn, has increased the number of citizens in the 30-39 age group (as of 1990). It has also added a small increase to the 40-49 age group. There were large increases in the 70 and over population due to increased longevity as a result of better health technology.

TABLE 4
NOBLES COUNTY
POPULATION BY AGE COHORT
1980-1990, 1999 estimate

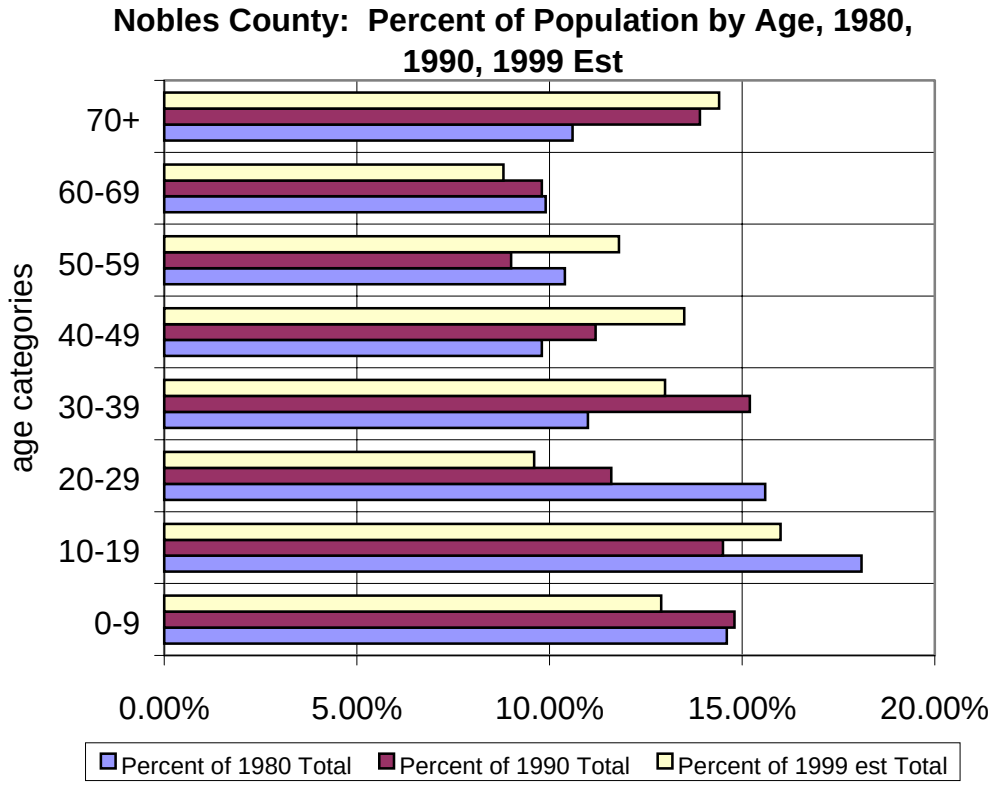
Age group	1980 Population	Percent of 1980 Total	1990 Population	Percent of 1990 total	Percent change (80-90)	1999 Estimate*	1999 Percent
0-9	3,191	14.6%	2,968	14.8%	-7.0%	2,514	12.9%
10-19	3,952	18.1%	2,920	14.5%	-26.1%	3,129	16.0%
20-29	3,404	15.6%	2,338	11.6%	-31.3%	1,870	9.6%
30-39	2,395	11.0%	3,063	15.2%	27.9%	2,535	13.0%
40-49	2,112	9.8%	2,242	11.2%	6.2%	2,642	13.5%
50-59	2,273	10.4%	1,809	9.0%	-20.4%	2,293	11.8%
60-69	2,166	9.9%	1,972	9.8%	-9.0%	1,716	8.8%
70+	2,347	10.6%	2,786	13.9%	18.7%	2,801	14.4%
Total	**21,840**	100.0%	**20,098**	100.0%		**19,500**	100%

Source: US Census, 1980 and 1990, *derived from 1999 US Census Bureau Minority estimates by age and sex

The large decrease in the 20-29 age group reflects a negative effect within the County. Historically, rural counties have had trouble retaining their young adults. Unless influential factors such as birth rates, economic development, telecommunications, or immigrants to Minnesota impact Nobles County specifically, the trend is likely to continue. The exodus of young adults also impacts the current and future enrollment of school districts. Young adults often leave rural Minnesota seeking opportunity. Some of the reasons young adults choose to

leave the area are low wages, lack of affordable housing, limited social amenities, and few employment opportunities (number and extent).

Chart 2



A recent report by the Minnesota State Demographic Center (November 2000) identified the leading origins on in-migrants and out-migrants for each County in Minnesota. The information was based on Internal Revenue Service data and identifies the top four origins – destinations for 1998-1999 estimates.

The leading places of origin of in-migrants to Nobles County in 1998-1999 were Jackson County, Rock County, Murray County and Minnehaha County (SD). The leading places of destination of out-migrants from Nobles County in 1998-1999 were: Hennepin County, Murray County, Jackson County and Minnehaha County (SD).

Table 5 illustrates population, households and persons per household in Nobles County for 1970, 1980, 1990 and 1999. The total number of households from 1970 to 1980 decreased by 1,226 people (13.6%) and there was a 5.89% drop in population. This resulted in a higher number of persons per household. The 1980 to 1990 household numbers decreased by 129 (1.7%) and the population decrease was greater than the decease in households (7.98%). The result was fewer persons per household. This follows a national trend toward smaller families and more single person households, often single elderly households, and if this trend continues, we may see an increase in the demand for housing.

TABLE 5
NOBLES COUNTY
PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLD
1970-1990, 1999 Estimate

Year	Households	Population	Persons Per Household
1970	9,038	23,208	2.57
1980	7,812	21,840	2.75
1990	7,683	20,098	2.55
1999 Estimate	7,894	19,920	2.52

Source: US Census, 1980 and 1990, Minnesota Planning 1999

Population Projections

Population projections play a key role in the planning process. Accurate projections allow the County to plan effectively for the future. This data can be used to assist in the budgeting process for necessary services, programs, and infrastructure. Since projections are an estimate of the future, based on past and current demographics, they cannot be perfectly accurate. Unforeseen factors such as annexations, the loss and recruitment of a major employer or policy changes, all may have significant effects on the population of the County. These projections, however, can be described as a useful measure in determining the County's future population. Four different methods were used to provide a variety of population projections.

Method A – is called a straight-line extrapolation. This method assumes that the County's population will decrease by the same number, -1,742, as it had from 1980 to 1990.

Method B – assumes that the County's population will decrease at the same percentage rate, –7.98, as it had from 1980 to 1990.

Method C – takes the rate of change in growth rates and projects population based on this change. In Nobles County, the population decreased at a -5.89% rate between 1970 and 1980 and –7.98% rate between 1980 and 1990. The 1980 to 1990 growth rate is about -10.9% of that of 1970 to 1980. If the rate of growth continues to decline, the 1990 to 2000 growth rate would be –14.8% and the 2000 to 2010 growth rate would be –30.2%.

Method D. – population projections prepared by Minnesota State Planning, using the co-hort-component method. Published in Minnesota County Population Projections 1995-2025.

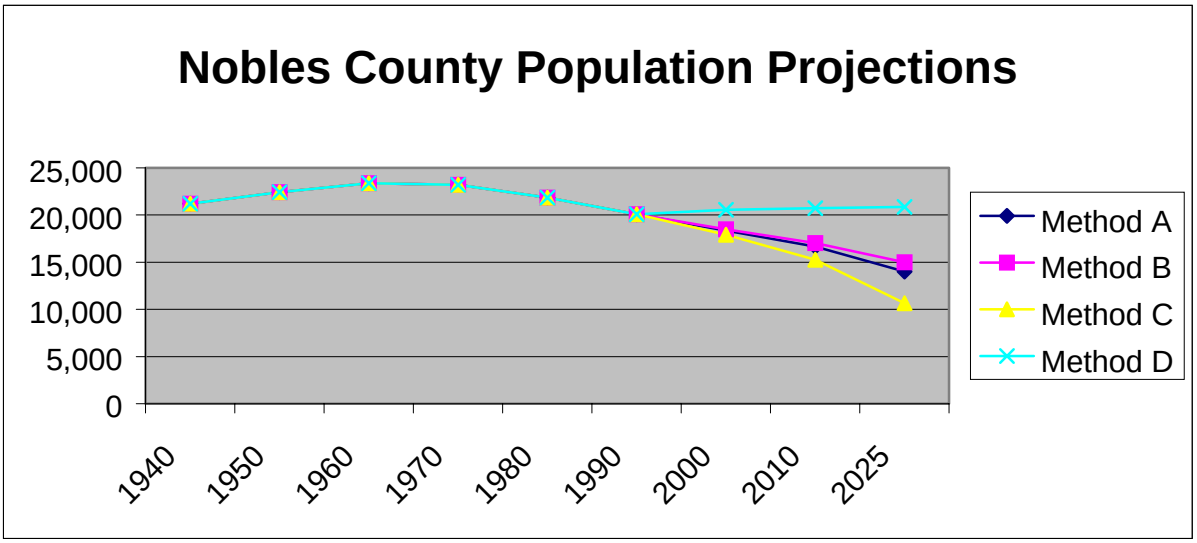
Table 6 illustrates the four population projection methods. It is anticipated that the County's actual population will fall somewhere close to Method D.

TABLE 6
NOBLES COUNTY POPULATION PROJECTIONS 1990-2025

	1990 Population	2000 Population	2010 Population	2025 Population
Method A	20,098	18,356	16,614	14,001
Method B	20,098	18,495	17,020	14,983
Method C	20,098	17,907	15,257	10,649
Method D		20,550	20,720	20,850

Source: US Census, 1980 and 1990, Minnesota Planning Faces of the Future 1995-2025

Chart 3



Housing

Table 7 depicts the number and type of housing units in Nobles County for the years 1980 and 1990. There was a loss of 101 year round housing units from 1980 to 1990. Single-family units make up the majority of the year round owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units in 1980. By 1990, the single-family housing units accounted for 82.9 percent of the year round homes and 95.9 percent of the owner-occupied units.

The percentage of 2+ owner-occupied housing units decreased from 1980 to 1990, while the percentage of owner-occupied mobile homes remained the same. Single-family renter-occupied housing units, as well as renter-occupied mobile homes, decreased from 55.4 and 4.8 percent respectively in 1980 to 48.6 and 3.2 percent respectively in 1990. During the same time frame, the number of 10+ renter-occupied housing units increased from 19.2 percent to 26.3 percent.

Table 8 displays the housing values in Nobles County for the years 1980 and 1990, as self reported, in the U.S. Census. As this table shows, the price of housing in Nobles County increased during the 1980's but still remained reasonable. In 1990, 64.2% of the homes had a value of less than $50,000, which is a decline from 75.9% in 1980. Housing continues to be a

good value in Nobles County. The median value of a home in 1980 was $34,000; it only moderately increased to $39,600 in 1990.

TABLE 7
NOBLES COUNTY HOUSING TYPE 1980-1990

	1980	1980 Percent	1990	1990 Percent
Year Round	**8,195**		**8,094**	
Single-Family	6,881	84.0	6,707	82.9
2-9 units	639	7.8	424	5.2
10 + units	369	4.5	674	8.3
Mobile Home / Other	306	3.7	289	3.6
Owner-Occupied	**5,926**		**5,791**	
Single-Family	5,560	93.8	5,551	95.9
2-9 units	173	2.9	55	0.9
10 + units	2	0.0	0	0.0
Mobile Home / Other	191	3.2	185	3.2
Renter-Occupied	**1,886**		**1,892**	
Single-Family	1,045	55.4	920	48.6
2-9 units	408	21.6	414	21.9
10 + units	363	19.2	497	26.3
Mobile Home / Other	90	4.8	61	3.2

Source: US Census, 1980 and 1990

TABLE 8
NOBLES COUNTY
OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING VALUES
1980-1990

	1980 Units	Percent of Total	1990 Units	Percent of Total
$0 - $49,999	3,108	75.9%	2,712	64.2%
$50,000-149,999	979	23.8%	1,479	35.0%
$150,000 or more	10	0.3%	33	0.8%
Total	4,097	100.0%	4,224	100.0%

Source: US Census, 1980-1990

Race Trends

Table 9 illustrates changes in the minority population from 1970 to 1999. These changes are largely attributable to increased employment opportunities found at agricultural industries within Nobles County. Population estimates produced for 1997 by Minnesota Planning indicate that while the overall population in Nobles County has declined by 1% during the 1990s, the minority population has increased by 37.8% during the same period. These same estimates for 1998 show that the largest numerical increases are found in the Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic/Non-White population, which increased by 166 and 88, respectively. The largest percentage increases

occurred in the Indian and Asian/Pacific Islander populations, which increased by 49.2 and 41.6% respectively.

TABLE 9
NOBLES COUNTY MINORITY POPULATION
1970-1990, 1999 Estimate

	1970	1980	1990	1999 est	1990-99 % change
Black	62	30	49	59	20.41
American Indian	45	52	90	81	-0.10
Asian/Pacific Islander	4	98	406	608	49.75
Hispanic	NA	NA	262	387	47.71
Other	7	77	NA	NA	NA
Total Minority Population	118	257	807	1,135	40.64
Total Population	23,208	21,840	20,098	19,113	0.05

NA – Census Data Categories Changed
Source: US Census, 1970, 1980, 1990; 1999 Estimates

The 1999 population estimates are based on statewide trends and are the official Census estimates, but do not reflect population pockets. Over the past decade, Nobles County has been undergoing a change in the ethnic make up of its population. These demographic changes have occurred, in part, to the meat packing industry in Worthington.

One indicator of the increasing diversity occurring in Nobles County is a Community Census conducted in the mid 1990's by the Cultural Diversity Coalition in Worthington. The Community Census information was derived from past school enrollment records, enrollment statistics from area employers, and participation levels in Adult Basic educations classes. The Community Census indicated that in the mid 1990's there were 2,100 Spanish speaking, 500 Laotian, 250 East African, and 200 Vietnamese residents in the Worthington area (Source: Worthington Community Education Director).

A second piece of documentation that gives an indication of the ethnic make-up of the County can be derived from school enrollment records. The Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, maintains a database of the ethnicity by School District for grades Pre-Kindergarten through 12. Table 10 represents the sum of the Nobles County School Districts (Adrian, Brewster, Ellsworth, Round Lake, and Worthington) for fall enrollment, indicating both ethnicity and total enrollment. The Nobles County School Districts experienced a general growth in fall enrollment of 419 a students during the 1996-97 school year. This was an increase over the 1989-90 school year. From the 1996-97 school year to the 1998-99 school year, the fall enrollment numbers dropped by 171 students. But the 1999-2000 fall enrollment figures again show an increase. Chart 4 provides a visual representation of the fall enrollment trend.

Chart 5 represents the non-white ethnicity in fall enrollment from 1988-1999 in the Nobles County School Districts. Since 1990, the fall enrollment of Asian/Pacific Islander students increased from near 100 students to about 250 students, and has remained relatively stable at about 7% of the total student population. The Nobles County School Districts saw a dramatic increase in students identified as Hispanic, going from 54 students in 1989 (1.6% of total

students) to 466 students (12.5% of total students) in 1999. Students identified as Black increased from 0.2% in 1989 to 1.7% in 1999. The Native American student population has fluctuated in the range of 0.1 % to 0.8% of the total student population.

Overall, the percentage of non-white students in the Nobles County Public School Districts has increased from 4.4% in the 1988-89 school year to 21.8% in the 1999-2000 school year.

