

Planning Context

Planning documents directly applicable to the Design Manual are the guiding principals and economic development goals of the proposed 2008 City of Belle Plaine Comprehensive Plan, the Belle Plaine Main Street Program and the 2005 Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan.

2008 City of Belle Plaine Comprehensive Plan

The guiding principles and the economic development goals of the proposed 2008 City of Belle Plaine Comprehensive Plan have portions which support the efforts of the Design Manual. Portions of these sections of the Comprehensive Plan are excerpted and discussed below.

Guiding Principals

Based on the Mission Statement, community input and Planning Commission and staff guidance, the 2008 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 that 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 identity that reflects the place
- A caring, learning environment

Belle Plaine's Comprehensive Plan supports a vibrant business community. The Design Manual seeks to unify and distinguish the downtown and the US Highway 169 Corridor businesses to enhance economic development.

Belle Plaine's Comprehensive Plan supports its small town character. The Design

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Manual seeks to enhance the City's small town character by providing for new development and restoration standards in keeping with the architectural style and scale of downtown Belle Plaine.

Belle Plaine's Comprehensive Plan supports the City's central core as a place for people to gather. The Design Manual provides for pedestrian-oriented urban design elements such as landscaping, lighting, intersection treatments and building façade upgrades to enhance the walkability and livability of the downtown and US Highway 169 Commercial districts.

Belle Plaine's Comprehensive Plan supports an identity that reflects place. The Design Manual draws on the community's sense of place to connect and distinguish the downtown and US Highway 169 Commercial districts with the Belle Plaine Boulevard.

Economic Development Agency's Mission Statement and Goals

EDA's mission statement is as follows,

"The mission of the Belle Plaine Economic Development Authority is to improve the economic well being of Belle Plaine as measured by job creation, increase in the tax base and expansion of business concerns; and instill a commitment to excellence, integrity, pride and respect in the community by working independently and cooperatively with other organizations and individuals, both public and private, for the purpose of promoting and advancing industrial, commercial, residential and agricultural development and redevelopment."

The EDA has adopted the following for their five year goals:

- *Implement an ongoing community beautification and enrichment program, including assistance to businesses to aesthetically improve their buildings and properties.*
- *Expand infrastructure to meet projected industrial, commercial and residential growth as well as improve existing infrastructure to better serve existing industrial, commercial and residential properties.*
- *Maintain and utilize an organizational focus, coordinated by the Executive Director of the EDA, for the purposes of promoting economic development efforts and enhancing community awareness and participation in economic development/redevelopment.*
- *Recruit, encourage and assist new and existing business and industry to locate and expand within the City through the development and implementation of a marketing plan.*
- *Maximize opportunities to access appropriate public and private sources of*

- technical and financial assistance to achieve community goals and objectives.*
- *Implement specific guidelines for promoting and utilizing the revolving loan fund.*
- *Investigate and actively participate in obtaining grant monies for community development activities.*
- *Address removal of blighted conditions in commercial and industrial areas.*
- *Promote a continued high quality of life within the Belle Plaine Community.*
- *Conduct an annual meeting with Community Officials and the public to receive input on economic development issues.*

The EDA's mission statement supports the improvement of Belle Plaine's economic well-being and the enhancement of commercial and industrial development and redevelopment. The Design Manual seeks to provide a unified and unique aesthetic for the Downtown and US Highway 169 Districts to retain and attract businesses and clients. By visually connecting and distinguishing these two districts, the city's and business' images will be more noticeable and marketable. Increased marketability will enhance efforts for commercial and industrial development and redevelopment.

The EDA's five-year goals include an ongoing beautification and enrichment program and promotion of high quality of life within the Belle Plaine Community. The Design Manual seeks to provide the tools to enhance the architecture, landscape architecture and urban design of the Downtown District, US Highway 169 District, Belle Plane Boulevard and City Gateways. The enhancement of the Districts and City Gateways will increase efforts to beautify the City. City beautification supports the efforts to enhance the quality of life. A high quality of life tends to attract new residents and businesses.

One of the EDA's five-year goals is to address blighted conditions in commercial and industrial areas. The Design Manual will provide the framework from which blight is identified. The Design Manual will guide business owners toward acceptable architecture, landscape architecture and urban design within the City.

