



# Bremer County Comprehensive Plan Update

*Adopted by the County Board of Supervisors – April 25th, 2016*



RESOLUTION NO. 16-25

A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT  
THE BREMER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE 2016

WHEREAS, said plan is authorized under Chapter 335 of the Iowa Code, as amended, and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held by the Bremer County Planning and Zoning Commission on March 15, 2016 at 7:00pm and the County Board of Supervisors on April 25, 2016 at 10:00 am in the Bremer County Courthouse on the proposed adoption of the Bremer County Comprehensive Plan Update 2016, and

WHEREAS, said plan was developed with consideration of the smart planning principles under section 18B.1 of the Iowa Code and includes information specified in section 18b.2, subsection 2 of the Iowa Code,

WHEREAS, said plan is a policy document that considers the community's demographics, public facilities, land use, transportation, housing and implementation procedures, and

WHEREAS, said plan looks at community development by outlining a land use plan and is the basis for Bremer County's zoning, subdivision, and urban renewal tools and regulations, and

WHEREAS, an integral part of the plan is providing opportunities for public input in the Comprehensive Plan Update 2016 process, including the use of Task Force meetings, community survey, community open house, Bremer County Planning and Zoning Commission public hearing and meeting, and a Bremer County Board of Supervisors public hearing, and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan Update 2016 has been the subject of, or a discussion item on the agenda of, numerous public task force meetings, and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan Update 2016 is a primary land use tool of the Bremer County Board of Supervisors, Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Adjustment, and county staff, and

WHEREAS, said plan is in the best interests of Bremer County, now therefore BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors hereby approve and adopt the Bremer County Comprehensive Plan Update 2016 as a replacement in its entirety to the existing Comprehensive Plan this 25th day of April, 2016.

Signed: Timothy J. Neil  
(Chairman)

Date: 4/25/16

ATTEST:

Signed: Shelly Wolf  
(County Auditor)

Date: April 25, 2016





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# Acknowledgements

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## Board of Supervisors

- Duane Hildebrandt
- Ken Kammeyer
- Tim Neil

## County Staff

- Randy McKenzie, Building Official, Zoning Administrator, and Sanitarian
- Brent Buls, Inspector
- Jason Hendrickson, Inspector
- Susan Neuhaus, Clerk
- Brenda Pothast, Administrative Assistant

## Bremer County Planning & Zoning Commission

- Ben Bolte
- Kathy Calease
- Jerry Dove
- Kathy Folkerts
- Mark Mueller

## Bremer County Task Force

- Jerry Aleff, Waverly
- Lori Anderson, Landowner
- Brent Buls, Bremer County
- Kathleen and Larry Burman, Landowners
- Sandi Carroll, Janesville
- Susan Cline, Tripoli
- Ryan Dermody, Resident
- Larry Farley, City of Denver
- Barry Fortsch, Readlyn
- Kathy Folkerts, Bremer County Planning and Zoning Commission
- J.D. Francis, Waverly
- Wes Gielau, Denver
- Bruce and Nancy Gipple, Landowners
- Dewey Hildebrandt, Bremer County Board of Supervisors
- Ken Kammeyer, Bremer County Board of Supervisors
- Judi and John Krizek, Bremer County
- Frederic Krumwiede, Waverly
- DeAnn Lahmann, City of Tripoli
- Pete Lampe, Waverly and County Board of Adjustment
- Randy McKenzie, Bremer County Building Department

- Mark Mueller, Bremer County Planning and Zoning Commission
- Tim Neil, Bremer County Board of Supervisors
- Jay and Jean Ranard, Tripoli
- Derrick Sunderman, Tripoli
- Bill Werger, Waverly
- Joel Wikner, City of Denver

### **Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments (INRCOG)**

- Kevin Blanshan, Executive Director
- Brian Schoon, AICP, Director of Development & Transit
- Jim Rodemeyer, Director of Housing
- Sheri Alldredge, Director of Administrative Services
- Sidney Noyce, Community Planner
- Jacob Tjaden, Community Planner
- Cindy Know, Housing Planner
- Kyle Durant, Transportation Planner II
- Codie Leseman, Transportation Planner
- Ben Kvigne, Environmental Planner II
- Dan Schlichtmann, Data Services Coordinator
- Ed Holm, RTC Operations Manager
- Brenda Ponto, Accountant
- Hayley Weiglein, Administrative Assistant

Cover photo: Kip Ladage

*Document Prepared by:*

**INRCOG**

229 E. Park Ave

Waterloo, Iowa 50703



**INRCOG**  
Iowa Northland  
Regional Council  
Of Governments

# Executive Summary

*Adopted by the County Board of Supervisors – April 25th, 2016*

The Bremer County Comprehensive Plan Update 2016 is the result of a collaborative effort between the Board of Supervisors, Planning and Zoning Commission, County staff, Comprehensive Plan Task Force, citizens, and INRCOG.

This Plan Update builds off of the goals and objectives established in the 2003 Comprehensive Plan and incorporates the principles and elements of the 2010 Iowa Smart Planning legislation. Based on input from officials, stakeholders, and citizens, the following goals, objectives, and actions were identified for inclusion in the Plan Update 2016.

**Agriculture & Natural Resources Goal 1: It is the goal of Bremer County to preserve agricultural land, placing emphasis on areas that are considered “prime” agricultural areas.**

- a. In making land use decisions, Bremer County shall consider the compatibility of existing surrounding land uses and the proposed use.
- b. Bremer County shall consider the availability of services needed for land use change requests.
- c. The County will require applicants to provide information regarding the services required for development at the time of the development request.
- d. Bremer County will prioritize the preservation of “prime” agricultural soils by considering land characteristics such as Corn Suitability Rating (CSR), soil type, and crop history.
- e. The County shall utilize large minimum lot size requirements as a means of discouraging development in the unincorporated areas.
- f. Bremer County will investigate utilization of factors in addition to CSR and lot size when making land use decisions (i.e. Land Evaluation and Site Assessment).

## Vision

Bremer County will embrace a shared vision for the future of the county that makes all voices part of the solution.

**Agriculture & Natural Resources Goal 2:** It is the goal of Bremer County to preserve and protect environmental features and sensitive areas such as floodplains, wetlands, woodlands, and other sensitive areas.

- a. The County shall protect natural features including surface waters including the Cedar River and Wapsipinicon River and their impact on other jurisdictions.
  - i. The County will participate in the appropriate watershed management authorities.
- b. Bremer County shall consider topography when making land use decisions.
- c. In addition, Bremer County shall protect or maintain the quality of its air and groundwater resources.
- d. As is required, the County shall implement federal, state, county policies and ordinances designed to protect its natural environment and environmentally sensitive areas.

**Hazards Goal 1:** The County will implement and update, as required, the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

**Community Character Goal 1:** It is the goal of Bremer County to maintain, and improve when possible, the quality of living of its residents. Quality of life, under this Plan, shall include the following factors:

- a. Education. The County will work to ensure that all Bremer County residents have access to a quality educational system.
- b. Crime. The County will continue to prevent and minimize criminal activity.
- c. Arts, Culture, Library, and Historical opportunities. The County will work with appropriate organizations to offer cultural opportunities to its residents.
- d. Parks and Recreation opportunities. Bremer County, specifically the County Conservation Board, will work with the incorporated communities in the County to offer access to golf courses, recreational trails, swimming pools, boating and fishing, open space, and community celebrations and festivals.
- e. Health. The County will work to ensure all Bremer County residents have access to quality healthcare including hospitals and nursing homes.