Table 10
Nobles County, Grades Pre-Kindergarten – 12
Public School Fall Enrollment 1988-1989 through 1999-2000

School Year	American Indian	Asian / Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Black	Total Non-white students	White	Total
1988-89	9	105	33	8	155	3,336	3,491
1989-90	3	88	54	5	150	3,249	3,396
1990-91	3	137	57	6	203	3,234	3,437
1991-92	11	212	75	13	311	3,299	3,610
1992-93	11	205	120	19	355	3,196	3,551
1993-94	3	257	163	29	452	3,222	3,674
1994-95	10	269	186	32	497	3,210	3,707
1995-96	7	263	214	45	529	3,192	3,721
1996-97	12	258	313	57	640	3,165	3,805
1997-98	20	250	355	64	689	3,056	3,745
1998-99	29	249	356	64	698	2,936	3,634
1999-00	19	267	466	62	814	2,927	3,741

Source: Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning (6-21-2000)

Chart 4

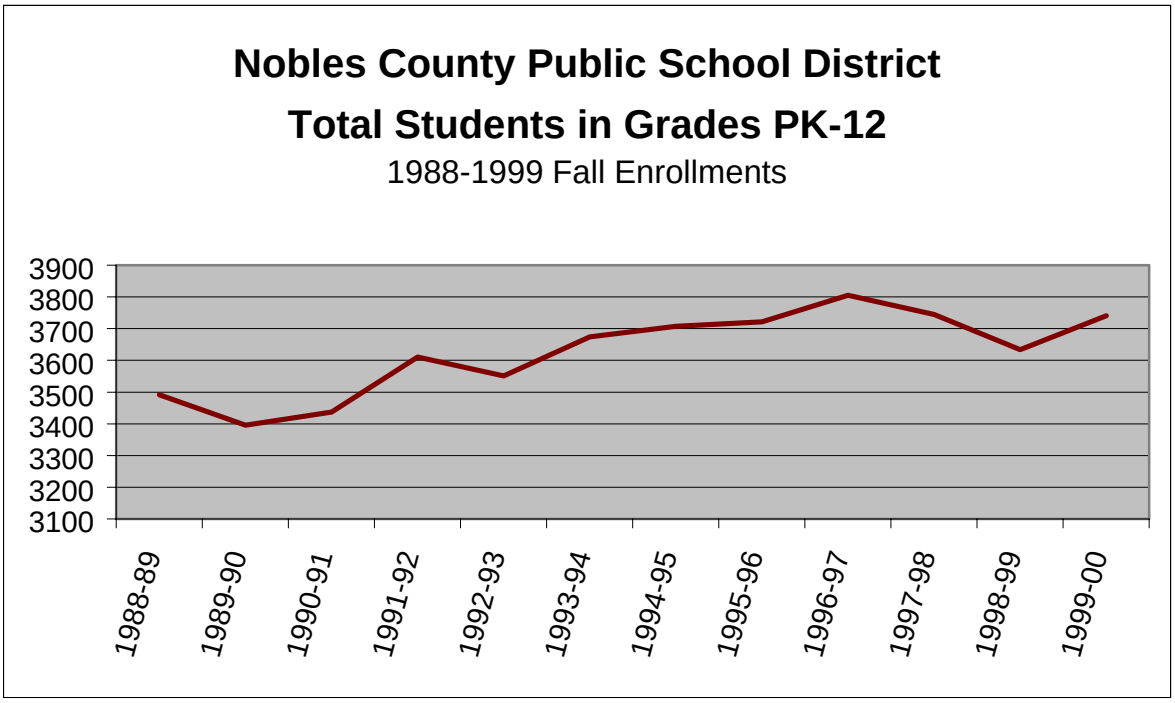
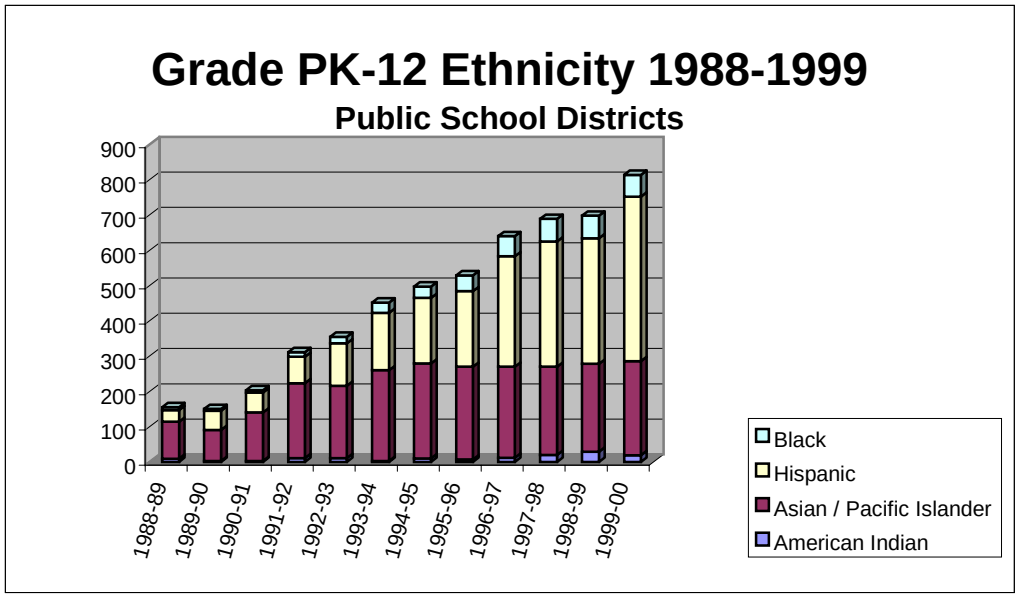


Chart 5



GOAL 1: **Stabilize younger population numbers.**
(related goals/objectives: Community Development 1; Housing 1, 2; Parks and Recreation; Historic and Cultural Facilities)

Objective: Establish strategies that retain and increase the County's population in the 0-29 age group.

Policies

1. Promote attractive and affordable housing and daycares in order to attract young families.

Implementation Strategies

1a. Develop and implement various means to provide attractive housing availability through programs such as tax abatements or low interest loan programs.

1b. Ensure adequate amounts of affordable housing and starter homes in order to encourage homeownership.

1c. Identify sources of low interest sources such as subsidized loans, for first time homebuyers.

2a. Ensure availability of daycare facilities through certifying daycares and educating all potential users.

2b. Work with businesses to recognize daycare needs of workers and the advantages of good day care facilities in relation to worker retention.

2c. Provide outlets for day care information dissemination through various means, such as Chambers of Commerce, SMOC, Churches, Public Utilities and the Internet.
2d. Facilitate the establishment of additional certified daycares.
3. Work with local units of government to attract high-tech industries providing higher wages and more benefits.
4a. Maintain the high educational standards throughout the County.
4b. Enhance and support existing and new means of reaching young people who may wish to move to a progressive rural area through services provided by the Chamber of Commerce, the Minnesota Department of Tourism and the Minnesota Job Service.
5a. Establish and market the area attractions. Provide exciting opportunities for new families in order to attract them to the area, which in turn will begin reversing the decreasing youthful population trend.
5b. Add highly demanded entertainment attractions.
5c. Help support all social and cultural opportunities.
5d. Maintain and add to the parks and recreation services provided by the County.

GOAL 2: Prepare for and preserve the quality of life for the increasing aging population.
(related goals/objectives: Infrastructure 3; Housing 3, Residential 3)

Objective: Ensure excellent care and support for the current and future needs of the County's aging population.

Policies

1. Ensure all appropriate access to facilities throughout the County so as to provide easy entry for the elderly and the disabled and retain the elderly population by ensuring sufficient and affordable access to all services.

Implementation Strategies

1a. Seek continued support of the Nobles County Heartland Express and research possible expansion.
1b. Continue the development and communication established by the Prairie Land Joints Powers Transit Board.
1c. Identify additional funding sources for the transportation system operations and capital replacement.
1d. Continue to support beneficial services for the elderly such as meals on wheels and place an emphasis on home health care.
1e. Monitor to ensure adequate supply of housing opportunities for the County's senior citizens that meet all of their required needs.
1f. Develop recreation opportunities for the elderly population.

GOAL 3. Educate the Community about the benefits derived from a culturally diverse population base.

Policies

1. Encourage the education of the community about cultural issues.

Implementation Strategies

1. Support and increase local participation in the Regional Resources for Rural Minnesota, a Culturally Diverse Workgroup located in Southwest Minnesota.
2. Encourage existing organizations and groups to begin or continue reaching out to diverse population groups within the County.
3. Support community education and extension programs.

EXISTING AND FUTURE LAND USES

Key Issues with Existing and Future Land Uses

- Agricultural Preservation (pages 5 – 7)
- Housing Development (pages 6 – 7)
- Economic Development (pages 7 – 8)

Countywide Goals

- Agricultural Preservation
  - Preserve agriculturally productive land uses as a vital resource to the County.
  - Continue to ensure minimal land use conflicts concerning basic farming operations, feedlots and residential/urban land uses.
- Housing Development
  - Allow for adequate residential development in rural areas taking care not to upset any agricultural or environmentally sensitive areas.
  - Continue to develop the livability and diversity of Nobles County by preserving existing farmhouse sites.
  - Supply communities with options for long-term residence within the residential sector.
  - Continue to provide adequate balance between residential developments and protection of agricultural and environmentally sensitive areas.
- Economic Development
  - Continue to enhance possibilities for the development of commercial and industrial enterprise within Nobles County that are compatible with current resources.
  - Protect the County's water supply from pollution.

Introduction

Land use regulation affects immediate as well as surrounding areas. One cannot simply zone an area as heavy industrial without affecting the surrounding areas in some way. Depending on the types of land uses that are planned for or desired, elements such as city services, infrastructure, natural resources and agricultural uses are going to be affected.

By carefully and systematically planning for appropriate growth, as well as designating different types of land uses throughout Nobles County, conflicting land uses will be minimized and desired growth can be allowed to take place.

Issues Summary

This section of the Comprehensive Plan presents an inventory of current land uses throughout the County (both a Base Map and a Land Use map of Nobles County can be found in the Map Section, Map #1 and Map #2). It will identify issues currently facing the County, as well as potential issues that are going to be of concern in the near future. All issues facing the County were identified through meetings between the general public and local officials throughout the County.

Some changes in land use have taken place in Nobles County since the last comprehensive plan was completed in 1966. The land use plan being presented in this document organizes and maps existing land use data, as well as sets up various guidelines intended to structure future growth and planning within the County. This is done by mapping out proposed growth areas, as well as identifying growth limitations for each of Nobles County's municipalities. By means of designating Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB), all incorporated areas within the County will have planned for appropriate growth, limited sprawl, protected agricultural land and discouraged leapfrog development.

To effectively manage future development areas, land use standards are necessary. If not properly planned for, a variety of detrimental consequences may occur.

Urban sprawl is low-density, uncontrolled, unregulated urban growth, and places a financial strain on different levels of government. Governing bodies are left trying to provide funding for the extra infrastructure that is required to support the inefficient use of land. When incompatible land uses develop next to each other, such as residential and heavy industry, a decrease in property values can occur.

Traditional forms of urban sprawl are not present in Nobles County because the establishment of the Agricultural Preservation District limits new non-farm home placement to properties that have proven former farm residences. However, in areas such as Nobles County, a different type of sprawl occurs. Former city dwellers moving out into the rural areas of the County can sometimes have certain expectations that will not be met. Some expect a higher level of service (i.e. snow removal, police coverage, city sewer, etc.) than will be provided. They have become accustomed to having these services while living in the city and continue to expect these services while living on the farm site. Most times, these sites exist in areas where city services do not reach. In addition to the afore mentioned problems, some residents moving out into rural areas find the agricultural practices taking place around their property to be a nuisance. This has prompted the County to develop a policy of requiring residents that do move out onto a rural housing site sign a notice saying they are aware that there will be farming operations taking place adjacent to their property, and that these operations may produce excessive noise, machinery traffic, dust and/or chemical drift.

Land Use Strengths

Residents pointed out that they feel it is important to keep an appropriate balance between urban and rural areas, as well as to continue to strengthen agricultural practices in rural areas. A strength identified was the use of the Agricultural Preservation District as a means to preserve and protect highly valued farmland and agricultural activities.

Residents felt that feedlots are an important issue facing the County and they realize that new feedlot development will be occurring in the future. Presently, residents feel the County does a good job of enforcing the various feedlot regulations through the use of zoning techniques and setback requirements (meaning residents feel there are adequate distances between urban areas and feedlots).

Land Use Weaknesses

Historically, Nobles County has been stricter in regards to their environmental regulations with feedlots (setbacks, manure management and permit requirements) than surrounding counties, or even the state. As such, an issue was raised that the County could be potentially weakening the County with too strict of regulations. The concern identified was that potential feedlot developers may end up developing feedlots in other counties due to their less strict regulations, thereby leaving Nobles County and taking with them the benefit to the economy that they provide. While no specific instances of this problem were reported, maintaining appropriate distances between feedlots, industrial uses, and housing developments is vital to the environmental well being of the County and should not be taken lightly.

Reports of land values increasing so much as to slow the development of new homes in the area were noted as a concern. Other concerns expressed dealt with rural homes. Many of the farm homes in the County that have become vacant, for whatever reason, are continually being removed and converted into cropland. Residents feel that removing these farm sites is like removing part of the County's heritage, and these acreages could serve as a site for new non-farm homes. Also, these acreages act as windbreaks, and removing them allows for greater air speeds which results in higher soil erosion and more blowing snow during the winter months.

The Future of Land Use

Many residents voiced their opinions on where they felt land use guidelines should be heading in the future. Concerns in this section were lakeshore development, wind energy planning and zoning, preservation of farmsteads, and agricultural diversification.

Some residents would like to see progress in zoning for wind energy to ensure appropriate development. Opinions varied in regards to lakeshore development. Some wanted to see development take place on lakeshores at the owner's discretion while others wanted to see the County's lakeshores preserved. Other specific projects were questioned, such as whether or not Adrian Springs should be demolished and replaced with a park.

While keeping in mind current land use weaknesses in the County, residents made a point to include the preservation of farmsteads as one of the key goals in future land use planning. The protection of farmsteads and the strengthening or diversifying of the agricultural sector remains a priority for most in the County.

While growth in the number of feedlots brings many economic benefits, consideration must be taken as to the extra demand they place on roads as well as their environmental surroundings. This may cause an increase in various costs to townships as well as the entire County.

Land Use and Cover

Land in Nobles County is typical of a prairie environment and has a significant variation in land elevation. The highest elevation occurs in the northwestern portion of the County and is just over 1,800 feet above sea level. The lowest elevations occur in the northeastern and southwestern sections of the County and are somewhat below 1,450 feet.

Land use remains primarily agricultural, with urbanization typically occurring around established communities. According to the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) 2000 data, there are 462,642 total acres in Nobles County. Of that, 407,600 acres are Cultivated.

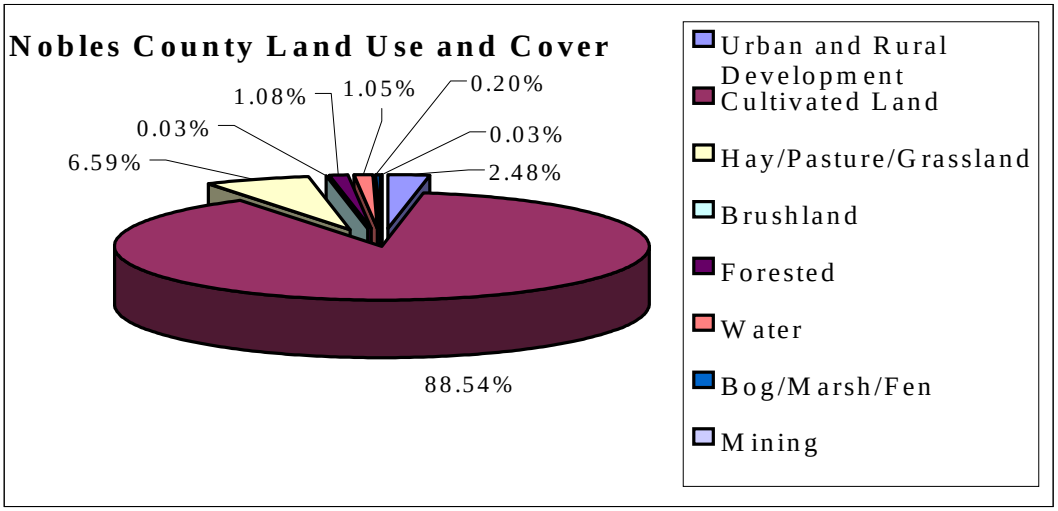
Concern was raised about the overall decrease in the number of farmers within Nobles County. Numbers from the FSA show that in 1990 there were 1,200 operators farming in Nobles County and that number has decreased to 1,046 for the year 2000. The average number of acres farmed per operator in 1990 was 350. Of those 350 acres, 65 percent were owned and 35 percent were rented. For the year 2000, the average number of acres farmed per operator climbed to 372. Of those 372 acres, 55 percent was owned and 45 percent was rented.

As illustrated below in Table 11, the largest uses are cultivated land (which accounts for 88.5 percent of total land usage), hay, pasture, and grasslands (which comprise 6.6 percent of the total land cover), and urban and rural development (which accounts for 2.5 percent of the total).

Table 11
Nobles County Land Use and Cover
1989 Data

	Acreage	**Percent of Total**
Urban and Rural Development	11,466	2.48%
Cultivated Land	409,605	88.54%
Hay/Pasture/Grassland	30,492	6.59%
Brushland	148	.03%
Forested	5,000	1.08%
Water	4,851	1.05%
Bog/Marsh/Fen	926	.20%
Mining	154	.03%
Total	**462,642**	**100.00%**

Source: Minnesota Planning



Source: MN Planning

Land uses of each individual community are illustrated on the land use maps included in the Maps Section. Every community in Nobles County is represented with a current land use map except for Worthington. Worthington's Land Use Map will be added to the Comprehensive Plan when the Worthington City staff has had sufficient time to complete it.

The major concentrations of development outside of the municipalities are the unincorporated areas of Leota and Reading. Nobles County implements agricultural preservation zoning which was developed in order to preserve and promote the use of land for agricultural and commercial Ag purposes. Agriculture preservation was established in order to prevent scattered, non-farm growth. In addition, it is meant to preserve natural resources and stabilize increases in public expenditures for public services.

Agriculture

The major portions of land within unincorporated areas of Nobles County will continue to be used for agricultural purposes. Urban development should generally take a secondary role to agriculture except in certain areas genuinely required for urban development. These lands are found within communities or are those lands adjacent to communities that are required for city expansion. Nobles County must continue to appropriately manage land uses by balancing the need for both urban and rural areas.

