

Project Vision and Purpose

The Belle Plaine Design Manual (Design Manual) is an update to the Belle Plaine Design and Sign Guidelines (See Appendix A) and the product of the City of Belle Plaine's Community Vision for Commercial Development Project effort. The Design Manual seeks to unify and distinguish Belle Plaine's downtown and the US Highway 169 Corridor businesses to enhance economic development. The intent of the Belle Plaine Design Manual is to guide developers, owners and the Urban Design Review Committee (UDRC) towards a building and landscape character that is complimentary to the community's vision for the 21st century. The community's vision strives to shape the physical identity of Belle Plaine by drawing from the City's sense of place which includes the Minnesota River, prairie and blufflands, small town heritage, significant location on the rural/urban edge, agriculture traditions and technologies, and local economic development.

The name of the Guidelines have changed from the Belle Plaine Design and Sign Guidelines to the Belle Plaine Design Manual because the content of the document has expanded to include a community-based vision and design guidelines for the new commercial and industrial development along US Highway 169 and improvement and restoration of buildings in the historic downtown. The Design Manual also includes recommendations for legal implementation and as such is intended to be a part of, or an addition to, the City Code.

The Community Vision for Commercial Development project was commissioned by the City of Belle Plaine, guided by the Belle Plaine Urban Design Review Committee (UDRC) and prepared by the Center for Rural Design (CRD) at the University of Minnesota. The Belle Plaine City Council approved the contract with CRD in December 2007 and the project concluded with the Design Manual in July 2008.

The Community Vision for Commercial Development Project was based on the community's values about Belle Plaine's current and future image. Community values were obtained from the project's Steering Committee and a Community Design Workshop. The Community Design Workshop took place on April 8th, 2008 and included close to 30 community members, plus Steering Committee members. The Steering Committee was comprised of the UDRC and a broad base of additional community members. The UDRC was reappointed to prepare recommendations for design components, potential funding sources for community-wide improvements and administer the design standards for properties in all commercial zoning districts.

The Design Manual is the product of Steering Committee guidance and the Community Design Workshop results.