

# INTRODUCTION

## I. PURPOSE

The City of Belle Plaine Comprehensive Plan is a dynamic planning tool intended to guide the future growth and development of the city. The Comprehensive Plan is based on local and regional historical facts, trends, and governmental planning standards. This Comprehensive Plan for Belle Plaine, Minnesota is reflective of the community planning process conducted in 2005 and 2006. The City previously updated its comprehensive plan in 1998. Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 462.355 and 473.864 and due to significant growth within the city, the area previously identified for the growth area has been for the most part developed over the past few years. With projected growth within the area, the City of Belle Plaine has identified a need to proactively plan for areas beyond the city limits and ensure utilities, transportation, parks and various land uses are planned accordingly.

This Comprehensive Plan, utilizing information from the System Statement for Belle Plaine, issued by the Metropolitan Council, recognizes and analyzes population, household and employment projections and their impact on local and regional infrastructure systems including transportation, wastewater, surface water, water and regional parks. It also considers the impact growth, within and around Jordan, will have on Scott County and the region.

As a means of classifying and analyzing historical information, an inventory of pertinent data has been compiled. The Comprehensive Plan identifies the type, amount, and pattern of growth that has taken place within the City and utilizes this information for the planning of future growth. Accordingly, the Comprehensive Plan provides a knowledge base for instituting a hierarchy of policies that will assist the community in processing a variety of development issues on a defined policy level. This information and policy base will allow decision-makers to evaluate and guide proposals benefiting the residents of Belle Plaine, and fulfilling the City's goals and objectives. The plan includes proposed land uses outside of the city's current corporate boundaries. This does not require this land to be developed, but establishes policies and recommendations to guide the development when it does occur. While the plan is intended to serve as a 20+-year guide, it should be reviewed and updated as needed to adequately address development as it occurs. Within fast growing cities, such as Belle Plaine, this may be required every five years.

## II. SCOPE OF PLAN

This Comprehensive Plan encompasses eleven (11) general categories of information:

1. This **Introduction** includes the purpose of the plan, the scope of the plan, the history and regional setting of the community. This chapter also includes a review of the **Planning Framework** which identifies the methods employed to obtain information for the Comprehensive Plan including statistical data and community input.
2. A review of the **Physical Profile**, which indicates the geographical nature of the community in terms of a regional context along with an evaluation of the physical aspects of the City such as soils information, topographical elements and physical barriers to development.
3. **Demographic and Social Characteristics and Trends** contains historic and projected population information as it relates to growth, age characteristics, education, occupation, and income level.
4. A **Housing Section** evaluates the current housing stock, identifies housing issues relating to the city's demographics, evaluates housing trends, reviews land use options and establishes housing objectives and policies.

5. An **Economic Development Section** which includes a review of various economic statistics, a review of the EDA and economic development policy statements relative to the Central Business District, the Highway Business District, the Industrial District and Industrial/Commercial District.
6. **The Land Use Section** includes elements that inventory existing land uses, identify potential infill or redevelopment areas and evaluates future land uses. This chapter also discusses the **Municipal Boundary Expansion** and defines a growth area outside of the current municipal limits in which future growth is anticipated, and where the city is able to service growth with future utilities. This section also includes policies for boundary expansion or annexation.
7. A section on **Transportation** includes information on the current transportation system, categorizes the current street system, identifies future collector streets, and establishes access management policies as well as overall transportation policies for future transportation planning.
8. The **Parks, Trails and Recreation Section** includes an inventory of existing park and recreational amenities, an analysis of future needs and policies relating to the future parks, trails and other recreational offerings.
9. A section pertaining to **Utilities**. This section includes an overview of sanitary sewer, water and surface water utilities as they relate to the city's ability to service current and future growth area and capital improvements required to support growth.
10. An **Implementation Section** describes and summarizes local controls pertaining to land use; the subdivision of land, Capital Improvement Planning, orderly annexation and implementation strategies.