Urban growth should be confined to its immediate areas and prohibited from encroaching upon agricultural land. This is done several different ways. By restricting nonagricultural development to areas within urban expansion areas of communities, the amount of cropland loss is minimized, potential urban/rural conflicts are avoided and a more efficient, orderly and visually pleasing environment is realized. Communities can zone land for agricultural use within their boundaries limiting development. In addition, they can set minimum lot size restrictions on land zoned for other purposes. Communities can also set up UGB that are designed to completely stop growth past a certain point (UGB will be further discussed later in this Section). Another option is to designate urban service areas that discourage growth past certain boundaries due to the lack of city provided infrastructure.

Conservation

The conservation of land and habitat is important to Nobles County. This is evident in the amount of state and federally owned acres in the County. According to the 1997 Nobles County Comprehensive Water Plan, Nobles County conservation areas consist of:

- 32 Wildlife Management Areas (WMA), 3,700 Acres
- 4 Federal Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA), 500 Acres
- 2 Wetland Restoration Easements
- 1 State Scientific and Natural Area, Compass Prairie

The conservation lands in Nobles County are labeled on Map #3 in the Map Section. More information on conservation within Nobles County is provided in the Conservation, Parks and Recreation Section of the Comprehensive Plan.

Waterways

Floodplains of rivers and streams, as determined by soil characteristics or high water records, should continue to be free from any kind of development other than agriculture (within areas of minimal erosion), forestry and recreation. This way, the natural overflowing of some streams and rivers will occur with minimal property damage and eliminate a need to build costly dikes.

In regards to building in established floodplains, the County's zoning ordinance describes allowable uses within the floodplain. These uses are: (1) those that do not include a structure of any sort, or (2) are those that are an addition to an already standing structure, which comply with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Flood Insurance Rate Maps. Keeping urban development a safe distance from waterways will minimize pollution and sedimentation.

Since Nobles County lacks any major rivers, the amount of flooding that occurs is usually minimal. However, any new County zoning ordinances should continue to restrict development in areas within the floodplain. The floodplain is level land that may be submerged by floodwaters. Areas of the base (100 year) floodplain have been identified throughout the County by the National Flood Insurance Program.

Housing Development

In the past, Nobles County has not had a serious problem with non-farm development housing occurring in areas that are beyond incorporated and unincorporated communities due to the implementation of Agriculture Preservation District zoning regulations. There has been an increased desire to live adjacent to the County's lakes and in the "rural" setting in general, however, due to the Agricultural Preservation District, non-farm housing development is limited to former existing farm residences.

Adequate controls should be maintained for new housing developments to occur, primarily on land that is within designated urban growth areas. In doing this, two desired results would be achieved: (1) the County will preserve the prime agricultural land for crop production and other agricultural activities, and (2) the County will prevent unnecessary urban-rural conflicts. These are important steps because controversy arises when non-farm rural dwellers are placed in the immediate vicinity of farming operations. Farming operations may produce significant amounts of dust from working the soil. Odor from livestock and drift of chemicals during spraying operations may result if the winds are blowing at moderate levels. All of these different occurrences may be serious nuisances to new rural dwellers. On the other hand, farmers must deal with their own set of problems resulting from new non-farm neighbors. These include a potential increase in taxes resulting from new non-farm neighbors because extra funding is needed for the building and reconstruction of roads, additional police and fire protection that results from new development, and more school busing costs due to a greater amount of children living in rural areas.

Rural Housing

Housing development on prime agricultural land with a soil classification of I, II, III and/or floodplain is prohibited. New housing development is not allowed to occur in unincorporated areas of the County because of the Agricultural Preservation District. However, if this document is to be sustainable over the next 20 to 25 years, it must be able to address the housing needs that the future may require.

Currently, there is not a great need for new housing construction in rural areas of Nobles County. Some Nobles County communities, especially Worthington, currently have designated areas for housing development that aren't being developed. However, as mentioned earlier, there has been an increased desire to live next to the County's lakes and sometimes in a generally rural setting. The County will have to be prepared to address these needs in the future as increased demand for housing in the rural areas occurs.

The uses of the Agricultural Preservation District should be revisited during the next 10 to 15 years. At this time, a housing analysis should be done in order to determine whether or not the Agricultural Preservation District requirements should be changed. If need warrants the altering of the current guidelines, a new strategy must be implemented. This would not include allowing rural homes to be developed all over the rural areas of the County for several reasons. This strategy would make siting livestock facilities more difficult, increase the costs of public services, increase costs for bussing children to and from school, and hamper the ability to provide adequate emergency response to individual households.

The allowance of rural housing must be appropriately planned for and confined to appropriate areas. If need warrants, rural non-farm areas could be encouraged in the Kinbrae/Dundee/ Grahams Lakes area and also within the Round Lake/Indian Lake area. Density should be limited as physical features and soil types permit. In addition, septic systems, lakeshore development and DNR guidelines for Natural Environment Lakeshore Development will have to be accounted for.

Commercial Development

As in most small communities within the region, commercial development within Nobles County is now concentrated almost entirely within the central sections of communities. Worthington has commercial development in both its downtown, and along the major highway corridors. A number of commercial additions have recently been built on the northwest portion of Worthington along Highway 59 and Oxford Street. Businesses there are becoming increasingly dominant. Types of businesses such as Wal-Mart, Holiday Inn Express, and Slumberland are becoming larger and are competing more often with the downtown area. For the most part, such decentralization of commercial activity in Worthington has occurred during the years following WWII but has progressed more rapidly in recent years. Indications are that this decentralization will continue in the years ahead. There are, however, niche businesses within Worthington's downtown area that help retain its vitality and attractiveness to shoppers. Some of these businesses include specialty stores like female and children's clothing stores, bookstores, sports apparel stores and craft stores.

Homogeneous groupings of commercial developments should continue to be encouraged, primarily in established downtown areas. The Nobles County zoning ordinance describes these areas as the General Business District (B-2). The main function of the General Business District is to provide an area that will permit general retail and commercial uses in both incorporated and unincorporated areas of the County. In addition, commercial development should also take place along highways or strategic highway intersections, such as the Highway 60 and Interstate 90 intersection, and the Highway 59 and Interstate 90 intersection. The outer edge of certain communities should also be encouraged to provide areas for development. These areas are known as Highway Business Districts. Generally, only vehicle oriented commercial establishments (gas stations, truck stops, restaurants, motels, etc.) should be permitted in close proximity to highways and strategic intersections. Other commercial uses which require sites for parking or display of merchandise (auto dealerships, farm implement dealers, mobile home sales, lumber yards, etc.) should be permitted at the edge of city boundaries because of a recognized land shortage within downtown areas for such activities.

Development of commercial uses in strip fashion along principal streets and highways should be discouraged. In cases where such pattern has already been established, access points between the roadway and commercial development should be minimized to reduce traffic conflicts, thereby increasing safety.

Industrial Location

The locating of highway business and industry can create access management difficulties. As the number of accesses along a stretch of road is increased, the potential for traffic conflicts also increase. Development measures to limit the number of highway accesses along major corridors should be implemented. Planning for joint use accesses or frontage roads could be ways to reduce points of conflict.

Industrial expansion should be encouraged in homogeneous groupings within city boundaries. These expansions should occur in appropriate locations, and should be discouraged in outlying rural locations. Proper planning should be used when siting future developments so access problems are minimized, the use of land is maximized, and improper developments do not occur next to each other. While heavy industries are desired for their economic benefits, it is important to group them together and separate them from most other land uses because of their visual and operational (noise, odor, heavy traffic, etc.) characteristics. However, light industrial uses are generally compatible with commercial and residential uses. The mixing of lighter industries with other types of uses does not have such a profound negative impact on their immediate surroundings. In addition, the closeness of employers with employees can have positive effects, such as, decreased drive times to and from work, and less congested city streets during peak driving times.

Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB's)

UGB's are regarded as an extremely useful tool for municipalities attempting to manage the challenges of both normal and rapid growth. They distinguish between the lands that will better serve for development and those that should remain in agricultural or conservation uses. UGB's

can also help lead to programs that encourage appropriate urban development inside the boundary, while enhancing long term ecological and agricultural stability outside of the boundary. The idea of an UGB is to contain, control, direct or phase growth in established urban areas. This is done in order to encourage higher density growth and adequately service that growth. A successful UGB will protect farmlands and other resources like watersheds or wildlife habitat, from low-density (urban sprawl) development.

UGB maps of Adrian and Worthington are located in the Maps Section and are labeled Map #4 and Map #5.

Adrian

UGB's for the City of Adrian have been designated in both northeast and southeast portions of the City. Although the City of Adrian does not foresee any immediate population growth demands requiring the City to expand its corporate limits, Adrian must provide a realistic and maintainable development decision that allows for growth and directs it to areas within and adjacent its existing urban areas.

Worthington

As the UGB map of Worthington indicates, the City has chosen to direct growth to the West, East, and North. Worthington has also designated a buffer zone surrounding the UGB's. There were three main reasons for establishing this buffer. The City wanted to:

- prevent poor planning in areas surrounding the community
- protect farmers and farmland immediately surrounding the community
- protect land from incurring development because it is highly unlikely to be serviced by the City of Worthington

Nobles County should continue to uphold the use of Ag Preservation in areas surrounding Worthington. The potential changing of this zoning regulation through individual requests can negatively affect the community several different ways. First, the City's zoning ordinances are much more stringent than the County's. This makes the construction of buildings and facilities outside of the City's corporate limits a problem when the City does need to grow and has to annex these buildings and land into the City. Also, poor planning on the City's periphery can negatively affect the way future developments are allowed to occur.

AGRICULTURE

GOAL 1: Preserve agriculturally productive land as a vital resource to the County. (related goals/objectives: Residential 4)

Objective: Develop and sustain a healthy agricultural economy designed to prevent loss in the total number of farm units and diversify the products that it produces.

Policies

1. Maintain a working knowledge of the intricacies of agricultural economic aspects and issues.
2. Continue to consider impacts of external and internal change on farming activities and the agricultural economy as a whole.
3. Continue to support economic incentives and the agricultural preservation district that works to retain highly valued farmland and keep it from conversion to other types of uses.

Strategies

1. Support livestock production within Nobles County.
2. Support the development of agricultural activities that produce diverse agricultural products and services that add value to the local economy.
3. Restrict land uses incompatible with agriculture to incorporated, unincorporated, and non-agriculture areas of the County.

GOAL 2: Continue to ensure minimal land use conflicts concerning basic farming operations, feedlots and residential/urban land uses.

Objective: Maintain good relations between urban and rural areas by defining appropriate boundaries for each.

Policies

1. Continue with zoning regulations (Ag Preservation District) that does not site non-agricultural facilities on prime agricultural land and near existing and future feedlots.
2. Continue separation distances between new feedlots and existing urban areas (corporate city limits or any R-1 or R-2 district boundary).
3. Provide land use districts that are clearly and reasonably tied to their locality.
4. Provide appropriate setbacks and separations between incompatible land uses and land use activities.
5. Coordinate with Nobles County communities in order to establish Urban/Rural Boundaries (Urban Growth Areas).

Strategies

1. Ensure that feedlot and zoning regulations are properly enforced, continually reviewed, and updated when necessary.

2. Encourage screening livestock facilities in order to make them more attractive.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

GOAL 1: Allow for adequate residential development in rural areas taking care not to upset any agricultural or environmentally sensitive areas.
(related goals/objectives: Natural Resources 1 and 2; Infrastructure 2)

Objective: Encourage and stimulate orderly housing development within municipalities and near appropriate lakes that are in compliance with DNR regulations and open space planning.

Policies
1. Ensure that new residential uses do not conflict with existing County ordinances or laws.
2. Ensure housing opportunities are in line with the Equal Housing Opportunity Act.

Strategies
1. Implement regulations for lakeshore development compliant with DNR regulations and open space planning.
2. Ensure that adequate zoning regulations are in place to direct new residential uses to the appropriate location.
3. Consider incentives to developers in order to stimulate construction.
4. Encourage the development of housing where there is access to infrastructure (water, sewer) services.

GOAL 2: Continue to develop the livability and diversity of Nobles County by preserving existing farmhouse sites.
(related goals/objectives: Agriculture 1)

Objective: Preserve farmsteads in rural areas as well as publicly accessible open space by continuing the use of the Agriculture Preservation District.

Policies
1. Encourage future growth to occur within existing municipalities protecting existing farmhouse sites and the land around them from development.
2. Further the development of planting value added crops which will bring diversity to the rural areas.
3. Match development suggestions with current uses to help create a sense of community in appropriate areas thereby preserving the “rural character”.

Strategies.
1. Attempt to encompass special characteristics of land use in order to utilize and preserve the County’s natural rural environment.

GOAL 3: Supply communities with options for long-term residence within the residential sector.
(related goals/objectives: Housing 1, 2, 3; Demographics 2)

Objective: Provide a variety of housing accommodations for Nobles County residents including differences in styles, prices and supply in addition to housing for the elderly, starter families, those seeking co-housing options, accessory housing and rental housing.

Policies

1. Encourage development guidelines that promote the development of variety in the housing supply.
2. Encourage the development of higher densities in areas where they can be supported by city services.

Strategies

1. Plan for the increasing elderly population in order to provide them with opportunities to stay close to their original homes and families, to be located next to essential city services such as transportation, medical services and social services and to have adequate shopping within a close proximity.

GOAL 4: Continue to provide adequate balance between residential developments and protection of agricultural and environmentally sensitive areas.
(related goals/objectives: Agriculture 2)

Objective: Discourage highly incompatible land uses, such as residential and high density industrial, from developing next to each other by using effective zoning regulations.

Policies

1. Prohibit development in the following areas that are prone to degradation from nearby urban developments:
    - floodplains
    - riparian corridors
    - environmentally sensitive lake shore areas
3. Non-farm land uses should only be considered where they could be adequately served by appropriate infrastructure including transportation and sewage disposal.
4. Provide for adequate lakeshore development to satisfy demand only in areas where the environment and appropriate infrastructure services allow it.
5. Increase local recreational opportunities that do not overcrowd existing facilities.

Strategies

1. Protect all areas of special rural character valued by residents.

2. Continue to implement land use plans that provide for urban and suburban land uses adjacent to existing incorporated areas, forbidding the destruction of rural character.
3. Integrate zoning review criteria that necessitate the existence of appropriate infrastructure before all non-farm type development occurs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL 1: Continue to enhance possibilities for the development of commercial and industrial enterprise within Nobles County that are compatible with current resources.
(related goals/objectives: Natural Resources)

Objective: Further develop the economic base by ensuring opportunities for additions to the commercial and industrial sectors of Nobles County.

Policies
1. Add to the commercial and industrial sectors while taking care not to disrupt existing land uses already in place.
2. Avoid "leap-frog" developments by expanding on areas that are already in use, thereby limiting the amount of infrastructure that would have to be extended.
3. Limit the development of high volume water usage industries to conserve the limited water supply.

Strategies
1. Ensure that adequate zoning regulations are in place to direct new commercial and industrial uses to appropriate location.

GOAL 2: Protect the County's water supply from pollution.
(related goals/objectives: Natural Resources 2, 3, 4)

Objective: Implement land use controls that support Nobles County communities in developing wellhead protection plans.

Policies
1. Initiate land use controls that protect wells in areas of ground water susceptibility to pollution.

Strategies
1. Work with communities and the SWCD to identify wellhead protection areas.
2. Evaluate land use activity within the wellhead protection areas.

3. Identify land uses that have the potential to pollute the groundwater in the wellhead protection areas.
4. Identify mitigation measures and ensure that adequate zoning regulations are in place to allow for the protection of the County's water supply.

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 Readings 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

Facility	Current Enrollment
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

Facility	Current K-6 Enrollment	Current 7-12 Enrollment
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

Facility	Current K-6 Enrollment	Current 7-12 Enrollment
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 persons55 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.

CONSERVATION, PARKS AND RECREATION

Key Issues in Conservation, Parks and Recreation

- Water Quality (pages 4 – 8)
- Park and Park Access (page 9)
- Trail Development (pages 10 – 11)

Countywide Goals

- Provide an awareness of the importance of drinking water protection to the general health and well being of the County's residents.
- Promote public health, economic development and community infrastructure by insuring a high quality drinking water supply for all residents of the community.
- Protect and improve all ground and surface waters
- Maintain and upgrade existing park and recreational facilities.
- Further the development of the recreational trail system throughout Nobles County.

Introduction

During the period of initial settlement by Euro-American civilization, Nobles County was primarily covered by tallgrass prairie. The prairie land was originally diverse and full of lush plant growth that enabled it to support many different types of animals. Although 90% of the Nobles County prairie has been plowed, the County has retained some of this grassland along railroad rights-of-way and along riparian corridors. Riparian corridors, located along Kanaranzi Creek, Champepadan Creek, and Little Rock River, are some of the most notable tracts of grassland. The railroad rights-of-way are home to some of the last known true prairie in the County. Within these rights-of-way are assortments of rare plant communities that are not only native to the County, but that have been home to various forms of wildlife for many years. Sunrise County Park and Compass Prairie Scientific and Natural Area, each contain small natural prairie remnants.