**Community Facilities Goal 1:** It is the goal of Bremer County to encourage quality community facilities, such as:

- a. Public safety services – sheriff, fire, ambulance services, and Emergency Management Coordinator.
- b. Art, culture, library, and historical facilities.
- c. Schools.
- d. Parks and recreation such as golf courses, recreational and bicycle trails, swimming pools, boating and fishing, and open space.

**Public Infrastructure & Utilities Goal 1:** It is the goal of Bremer County to consider the need for services when assessing a potential development.

- a. The County will require that necessary services shall be provided concurrent with development. For the purposes of this Plan, “necessary services” shall include:
  - i. Access to a transportation network through highways, roads, streets, trails, and driveways.



- ii. Access to a potable, approved water supply (individual wells and/or shared wells). The County will encourage use of shared or central wells, when possible.
- iii. Access to an approved on-site septic system or connection to a central sewer system.
- iv. Access to public safety services (sheriff, fire, ambulance services).
- v. Connections to other utilities (electric, gas, etc.).
- vi. Access to schools.
- b. The County will work with utility and internet providers to extend high speed internet access to rural County residents.

**Housing Goal 1: It is the goal of Bremer County to provide housing opportunities for all residents and maintain quality building standards.**

- a. Bremer County will consider coordinated efforts with incorporated cities to meet the housing needs of various groups, including:
  - i. Low income individuals and families
  - ii. Retirees
  - iii. Young adults and families
- b. To provide areas for new housing, the County should consider provisions for smaller, denser lots closer or contiguous to towns that do not negatively impact the environment or decrease prime agricultural land unnecessarily.

**Economic Development Goal 1: It is the goal of Bremer County to maintain and enhance economic development opportunities.**

- a. The County will work with incorporated cities on coordinating economic development activities and efforts.
  - i. A Bremer County Economic Development Coordinator, or similar, position may be considered as a way to further efforts in accomplishing this goal.
- b. Where appropriate within the unincorporated County, sites will be considered for limited residential, industrial, and commercial opportunities.

**Transportation Goal 1: It is the goal of Bremer County to provide a safe and efficient transportation system to residents.**

- a. Bremer County will maintain and continue to develop a multi-modal transportation network that includes access to:
  - i. Highways and roads
  - ii. Air service
  - iii. Transit service
  - iv. Bicycling and trails
- b. The County will consider safety as a main consideration when providing for transportation network users.
  - i. Road accommodations should factor in larger vehicles and farm implements.
  - ii. On-road accommodations for bicycles should be considered in road construction and for expansion of the trail network.

**Land Use Goal 1: It is the goal of Bremer County to preserve agricultural areas and natural resources by directing most growth and development within towns or contiguous to towns in areas that will likely be annexed by the neighboring city.**

- a. Bremer County will limit residential development in the County to areas that are planned for this type of growth.
  - i. The County shall protect, as best it can, soils with prime agricultural characteristics from residential development.
  - ii. The County shall encourage infill development to occur in existing subdivisions where infrastructure may be more readily available.
  - iii. As is possible, Bremer County shall work to direct new residential growth to occur in incorporated communities where services are more readily available. If this is not possible, the County shall attempt to direct residential growth to areas where services may be available or to areas where minimal impact to agriculture will occur.
  - iv. The County will direct growth to areas with the least impact on environmentally sensitive areas.
  - v. The County, in considering residential development, shall be cognizant of adjacent land use(s) and attempt to minimize any associated conflicts or concerns.
- b. Bremer County will only allow limited commercial development in the unincorporated areas of the County.
  - i. The County shall protect, as best it can, soils with prime agricultural characteristics from commercial development.
  - ii. As is possible, Bremer County shall work to direct new commercial growth to occur in incorporated communities where services are more readily available. If this is not possible, the County shall attempt to direct commercial growth to areas where services may be available or to areas where minimal impact to agriculture will occur.
  - iii. The County will direct growth to areas with the least impact on environmentally sensitive areas.
  - iv. The County, in considering commercial development, shall be cognizant of adjacent land use(s) and attempt to minimize any associated conflicts or concerns.
- c. Bremer County will only allow limited industrial development in the unincorporated areas of the County.
  - i. The County shall protect, as best it can, soils with prime agricultural characteristics from industrial development.
  - ii. As is possible, Bremer County shall work to direct new industrial growth to occur in incorporated communities where services are more readily available. If this is not possible, the County shall attempt to direct industrial growth to areas where services may be available or to areas where minimal impact to agriculture will occur.
  - iii. The County will direct growth to areas with the least impact on environmentally sensitive areas.

- iv. The County, in considering industrial development, shall be cognizant of adjacent land use(s) and attempt to minimize any associated conflicts or concerns.

**Land Use Goal 2: It is the goal of Bremer County to adopt and amend, when appropriate, a Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The purpose for the Plan is the following.**

- a. The Plan will serve as a guide and a statement of policies for the County.
- b. The Plan will seek to promote orderly growth. More specifically, the Plan will attempt to:
  - i. Prevent leapfrog development.
  - ii. Promote the County and cities working together when annexation is proposed to plan for growth and service provisions in the proposed areas.
  - iii. Include a severance policy that requires that land that is severed from a city is reverted back to agricultural use and corresponding zoning.
  - iv. Provide guidance to the various County commissions, boards, and authorities (P&Z, Board of Adjustment, Board of Health) that may be involved in county land use management.
  - v. Guide County staff as development is reviewed and considered.
- c. The Plan is intended to be the planning and legal foundation for:
  - i. The County Zoning Ordinance.
  - ii. The County Subdivision Ordinance.
  - iii. The County Building Code (including building, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical codes).
  - iv. Any future County Urban Renewal Plans or Ordinances.
  - v. Any future annexations consistent with comprehensive plans.
- d. The Plan, and its implementation tools listed above, is designed to encourage citizen or community input through defined and statutory development, amendment, and implementation processes.
- e. The County will require or measure the following checklist of issues prior to development approval.
  - i. Consistency with the Plan, including the Future Land Use Map and the goal of preserving prime agricultural land.
  - ii. Compatibility with existing surrounding land use(s).
  - iii. Minimal impact on adjacent property.
  - iv. Appropriate density of proposed use and its surroundings.
  - v. Minimal impact on traffic generation and flow.
  - vi. The ability of the proposal to obtain or access adequate services.
  - vii. Minimal environmental impact (i.e. floodplain, wetlands, and woodlands).
  - viii. Other factors affecting general intent and purpose of Plan.
- f. The Plan, which is intended to be broad and general, will serve as an umbrella for other County plans such as the Hazard Mitigation Plan and Housing Needs Assessment.

**Land Use Goal 3: It is the goal of Bremer County, and its residents, to recognize that land use planning is a continuous process.**

- a. The County will review this Plan as the need arises.
- b. This Plan will be implemented through various departments, policies, and ordinance including, but not limited to, the following:
  - a. County staff
  - b. County ordinances
  - c. County plans
  - d. County budget
  - e. Outside agencies
- c. Public input on planning decisions and considerations will be sought out early in the process and in various formats, which may include providing public notices in or on:
  - a. Newspapers
  - b. County websites
  - c. Public areas

**Collaboration Goal 1: It is the goal of Bremer County to collaborate with other levels of government with regard to future land use and development. Specifically, the County shall collaborate with the federal, state, city, and school districts as is appropriate and/or possible. The County may also choose to work collaboratively with other counties.**

- a. The County will work with incorporated communities and neighboring counties, in appropriate situations, to develop agreements authorized under Iowa Code Chapter 28E on growth and development, particularly concerning future annexation and service provisions.
- b. School districts should be invited to participate in future planning efforts.