### III. HISTORY AND REGIONAL SETTING

#### History

Minnesota Territorial Judge Andrew G. Chatfield settled in Belle Plaine in 1852-1853, with the village founded in 1854. In 1854 the first post office was constructed. Belle Plaine was incorporated as a borough on March 5, 1868.

Belle Plaine, which is French for, "Beautiful Prairie", overlooks the Minnesota River bluffs, contains scenic ravines, prairie land and wooded areas. The rolling topography provides a variety of attractive home sites. The proximity to the metropolitan area as well as the City of Mankato, with direct access to Trunk Highway 169, adds to the appeal of the community for commerce and industry.



The City of Belle Plaine's population has grown by approximately 119% over the past 25 years. A majority of this growth has occurred in recent years, with a 59% increase in the past five (5) years. The State Demographers Office estimated a population of 6,037 as of April, 2005. The Chamber of Commerce reports membership, as of April 2005, of approximately 90 businesses and individuals.



Above: One of Belle Plaine's first businesses, the Creamery, now serves as the home for Creative Tool and Engineering, a local manufacturing company.

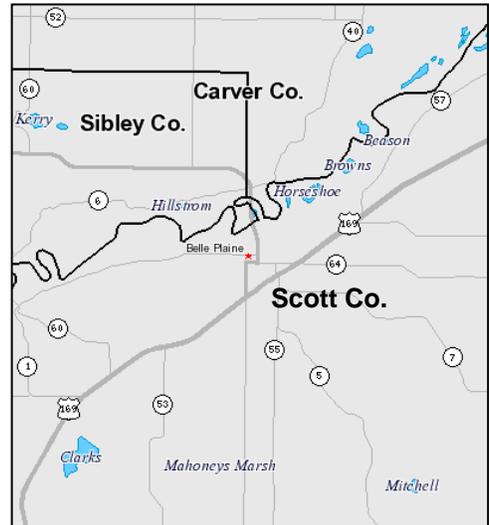
To the right: The Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration was constructed in 1869. The Church is located on the National Register of Historic Places and still exists at the corner of Church Street and Walnut Street.

Also listed on the National Register of Historic Places is the Hooper-Bowler-Hillstrom House, which was constructed in 1871 by S.A. Hooper, an early settler. An addition to the residence and a two-story outhouse were added to the home in the late 1880s.

### Regional Setting

Belle Plaine is situated approximately 42 miles west of the Twin Cities Metropolitan area. Located on the southwest corner of Scott County, the community serves as the gateway to the seven-county metropolitan area. The City is served by U.S. Highway 169, MN State Highway 25 and a number of County roadways.

Scott County has been identified as one of the fastest growing counties in the nation. Located within the seven-county metropolitan area, both Scott County and the City of Belle Plaine are within the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Council.



## IV. PLANNING FRAMEWORK

This Comprehensive Plan is the product of several entities and systematic, ongoing, forward-looking processes including:

- Interviews with completion of a community survey with a cross section of sixteen community leaders, city staff members and consultants and developers;
- Gathering of historical data from the city, county, state and U.S. Census;
- Analysis of opportunities and constraints leading to the formation of goals and objectives;
- Review of City Ordinances;
- Approximately 29 public meetings, including Planning Commission workshops, open houses, business meetings and public hearings, providing opportunities to obtain input from residents and the business community;
- Review of the previous Belle Plaine Comprehensive Plan;
- Review of the current Scott County Comprehensive Plan;
- Inventory of pertinent information, statistical data, and existing structures;
- Input from City agencies/commissions, including the EDA, the Planning Commission, the Park Board and the City Council; and,
- City staff participation.