The Buffalo Ridge marks the last major advance of glaciers in southern Minnesota. This feature also represents a natural divide in Nobles County. To the east, the landscape contains more lakes and wetlands. To the west, the landscape is more characterized by deeper and more extensive streams and rivers. These differences continue to define natural resource patterns on the land. In the west, steeper and deeper channels and valleys are inherently difficult to farm, and in many places were never likely plowed. Relatively large tracts of grassland tend to follow linear riparian corridors. However, these areas have historically been used for intensive pasturing of cattle and few people know about the native plant communities existing in these areas. To the east, wetlands and shallow lakes were the principal obstacle to crop production.

Like all resources, conservation areas and parks must be managed as sustainable resources. An inadequately maintained or neglected facility results in a run down and polluted area. The problem of overcrowding, if let go without appropriate action, can overload the resource in a short time. These problems can cause what were once attractive recreational areas, to become dilapidated and unattractive. The County should continue to address the challenge of maintaining conservation resources by keeping them free of litter and ensuring that their amenities remain in good repair.

Issues Summary

A topic that was discussed often in regards to parks and recreation was the development of recreational trails throughout Nobles County. Some felt that more money should be used for roads instead of trails, as some of the current trails planning seem extravagant. However, many residents feel that these trails would be an excellent way to make connections between urban, rural, and recreational areas as long as dead ends were either limited or completely eliminated. Some of these rural to urban connection ideas consisted of using trails to connect Worthington to Lake Bella or Worthington to Lake Ocheda.

Parks were identified as an important issue at community meetings. Residents expressed concern as to overall park accessibility throughout the County and noted that they would like to see paved roads entering appropriate parks. They felt this could be one way to generate more park usage but many already felt that their communities' parks were presently being managed properly.

There was a noted fear in seeing the amount of camping developments on County parks increase. It was believed that this would lead to park degradation. It was thought that an increased camping presence and overall increased park usage would increase the amount of trash and litter generated. This led to a fear that extra precautions to address this effect would need to be implemented. However, as this is a basic component of park management, this should not be a major issue.

Water conservation issues were also discussed frequently at the community meetings. Residents said that they feared there is a large amount of pollution going into the watersheds and they blamed industry and the larger cities in the county for this problem. However, agricultural run off is a major contributor to this problem. Practices that include fall application of nitrogen and applying more units than is necessary, greatly contribute to water pollution. Residents wanted to see increased efforts for improving water quality and protecting all of the County's water sources. The presence of phosphates in the water is often the result of improper watershed management practices, agricultural practices, and urban storm water. Increased phosphates were a concern because a phosphate increase can cause increased algae blooms in lakes and rivers posing a negative affect on aquatic life.

<u>Conservation, Park and Recreation Strengths</u>

Many felt that the development of the recreational trail system within the County will provide excellent opportunities for bikers and runners as well as increased recreational opportunities for older children. It is hoped that recreational trails will help both the young and old to connect

with the area. A trail system could be used to connect facilities such as Veteran's Memorial, located in Summit Lake Township, to Prairie Expo, which is located in Worthington. A trail system that is connected not only to itself, but also with attractive amenities such as the two listed above, would bring further utilization to all three projects.

Rural residents felt that the rural water supplies, which include Lincoln-Pipestone Rural Water and the natural ground water system, constitute one of their most special natural resources. These resources should be protected. Nobles County will have a consistent, continuous supply of water, if it properly manages these resources.

Overall, residents felt they should build on the attractive amenities that they already possess, such as lake areas and park systems. Development of these amenities should be regulated to impose the least impact to natural wildlife and water quality.

Conservation, Park and Recreation Weaknesses

Weaknesses were identified as: lacking in overall recreation areas, a decline in the amount of park usage within the County, park fees and limited camping facilities.

The Future of Conservation, Park and Recreation Areas

Ideas to address the weaknesses include: increasing the amount of recreation areas within the County, increase in the amount of available campsites, and further the development of the trails system. Further development of this system will be realized by linking trails to each other and to other types of special places. The special places include campsites, parks, and major features such as Prairie Expo.

Future planning in this area should continue to consist of preserving existing facilities to prevent deterioration. The County could take substandard recreational areas and change their uses by using funding from the DNR to provide new uses such as ATV parks or snowmobile trails. Surface water issues should continue to be a large part of this issue. All water and watersheds should continue to remain protected and preserved.

Environmental Analysis

Nobles County is benefited by its inventory of well-kept natural resources, which include its parks, open spaces, wildlife, and different bodies of water. As mentioned earlier in the Land Use Section, Nobles County has:

- 32 Wildlife Management Areas (WMA's) totaling 3,700 acres,
- 4 Federal Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA's) totaling 500 acres,
- 2 wetland restoration easements,
- 1 State Scientific and Natural Area, Compass Prairie.

Except for wetland easements, all of the afore mentioned amenities are open for public use. Other open spaces include Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) land that takes marginal agricultural

land out of production and converts it into uses such as wildlife habitats, erosion controls, flood controls, and groundwater recharge areas.

Water Resources

There are approximately 5,000 acres of open water in Nobles County. This open water is characterized in three categories: lakes, marshes, rivers and streams. Of the 29 wetlands, gravel pits, lakes and marshes covered by County or City shoreland ordinances, all are suitable for recreational, wildlife, and scenic purposes, but thirteen have been found to be potentially attractive for recreational or general development. A Nobles County water features map is located in the Map Section, Map #21.

In Nobles County, three main watersheds drain water within the County and each include a watershed district, they are the:

- Rock River Watershed (Missouri River Watershed)
  - Kanaranzi – Little Rock Watershed District
- West Fork of the Des Moines River (Headwaters) Watershed (Mississippi River Watershed)
  - Heron Lake Watershed District
- Little Sioux River Watershed (Missouri River Watershed)
  - Okabena Ocheda Watershed District

<u>Water Supply</u>

Nobles County has a limited ground water supply. Residential, agricultural, and industrial demand placed on the water supply is great, relative to capacity of available aquifers. These shallow aquifers that provide the greatest amount of water to Nobles County are also the most vulnerable to pollution. Steps implementing wellhead protection should continue to restrict polluting land uses adjacent to these aquifers.

The Lincoln-Pipestone Rural Water System currently provides water to the western half of Nobles County and Red Rock Rural Water covers a northeast portion of the County. This leaves a large void within the County that is not serviced by rural water. Due to high demand and existing water shortages during times of extended drought, the Lewis and Clark Rural Water System has been identified as a means to provide a supplemental water supply. Water from the Missouri River will be diverted, treated, and piped to Iowa, South Dakota and southwest Minnesota. This system will provide potable water to Nobles County but it should be viewed as a supplemental water supply and not an answer to water shortage problems. The entire system will need approximately 10-12 years of further development and construction and a large amount of funding derived from federal sources before it even comes online.

In addition to Lewis and Clark, a Water Exploration Task Force is currently searching for new water supplies within southwest Minnesota. Representatives from rural water services within

southwest Minnesota and northwest Iowa have said they would like to extend their service to areas not presently being served by a rural water system. Before they can do this, a water source must be found. Through an integrated regional water supply system, problem water supply shortages can be solved. Nobles County must continue to support the Task Force and its efforts. This will aid those areas not currently being serviced and also strengthen Worthington's reserves for industrial purposes.

Policies and strategies regarding economic development, with respect to water intensive industry, will have to be considered with the limited available water resources. In cases of severe drought, the Water Appropriations Law says that agricultural processing industries take priority over non-agricultural industries when those industries use over 10,000 gallons of water per day. This means local officials will need to take into account the needs of all existing industries and the ability of the current water reserves to support them before encouraging the development of more water intensive industries.

Wellhead Protection Plan

The City of Worthington will soon be developing a source water protection plan. This plan will address land uses and land management practices around the City's wellhead. Since the Bella Well Field supplying water to the City is outside of Worthington's corporate limits, the City of Worthington will have little legal authority to implement the proper land use controls within the vicinity of the wellhead. The City of Worthington, and all communities in similar situations, should work with the County to aid in the process of implementing adequate protection of all wellhead areas.

Past land and water conservation efforts in Nobles County should be continued, and, where appropriate, the development of recreational facilities in conjunction with conservation projects should be encouraged. Practices include wetland restorations, installing riparian buffers, re-establishing legally required buffer strips on public drainage systems, and temporary or permanent retirement of marginal and erodible croplands through programs such as CRP or the previously mentioned RIM. In addition, cities need help in protecting their water supplies. Unlike rural residents that may be hooked up to a rural water system, a city's water is local and therefore needs protection from all sources of pollution. A map showing Nobles County groundwater sensitivity is found in the Map Section, Map #22.

The Heron Lake Watershed District, which has recently been awarded a Conservation Partners Grant, provides an example of the types of activities that should be pursued within Nobles County. The grant came from the Department of Natural Resources to enable the District to continue watershed monitoring, promote wildlife enhancement projects near Heron Lake, and provide support for graduate-level research designed to identify factors limiting the growth of sago pondweed in Heron Lake. Through this program, water quality will be monitored throughout the watershed, aquatic vegetation surveys will be completed, watershed maps and databases will be updated, waterfowl nesting baskets will be monitored, and educational seminars will be organized and promoted.

Water Supply Management

Well depths throughout the County are becoming more and more of a concern for the County's residents. Several cities have wells that are located within areas of very high susceptibility to groundwater contamination. Contamination results from not only pollution, but natural causes as well. Some rural areas within the County contain large amounts of sulfates. These sulfates may pose problems not only for people drinking the water, but for farmers who have livestock drinking large amounts of the water as well.

Water recharge in these areas can occur in a matter of hours and is vulnerable to pollutants that result from inappropriate land uses. Since this is where the water supplies are, action should be taken not to restrict the development of these wells, but instead to aid in the protection of these wells from potential contamination. A Nobles County well index map is located in the Map Section, Map #23. Cities that have wells that are in areas of high concern are listed below.

City	Well Depths (In Feet)
Lismore	42, 23
Adrian	26, 42 (Two Additional Wells, Data Unavailable)
Ellsworth	20, 29
Worthington	Bella Well Field (64, 69, 75, 75, 80, 87, 102)

Source: DNR Division of Waters; "SWUD" Database

Floodplains

Nobles County has had few problems dealing with areas of dramatic flooding. Minimal flooding occurs throughout Nobles County, which has led to its designation as Zone C (areas of minimal flooding).

This is not to say that problem areas do not exist in Nobles County. Several areas of the County, such as the length of the Kanaranzi Creek south of Interstate Highway 90, is an area where the floodplain remains wide through the City of Adrian. The Nobles County Water Management Plan identifies the floodplains along Champepadan Creek in the Leota and Lismore Townships, and the Norwegian Creek in Grand Prairie Township, as problem areas in danger of frequent flooding. Development activity in these susceptible areas should be minimal so as to not be impacted by floodwaters. Through a set-aside program, high flood risk areas could receive a permanent vegetative cover in order to help alleviate problems caused by flooding.

Aquatic Life

Nobles County boasts several lakes that provide adequate fishing resources. Six Lakes: East and West Graham, Okabena, Ocheda, Bella and Indian Lake, all provide sufficient opportunities for catching game fish. These lakes are generally shallow. Okabena is considered the deepest as its maximum depth is 13.9 feet and its mean depth is 6.9 feet. Lake Ocheda is the shallowest with average depths at only five feet. By using such techniques as fish stocking, reclamation and

aeration systems (needed to reduce the occurrence of winter kill), sport fishing is available on local lakes.

Land use and management practices that have occurred throughout Nobles County have caused water quality degradation in all of the County's lakes. Due to the increase in nutrients in the water column, the County's lakes have seen an increase in algae blooms and other suspended sediments. With this decrease in water clarity, the sunlight is not able to reach all areas of the lake and this restricts many different kinds of plant growth. This not only eliminates a food supply for many game fishes, but it also favors the growth of less desirable species such as carp and black bullhead. These fish then cause greater destruction to the lake by uprooting other types of vegetation and sending more debris into the water column. All of the lakes within the jurisdiction of Nobles County are classified as Natural Environment, which means they have limited development potential. Guidelines for the development of Natural Environment Lakes were developed by the DNR and adopted by the County in its zoning code.

Biological Resource Management

Nobles County should continue to further the development of natural resource protection through various means. This way, recreational activities such as fishing, hunting and wildlife watching, can be assured for future generations. Since Nobles County is made up of prime agricultural land, and this land is unlikely to be used for conservation purposes, steps must be taken to preserve what the County already has set aside. The County is not limited in ways to approach this task and some are listed below.

Land Use Controls

By using conservation overlay districts, Nobles County can protect important wildlife areas that are threatened by development and other types of land use alteration. Areas for overlay districts include the previously mentioned riparian corridors, such as those found within close proximity to the Little Rock, Chanarambie and Kanaranzi creeks. Other potential areas would be the areas adjacent to Lake Bella and Lake Ocheda.

Lake Ocheda. The eastern basin of Lake Ocheda is currently home to many different kinds of waterfowl. Presently, the Area Wildlife Manager estimates that this particular basin is used by up to 5,000 Canadian geese and 10,000 to 25,000 mallards during migration times. Plus, a flock of nearly 1,500 Canadian Geese calls this basin home. Presently, pressure has begun to mount concerning the development of Lake Ocheda. Several reasons exist as to why the County should not give in to these pressures. Not only will the proposed housing developments devalue the area in terms of a hunting resource, but it will negatively affect the overall wildlife habitat that the area supports. Bird populations, such as those listed above, provide hunting opportunities in fields around the refuge as well as pass shootings at the margins of the refuge. Also, lawns make excellent grazing areas for geese and with the new abundance of lawns, the increased attraction of geese will result. This alone will create many nuisances including the undesirable messes that these geese leave behind.

The middle basin is much too shallow to be considered adequate for residential development as the deeper portions of this area reach average depths of only 2.5 feet. This limits the lake's ability in terms of recreational use. Residential development would be based more on the lakes aesthetic features than its recreation capacity. With new developments occurring, the existence of these aesthetic features would be placed in jeopardy.

While the western most basin of Ocheda is deeper, allowing it to support a wider range of activities, the fact remains that the rest of the lake is fairly shallow. In allowing housing developments on the western portion of the lake, lakeshore owners may eventually begin to request that the lake be dredged in order to accommodate their needs. Dredging is not only expensive, with costs to be borne mainly by the county, but it also upsets the present ecological balance within the lake. Careful consideration and deliberation must occur before development is allowed on Lake Ocheda. Assurances (or an established policy) of no dredging may be required before any development plans are offered or considered.

As mentioned above, in order to ensure adequate amounts of water for human consumption within Nobles County, the City of Worthington's source water protection plan should be finalized. This way, water bodies such as lakes and streams will be protected from various risks. Housing density within developments located along waterways should be further minimized in order to protect water bodies from the dangers of on-site sewage disposal. The shoreland standards that were instituted in the 1970's were a major step forward during that time, but future densities within developments should be lessened due to the fact that sooner or later septic systems will fail.

Missouri River Basin Riparian Corridors. Presently, little development pressure exists along the Little Rock, Kanaranzi Creek or Chanarambie Creek corridors. This is due to several factors. First, these areas lie within designated flood plain areas that restrict development. Second, most of these areas are designated as an agricultural preservation area, which limits its use further. Finally, shoreland-zoning regulations should continue to provide the area with assurances that the blocks of permanent vegetation will continue to remain protected. Potential development that the area may incur could be in the form of agriculture. However, due to the conditional use process that is in place in Nobles County, the threat of increased livestock production, mainly in the form of confinement buildings, can be minimized. This way, aquatic life and continued livestock production can continue to co-exist.

Wildlife Management Areas. Care should be taken to not encroach upon WMA's throughout Nobles County. WMA's often attract housing developments due to their ability to provide wide-open scenic areas and provide distances between other developments and agricultural activities. Another development problem being faced by WMA's is the construction of feedlots and other livestock producing facilities. Public hunting opportunities are limited with these forms of encroachment on wildlife areas due to animals choosing not to take cover in close proximity to man made developments. Reasonable setbacks should be developed in order to limit the amount of conflict that may arise.

Corridor Management and Development

Two different types of corridors, transportation and riparian, provide wildlife with a continuous string of habitat.

Transportation Corridors. As mentioned above, rights-of-way surrounding the railroads within Nobles County provide the County with essential prairie remnants. This, in turn, provides a functional wildlife habitat. However, these corridors are threatened by herbicide drift from agricultural practices. The use of chemicals from farming operations may blow onto the corridor and potentially kill beneficial wildlife habitat. Also, abandoned railroad ties left along the rail lines make the use of fire to keep up the vitality of the prairie an unsafe choice. This leads to the additional use of chemicals to control unwanted weeds and further destruction of the prairie remnants may result. As part owner of the Minnesota Southern Railway, it would be in Nobles County's best interest to continue to work not only with this Railroad, but also the Union Pacific Railroad and the DNR in order to provide proper management of all railroad corridors.

Road corridors provide efficient, continuous habitat as well. Proper policies regarding allowable mowing and spraying dates, as well as proper vegetation management, will allow many different types of bird species time to nest. This will have positive effects on bird populations such as pheasants and mallard ducks living within these corridors.

Riparian Corridors. Riparian corridors are vital to the survivability of the Topeka Shiner found in the Missouri River Basin (the western portion of Nobles County). The Topeka Shiner is currently on the Federal Endangered Species list. These riparian corridors also make up the most substantial amount of natural vegetative covering in the County. A large portion of these corridors are located on private lands, so if the Topeka Shiner is to be protected, a great deal of cooperation will be required from the individual landowners. However, the corridors are also tied into aquifer protection and possibly source water protection and watershed management. This means there should be a great deal of importance placed on these corridors.