Existing conditions, key issues, and opportunities related to each goal are treated in detail within each section of Chapter 2: Plan Elements. An action plan identifying roles, responsibilities, and timelines for each goal's objectives can be found in Chapter 3: Implementation & Maintenance. Each year, the Comprehensive Plan and its goals should be reviewed by the County Board of Supervisors, Planning & Zoning Commission, and any other responsible agencies to gauge progress in accomplishing the intentions of the Plan.



# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Section 1 – Legal Basis of a Comprehensive Plan

The Bremer County Comprehensive Plan, and its sequential updates, is designed to meet the statutory requirements of the State of Iowa. The ability of the County to plan and regulate land use within its borders is granted through Chapter 335 of the Code of Iowa, which may also be referred to as “state enabling legislation” for planning powers. Also, this Plan is intended to meet planning requirements for its implementation tools, chief among those being the County’s zoning ordinance (Code Chapter 335), land subdivision ordinance (Code Chapter 354), urban renewal program (Code Chapter 403), and the newly adopted Land Use – Smart Planning principles and local comprehensive planning and development guidelines (Code Chapter 18B.1 and 18B.2).

## Section 2 – How to Use the Plan

Comprehensive land use planning is a conscious act of a community to plan for its physical development. In addition, planning requires that the existing circumstances of a community be defined and evaluated, including existing land use patterns, population characteristics, community and area plans, public service availability, and public sentiment. In Bremer County, Iowa, the Comprehensive Plan Update is the written result of these efforts. The Plan Update is designed to be a general guide for physical development of the community.

The Comprehensive Plan, which may also be referred to as a General Plan or Master Plan, represents the principal document that organizes concepts and states goals and objectives relating to the future physical development of the County. Predictable and desirable development in the county depends upon the establishment of a vision for the future that perceives the interrelationships of governmental services, private development needs, public finances, free market dynamics, population characteristics, environmental health, and the desires of the majority of the citizenry. The Comprehensive Plan Update strives to integrate and balance those various forces so as to promote the most beneficial physical development and community welfare possible in the next 10 to 20 years.

The most beneficial future portrait of the County requires that the Comprehensive Plan Update incorporates the vital input of two major civic forces:

1. Governmental agencies which administer critical phases of building development, such as infrastructure provision and important public resources such as parks and schools; and
2. Private sector investment and enterprise which provide the capital and energy necessary to construct homes, businesses, services, and industry.

The Comprehensive Plan Update seeks to incorporate the best visions and ideals of the citizens along with realistic needs and aspirations of private development in order to capitalize upon the county's ongoing productivity and potential.

Furthermore, the **Plan Update 2016** promotes managed growth that is cost-effective and logical. The County hopes to prevent leapfrog development, as well as minimize conflict between incompatible uses that locate next to each other. In addition, the Plan Update establishes a circular process of implementation, review, and amendment for itself.

## Section 3 – Smart Planning

**Plan Update 2016** is an updated comprehensive plan for the *Bremer County 2003 Comprehensive Plan* as part of the continuing process involved in evaluating and modifying the Plan to keep it as a current and effective means of guiding the future growth and development of the County. This Update was under the direction of the Bremer County Board of Supervisors, Bremer County Planning & Zoning Commission, and Task Force.

Bremer County had help with the completion of the **Plan Update 2016** with the assistance of Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments (INRCOG). The Commission provided input and guidance to INRCOG planners to ensure the direction of the update was consistent with County citizens and current development trends.

**Plan Update 2016** was developed using the Iowa Smart Planning Principles (Iowa Code 18B.1) and the identified thirteen elements of a comprehensive plan (Iowa Code 18B.2). These principles and elements assisted in shaping what and how information was discussed and compiled in this Plan.

### Smart Planning Guiding Principles

The **Plan Update 2016** was guided by Iowa's Smart Growth and Sustainable Principles (Iowa Code 18B.1 and 18B.2). As Iowa Code 18B.1 states "...local governments, ... shall consider and may apply the following principles during deliberation of all appropriate planning, zoning, development and resource management decisions." These principles include:

- ✓ Collaboration – Governmental, community, and individual stakeholders, including those outside the jurisdiction of the entity, are encouraged to be involved and provide comment during deliberation of planning, zoning, development, and resource management decisions and during implementation of such decisions. The state agency, local government, or other public entity is encouraged to develop and implement a strategy to facilitate such participation.
- ✓ Efficiency, Transparency, and Consistency – Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should be undertaken to provide efficient, transparent, and consistent outcomes. Individuals, communities, regions, and governmental entities should share in the responsibility to promote the equitable distribution of development

benefits and costs.

- ✓ Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy – Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should be undertaken to promote clean and renewable energy use and increased energy efficiency.
- ✓ Occupational Diversity – Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should promote increased diversity of employment and businesses opportunities, promote access to education and training, expand entrepreneurial opportunities, and promote the establishment of businesses in locations near existing housing, infrastructure, and transportation.
- ✓ Revitalization – Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should facilitate the revitalization of established town centers and neighborhoods by promoting development that conserves land, protects historic resources, promotes pedestrian accessibility, and integrates different uses of property. Remediation and reuse of existing sites, structures, and infrastructure is preferred over new construction in undeveloped areas.
- ✓ Housing Diversity – Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should encourage diversity in the types of available housing, support the rehabilitation of existing housing, and promote the location of housing near public transportation and employment centers.
- ✓ Community Character – Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should promote activities and development that are consistent with the character and architectural style of the community and should respond to local values regarding the physical character of the community.
- ✓ Natural Resource and Agricultural Protection – Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should emphasize protection, preservation, and restoration of natural resources, agricultural land, and cultural and historic landscapes, and should increase the availability of open spaces and recreational facilities.
- ✓ Sustainable Design – Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should promote developments, buildings, and infrastructure that utilize sustainable design and construction standards and conserve natural resources by reducing waste and pollution through efficient use of land, energy, water, air, and materials.
- ✓ Transportation Diversity – Planning, zoning, development, and resource management should promote expanded transportation options for residents of the community. Consideration should be given to transportation options that maximize mobility, reduce congestion, conserve fuel, and improve air quality.

## Smart Planning Elements

Under subsection 2 of the Iowa Code (18B.2), it stated a county “shall consider the smart planning principles” and “may include” the elements listed below, if applicable, when developing or amending a comprehensive plan. The twelve smart planning elements that are discussed in this chapter are:

- ✓ Community Overview
- ✓ Agricultural & Natural Resources
- ✓ Hazards
- ✓ Community Character
- ✓ Community Facilities
- ✓ Public Infrastructure & Utilities
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Economic Development
- ✓ Land Use
- ✓ Intergovernmental Collaboration
- ✓ Implementation – Action Plan

## Section 4 – Plan Organization

**Plan Update 2016** is divided into three chapters for the ease of citizens, development interests, local and regional agencies, and decision-makers who will be its primary users. These three chapters include: Introduction, Smart Planning Elements, and Plan Implementation.

### Chapter 1: Introduction

This first chapter discusses what a comprehensive plan is, the legality of a plan, the components of a plan, and the public participation conducted to update the plan.

### Chapter 2: Plan Elements

The heart of the **Plan Update 2016** is found in this chapter. This chapter discusses in detail the two process elements and the ten background elements to a comprehensive plan.

Chapter 2 is comprised of the twelve smart growth elements. The reader who understands these sections will understand Bremer County’s implementation plan (outlined in Chapter 3) and the extensive citizen, task force, commission, and staff effort that created it. Each element or section contains the goals, objectives, and action strategies developed by citizen, Task Force, local Commissions, and the Planning and Zoning Commission, recommended by the Planning and Zoning Commission, and adopted by Bremer County’s Board of Supervisors. Each group of goals, objectives, and action strategies is preceded by a summary of existing conditions and issues and opportunities.