## V. COMMUNITY'S UNIQUE STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

A cross section of sixteen community leaders including representatives from major employers, city department heads and various developers were asked to identify the best aspects of day-to-day living in Belle Plaine, or the most positive attributes. Following are the most common responses received, with the number of responses preceding the comment:

<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Response</u>
6	Location/physical setting between metro and Mankato and accessibility with 169
4	Growth
3	Small town atmosphere, attitudes, friendliness, knowing people
2	Geography/terrain, good land for development
1	Positive attitudes of city staff at this time
1	Parks in Belle Plaine
1	School referendum passed
1	Historical integrity

Several people participated in a Community Meeting to discuss the comprehensive plan update for the City of Belle Plaine. Small group discussions were conducted on a number of topics with full group review and further discussion.

Community meeting participants were asked to list the top three positive attributes of Belle Plaine. Responses are below:

- Topography
- The school referendum passing
- When the new school facility is built
- Highway 169 accessibility, once the interchanges are built
- Location between Mankato and the twin cities
- Located on Highway 169
- Parks, police, several youth activities
- Friendly

Survey/interview participants were asked, "What do you see or would you like to see for the future of Belle Plaine, over the next ten years?" Following are the responses:

<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Response</u>
1	A. Increased Growth at a fast pace
8	B. Slow Growth
0	C. No Major Changes
1	D. Decrease population/business remain the same

### **Opportunities**

As the City continues to grow and change, residents and businesses believe the community will be faced with a number of challenges or opportunities. Survey/interview respondents indicated that the number one challenge will be controlled or managed growth. Participants of the community meeting identified the major challenges as:

- Traffic and traffic signals of Highway 169
- Building the school
- Finding an additional site(s) for future elementary schools
- Attracting "big box" commercial growth, because it takes a lot of roof tops to bring in "Target" and I always hear, "Too much growth, slow it down", but "Why can't we have a Target and a Cub?"
- Future utility extensions should be geared to the west and south of the new school site. I believe more families will seek Belle Plaine for their new home because of the new school proximity and the ever increasing cost of land. Families seem to want to live close to the school that their children will attend.
- Control population growth balanced with tax base, government services and taxes.
- Tax base – need more industrial, commercial tax base or we won't be able to afford government services without high taxes.

When asked what one major improvement would make living in Belle Plaine better for them, interview respondents noted the following items:

<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Response</u>
4	More commercial industrial tax base, more variety of commercial offerings
2	Resolve school issues and new school facilities
1	Community Center
1	More proactive planning by the city
1	Lutheran Home planned project becoming reality

Other comments received through the survey process, neighborhood meetings, from city staff members and consultants and from planning commission meetings are contained within the various chapters of this Plan. This plan is a statement of the direction the City will follow to achieve its goals.

## **VI. GUIDING PRINCIPALS**

### **Mission Statement**

The City of Belle Plaine adopted a Mission Statement in October, 1999 which addresses various aspects of the community as it grows. As a part of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan update, participants were asked to provide input on the current vision statement to ensure it is consistent with their vision for the future development of the community. The Mission Statement reads,

*"Through civic leadership marked by integrity, supported by active involvement of its citizenry, it is the mission of the City of Belle Plaine to provide a safe and wholesome environment, a vibrant business community, with adequate infrastructure including functioning parks, trails and other recreational opportunities to support a high quality of life. Further, the City also supports planned growth aided by constant application of fiscally responsible decisions for the overall benefit of the entire community."*

### **2006 Guiding Principals**

Based on the Mission Statement, community input and Planning Commission and staff guidance, the 2006 Comprehensive Plan is being developed with the following guiding principals:

*Belle Plaine strives to provide:*

- An atmosphere that encourages active involvement of its citizenry
- A safe and wholesome environment
- An attitude that encourages a vibrant business community
- A safe and efficient transportation system
- A well planned community with adequate infrastructure
- An atmosphere promotes quality of life with functioning parks, trails and other recreational opportunities
- Fiscally responsible decisions
- An atmosphere which captures the spirit of a small town
- Housing that reflects a full range of choices
- Downtown ~A place for people to gather and preserve as the city's central core
- A well balanced tax base
- A proactive position on future growth
- An identify that reflects the place
- A caring, learning environment