Park and Recreation Resources

As mentioned in the Infrastructure and County Facilities Section, there are eight County owned parks and numerous city and township parks located throughout Nobles County. These parks provide just a few of the recreational opportunities available in the County. Other sources for recreation activities are the many conservation areas listed above. These areas provide recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, hiking and bird watching.

In Nobles County, Lake Okabena is the most popular body of water for recreational use. Since it is located in the City of Worthington, Lake Okabena's close proximity to a large population has allowed it to become a popular spot for water skiing, pleasure boating, and fishing.

Nobles County also contains 165 miles of Grant-in-Aid registered snowmobile trails. There are also three golf courses in Nobles County, they are the Prairie View Golf Links in Worthington, the Worthington Country Club and the Adrian Golf Course.

YMCA

The Worthington YMCA is an excellent source of recreation in the County for young and old alike. The YMCA offers many recreation activities including a swimming pool. Currently, the Worthington Area YMCA and its strategic partners are considering the construction of a new facility. Their goal is to explore the positives and potential negatives of constructing a new community facility. This new facility would provide space and affordable programming for its diverse and multi-aged group of users. Community meetings are presently being held in order to attain input on what type of facility should be built to accommodate all residents in the county from infants to seniors.

Trails

The Southwest Minnesota Regional Trails Plan (2000) identified recent studies the show the use of outdoor trail systems is on the rise. According to a 1990 Harris poll, it was estimated that 73% of adults in the US walked outdoors, most notably for exercise. It is also believed that local economies receive stimulation when communities respond to the needs of trail users. Nobles County should encourage the development of trails and trail heads within its borders, as well as trail connections with those of neighboring counties.

Potential Trailheads identified in the Regional Trails Plan within Nobles County are shown in the Map Section (Map #24) and include the following (an asterisk indicates an existing trail):

- 59/60 Travel Information Center
- Adrian Springs
- Bigelow
- Fury's Island*
- Indian Lake
- Lake Bella
- Lismore
- Maka Oicu*
- Midway County Park
- Lake Ocheda*
- Lake Okabena*
- Org
- Prairie Expo (Worthington)
- Round Lake (City)
- Sunrise Prairie Park
- Worthington

Presently in Nobles County, three recreation trails exist, they are:

- Olson Park Trail – This is a 1.1-mile paved, off road pedestrian/bicycle trail following the Lake Okabena shore in the City of Worthington.

- Lakeshore Trail – This is a 1/3 mile paved, off-road pedestrian/bicycle trail following the Lake Okabena shore in the City of Worthington.

- Fury's Island and Maka Oicu – These County Parks are located at Graham Lakes. The park road serves as a walking and biking route.

The following are the future trail developments for Nobles County:

- Worthington to CSAH 13 near Rushmore – Within the next five years, there will be an eight mile, hard surface off-road trail for bicyclists, in-line skaters and walkers. The trail will be the first of three segments connecting Worthington, Rushmore and Adrian to the west County line along a parallel path to County Highway 35. This proposed trail will be funded in part through Federal Surface Transportation Enhancement dollars.

- Adrian to West County Line – Within five to ten years, there will be a six mile, hard surface off-road trail for bicyclists, in-line skaters and walkers. The trail will connect Adrian to the west County line along a parallel path to County Highway 35. Points of interest that this trail will access are the Adrian Campground and the Adrian Spring.

- CSAH 35 near Rushmore to Adrian – Within five to ten years, there will be a six mile hard surface off road trail for bicyclists, in-line skaters and walkers. The trail will connect Adrian to Rushmore and complete the Worthington to west County line link along a parallel path to County Highway 35.

Potential Corridors for Pedestrian and Bicycle or multiuse trails and routes include (as identified in the 1999 planning process and January 2000 comment period of the Regional Trails Plan):

- Worthington to Luverne
- Adrian Springs to Lismore
- Tie Worthington/Prairie Expo to Fulda/Graham Lakes/Talcot Lake Area
- Round Lake/Lake Ocheda/Indian Lake/Lake Bella Area
- Along the Wind Turbine Corridor

NATURAL RESOURCES

GOAL 1: Monitor and protect all vital natural resources such as water, soil, and air, from improper development and/or deterioration.
(related goals/objectives: Residential 1)

Objective: Continue to develop plans for safeguarding all natural resources in the County such as Wildlife Management Areas (WMA's), wildlife inhabited corridors and lakeshores.

Policies

1. Develop an environmental education program designed to encourage the safe and responsible uses of all recreational areas.

2. Develop the best possible management practices in order to reduce air pollution, limit soil erosion and improve surface water quality.
3. Prohibit lakeshore development in areas not well suited for it or in areas being used for public water supply (Lake Bella).

Strategies

1. Maintain and increase the water quality in the region.
2. Continue to enforce all zoning, feedlot and Individual Sewage Treatment Systems (ISTS) regulations through the Nobles County Environmental office.

GOAL 2: Protect and improve all ground and surface waters.
(related goals/objectives: Residential 1; Economic Development 2)

Objective: Promote growth and new developments away from sensitive water supply areas.

Policies

1. Strengthen land use standards.
2. Create and follow the best possible management practices in order to increase the quality of surface water.
3. Ensure proper enforcement and updating of zoning regulations regarding the placement of feedlots and manure storage areas in order to protect surrounding watersheds and drinking water sources.
4. Support source water and wellhead protection planning by all public water suppliers.
5. Identify source water protection areas.
6. Encourage landowners to upgrade their septic systems.

Strategies

1. Continue to update shoreland zoning ordinance as needed.
2. Continue to enforce and update all zoning regulations concerning environmental affairs.
3. Ensure adequate manpower to carry out enforcement.
4. Develop a safe drinking water public education program.
5. Work with agencies and special interest groups that support this goal.
6. Promote agricultural BMP's (Best Management Practices).

GOAL 3: Promote public health, economic development and community infrastructure by insuring a high quality drinking water supply for all residents of the community.
(related goals/objectives: Economic Development 2)

Objective: Support source water/wellhead protection planning for all public water suppliers.

Policies

1. Develop a safe drinking water public education program that includes brochures, newspaper articles (consumer confidence reports) and informational signing which identifies wellhead protection boundaries.
2. Promote an educational event on the topic of groundwater/surface water protection theme on a regular basis.
3. Continue to use land use planning and implementation controls to ensure water and wellhead protection of public water supplies.

Strategies

1. Modify local controls to include language under specific conditions for conditional uses or requirements under permitted uses which place obligations on the developer and the owner-operator in a source water protection area to follow land management practices which are identified as best management practices or other management strategies of a source water/wellhead protection plan.
2. Provide a cost-share for the sealing of unused wells in wellhead protection areas.
3. Support the Federal Legislature to develop and implement the Lewis and Clark Water Project in order to provide a supplemental water source to the County.
4. Support the efforts of the Water Exploration Task Force in order to provide a rural water service to all areas of the County.

GOAL 4: Provide an awareness of the importance of drinking water protection to the general health and well being of the County's residents.

Objective: To maintain groundwater nitrate levels at a point which is significantly less than the drinking water standard of 10 parts per million.

Policies

1. Assist with financial support for the purchase of development rights in vulnerable wellhead protection priority areas.
2. Implement appropriate best management practices to protect surface and groundwater.

Strategies

1. Conduct regular (annual) screening clinics for testing private wells for nitrates.
2. Contact local Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program participants for the purpose of awareness and testing of a safe drinking water supply.
3. Implement fertilizer management practices in both municipalities and in agricultural applications.

PARK AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

GOAL 1: Maintain and upgrade existing park and recreational facilities.

Objective: Increase attendance at all recreation areas and continually monitor for signs of dilapidation and deprivation.

Policies

1. Market all appropriate recreation areas to residents and tourists.
2. Preserve and protect all existing recreational uses throughout the County.
3. Work with all potential funding sources such as the DNR in order to provide useful recreational activities.

Strategies

1. Consider any possibilities of expanding current park areas.
2. Develop a County website possibly focussing on the marketing of the area.
3. Research the costs and benefits to paving roads to parks in order to increase park usage.

GOAL 2: Further the development of the recreational trail system throughout Nobles County.

(related goals/objectives: Infrastructure and County Facilities 5)

Objective: To promote hiking, biking, walking and jogging on the County's trails enhancing the recreational uses within the County.

Policies

1. Continue to develop multi-model trails to be linked throughout the County.
2. Enhance and promote all areas affected by the trail system.
3. Connect all trails to each other and other existing attractions such as parks and local attractions.

Implementation/Strategies

1. Initiate a County Trails Committee to develop a County-wide Trails Plan.
2. Identify viable trail projects that link facilities (Trail Heads).
3. Seek funding assistance through various local, state and federal resources.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL FACILITIES

Key Issues in Historic and Cultural Facilities

- Little Importance Placed on Historic and Cultural Facilities (page 3)

Countywide Goals

- Initiate all necessary means to protect, improve and further the development of all Nobles County Historic and Cultural facilities.

Introduction

Many factors can determine how long a culturally significant building retains its beauty and luster. It takes people with a certain kind of desire to care for these buildings and to value the past that they represent. However, the largest threat facing the cultural resources in Nobles County, as in many other counties, is the lack of continual funding resources to properly maintain them.

In order to properly define the criteria that the County uses in designating a building historical, we rely on a definition that is most commonly accepted as the simplest definition known. This definition states that these resources must be a, "building, site, structure, object, or district evaluated as having significance in prehistory or history" (NRHP Bulletin 16A). This definition comes from the United States Department of the Interior's National Register Bulletin. There are currently a lot of different organizations and norms that have been employed to help assist in the designating of these resources. In other words, this definition should be used when attempting to ascertain exactly what makes a particular building a culturally significant resource. However, the most important term retrieved from the definition being applied here is the word significance.

Issues Summary

The main concern that was realized through the public meeting process regarding historic and cultural facilities was the lack of concern or the overall limited importance of this topic. Very few of the public meetings generated any sort of discussion on the preservation or protection of cultural and historic structures within Nobles County. This established the conclusion that there is a void in overall education regarding these designated structures. Few residents commented on either the strengths or weakness of these facilities, meaning this is an area lacking in overall concern by the general public.

<u>The Early History of Nobles County</u>

Before the area of land that was to become Nobles County actually became Nobles County, it was settled by the Sisseton Native American Indians. This took place many years before Europeans even began to settle in America. Over the years, the land became home to many different Indian tribes. The Native American Settlement kept European settlement at a minimum until 1842. It was at this time that a man named Joseph Nicolas Nicollette came to map out the area. During his encounter with the area, he named the bodies of water in which he came across.

He mapped two lakes and named them Lake Okabena and Lake Ocheyedan. He is also credited in naming the Kanaranzi River. It wasn't until the mid 1800's that the Nobles County area actually began to see new settlements. During this time period, many Native Indian tribes still called the Nobles County area home. In addition to the lack of legal basis for Euro-American settlement, the threat imposed by Native American Indians and their willingness to defend their homelands, limited the amount of new development by any settlers. It wasn't until the Traverse Des Sioux Treaty of 1851, when the Sisseton Sioux ceded the land, did the settlers gain legal right to settle Nobles County.

The northeast area of Nobles County was the first to be developed as a new settlement began in the vicinity of Graham Lake. It wasn't until the mid-1860's that this first permanent development was established. At this time, townships began forming along the Iowa border with Grand Prairie, Little Rock, Ransom, Bigelow and Indian Lake Townships.

The Minnesota territory was organized in 1849 and by 1856, many settlers had come and established new development. However, this time for development came to a halt during 1857. Settlement was discouraged due to conflicts between the Native Americans and settlers. A conflict arose during that year when a band of Sioux Indians killed settlers in Spirit Lake, Iowa. The few whites that were still living in the area after this event decided not to stay.

The area's first mail route began during the Summer of 1867. It ran from Blue Earth through the Graham Lakes settlement and then on to Yankton, South Dakota. This event encouraged development and by the Spring of 1870, the population in Nobles County doubled from 117 to 234. It was at this time in 1870 that the actual County government began. A year later in 1871, the first railroad went through the area. This stretch of railroad began in Mankato, ran through Worthington, and ended up in Le Mars, Iowa.

In 1877-1878, Bishop Ireland of Saint Paul and several priests forwarded the development of the western third of the County using Adrian, the newly established rail port as their center. The area filled with German and Irish Catholics changing both the religious and political balance of the County from Protestant/Republican to Catholic/Democrat.

Meanwhile, in the northeast corner of the County, the Sioux City and St. Paul Railroads were competing for the farm market. This resulted in the establishment of rival towns separated by only a mile and destined to remain small. The railroads played a major role in the establishment of all but two towns in the county. The exceptions are Leota and St. Kilian, both of which were church sites.

In 1861, 35 people made up 11 total families in Nobles County. Just 19 years later in 1880, the population was 4,435. Over the years, the population continued to grow at a steady pace and in 1895 there were 11,905 residents. This number doubled by 1970 when the census reported 22,959 residents. By 1990, however, that number had fallen to 20,098 and is estimated to have fallen to 19,920 in 1999.

Historic and Cultural Facility Strengths

It was mentioned in several discussions that the area does have attractive communities. This is to imply that there is an overall pride in the area and that for residents, keeping their communities nice looking and well-organized is a priority. To some degree, this credits the existing historic or culturally important facilities as being in good repair.

Historic and Cultural Facility Weaknesses

There were some who noted they feel there is a lack of public community facilities for historical society purposes. This may be a building block for establishing a need for more programs, funding, designation, and overall recognition of these important facilities.

Future

The County should begin to further promote the benefits and aesthetics of these important resources. There could be a higher priority in the designation and overall benefits of preserving the sustainability of historic structures that the County has. Due to a limited number of structures, preserving them and providing an adequate amount of community centers should be of high priority for the County.

Historic Resources

Any distinct area or region is almost always made up of structures that are conducive to the natural environment and activities that took place there. For example, Minnesota itself has many distinct land features and attributes. The state is full of an abundance of excellent farmland, many full and beautiful forests in the northern portion of the state, beautiful shores along many lakes, numerous prairies, and the Mississippi Bluffs. All of these different features have had an effect, one way or another, on the types of facilities and different buildings that have been built in the area.

Explicit reminders as to the cultural history of a place are seen through the structures that are standing in an area. Uses such as grain elevators, mills, mines and taller buildings are all examples of this visual history and cultural identity of each individual place. In addition, cultural history is linked to natural history as preserving the few remnant prairies is significant for cultural and historic preservation.

The National Register of Historic Places (Minnesota Checklist), distributed by the Minnesota Historical Society, defines how a structure is able to obtain the title of an Historic Place this way: “Properties are listed on the National Register because of their association with significant persons and events, because of their architectural or engineering significance, or because they contain important information about our history or prehistory.”

The following is a listing of properties located in Nobles County that have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

- ***Adrian State Bank***. Main Street and 2nd Avenue, Adrian
- ***Church of Saint Kilian*** (Catholic). Approx. 3 mi. NW of Wilmont Township
- ***Church of Saint Adrian*** (Catholic). Main and Church Street, Adrian
- ***Citizens' National Bank***. 326 10th Street, Worthington
- ***Hotel Thompson***. 300-310 10th Street, Worthington
- ***Kilbride Clinic***. 701 11th Street, Worthington
- ***Siemer Silo and Barn***. County Highway 19, Grand Prairie Township
- ***Sioux City and Saint Paul Section House***. Spencer and 1st Street, Dundee
- ***Slade Hotel***. 2nd Avenue and Main Street, Adrian

Cultural and Historic Points of Interest

Nobles County provides its own view into the past with these following attractions.

- ***Nobles County Pioneer Village*** features restored buildings that illustrate the early pioneer experience. Antiques and other memorabilia are also displayed.
- ***Adrian Springs*** which was first used as a stagecoach stop.
- ***Sunrise Prairie County Park*** is a pioneer cemetery and several acres of high quality prairie land.
- ***Prairie Expo*** focuses on the cultural, natural and commercial history of Southwest Minnesota. The cultural history exhibit titled Zuya: "The Gathering", tells the story of how the prairie was settled. The natural history exhibit titled "Painted Prairie" looks at the land and how it was formed and the commercial history exhibit titled "Beyond the Plow" focuses on the importance of agriculture as the primary industry. In addition, a travel center features six interactive exhibit kiosks to encompass the six tourism regions of Southwest Minnesota. These include Open Skies, Railroad Country, On the Banks of Plum Creek, Wetlands, Native Lands, and Little Europe. Each of these exhibits help visitors find out more about the region.

Festivals and Events

There is no shortage of events and exciting festivals to attend throughout the year in Nobles County. Listed below are special events held throughout the year.

- ***Adrian Farm and Home Days***. This is held the fourth week in June in Adrian and it consists of a carnival, parade, and health and safety fairs.
- ***Dairy Days***. This event is held during the second week in June in Ellsworth and it consists of a banquet with entertainment, the crowning of Nobles County Dairy Princess and Little Miss Ellsworth, a carnival, a parade, a street dance and a horse show.