Belle Plaine Design and Sign Guidelines, Belle Plaine Main Street Program

Developed by the Design Committee of the Belle Plaine Main Street Program, this set of guidelines outline the requirements for rehabilitation of historic building facades. This document provides detailed recommendations in regards to storefronts, upper stories and sign standards. Compliance with these guidelines is required for consideration in the low interest loan pool provided by the City. These guidelines were developed with concern for the appearance of the town, for the economic abilities of the building owner, and for general compliance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Please see Appendix A for a complete copy of both the Main Street Program Design guidelines and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

The Belle Plaine Design and Sign Guidelines developed through the Main Street Program is the precursory document to the Design Manual. The detailed design

guidelines in this document are the basis for the Downtown District design guidelines in the Design Manual. Compliance with the Design Manual will supersede the Belle Plaine Main Street Design and Sign Guidelines for the consideration of the City Low Interest Loan Program.

The Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan Goals

The 2005 Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan highlights the assets and amenities of the Parks, Trails and Recreation Section of the 1999 City of Belle Plaine Comprehensive Plan and plans for the City's green infrastructure¹. The Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan is important to the Design Manual because the Design Manual seeks to link to local and regional natural and recreational amenities. The Design Manual also includes urban design guidelines. Urban design is the design of the pedestrian friendly environment. A pedestrian friendly environment provides ease of access by foot, bike or other non-motorized transportation and as such incorporates bike paths, park space and wayfinding signage. The following is an excerpt of the goals from the 2005 Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan. The highlighted goals support the efforts of the Design Manual:

1. *Natural resource protection and management.*
2. *Cooperation with other governments and communities. The City of Belle Plaine will enhance its green infrastructure by cooperating with other governments, agencies, and communities with land use interest or authority around Belle Plaine. The City adopts the following goals to guide green infrastructure decisions:*
 - A. *Open and maintain dialogue with neighboring communities, the school district, county and state agencies, and other planning and regulatory authorities to conduct cooperative planning and programmatic initiatives.*
 - B. *Create long-term park, recreation, and open space goals in cooperation with other communities, units of government, and agencies.*
 - C. *Create links between Belle Plaine's park, trail, and open space system and the regional systems administered by surrounding counties and the State.*
3. *Systematic expansion of the park, trail, and natural open space system. The City of Belle Plaine will carefully and efficiently expand its park and open space system to meet the needs of its growing population base. The City adopts the following systematic expansion goals:*
 - A. *Maintain or improve its residents' access to parks and park facilities, both*

1. "Green infrastructure, also called 'natural infrastructure', is a planning term used to refer collectively to parks, trails, open space, surface water and shoreland, and natural systems" Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan, CR Planning, 2005.

in terms of an even distribution of parks across the City and in providing a variety of recreation opportunities to meet the needs of the City's growing population.

- B. Encourage pedestrian and bicycle paths throughout the community.*
 - C. Promote the creation of new green space, native plant landscaping, and expansions of the urban forest on both private and public lands.*
 - D. Provide for new park, open space, or other green infrastructure in growth corridors and annexations.*
- 4. Ensuring sustainability of green infrastructure*
 - 5. Offering a range of recreation areas and sport facilities to serve people of all ages*
 - 6. Management and system expansion that enhances private property values and property rights.*

The Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan supports the creation of links between Belle Plaine's park, trail, and open space system and the regional systems administered by surrounding counties and the State. The Design Manual seeks to connect Belle Plaine's commercial areas to the parks, trails and recreational areas to enhance people's sense of place, provide a variety of entertainment options and promote the rural and natural resource heritage of the City.

The Belle Plaine Park and Open Space Plan supports pedestrian and bicycle paths throughout the community. The Design Manual seeks to enhance the pedestrian-oriented urban design elements to enhance the small town quality of life of Belle Plaine. Incorporating pedestrian and bicycle paths are important to connect the commercial areas and green infrastructure. The paths physically slow people down to allow for contemplation of place which helps to promote the rural heritage of the City. And, the paths provide for a connection and extension of the regional bike system.

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