The twelve sections or elements of Chapter 2 are:

- ✓ Section 1: Community Overview (location, history, population)
- ✓ Section 2: Agricultural & Natural Resources
- ✓ Section 3: Hazards
- ✓ Section 4: Community Character
- ✓ Section 5: Community Facilities
- ✓ Section 6: Public Infrastructure & Utilities
- ✓ Section 7: Housing
- ✓ Section 8: Economic Development
- ✓ Section 9: Transportation
- ✓ Section 10: Land Use
- ✓ Section 11: Intergovernmental Collaboration

Each section provides the information needed to understand how the **Plan Update 2016** is intended to guide growth and development in Bremer County, but the sections, as well as all chapters, work in connection with one another. For instance, to understand the local economy, the reader needs to know about the community history and population trends. The income levels, age and other community characteristics help determine land use needs, the location and type of housing that the market needs to provide, and so on.

As mentioned earlier, this chapter contains plan elements or sections that provide details supporting the Action Plan recommendations. Each element is generally organized as follows:

- ✓ Introduction – provides a brief overview of the specific context of the section.
- ✓ Existing Conditions – examines the current conditions specific to element in discussion.
- ✓ Issues and Opportunities – provides a summary of the identified issues and opportunities that would impact future development of the County.
- ✓ Goals, Objectives, and Action Strategies – provides formulated strategies for resolving the major issues of the city.

### Chapter 3: Plan Implementation

Also known to some as the Action Plan (Implementation – Smart Growth Element), this chapter should be viewed as the user’s manual to work through implementing the identified goals, objections, and action strategies in Chapter 2. This chapter also discusses the adoption and amendment processes, how to evaluate and effectively participate in continued – and in some cases – improved collaboration events with local, county, and regional agencies and organizations.

The Action Plan sets an agenda for future work to be done. To many persons involved in **Plan Update 2016**, it has become clear that the planning process is one of discovery and working together. While we know more about the community, the values and desires of the people who live here, much remains to be done over time by citizens, county officials, county staff, county commissions, and community organizations to work through this County’s more difficult land use, economic, cultural, housing, and governance issues.

The Action Plan builds on Bremer County’s history of successful planning and development initiatives. Experience gained from previous planning documents and ongoing efforts (financial and time) provided the groundwork to refine the goals, objectives, and action strategies found in the **Plan Update 2016**.

These main assumptions were used in developing the Action Plan.

- ✓ The plan must be concise, user-friendly, and visionary.
- ✓ The plan must be reasonably internally consistent, well integrated, financially feasible and generally capable of implementation.
- ✓ The plan must be developed on strong public insight.

## Section 5 - Goal Setting

The goals, objectives, and action strategies are the heart of each section, as well as the entire comprehensive plan. Much time and considerable effort by numerous people have been invested in developing goals, objectives, and action strategies, as documented in Chapter 2 and in the Action Plan in Chapter 3. The **Plan Update 2016** takes into account past planning efforts and comments received during task force meetings, recommendations of the various citizens' commissions, and the guidance of the County Planning and Zoning Commission, department heads, and county staff.

All goals, objectives, and action strategies takes into consideration the ten Iowa Smart Planning Principles, of the Iowa Code, and Bremer County's overall vision.

### Components of Goal Setting

**Principle Statement** describes the current condition or consideration that makes the goal(s) and its associated objectives and action strategies necessary and explains how they address the problem or condition.

**Goals** are broad statements of a community's desires. Goals tell us where we want to go. The language of a goal statement includes directives, such as "ensure", "provide," and "retain." "Ensure" in this plan means the County will do whatever they can within their physical, legal, and financial means.

**Objectives** are more specific and measurable activity, a benchmark, to be reached in pursuit of the goal.

**Action Strategies** express a commitment to a course of action in one of three ways:

- ✓ The action strategies themselves, as they appear in an adopted comprehensive plan, provide clear guidance for decision making when a situation arises;
- ✓ They form the basis for revised development regulations (i.e., zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, building codes, etc.); and
- ✓ They provide the overall direction for implementation of a strategy or course of action.

## Section 6 – Public Participation

This section summarizes the numerous phases and tasks completed in order to develop the Plan, defines the roles and responsibilities of different citizens, stakeholders, and groups involved in the planning process. It also summarizes the public involvement opportunities used to gather public input.

### **The Planning Process**

The planning process used to update the Bremer County's Comprehensive Plan engaged a diverse group of community stakeholders, concerned citizens, elected and appointed officials and County representatives. The process allowed numerous opportunities for participation and involvement throughout the project. Throughout the project, the process balanced preserving and improving upon Bremer County's existing strengths, enhancing economic opportunities, preserving county character and quality of life, identifying means and areas for development to occur, and creating a community that is livable.

#### ***Smart Planning Element - Public Participation***

*This is a process element that includes: Information relating to public participation during the comprehensive plan or land development regulations, including documentation of the public participation process, a compilation of objectives, policies, and goals identified in the public comment received, and identification of the groups or individuals comprising any work groups or committees that were created to assist the planning and zoning commission or other appropriate decision-making body of the municipality.*

### Task Force Meetings

Four structured and facilitated Task Force meetings were held between May and August, 2015. These meetings provided discussion of existing conditions, objectives, and draft recommendations for each of the 13 Plan Elements. Each meeting ran approximately one and one-half hours from 6:30pm to 8:00pm. Members of the Task Force consisted of county supervisors, city elected officials, city and county staff, Planning and Zoning Commission members, Board of Adjustment members, and members of the public.

TASK FORCE MEETINGS		
Meeting Dates	Location	Discussion Topics
May 19, 2015	Tripoli City Hall	Comprehensive plan overview, Task Force duties and purpose. Discussion on community character, agricultural and natural resources, and hazards elements.
June 10, 2015	Tripoli City Hall	Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) overview. Discussion on housing, public infrastructure and utilities, and community facilities elements.
June 23, 2015	Tripoli City Hall	Discussion on economic development and transportation elements.
August 12, 2015	Tripoli City Hall	Discussion on intergovernmental collaboration and land use elements.

### Planning & Zoning Commission Work Sessions and Public Hearing

Work sessions were held with the Planning and Zoning Commission following the final Task Force meeting. Input from the Task Force was used by the Commission to develop goals and objectives for the Plan along with recommendations for the Future Land Use Map. A public hearing was held on March 15, 2016, after which the Commission recommended the Plan Update be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for adoption.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEETINGS		
Meeting Dates	Location	Discussion Topics
September 15, 2015	County Courthouse	Reviewed input received from Task Force on all elements.
October 20, 2015	County Courthouse	Reviewed current Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives. Discussion on potential changes.
November 17, 2015	County Courthouse	Reviewed goals and objectives proposed for Plan Update. Discussion on additional changes needing to be made.
December 15, 2015	County Courthouse	Reviewed Future Land Use Map.
February 16, 2016	County Courthouse	Reviewed draft Comprehensive Plan and set date for public hearing.
March 15, 2016	County Courthouse	Comprehensive Plan public hearing.



### **Board of Supervisors Public Hearing**

After recommendation by the Planning & Zoning Commission, the Board of Supervisors held a public hearing on adopting the Plan Update 2016 on April 25, 2016. The Plan Update was approved and adopted by the Board of Supervisors following the public hearing.