- ***Fourth of July Celebration***. This is held on the 4th of July in Leota. This event consists of parades, fireworks, fun entertainment, children's games, picnics and ball games.
- ***Old Fashioned Fourth of July at Pioneer Village***. This is held on the 4th of July in the Nobles County Fairgrounds. It consists of melodrama, hymn singing, heritage demonstrations, band concert, concessions and music.
- ***International Festival***. This is event is held during the week of the 4th of July at the Worthington Jr. High School. This event consists of multi-cultural celebrations of sports, entertainment, and food.
- ***Old Home Days***. This event is held in Lismore during the 1st weekend in August. It includes a great deal of family fun with a parade, picnic in the park and a magician for the kids.
- ***Regatta Wind Surfing***. This event is held during the 2nd week in June on Lake Okabena in Worthington.
- ***Art in the Courtyard***. This event is held on the first Saturday in August on the Nobles County Courthouse lawn. It consists of artists, craftsman, refreshments and more.
- ***Nobles County Fair***. This is held in Mid-August at the Nobles County Fair Grounds. It consists of grandstand events, exhibits, a carnival, a demolition derby and Nobles County Night.
- ***Days of '78***. Held in Rushmore in July during the first weekend after the 4th. This event includes a parade, theatrical performance and numerous festivities.
- ***Corn off the Cob***. This is held in late September and is an annual production of a homespun mix of nostalgia, humor and music.
- ***King Turkey Days***. This event consists of a grand parade, a pancake breakfast, famous speakers, the Great Gobbler Gallop Turkey Race, polka and country western dances and vendors. This event is held on the second Saturday after Labor Day in Worthington.
- ***Dundee Nothing Days***. Held the last weekend in July and is a great time to be had by all who attend.
- ***Fun Days***. Held in the City of Brewster during August. A lot of family fun for everyone.
- ***Celebrate Chautauqua***. This event is held the second Saturday after Labor Day at Chautauqua Park on Lake Okabena. It consists of a kiddie parade, food, entertainment and arts and crafts.
- ***Christmas at Pioneer Village***. This is held on the first Thursday and Friday in December. It is an old-fashioned holiday celebration made up of singing groups, an orchestra, wagon rides, hot apple cider and cookies with Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus.
- ***New Year's Eve at Memorial Auditorium***. This is held on December 31st and includes topnotch family entertainment.
- ***Sun and Fun Days***. This event is held in Round Lake during the second Saturday in June. Games in the park consist of a water balloon launch, dart throw, face painting and others. Also, a fireman's street dance is held Saturday night.

GOAL 1: **Initiate all necessary means to protect, improve and further the development of all Nobles County Historic and Cultural facilities.**
(related goals/objectives: Industrial and Economic Development 1)

Objectives: Prioritize and refurbish facilities in bad repair, work to preserve all existing facilities in suitable shape and look for all possibilities of expansion.

Policies

1. Identify all possible funding sources for the preservation of Historic and Culturally important facilities.
2. Ensure that best efforts are employed in order to obtain genuine materials when attempting rehabilitation and restoration projects.
3. Encourage all efforts made by the Nobles County Historic Society, and all those wishing to aid in the development of historically significant buildings, in order to preserve historic values and promote ethnic heritage.
4. Continue educating the public on the significance of public sites and the importance of preservation of these buildings as non-renewable resources.

Strategies

1. Identify all possible sources for historic funding improvement and establishment practices.
2. Ensure the zoning ordinance protects appropriate resources and land use.
3. Work with Prairie Expo, Pioneer Village and any other high profile tourist centers within the County as a means to educate citizens and tourists as to the locations of relevant cultural and historic sites within the County.

INDUSTRIAL/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Key Issues in Industrial/Economic Development

- Need for Niche Markets (pages 5 and 12)
- Need for Energy Alternatives (pages 8 – 9)
- Lack of Diversification in Agriculture (pages 10 – 12)

Countywide Goals

- Increase the diversification of business and industry.
- Ensure that energy services will be able to sustain the County for many years to come.
- Build up and diversify the agricultural economy.

Introduction

Industrial and economic development can be considered one of the most important areas relating to the vitality of a community or county. These types of development can best be defined as those actions and activities that increase the number of dollars that flow into the community.

Many subtle but different components make up economic development. One of the main themes often heard at community meetings was diversification and how that can be applied to both current and future businesses and industries throughout Nobles County. A second theme was to increase the number of jobs, as well as increase the pay at those jobs. Nobles County currently boasts a low unemployment rate, however many residents at community meetings openly questioned why most of the available jobs are not high-tech or high paying. The third area discussed was the ability to preserve current industry and business throughout Nobles County, as well as the ability to create new businesses and industry. Niche businesses and markets should continue to be developed as well as higher wage jobs, which in turn can have positive effects not only on industrial and economic development, but also the current out-migration of the County's younger age citizens. High tech jobs require specialized skills and in typically smaller labor markets, such as Nobles County, various amounts of in-migration may need to occur in order to fill these specialized positions. Due to currently low unemployment rates, employees sought by any new business would likely have to be pulled from their current employer, as well as neighboring counties.

Issues Summary

The farm industry is currently experiencing a declining economy and this dilemma raised concerns at local meetings. Residents pointed out current agricultural trends such as farm consolidations, agricultural pollution (nitrogen leaching, manure storage), and a need for diversification in the agriculture sector, as issues that need to be addressed. Farm operations continue to grow larger as medium sized farm operations are pushed out of the business. These bulk commodity, medium sized operations, do not have the scale of economy to

compete with the larger operations. Small farms and hobby farms are able to stay in operation because of supplemented income. This additional source of revenue is usually from another job located off the farm and/or government payments. However, government assistance is a major contributing factor to both the large and small scale farming operations being able to stay in business during recent years.

Residents also noticed a disconnect between food production and consumption. Farmers within the County use land, labor, capital, and equipment to produce an inexpensive grain. This grain will be used as feed for livestock and as other intermediate type foods. The disconnect occurs when the inexpensive, locally produced grain, leaves the area and is processed (has value added to it) and returns to the County in the form of meat being sold at the local grocery store or as ethanol being sold at the local gas station. The idea behind this issue was that if more emphasis was placed on adding value to the farm products produced within the County through locally established cooperatives, jobs would be created, the County's economy would be expanded, and farmers could increase their income by establishing new local markets.

Residents also reported that they believe more operators are entering into different types of large scale and corporate farming operations. Many expressed negative feelings with the agriculture trend going from locally owned to non-locally owned. Interest was expressed in attempting to bring control of the coops back into the control of the local farmer. Some pointed out concern over governmental and environmental regulations increasing for small agricultural and organic products. The County should encourage additional and unique types of economic development for both the rural areas and the larger cities. These could be in the form of primary food production, i.e. truck farm vegetables or direct market meat.

Many residents expressed concern that the larger communities of the County are receiving a larger portion of the benefits from economic expansion. They also stated that small locally owned businesses in smaller communities were having an increasingly difficult time competing with larger business in larger communities. These small businesses, residents felt, are not able to offer comparable benefits and wages to their employees that are offered by the larger competition. Therefore, they are losing business to these larger operations if they try to pay their employees a competitive wage because they then have to raise prices on products they sell. Due to the negative effects incurred by smaller cities relating to these circumstances, residents stated that they would like to see efforts made by the County to encourage residents living within smaller cities to do their shopping locally.

Residents expressed the need for more emphasis placed on the establishment of many smaller to mid-size new companies and business instead of attempting to bring in one large company employing a large number of people. Large plants are often subject to corporate whims, which creates a certain kind of risk for the entire area. They cited the Campbell's Soup Company closing its doors and the negative effect that it had on the region as an example. These concerns led to residents questioning the availability of potable water supplies. In times of business creation and expansion demands, many felt the low water supplies indicated a reason to not only be cautious of the types of business and industry

sought by the County, but also a reason to protect the available water sources within the County.

By attempting to increase overall business and industry diversification, the County must consider all issues. Placement, size and type of business or industry are all pieces of a large puzzle. Commercial and retail services will likely continue to consolidate in Worthington as the business sector will have to compete more and more with Sioux Falls and E-commerce. Nobles County will be limited as to what businesses and industries it can support as water demands and labor force availability will also play a large role in determining all possibilities.

Industrial and Economic Development Strengths

Strong work ethics possessed by the residents of the County, as well as the geographic location of the County, were identified as strengths to build on. Both Prairie Expo and the construction of the new jail can bring many positive changes. Prairie Expo could have the potential to enhance economic development in the area and increase attraction to tourism throughout the County and the region as a whole. The new jail will bring a better working environment then that of the older facility.

In many communities, residents reported benefits in economic development that resulted through the construction of developments in Worthington. Many said that they felt smaller communities should find ways to continue to utilize developments in Worthington in order to provide better circumstances within their own communities. Smaller communities serve as a reservoir of affordable housing for the area as well as an attractive climate for raising a family.

The employment opportunities were reported as a strength throughout the County, especially the blue-collar type jobs. The area is seen as having a strong opportunity for increased business growth. Many felt that there is strong economic development organization throughout the County and that there is much diversity within the industrial sector. However, this diversity could always be built on and improved. In addition, residents commented on the strong base within the agricultural sector.

Many noted the activity of the Worthington Regional Economic Development Corporation (WREDC) as a major benefit to the County as is the future development of wind energy. Wind development has the potential to provide an abundant amount of economic opportunities in the future. The development of local coops controlling and leading the development of future constructions was also reiterated as a potential benefit to the County. Community owned projects should be viewed as a potential strength and avenues could be investigated to further their developments.

Industrial and Economic Development Weaknesses

The current national economy is strong, yet there are individual areas that require attention and need improvement. The lack of affordable housing throughout the County was the

single greatest weakness identified at the Economic Development Issue meeting. In addition, conflicting goals between Agri-Alley and residential land use was viewed as a problem.

Presently, the area has a low unemployment rate. While this is a strength, many have expressed concern in the fact that many of the available jobs are low wage level, blue-collar type positions. The area has a shortage of high paying, high-tech full time jobs. The County and its residents would greatly benefit from an increase in office type (service) jobs, as well as more high quality technology related jobs. These types of jobs are often desired to keep people in the area while limiting use of the current water resources.

The Future of Industrial and Economic Development

The promotion of tourism through Prairie Expo, Pioneer Village, and other County events and facilities, as well as economic diversification, were all seen as the future direction of economic development. By increasing technology use and finding niche businesses, the Nobles County economy can be strengthened and provide a steady supply of positions with higher wages. The promotion of industries with good paying jobs and benefits will increase the quality of life by not only enticing the college graduates that the area produces to remain in the area, but to also attract those from outside of the area.

Ideas to meet these challenges have been many and creative. Some of these ideas include:

1. Cooperative purchasing in order to alleviate problems resulting from a declining tax base,
2. Encouraging partnerships and collaborative efforts in promoting amenities such as parks,
3. Working with farmers to showcase community supported agriculture coops and organic foods through education

Forming cooperatives within the livestock chain can increase the amount of value added processing done within the County. These cooperatives are businesses comprised of farmers coming together to market their product and receive the benefits of having the product receive further processing into a more valuable commodity.

Many felt that the businesses within the County need to focus less on competition and more on working together in order to find appropriate niches. Communities need to work together to create an economic climate that enhances the entire County. Early planning should be made concerning the marketing and services of small town businesses so that they are not forced to close. Financing will remain an important factor in keeping these businesses in place.

Technology is a word often mentioned in relation to enticing higher wage industries to move into the area. Nobles County is in an excellent position to take advantage of potential renewable energy sources such as wind, biomass, and ethanol. These could be marketed as green energy to business that would be interested in and willing to use clean energy within

the scope of products they sell. In addition, the area is in a position to utilize a booming economy with the transportation infrastructure that it presently has and maintains. These major highways, the rail-line, the airport in Worthington, as well as transit, are vital in obtaining and maintaining medium sized businesses and industries requiring adequate transportation.

Industrial and Business Development

Agriculture and its many related activities is a major component of the industrial and economic processes within Nobles County today. The employment sections covered in this plan encompass all private sector employees as well as state, county and municipal government employees who are insured under the Reemployment Insurance Act. The closing of Campbell's Soup Company in late 1997 is the most attributable cause to the considerable drop in employment figures in Nobles County for late 1997 and early 1998 (Table 14). Employment declines were in the Transportation and Public Utilities sector, which declined by 24 employees (5%) and the Wholesale Trade sector, which declined by 113 employees (13%). The largest growth in Nobles County occurred in the Manufacturing sector which increased by 768 employees (39%) between 1989 and 1997. Strong increases were also found in the Retail Trade, Services, and Government sector during this period.

If current trends continue, many younger Nobles County residents will leave the area seeking higher education and new and better types of employment. The labor force will likely continue to decline in the next ten to twenty years. However, this will not eliminate all of Nobles County's chances for industrial and economic growth. With the appropriate planning and assistance, rural areas will be able to adapt to economic change and will have the opportunity to establish themselves as independent and uniquely diverse areas. Several sectors that require improvement include education and training, tourism, agricultural diversification, underutilized assets, infrastructure investments, renewable energy sources, and telecommunications. With the proper planning and treatment, all rural areas can be helped by economic development and be allowed to flourish.

In the recent past, Nobles County experienced a loss with the closing of Campbell's Soup Company. This event, coupled with low farm commodity prices, has spurred many in the County to seek diversification for all of the County's new developments, as well as in some existing businesses. As far as new development, Awara Doro, Inc. purchased the Campbell's plant and should be in operation sometime in 2001. This company will process spent hens using 80 full-time employees and they intend to increase employment to 275 employees within a year.

Development of niche markets can include a variety of facets from high-tech industries to value-added production. Diversification should continue to focus on existing companies in order to find new products or markets, and to a lesser extent, new industries being developed within the area.

Major Employers

Table 13 shows the main industries operating within Nobles County.

Table 13
Primary Industries
Nobles County
September 2000

Company	Product or Service	Number of Full-Time Employees
Swift	Pork Processing	1,700
Worthington School District	Education (K-12)	500*
Kraft Foods	Production	400
Worthington Regional Hospital	Health Care	195**
Bedford Industries	Packaging Manufacturer	160
Highland Manufacturing	Manufactured Homes	155
Minnesota West Community (College)	Education	61
Intervet	Animal Health Vaccines	50
Newport Labs	Animal Health Vaccines	45

* Includes full-time and part-time employees
** Full-time equivalent
Source: Maxfield Research Inc.

According to information provided from Maxfield Research Inc., the average hourly wage at Swift, Bedford Industries, Highland Manufacturing, Intervet, and Newport Labs is $11.00 per hour, which would be just under $23,000 per year. Production type employment accounts for 80 percent of the jobs offered at these businesses as the remaining jobs are mainly higher paid managerial and administrative type positions. In addition, all of these companies are not expecting any significant growth in the near future except for highland Industries. Highland Industries has started work on a $2.7 million, 47,500-square foot addition to its Worthington facility. The company expects the expansion to allow for the creation of 50 new jobs.

Employment Data

If trends continue, the County can expect to experience a decline in the overall labor force as people in the age groups of 24 to 44 continue to leave the County. However, it is projected that the residents in the age groups of 45 to 64 and 65 and over, will continue to increase. This continuation of the declining labor force in conjunction with both the overall population decrease and increasing elderly population, will no doubt have profound impacts on the overall stability of the County. These impacts include a lack of housing for the elderly, labor shortages, decreasing tax bases, and lower school enrollments.

By recognizing this trend, Nobles County has the opportunity to boost slumping sectors of the business economy. By assisting rural areas to develop and adapt to economic change, they will have a chance to develop the kinds of business and support the industries that will benefit the entire County. To enhance this opportunity, certain aspects must be dealt with and improved, including education and training, tourism, agricultural diversification, underutilized assets, infrastructure investments, renewable energy sources, and telecommunications.

Table 14 illustrates covered employment over an eight-year period from 1989 to 1997 and is listed below. Each yearly data set represents the annual average.

Table 14
Covered Employment by Industry
Nobles County
1989 to 1997
(Annual Averages)

				Change			
				1989-1993		1989-1997	
	1989	1993	1997	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Ag, Forestry, Fishing Mining	84	117	ND	33	39%	ND	ND
Construction	161	193	253	32	20%	92	57%
Manufacturing	1,949	2,618	2,717	669	34%	768	39%
TCPU*	465	395	441	(70)	-15%	(24)	-5%
Wholesale Trade	900	892	787	(8)	-1%	(113)	-13%
Retail Trade	1,863	1,981	2,082	118	6%	219	12%
FIRE**	292	360	344	68	23%	52	18%
Services	1,150	1,251	1,392	101	9%	242	21%
Government	1,559	1,754	1,800	195	13%	241	15%
All Industries	8,423	9,561	9,816	1,138	14%	1,393	17%

* Transportation, Communications, and Public Utilities
** Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate
ND No Data available
Source: Minnesota Department of Economic Security, Southwest Regional Development Commission

Tourism

Some areas in southwest Minnesota, especially those located near lakes or on lakeshores, are seeing new development. Many of these areas are beginning to lose their "vacation area only" image and are beginning to attract new "year-round" arrivals from the neighboring large communities, various suburbs, as well as places outside of the state. Pheasant hunting is an example of a historic tourism use within Nobles County. A map showing prospects for pheasant hunting during the 2000 year is found in the Map Section (Map #25).

As shown in the Demographics section, Nobles County's population is beginning to reverse its declining trend. By further investing in the future, Nobles County can add new

developments, both industrial and commercial, that will give the County better balance and reduce the amount of out-migration. It can also begin attracting visitors from outside of the region, as economic potential does exist within southwestern Minnesota and Nobles County. These areas, which certainly include the tourism and recreation industries, should continue to be built upon.

Prairie Expo

The newly developed Prairie Expo is the latest addition to the tourism industry within Nobles County and southwest Minnesota. Prairie Expo opened its doors during the Fall of 2000 and is located north of the City of Worthington along Interstate 90 and U.S. Highway 59. Prairie Expo expects to attract 400,000 annual visitors. Its exhibit hall contains three dimensional, interactive displays depicting the importance of the prairie to life in southwestern Minnesota. The large, signature building, which includes the exhibit hall, is the centerpiece of the 40-acre exposition complex being developed to showcase the culture, history, and agricultural economy of the prairie. The exhibits include information, photographs, and artifacts from the area. Visitors are informed of numerous area attractions and are directed to communities where they can enjoy festivals, events or activities. The 40 acres on the front of the property have been planted with native prairie grasses, flowers, shrubs, and trees that can be explored by the meandering walking paths that extend 3,000 feet.

Future plans for Prairie Expo include building additions to the exhibit hall and themed development of the north 50 acres. A farmers'/crafters' market, an amphitheater, an animal barn and additional display space will be added to the exhibit hall. The commercial development has been zoned to include hospitality business, retail centers, and light industry.

The Infrastructure and County Facilities Section of this plan further describes the museum, Pioneer Village, the Art Center, Parks, the Historical Society, and Pioneer Village.

Renewable Energy

Scientific reports stating carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels are likely altering the global climate increase the need for renewable energy sources. Discussions as to how far the extent of damage from these emissions continues as the Federal Government continually tightens its restrictions on overall emission standards. Nobles County should continue its efforts in transforming the County from a fossil fuel burning, carbon dioxide producing member of the State of Minnesota, to a County that relies more heavily on clean, renewable energy. This way, energy sources such as wind power can become an export industry for Nobles County.

Nobles County should continue its involvement in the Southwest Minnesota Energy Task Force. This task force was created after the initial success of the Ridge County Task Force which was made up of the counties located along the Buffalo Ridge. The Ridge Counties Task Force focused on Wind Power Issues. The new Energy Task Force has a much

broader focus so that it could include all nine counties in the southwest Region and is focusing on electric deregulation and all sustainable or alternative energy sources. This broad spectrum was chosen to allow for flexibility in setting goals and objectives for the group. The current set-up allows for each County in the Region to have a vote on what issues the Task Force advocates.

A strategy currently being developed in Nobles County is the use of renewable energy generation through wind power production. The Nobles County Planning and Zoning Commission recently approved four conditional use permits to Northern Alternative Energy (NAE) in order to build wind turbines. NAE will be erecting two 660-kilowatt wind turbines in Section three and two more in Section two of Larkin Township, near Wilmont. The Planning Commission placed five conditions on the permits:

- Turbines must be 850 feet from the nearest neighboring residence
- Permits must be obtained from the township for the 15 foot wide access road to each turbine
- Turbines must be sited at least five rotor lengths apart
- They must be 250 feet from neighboring property lines
- They must be 250 feet from rights-of-way

Source: The Daily Globe

Increasing the use of wind power production will help diversify the economy of Nobles County. This industry has the potential to create jobs, increase the tax base, and provide income for local landowners. The direct effects of wind power generation are seen through the spending of wages and salaries received through the local energy-producing industry, the easement payment made to landowners, property taxes assessed on wind generating sites, and revenue from the production of electricity. The increase of economic development with wind energy through locally owned cooperatives (who distribute the newly generated electricity) will increase the public's overall benefit. All of these positive features will be a direct result of the subsequent wind development.

However, negative aspects can occur as well. Generally, large wind turbines are not aesthetically pleasing to most residents who have to live near them. They can also have negative impacts on the County's wildlife populations. While avian monitoring studies at the existing Buffalo Ridge wind farms have not found significant numbers of birds killed by turbines, they have found a surprising number of migrating bats that have been killed by them. Impacts to wildlife and native plant communities can be reduced by careful attention to micro-siting issues such as:

- Near native prairie
- Between two wetlands
- Near bird flight lines.

Agriculture

Nobles County faces the challenge of attempting to diversify its overall employment industries while trying to maintain a high amount of excellent crop production. The County has retained its ability to produce very high crop yields over the years and remains in the top 15 most productive counties in the state in terms of bushels produced per acre. The 1997 Census of Agriculture says that Nobles County had 350,661 acres of harvested cropland. Of that, 166,327 acres were planted to corn and 172,116 acres were planted to soybeans.

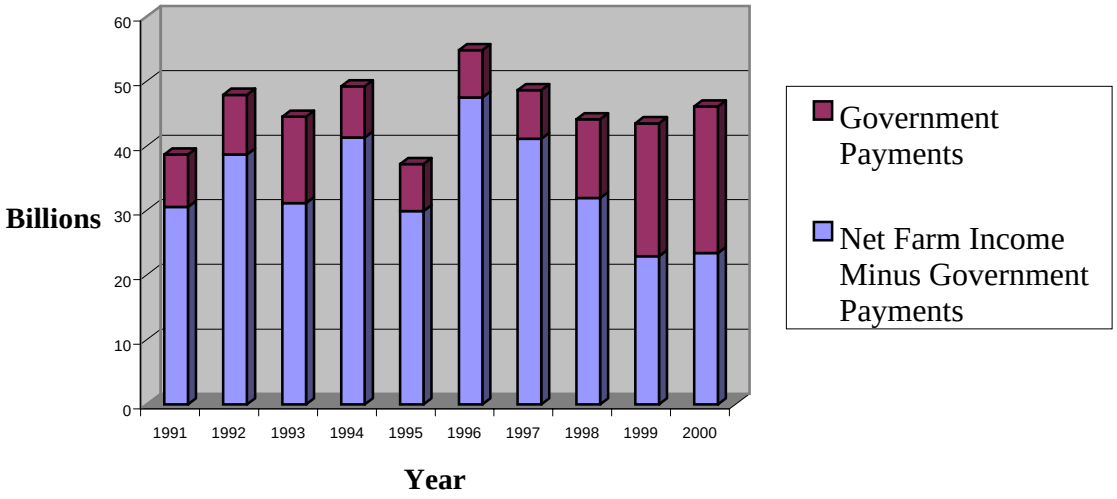
Presently, Americans spend 8 percent of their income on food and since this is not likely to change in the future, area farmers must learn how to identify the demands of the consumer and determine if they can meet these demands. This may range from raising different kinds of crops to joining with other area farmers to collectively process and market their commodities. Due to low market prices for the past few years, net farm income has remained relatively stable due to government payments. These payments continue to become a growing portion of net farm income for most corn and soybean farmers. The income realized by farmers, minus the government payments, continues to decline. As Table 15 indicates, the percent of income from federal farm programs has risen from 21 percent in 1991 to 49 percent (projected) in 2000. The end of the farm program payments will have a serious impact on area farmers if the market prices remain low.

Due to Nobles County's prominent dependence on the agricultural industry in its current form, diversification efforts will be challenging. Continued production from farming will continue to rise while the employment levels that the agriculture industry supports will continue to fall. As technology grows, the use for human input declines. Farm sizes continue to increase as the required number of people to farm those larger farms decrease. Many people farming today report an outside income other than farming, and many of those same people report the other occupation as their main profession. Economic professionals forecast increased employment levels in every industry except for the mining and agriculture industries.

Table 15
Net Farm Income
1991 - 2000

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Net Farm Income Minus Government Payments	30.5	38.7	31.1	41.3	29.9	47.5	41.1	31.9	22.9	23.4
Government Payments	8.2	9.2	13.4	7.9	7.3	7.3	7.5	12.2	20.6	22.7

Chart 6
Net Farm Income
1991-2000



Source: Agricultural Outlook 2000, USDA Economic Research Service

By diversifying the County's overall economy, the negative impact upon relying on a single industry will be reduced. The County can encourage industry that will provide high paying jobs to a qualified workforce. Diversification in the agricultural sector should also be considered. Research and education should be used to identify niches in all potential markets as well as seeking opportunities to increase value added production industries (without placing unrealistic long term demand on existing water supplies). All will benefit the County and lead to diversification.

Livestock

The 1997 Census of Agriculture shows that Minnesota ranks high compared to other states in the nation in terms of livestock produced. In terms of value of cattle and calves sold and also value of hogs and pigs sold, Minnesota ranked 12th and 3rd respectively.

In 1997, Nobles County ranked 42nd out of all counties in the U.S. in terms of total hogs and pigs inventoried with 224,050. That was an increase of 22,253 over the 201,797 in 1992. However, in 1992, the 201,797 pigs inventoried in Nobles was enough to rank the County 35th out of all counties.

In 1997, Nobles County ranked 49th out of all counties within the U.S. in terms of the value of hogs and pigs sold with a total valuation of $46,565,000. This was higher than the $34,485,000 the County held in 1992 but during the 1992 year, the County was ranked 37 out of all counties.

Livestock production and processing can bring negative aspects to an area. Feedlots may bring with them offensive odors as well as problems with manure storing and application

methods (a feedlot inventory map is found in the Map Section, Map #26). The meatpacking industry continues to see low wages, physically demanding work, sometimes-risky work environments, and overall poor working conditions. However, the livestock industry within Nobles County has had noticeable effects on both the quality of life in the area as well as the agricultural economy. The processing of pork, beef, and poultry within the County, not only aids the local economy by providing essential products, but it creates employment opportunities and helps to stabilize fluctuating population levels.

County residents negatively view current public policy coming from the legislature. They feel it is too urban-based and that doesn't fully understand plant and animal agriculture. This was viewed as a major threat to all producers in the area. Many throughout the County perceive a problem with over-regulation of feedlot operations. Nobles County has historically had stricter manure management and set back regulations than surrounding counties and some view this as unhealthy for the rural economy. A lack of animal agriculture education in both the agricultural community as well as the urban sectors has the potential to negatively affect the area's economy through the loss of agriculturally related businesses. In addition, there is potential danger in damaging real estate and water supplies through improperly handled manure.

Future of Industrial and Economic Development

Diversification is often the key term mentioned in conversations covering recent large business closings or arduous economic times. Developing high-tech industries using value-added production is usually stated as a key goal in diversifying the local economy. However, diversification should not necessarily be focused on bringing in new labor intensive or high-tech industries. While new business and industry is extremely beneficial, working with all industries already doing business within the County is equally important. Diversification for these industries can include finding new niches in the market and helping them to produce new products. Goals should be set in order to assist in adding new infrastructure to increase overall production. When working to diversify existing industry, the County should continue to monitor water requirements and availability.

Telecommunications is an excellent way for the County to diversify its economy. Use of the Internet is rapidly becoming an extremely important factor in the global market. New businesses are created everyday exclusively using the Internet to sell their products. These "e-tailers" are not only able to potentially utilize every user of the internet as a potential customer, they are able to limit advertising costs and save money on development due to the fact that they can eliminate middle men. This allows them not to be forced to charge retail prices. Until certain government regulations are passed or moratoriums are lifted, e-tailers are even able to avoid charging tax on products that they sell. At the same time, the uses of e-tail trade will increase the need for a good reliable transportation network and delivery system to deliver the products. Nobles County does possess an advantage in establishing business as it has direct access to Interstate 90, it is located in between Interstate 29 and Interstate 35 and it has access to the Worthington Regional Airport and the two railroads, the Minnesota Southern Railway and the Union Pacific Railroad. In terms of Interstate access alone, Nobles County has the potential for an e-tailor sound trucking industry.

In light of these listed advantages of Internet to Nobles County, it should be stated that it is in the best interest of residents to learn how to use the Internet and increase access to the Internet. Increased use and access will help to lure and retain business already in the habit of utilizing this technology, and that will continue to in the future.

Future planning should involve development of the most up to date communications infrastructure. The addition of fiber-optic cables or other infrastructure investments that help speed connections may be a great benefit to businesses that use, or plan to use the Internet. Satellites, interactive television and cellular phones are other avenues of future development in which the County should explore and prioritize.

GOAL 1: Increase the diversification of business and industry.
(related goals/objectives: Agriculture 1; Parks and Recreation 1, Historic and Cultural Facilities 1)

Objective: Stable employment in business and industry that provide full-time positions and higher wages.

Policies

1. Expand economic development in the Agriculture sector.
2. Continue to protect prime agricultural land for farming.
    a. Increase activities or developments that favor tourism within the County but not at the expense of Agriculture in prime agriculture areas.
3. Increase appreciation and familiarity of the cultural resources in the County.
4. Encourage cooperative climate with cities and business in the County to work as a whole.

Strategies

1. Further the development of agricultural industries to diversify in their production.
2. Support tourism activities which highlight the cultural resources in the County.

GOAL 2: To increase overall employment within the County.

Objective: Encourage the addition or expansion of both new and existing business and industries.

Policies

1. Encourage economic development in all available areas of the County.

2. Provide new zoning for future economic development sites while taking into account existing adjacent land uses and preserving prime agricultural and recreational lands.

   Strategies
   1. Continue to support all agencies such as the WREDC which focuses on the promotion of economic development within Nobles County.
   2. Encourage company competitiveness by supporting and encouraging all relevant job-training activities.
   3. Attract desirable manufacturing enterprises and strengthen existing Nobles County industry and business while considering all issues such as available workforce and limited water supplies.
   4. Offer and market goods and services produced within the County, thereby encouraging local shopping.
   5. Identify state and federal grants and low interest loan programs for existing business expansion.

GOAL 3: Ensure that energy services will be able to sustain the County for many years to come.
(related goals/objectives: Infrastructure 1)

Objective: Support the further development of energy alternatives.

Policies
1. Support the increase in investments of advanced technology for the residents and businesses within the County.
2. Keep abreast of energy development alternatives, and issues and impacts by continuing to work with the Southwest Minnesota Energy Task Force.

Strategies
1. Encourage the residents and businesses in all of Nobles County to utilize advanced technology to augment their own interests and concerns.
2. Participate in the Regional Energy Task Force.
3. Update the County Development Code to protect the health, safety and welfare of the residents as energy development matures and impacts County residents.

GOAL 4: Build up and diversify the agricultural economy.
(related goals/objectives: Agriculture 1)

Objective: To work towards achieving sustainability of the locally owned and operated farm and the profitability that is to be had through the production of high valued specialty crops, local market supplies and livestock production opportunities.

Policies

1. Protect areas designated as highly valued farmland.
2. Provide alternatives in development strategies that allow highly valued farmland to remain in agricultural production.
3. Encourage the development of various types of value added crops such as:
    - High Oil Corn
    - Non-Bioengineered Crops
    - Organic Crops
    - Popcorn
    - White Corn
    - Wheat for Pasta
    - Pulp Trees
    - Edible Beans

Strategies

1. Create and expand value added processing within Nobles County while continuing to account for all water quantity issues. Aid farmers in developing and marketing value added crops by forming Regional Associations or alliances that provide marketing and support services to minimize risks and aid all farmers in taking advantage of new opportunities.
2. Develop a zoning code revision in order to reflect agricultural preservation areas that limit conflicts where business and industry developments could occur.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Key Issues in Community Development

- Increase Entertainment (Page 2)
- Increase Importance on Small Town Businesses (Page 3)

Countywide Goals

- Enhance all recreation and entertainment areas in order to retain the County's youth.
- Ensure that the ability to keep community centers and Main Street businesses open, remain a focal point of all communities within Nobles County.

Introduction

The communities that reside within Nobles County provide a lot more than just a place to live for most citizens. Communities bring many families together and provide all who live there with a place to eat, work, shop, and attend worship services. Communities within Nobles County, however, should be more than that. Nobles County should explore all possible avenues in order to find funding for building community projects that will provide some form of entertainment for its residents.

The sustainability of the area depends on the ability to provide people with a reason for wanting to live within Nobles County. One of the primary goals of CBP is to "promote cooperation among communities to work towards the most efficient, planned, and cost effective delivery of government services by coordinating planning to ensure compatibility of one community's development with development of neighboring communities." While meeting all of the basic requirements of human and overall city needs is an appropriate goal to strive for, County residents must ask themselves if it is really enough. Minnesota residents, just like every resident of the country, require some form of excitement in their lives. The County cannot continue to question why the younger generation continues to leave the area if it cannot provide reasons for them to stay.

Issues Summary

Throughout the various public meetings, cooperation and unity were major issues for community development. Many in the County feel that working together as a community in order to get things accomplished will certainly benefit all involved but it is not to be looked at as the one answer to all problems. There also needs to be a collaborative effort to sustain entertainment resources, which could include partnerships such as City and County, City and City, as well as City and Township coordination.

The rural areas should not be overlooked in these amenity improvements as cooperation and coordination of all involved is extremely important. The relationship with Worthington and the surrounding communities as well as the outlying areas needs to be improved wherever possible. A negative overall perception of the County by its own residents will seriously limit all attempts

at cooperation. In order to help limit the out-migration of young people, rehabilitation funds should be accessed for residential and commercial properties, especially those that that can either provide adequate housing that young adults are shopping for or provide entertainment opportunities that are sought by most all citizens within the County.