# Chapter 2: Plan Elements

## Section 1 – County Overview

In this section, past county population trends, population characteristics, and population projections are examined. The information generated from this section will be valuable to accomplish multi-generational planning - takes into consideration the needs of all age groups throughout all stages of planning - for years to come and to understand where Bremer County came from.

### Location

Bremer County is located in northeast Iowa. The County has an area of 280,960 acres and Waverly is the county seat. The Cedar and Wapsipinicon Rivers bisect the County, the former in the western part of the County and the latter in the eastern part, and flow from northwest to southeast. U.S. Highways 63 and 218 traverse north and south through the County. See Map 1 for the location of the County relative to its neighbors and points within the County.

### History

In 1833, Bremer County and surrounding area were ceded to the Winnebago tribe by the U.S. government in exchange for land in Illinois and \$10,000. At the time of the first settlement in 1845, there were approximately 650 members of the Winnebago, Mesquakie, and Pottawattamie tribes living in the county. First settlers included Charles McCafree, Jacob Beelah, J.H. Messinger, George Tibbetts, T. Fisher, and P. Miller.

In 1848, the Native Americans remaining in Bremer County were removed by U.S. government troops to areas west of Bremer County and, in 1850, a treaty was signed that included provisions moving the tribes out of the Iowa territory.

Bremer County, which was named for a Swedish author, Frederika Bremer, was surveyed into townships in 1847 and the first township, Jefferson Township, was divided into sections in 1848. By 1851, the entire county was sectionalized and placed onto the market for sale or homesteading. The first community platted was Janesville, recorded on July 22, 1854. Development closely followed the platting of Janesville.

Elections were first held in 1851 and public education began in a log cabin in Jefferson Township during the winter of 1852-1853. Higher education came to the county with the establishment of Wartburg College in 1879. The first newspaper, the Bremer County Herald, was printed in

Janesville in 1855. Bremer County built its first courthouse, a 20 foot by 30 foot building, in 1854 at a cost of \$147.50.

As in many northeastern Iowa counties, the railroad had a dramatic influence on development in the 1860s and 1870s. The railroads offered a means of transportation for people, agricultural commodities, and other materials. During this era, the county was crisscrossed by the Illinois Central; Iowa and Pacific; and Dubuque and Dakota Railroad lines. The communities of Tripoli, Sumner, and Plainfield were developed as railroad towns.

During the 1920s through 1940s, the county made contributions to the war efforts and was economically affected by the Great Depression. The air station south of Waverly provided employment for military and service personnel and added to the economy of the surrounding cities of Waverly and Janesville.

Today, the county includes eight incorporated communities: Denver, Frederika, Janesville, Plainfield, Readlyn, Sumner, Tripoli, and Waverly. These communities are separated by areas of prime agricultural land. Highways have picked up where railroads have disappeared and Bremer County enjoys access to a notable transportation network. The county seat is located in Waverly in the southwestern part of the county. Education, family values, and a strong work ethic remain hallmarks of the residents of Bremer County.

## Government Structure

Bremer County is governed by a Board of Supervisors. The Board is comprised of three members representing three districts:

- **District 1:** All unincorporated territory in Washington Township east of the centerline of Easton Ave and east of the city limits of Waverly, City of Waverly Wards 1, 2, 3, and 4
- **District 2:** Polk Township, Douglas Township, Fremont Township, Warren Township, Lafayette Township – except portion in Waverly, All unincorporated territory in Washington Township west of the centerline of Easton Ave and west of the city limits of Waverly, Jackson Township, City of Waverly Ward 5, City of Plainfield, City of Tripoli, City of Janesville
- **District 3:** Frederika Township, LeRoy Township, Sumner Township, Dayton Township, Jefferson Township, Maxfield Township, Franklin Township, City of Frederika, City of Sumner, City of Denver, City of Readlyn

## Population

Figure 1 illustrates the historical population trend for Bremer County. According to the 2010 Census, the County has a population of 24,276 people. This is a 4.1 percent increase from the previous Census in 2000. The county has experienced modest growth over the last 100 years. Most communities in the region saw a decline during the 1980s and Bremer County was not immune, seeing an 8.1 percent decrease during this decade. Besides this notable exception, the county has experienced growth in every decade since 1910. The county reached a peak population of 24,820 in the 1980 Census and, since the decline of the 1980s, has been steadily growing back towards that peak. The largest growth period was the 1950s when Bremer County saw an 11.8 percent increase between 1950 and 1960.

FIGURE 1: HISTORICAL POPULATION FOR BREMER COUNTY

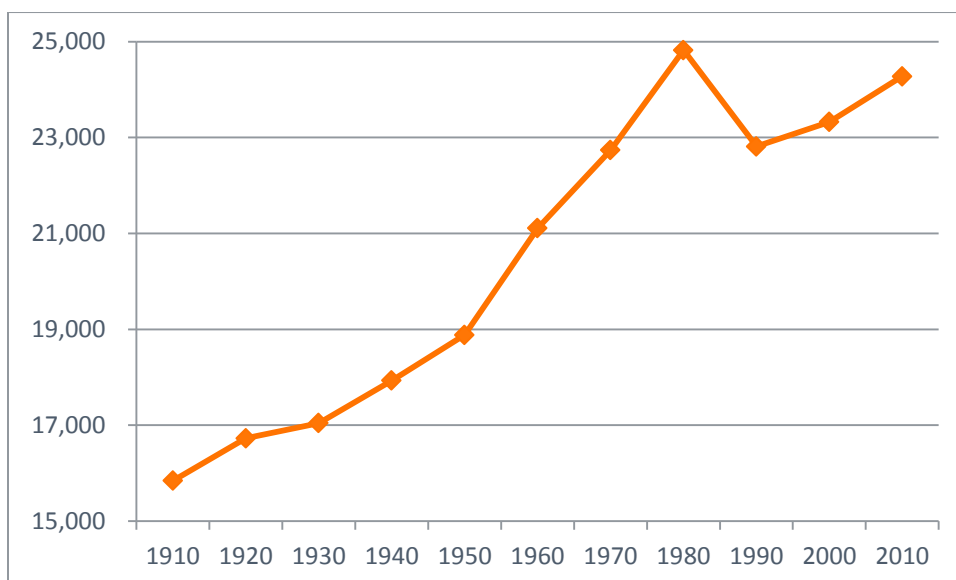


Table 1.1 shows population trends for communities in Bremer County, the County itself, and the State of Iowa since 1970. Based on the 2010 Census, unincorporated Bremer County accounts for 6,924 people with the rest of the county's population accounted for by these eight cities. Much of the county's growth in recent decades has been due to the growth of Waverly. This city alone accounts for just over 40 percent of Bremer County's population.