Community Development Strengths

Many throughout the County believe that the positive attitudes of the diverse group of people making up Nobles County is one of the main foundations to build on in the community development arena. The area has attractive communities that provide a low cost of living and the County should make a serious effort to promote amenities that make these communities attractive and, wherever possible, expand on them.

Some cities have taken large strides to be proactive and innovative. Examples include keeping important facilities open such as swimming pools and fire halls. Keeping areas open for youth and making sure the County's parks have received required maintenance is vital in ensuring the sustainability of small communities. In addition, providing day care facilities and various amenities such as cultural events, athletic activities, and entertainment sources are all-important in terms of community development.

Community Development Weaknesses

The largest concerns are raised due to the fact that the area is seriously lacking in the area of youth programs. The costs of these programs are deemed to be too high for the area residents, but at the same time, they are deemed essential. There are various indications that the area is lacking in terms of entertainment type developments.

The issue of water quality in the County's lakes was mentioned at several of the community meetings. As previously mentioned, many residents continued to voice their opinions in that something must be done to preserve and protect the water supply.

The Future of Community Development

In order to reach and maintain a high quality of life within Nobles County, not only will environmental and employment concerns need to be addressed, but entertainment opportunities should continue to be provided to the County's youth. The young people in the area will need good job and entertainment opportunities if they are to be expected to remain in the area. Youth programming in smaller communities should be deemed just as necessary as in larger communities. If required, smaller cities could consolidate and spread the funding out to ensure all communities can offer recreational opportunities for the County's youth. Community education should be incorporated wherever possible.

As mentioned earlier, stronger councils and boards that are active in seeking community development initiatives will be instrumental in forming bonds between the public and government and in getting new programs funded and under way.

Sustainable Community Development

Although economic development has been discussed in the previous Section, it has a place in community development as well. For example, the reuse and refurbishment of older existing buildings is an example of sustainable community development. This type of community development not only increases the worth of the building itself and allows it to be used for a certain purpose, but it also greatly benefits the local economy. Area communities should continue to maintain attractive resources such as old fire halls, while swimming pools and city parks provide a very attractive recreation for younger and older persons alike. Many bed-and-breakfasts, for example, are located in older large single-family homes that have been renovated to provide a place for lodging.

Economic Expansion

Although it may be hard for communities in Nobles County (especially the smaller ones) to attract new businesses, the County does already host a number of fruitful enterprises. Instead of offering free land and/or tax breaks to new business, the ones already doing business in Nobles County should be supported in order to help guarantee their retention and possible expansion.

Local governments should continue to work with planning agencies and area businesses in order to remove some of the obstacles that may be slowing growth of these businesses. For example, this Nobles County Community Based Plan has been created largely on the part of public input, which may positively affect local business. The input has addressed water needs, transportation requirements and agricultural concerns. Continuing this open communication between the area businesses and local government allows for all businesses to expand with an atmosphere of common goals.

Workforce Development

As Nobles County moves further into the new millennium, its workforce will have to become higher skilled. In the present day, this training centers mainly on operating computers in the workplace. The many computer applications range from the more complicated programming positions to the office duties of setting up a network. Plus, factories are continuing to require more workers that know how to use computers to perform complicated tasks, which can include anything from cutting and punching holes in metal to running a computerized lathe. The ability to understand and operate computers is becoming increasing more important.

Important considerations arise as to who is going to provide and pay for this training and for which jobs should workers train for. Since there are not a large number of high tech positions currently operating within Nobles County, computer education would have to focus on enabling workers to advance within those businesses already operating in the County. In addition, training should be focused on regional positions. Training that is not implemented this way will only benefit the workforce if they leave Nobles County.

Computer training could take place in area schools during evening hours. They should be aimed at providing skills for the workforce to get jobs that existing Nobles County businesses are looking for or that the County is actively pursuing.

GOAL 1: **Enhance all recreation and entertainment areas in order to retain the County's youth.**
(related goals/objectives: Demographics 1)

Objective: To stabilize the population rates and keep the idea of growth and expansion as a viable option for Nobles County.

Policies

1. To understand that in terms of labor force and overall population, youth represents the future of Nobles County.
2. Identify adequate funding to provide additional entertainment opportunities with the County.

Strategies

1. Conduct surveys with young adults within the County in order to ascertain why those that remain in Nobles County remain, and to find out why those that leave the County, leave.
2. Consider having run down and dilapidated buildings either refurbished or demolished in an attempt at keeping the communities attractive and appealing to young adults wanting to start families.

GOAL 2: **Ensure that the ability to keep community centers and Main Street businesses open, remain a focal point of all communities within Nobles County.**
(related goals/objectives: Residential 2)

Objective: Support and encourage growth in small communities, as the role they play is a vital asset to the future of Nobles County.

Policies

1. Further the development of small business owners and farmers through advanced training and classes so as to achieve their utmost potential.
2. Support all forms of cooperation between the various levels of local government: Watersheds, School Boards, Townships, Cities, and the County.
3. Recognize rural areas in community development, as these residents will be burdened by the costs and receive benefit from the creation of any new such projects.

Strategies

1. Encourage businesses and farmers to use all available technology to enhance their interests.
2. Encourage local shopping and community pride.

HOUSING

Key Issues in Housing

- Poor Quality in Low Income Housing Market (pages 2 –3)
- Need for Housing Rehabilitation of Older Homes (pages 2 –3)
- Lack of Housing for the Elderly (page 3)

Countywide Goals

- Increase the quality and availability of affordable housing.
- Continue to sustain and preserve the existing housing stock.
- Continue to support the development of new housing within all appropriate urban areas throughout the County.

Introduction

The Housing Section takes inventory of the current housing situation within Nobles County. Information included in this section will range from population and household growth and forecasts, to housing unit conditions and availability. Residents' opinions were gathered at community meetings and their feelings and vocal contributions reflect their beliefs on the current housing situation throughout the County.

Overall, data is presented to show the general condition of the County's housing stock. However, numerical data from the 1990 Census, as well as citizen input from community meetings, is presented reflecting specific information for the County's communities. The housing information should demonstrate requirements for construction, demolition, and/or the rehabilitation of housing (where need is justified throughout the County's communities).

Issues Summary

The main concern at the housing issue meeting was the lack of new rental housing and the poor quality of the existing rental housing stock. In addition, another issue that generated a lot of discussion at many meetings was the topic of the increasing senior population and the housing requirements that would be needed to accommodate this age group. Many wanted to ensure that the adequate housing availability for seniors would continue to remain a priority. There were also those who were concerned with the condition of rural housing that tends to decline when they are senior owned and the owner passes away. Proponents of increasing housing availability stated that there could be more single-family housing construction, in addition to the rehabilitation of existing vacated elderly housing units, in order for the city to avoid costs for homes that decay to an irreparable point.

Many throughout the County felt that there is a need to rehabilitate the existing housing stock and develop a variety of housing types. Some participants throughout the meeting process noted a preference in seeing new construction begin that is needed for multi-family affordable housing and middle-income condos. They feel there is also a need for an increase in the availability of starter homes throughout the County, as it would benefit the County to encourage forms of

growth. As such, the availability of starter homes for new families moving into the area is of importance to the sustainability of the area.

Some residents report a consistent lack of rental and owner-occupied housing in their respective city. This remains a problem because residents living within these smaller communities feel that they are not large enough to support, or even develop these kinds of projects on their own. Residents from other cities stated that their former housing program allowed many rural residents interested in funding for housing rehabilitation be able to acquire it. They felt that maybe a program such as this should be brought back into action. In addition, other residents stressed a need within their community for single-family housing.

Housing Strengths

There were many strengths in the Housing category that Nobles County residents reported. Many felt that most of the rural housing within the County was in good condition and that acreages throughout the area are still selling at respectable levels. In addition, residents feel that local bankers are working well with prospective buyers and providing all necessary consideration in making desired loans.

A few noted that they felt there was a visible increase in the amount of young people buying homes within the County as housing remains affordable within the smaller communities. The majority agreed that this is a trend that is to be encouraged.

Some residents throughout various communities reported that they have seen an overall increase in the amount of improvement done to the existing housing stock. In addition, the help of increased grant money has made this process even easier. Others have seen its subsidized housing units remain occupied while they also view their retirement housing availability as a strength. Many expressed belief that these two events have helped to open single-family homes and allowed people desiring to stay in the area the ability to do so.

Housing Weaknesses

One of the weaknesses expressed at community meetings was an overall lack of available single-family homes and the overall lack of affordable housing units within the area. The incorporated areas do not have enough affordable rental units or starter homes that are required to attract potential newcomers to the area. In addition, citizens feel the condition of the existing housing stock in many areas is very poor.

These problems are contributing to overall concerns that abandoned and run-down housing is more of a problem than many choose to admit. There are certain areas throughout the County where a need for rehabilitation of many aging housing units exist. Many feel that there is a potentially serious problem in that the addition of new housing will be expensive to the city due to acquisition costs that the city would have to incur.

Some residents stated a need for more apartment units. Current buildings located within various communities only have minimal handicapped accessible apartments and many residents feel an appropriate amount of elevators are needed in areas that require them.

The Future of Housing

Residents would like to see efforts increased in attempting to meet the housing needs of the ever-increasing amount of senior citizens in the area. In addition, housing rehabilitation and new single-family housing construction should take place where required. Locating any additional funding sources for a housing rehabilitation program should be encouraged.

Housing Analysis

Nobles County shows a decrease in population in the years spanning 1990 through 1999. The population in Nobles County in 1990, based on the 1990 Census was 20,098 people and it has decreased to an estimated 19,920 people in 1999. This is a decrease of .89 percent. During this time, the number of households has actually decreased by a smaller percentage. This follows a national trend toward smaller families and more single person households, which means that even though there is not currently a large increase in population, there will still be a demand for new and adequate housing.

Housing studies completed in Nobles County over the past five years have found very low vacancy rates between one and five percent. A five percent vacancy rate is considered normal in a healthy market to allow for adequate consumer choice and turnover. These studies also outlined specific recommendations regarding new development, of which, only a moderate amount has occurred. Nobles County should continue to encourage the development and preservation of affordable and life cycle housing. Affordable housing units are those that are available for purchase, decent, safe, sanitary, and that do not cost more than 30 percent of a family's annual income. Life cycle housing is defined as housing of a variety of types and costs which meet resident's needs and preferences as incomes and circumstances change throughout their lives. The area is at a point where reassessments need to be conducted in the areas and development plans implemented to further the amount of housing that is available and to meet these needs. The City of Worthington has recently undertaken an assessment.

In areas that have seen economic growth and the expansion or development of industries, housing will have to be added to support the people entering the area filling new jobs. Also, due to the increasing elderly population, Nobles County will need to have new and renovated housing to accommodate their life-style needs. Areas that have seen a decline in population will need to see housing rehab and renovations to current housing stock as opposed to building new homes. This is key to sustaining existing industry and providing for planned and future job growth in Nobles County.

According to the 1990 Census, Nobles County has approximately 8,094 housing units with 7,683 occupied and 411 vacant. Of the occupied units, 5,791 (approximately 75%) are owned and 1,892 (25%) are rented. The vacancy rate for all units was slightly over 5 percent in 1990. As mentioned earlier, a five percent vacancy rate is considered normal in a healthy market to allow for adequate consumer choice and turnover. This rate is estimated to be considerably lower at this time.

Table 16 illustrates monthly housing costs within Nobles County according to the 1990 Census. Due to increased housing costs, these figures will be somewhat lower than the current market. In 1990, the median monthly cost of mortgaged housing units was $445, with an average of $509. For non-mortgaged housing units the median monthly cost was $155 with an average of $168. For rental units the median gross rent was $299 with an average gross rent of $289.

Table 16
Monthly Housing Costs
Nobles County

Mortgage Housing Units

	Number	Percent
$199 or less	40	2%
$200 to $299	219	11%
$300 to $399	534	27%
$400 to $499	420	21%
$500 to $599	230	12%
$600 to $699	198	10%
$700 or more	326	17%
Total	**1,967**	**100%**

Non-Mortgaged Housing Units

	Number	Percent
$99 or less	213	9%
$100 to $149	893	38%
$150 to $199	700	30%
$200 to $249	284	12%
$250 or more	255	11%
Total	**2,345**	**100%**

Renter-Occupied Units

	Number	Percent
$149 or less	117	7%
$150 to $199	167	10%
$200 to $249	214	13%
$250 to $299	290	18%
$300 to $399	491	30%
$400 to $499	230	14%
$500 or more	61	4%
No Cash Rent	81	5%
Total	**1,651**	**100%**

Source: 1990 Census

Homes in Nobles County range in value from less than $20,000 to more than $150,000. According to the 1990 Census Data, the median value of a home in Nobles County was $39,600.

According to the Minnesota Department of Revenue the 1995-1996 median sale price of existing homes in Nobles County was $47,680. This is significantly lower than the state median price of $87,500 but higher than the median price of $42,000 for southwest Minnesota. The following table is a comparison of median sale prices for the southwest Region.

Table 17
Median Sale Prices
1995 - 1996

County	Median Sale Price
Nobles	$47,680
Cottonwood	$33,000
Jackson	$33,750
Lincoln	$21,000
Lyon	$64,175
Murray	$35,750
Pipestone	$29,900
Redwood	$40,600
Rock	$52,000
Southwest Region	**$42,000**

Source: MN Dept. of Revenue

The number of housing units built in Nobles County remained consistent from 1940 through the 1970's as the chart below demonstrates. In addition, the 1980's saw a major decline of total housing units built. The following table breaks down the number of housing units built from pre-1939 through March 1990.

Table 18
Housing Units Built
Pre 1939 – March 1990

Year	Total	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied
1989 – March 1990	79	17	56
1980 – 1988	589	292	264
1970 – 1979	1,313	833	398
1960 – 1969	1,005	745	203
1950 – 1959	1,125	921	157
1940 – 1949	1,046	795	211
1939 or earlier	2,937	2,188	603
Total	**8,094**	**5,791**	**1,892**

GOAL 1: Increase the quality and availability of affordable housing.
(related goals/objectives: Demographics 1)

Objective: Provide all residents of Nobles County with homes that are decent, safe, and sanitary.

Policies
1. Support the HRA and other rural housing entities.
2. Promote initiatives that encourage first time homebuyers regardless of income.

Strategies
1. Continue to support housing initiatives in the County.
2. Identify funding sources that allow for affordable development of single- and multi-family units.

GOAL 2: Continue to sustain and preserve the existing housing stock.
(related goals/objectives: Demographics 1)

Objective: Avoid abandonment and deterioration of housing units and acreages within the County.

Policies
1. Support funding that rehabilitates the current housing stock.
2. Encourage improvements that eliminate health and safety issues and encourage energy efficiency.

Strategies
1. Identify any and all funding sources for the continuation of all housing rehabilitation projects.
2. Examine the potential for collaborations such as Habitat for Humanity to achieve this goal.
3. Encourage local units of government to identify and promote housing within their jurisdiction.
4. Increase awareness of the "This Old House" program for tax relief to people who improve/remodel older homes.

GOAL 3: Continue to support the development of new housing within all appropriate urban areas throughout the County.
(related goals/objectives: Demographics 2)

Objective: Permit all appropriate housing developments within the most cost efficient process.

Policies

1. Continue to make sure that all new housing developments occur within appropriate land use areas.
2. Consider adjacent land uses before zoning for further additions to the current housing supply.
3. Encourage communities to develop implementation tools to allow semi-rural housing development in their corporate limits, thus allowing a feasible connection to existing infrastructure.

Strategies

1. Continue to sufficiently supply the area with an appropriate number of attractive, affordable homes.
2. Encourage the future development of senior housing facilities, such as independent care, or those housing options with more services for the increasing elderly population, such as congregate care and assisted living.
3. Encourage communities to consider the development of small acreages with the infrastructure available within corporate limits.

"In cooperation with our citizens, we improve the quality of life for individuals, families and communities by fostering a healthy economy and environment."

"Looking Forward with Purpose"

JANUARY 29, 2025 WORK SESSION
PRAIRIE JUSTICE CENTER – PARKING AND DRIVING SURFACES RESURFACING PROJECT AND INNER-DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS
BRUCE HEITKAMP, ADMINISTRATOR

Topic:
The County is preparing for proposed parking and driving surface improvements at its Prairie Justice Center.

Background:
The Joint Powers Law Enforcement Committee met and offered the Nobles County Commissioners a recommendation to resurface the Prairie Justice Center's parking and driving surfaces. The County Commissioners subsequently reviewed cost projections and resurfacing options. The Prairie Justice Center entities are offering the project's logistics input for the Work Session. Parking needs to be made available and areas need to remain accessible.

The County Commissioners will hear staff's recommendations which could include construction phases. No action can take place but directives can be shared. Expectations and consensus on respective staff and contractor involvement can be obtained.

Options:
- Ask questions and discuss a means for improving or replacing Prairie Justice Center driving and parking surface improvements
- Do not take part in the discussion

Recommendations:
Administration recommends the Commissioner ask questions and discuss the pending project(s). As mentioned, staff and residing stakeholders will meet prior to the work session to share information and possible concerns. County Engineer Aaron Holmbeck will be available to offer recommendations.