TABLE 1.1: POPULATION TRENDS OF SELECTED COMMUNITIES

Community	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Denver	1,169	1,647	1,600	1,627	1,780
Frederika	190	223	188	199	183
Janesville	741	840	822	829	930
Plainfield	446	469	455	438	436
Readlyn	616	858	773	786	808
Sumner	2,174	2,335	2,078	2,106	2,028
Tripoli	1,345	1,280	1,188	1,310	1,313
Waverly	7,205	8,444	8,539	8,968	9,874
<b>Bremer County</b>	<b>22,737</b>	<b>24,820</b>	<b>22,813</b>	<b>23,325</b>	<b>24,276</b>
State of Iowa	2,825,368	2,913,808	2,776,831	2,926,324	3,046,355
Source: U.S. Census Bureau					

## Characteristics

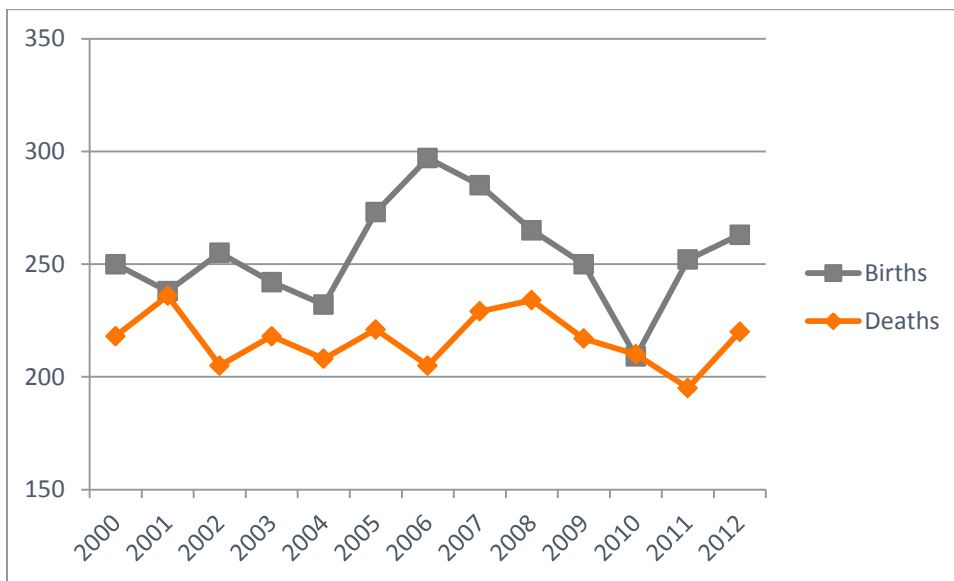
Population characteristics are the specific elements that make the community unique and diverse. This analysis examines natural change, age, sex, and dependency ratio.

### Natural Change

Figure 2 illustrates Bremer County's natural change by comparing the number of births and deaths. The birth and death rates have fluctuated since 2000 with two years (2001 and 2010) when both rates were nearly the same. As can be seen, however, the birth rate is usually higher

than the death rate in the county. The highest birth rate in the timeframe shown was 2006 with 12.5 births per 1,000 population. Deaths were highest in 2001 with a rate of 10.1 deaths per 1,000 population.

FIGURE 2: NATURAL CHANGE OF BREMER COUNTY



#### Age, Sex, Race

Table 1.2 provides a detailed breakdown Bremer County's population. In general, this table shows which age cohorts grew and declined between 2000 and 2010. As of the 2010 Census, the largest age cohort in the County is 45-54 year olds which grew by only 3.7 percent since 2000. Between these two years, a few changes stand out. There were large increases (over 20 percent) in the 55-64 and 65-74 cohorts, along with a 19 percent increase in the older than 85 cohort. There was a sizable increase of 14 percent in the 20-24 cohort which may be attributable to

TABLE 1.2: AGE COHORTS FOR BREMER COUNTY

Age Cohort (in years)	2000		2010		% Change between 2000-2010
	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	
Less than 5	1,291	5.5%	1,414	5.8%	9.5%
5-9	1,532	6.6%	1,460	6.0%	-4.7%
10-14	1,673	7.2%	1,539	6.3%	-8.0%
15-19	2,175	9.3%	2,104	8.7%	-3.3%
20-24	1,754	7.5%	2,000	8.2%	14.0%
25-34	2,309	9.9%	2,480	10.2%	7.4%
35-44	3,272	14.0%	2,791	11.5%	-14.7%
45-54	3,176	13.6%	3,294	13.6%	3.7%
55-64	2,410	10.3%	3,002	12.4%	24.6%
65-74	1,696	7.3%	2,153	8.9%	26.9%
75-84	1,432	6.1%	1,319	5.4%	-7.9%
85+	605	2.6%	720	3.0%	19.0%
Total	23,325	100.0%	24,276	100.0%	4.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

enrollment at Wartburg College in Waverly. The only sizable decrease in an individual cohort between 2000 and 2010 was in the 35-44 cohort which saw a 14.7 percent decrease.

Table 1.3 shows race and sex characteristics for Bremer County residents as reported in the 2000 and 2010 Censuses. The county is predominantly White or Caucasian with 97.2 percent of residents reported in that category in 2010. Although not recognized as a race category by the Census Bureau, the number of persons of Hispanic origin increased from 130 persons in 2000 to 239 persons in 2010.

TABLE 1.3: RACE & SEX OF BREMER COUNTY RESIDENTS						
	Total Population	White or Caucasian	Black or African American	Am. Indian, Eskimo, Aleut	Asian or Pacific Islander	Other Race or 2+ Races
<b>2010</b>						
Male	11,869	11,530	107	12	71	149
Female	12,407	12,071	84	4	105	143
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,276</b>	<b>23,601</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>292</b>
<b>2000</b>						
Male	11,274	11,068	61	11	52	82
Female	12,051	11,841	51	4	74	81
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,325</b>	<b>22,909</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>163</b>
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau</i>						

### Dependency Ratio

One way of expressing the general age composition of the local population is through the use of a 'dependency ratio.' Dependents are categorized as persons under the age of 18 and over the age of 64. A high dependency ratio for a community results in significant planning directed to address the dependents' needs.

Table 1.4 analyzes the number and percent of dependents in Bremer County and the State of Iowa as reported in the 2000 and 2010 Censuses. In both years, Bremer County had a lower percentage of persons under 18 than the state, but a higher percentage of persons over 64. Also, the 2010 numbers suggest that the county is increasing in elderly dependents while decreasing in young dependents both in total numbers and as a percentage of the county total. The county's median age increased from 38.1 in the 2000 Census to 39.3 in 2010.

TABLE 1.4: PERSONS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 AND OVER THE AGE OF 64								
Area	2000				2010			
	#<18	%	#>64	%	#<18	%	#>64	%
Bremer County	5,627	24.1%	3,733	16.0%	5,513	22.7%	4,192	17.3%
State of Iowa	733,638	25.1%	436,213	14.9%	727,993	23.9%	452,888	14.9%
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau</i>								

### **Population Projections**

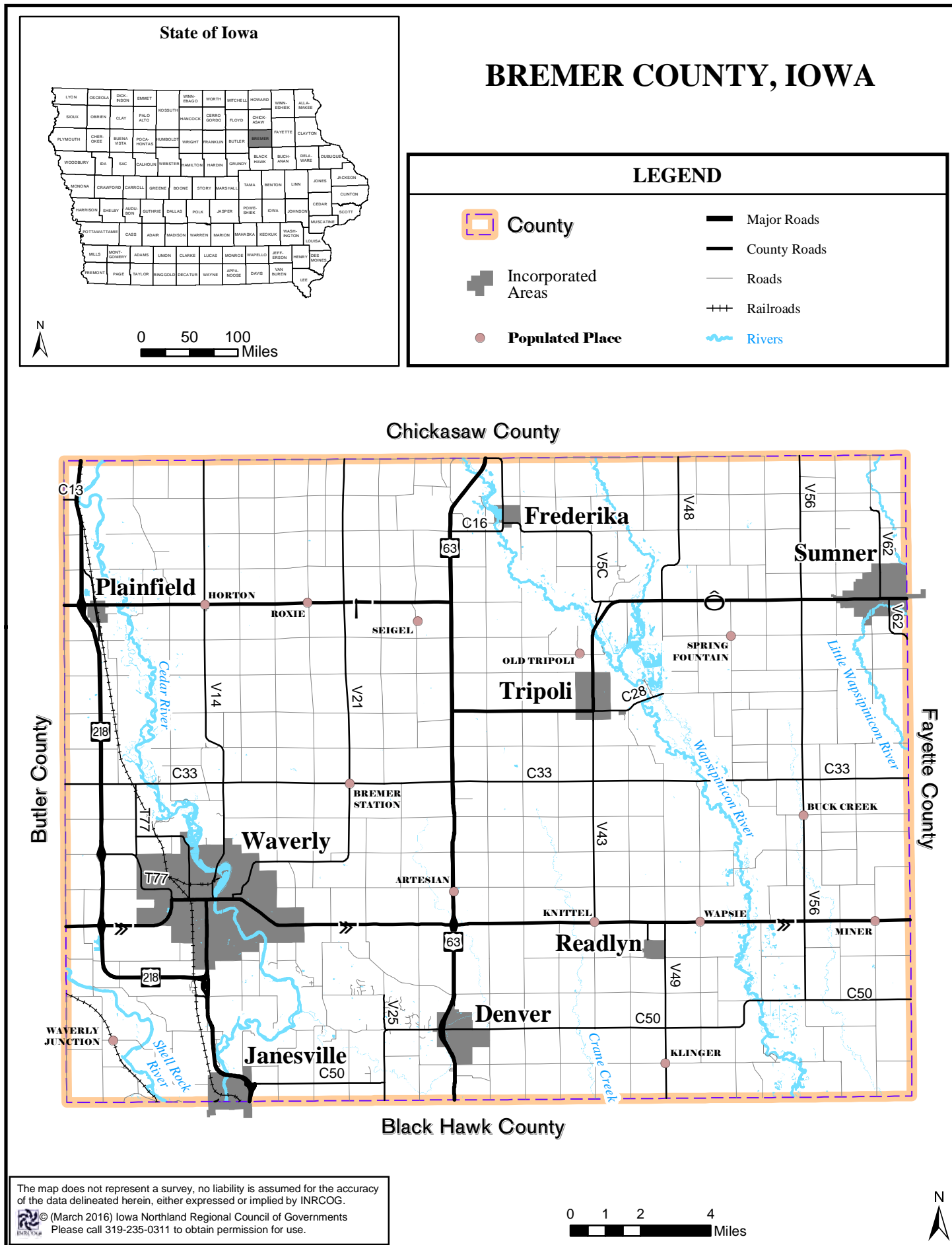
Population projections are generally based on the assumption that past trends will continue in the future. As a result, future population will change according to a mathematical formula that best describes past population changes – what happened in the past will happen in the future.

Table 1.5 provides 20-year population projections or estimates for Bremer

County. These projections were made using historical population trends as their basis and do not express an exact population figure for the years 2020 and 2030. An explanation of each projection type follows.

TABLE 1.5: POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR BREMER COUNTY		
Type of Projection	2020	2030
Linear		
1910-2010	25,001	25,725
1960-2010	25,175	26,073
Geometric		
1910-2010	25,204	26,168
1960-2010	25,364	26,501
Mean or Average	25,186	26,117
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, INRCOG		

Linear and Geometric projections are straight-line or averaging methods of predicting population change. The Linear method uses the actual change in the total number of persons over a predetermined period of time in the community. Conversely, the Geometric method utilizes the percent change in population over that same period of time. For both of these projections, this Plan uses trend information from two time periods, between 1910 and 2010 and between 1960 and 2010, for determining the figures shown in Table 1.5. The former period looks at the trend over the past 100 years while the latter looks at the trend over the past 50 years.





## Section 2 – Agricultural & Natural Resources

The Agricultural and Natural Environment element serves two purposes. The first is to clarify the relationship between the natural environment and the built-out surroundings. The second is to secure a balanced or sustainable approach to future development. To help complete these purposes, the following guiding principles and assumptions were used, as well as the Smart Planning Principle identified in the textbox to the right:

- ✓ The cultural landscape where we work, live, and play is shaped by the natural surroundings.
- ✓ The economic base of agriculture products is dependent upon the county's natural setting and its' resources.
- ✓ In order to protect the long-term capacity of the environment to support growth, the community needs to understand the limits of natural systems.
- ✓ Responsible growth requires the county to work with and within their natural setting. We must work with nature rather than against it.
- ✓ Bremer County must recognize their limits. Humankind's problems, especially in regards to the natural setting, cannot always be solved with better science or a technological fix.
- ✓ Understanding the linkages between the natural and cultural landscapes is an important dimension of sound growth management.

The natural environment of Bremer County is comprised of multiple factors that combine to form the environmental setting. The importance and status of the man-made elements or the state's roads, water, sewer, businesses, and residential areas are commonly viewed, or mistaken, as being independent of the natural environment. Such misconceptions have led to the residential and commercial development of floodplains and prime agricultural land, and loss of irreplaceable natural elements such as native prairies, forests, prominent vistas, and other scenic resources.

The following section will identify the physical elements that make up the environmental setting of Bremer County. From the identification and analysis of the individual elements, areas can be identified as sensitive, or in need of protection. Bremer County, like all governments bodies, must learn from past mistakes and implement

### Smart Planning Element A&NR

Objectives, policies, and programs addressing preservation and protection of agricultural and natural resources.

simple rules and regulations to ensure the protection of elements that have been destroyed in the past.

The health and stability of Bremer County and both the natural and man-made environments, can be measured by the diversity within the system and the ability of the county to develop responsively to the natural systems, which shape its ultimate path

## Existing Conditions

Bremer County's agricultural and natural resources existing conditions include agricultural lands, topography, waterways, climate, vegetation, and soils.

### Agriculture

Agricultural land is spread throughout the county. Corn and soybeans are the main crops.

### Topography

The topography of Bremer County is influenced by the Cedar, Wapsipinicon, and Shell Rock Rivers. The highest elevation, approximately 1,175 feet above mean sea level, in the county is in the northeastern corner near Sumner, while the lowest elevation is 865 feet in the southwest corner near Janesville. See Map 2 for a visual representation of the County's topography.

### Waterways

The two main rivers in the county are the Cedar and Wapsipinicon Rivers. The Cedar River flows north to south in the western part of the county passing through Waverly and Janesville. The Wapsipinicon River flows north to south in the eastern part of the county passing through Frederika and close to Tripoli. The Shell Rock River also flows through the southwestern corner of the county close to Janesville.

### Climate

Bremer County's climate is similar to other communities in the upper Midwest. Wide variations in temperature and precipitation occur over four distinct seasons.

The County's average annual temperature is 46.6 degrees with average extremes of 16.9 degrees in January and 72.4 degrees in July.

Precipitation averages 34.77 inches annually peaking in June with an average of 5.2 inches. Snowfall averages 34.21 inches annually with a peak average in December of 9.1 inches.

### Vegetation

Because the County is largely agricultural, much of the undeveloped land is planted with row crops. Trees, shrubs, and grass are prevalent where crops are not planted.

### Soils

According to the Bremer County Soil Survey (1967), "the soils of Bremer County, for the most part, are deep, level to gently sloping, and loamy or silty. They are productive, but many of the level or nearly level soils would benefit from artificial drainage. Crops grown on all the soils respond well to fertilizer, and they respond to lime on all except the poorly drained soils."

Corn Suitability Rating (CSR) is a numerical rating, between 5 and 100, of each soil type in the county. Accordingly, the CSR scale shows that the higher the CSR, the higher agricultural value of the soil type. Soils near the Cedar, Wapsipinicon, and Shell Rock Rivers and their floodplains have CSR scores less than 50, which is the threshold at which the county has deemed for preservation. In general, the remainder of the county is comprised of soils with CSR values of 50 or more rating points. See Map 3 for a visual representation of CSR values in the County.

## Key Issues & Opportunities

The Comprehensive Plan Task Force was asked a series of questions regarding agricultural and natural resources. Their responses provided guidance for the following key issues, opportunities, and goals.

### Protection of Natural Resources

Multiple comments were made that not enough was being done to protect natural resources and agriculture. There were concerns about chemical runoff, effects of hog confinements, and water quality. Task Force participants were in favor of more regulation on these activities.

The County has an opportunity to participate in watershed management authorities that are currently being established in the region. With water quality being a concern of stakeholders in the County, these organizations will help plan activities that will help improve water quality.

### Agricultural Land Preservation

One of the prominent themes in the Task Force meetings was the need to preserve agricultural areas in the County and prevent prime agricultural land from being developed. Stakeholders did not want to see much development where present land uses were agricultural. However, with pressure to develop within the county, a balance needed to be struck between preserving agriculture and providing areas for development.

#### Additional Measures to CSR

Currently, “prime” agricultural soils are defined by the County Soil Survey. Meeting participants were receptive to the idea of using other factors, such as soil types and crop history, in addition to CSR when reviewing development proposals and rezonings. Using a comprehensive evaluation tool, such as LESA (Land Evaluation and Site Assessment), would provide more information to the Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Supervisors regarding a site’s suitability for agriculture. These topics and tools should be considered by the County as the capabilities and time of staff permit.

#### Development Contiguous to Cities

When considering the needs for more development in the county, Task Force participants suggested directing growth towards or contiguous to cities in order to preserve agricultural uses and prevent “leapfrog” development. See Section 10 of this chapter for more detailed land use information.

## Agricultural & Natural Resource Goals

**Goal 1: It is a goal of Bremer County to strive to preserve agricultural land, placing emphasis on areas that are considered “prime” agricultural areas.**

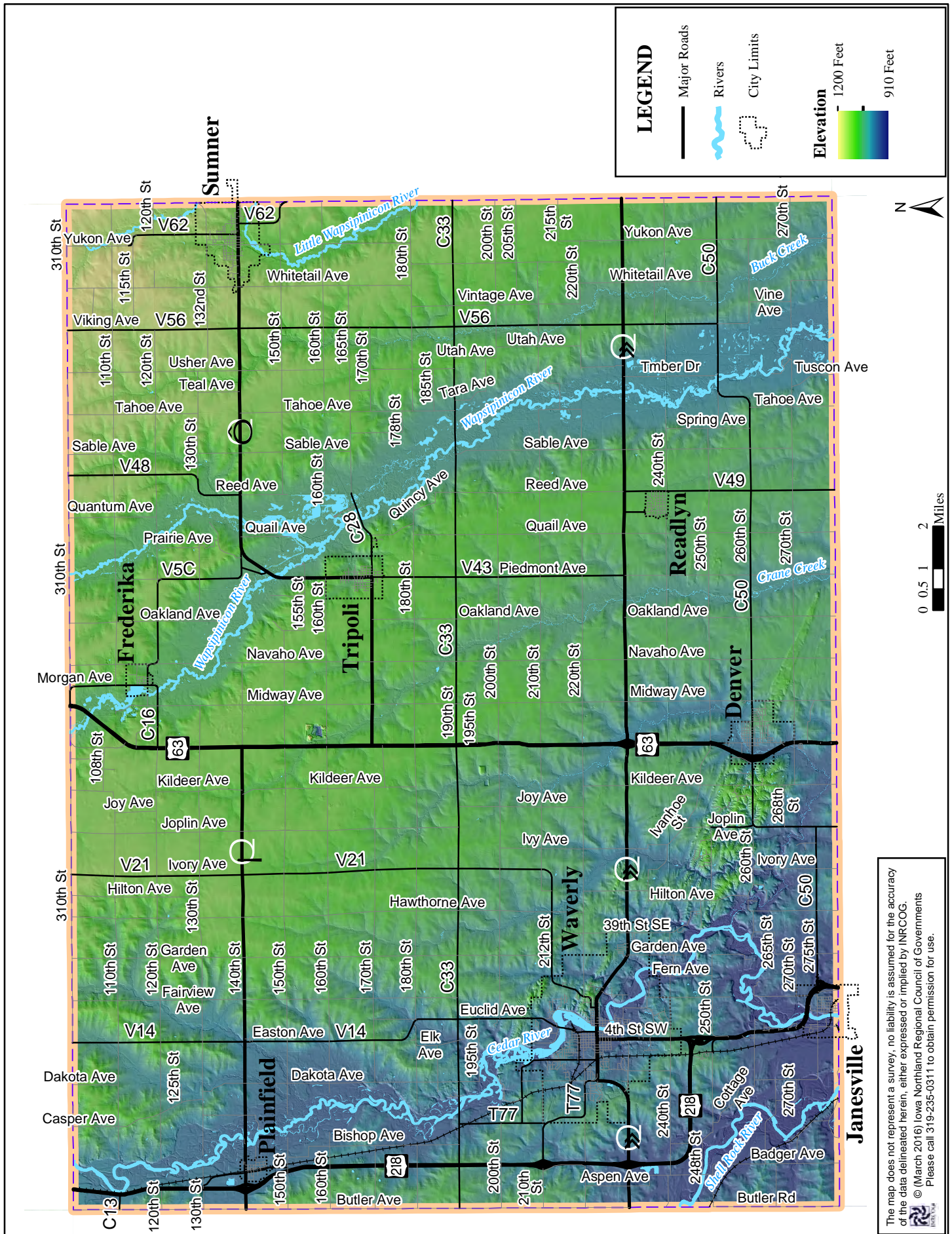
- a. In making land use decisions, Bremer County shall consider the compatibility of existing surrounding land uses and the proposed use.
- b. Bremer County shall consider the availability of services needed for land use change requests.
- c. The County will require applicants to provide information regarding the services required for development at the time of the development request.
- d. Bremer County will prioritize the preservation of “prime” agricultural soils by considering land characteristics such as Corn Suitability Rating (CSR), soil type, and crop history.
- e. The County shall utilize large minimum lot size requirements as a means of discouraging development in the unincorporated areas.
- f. Bremer County will investigate utilization of factors in addition to CSR and lot size when making land use decisions (i.e. Land Evaluation and Site Assessment).

**Goal 2: It is the goal of Bremer County to preserve and protect environmental features and sensitive areas such as floodplains, wetlands, woodlands, and other sensitive areas.**

- a. The County shall protect natural features including surface waters including the Cedar River and Wapsipinicon River and their impact on other jurisdictions.
  - i. The County will participate in the appropriate watershed management authorities.
- b. Bremer County shall consider topography when making land use decisions.
- c. In addition, Bremer County shall protect or maintain the quality of its air and groundwater resources.
- d. As is required, the County shall implement federal, state, county policies and ordinances designed to protect its natural environment and environmentally sensitive areas.



Map 2: Topographic Map of the County





Bremer County Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update



## Section 3 – Hazards

For a more complete treatment of hazards and mitigation planning in the County, refer to the *Bremer County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan*.

### Existing Conditions

Natural hazards to the County include thunderstorms, severe winter storms, tornados, hailstorms, and flooding. Man-made hazards include HAZMAT, communications failure, transportation, and terrorism.

For a detailed analysis of hazards to the County, please see the *Hazard Mitigation Plan*. Map 4 shows flood-prone areas of the County.

### Key Issues & Opportunities

Bremer County regularly conducts hazard mitigation planning.. The most recent *Bremer County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan* was completed in 2012 and has a life of five years.

### Hazards Goals

**Goal 1: The County will implement and update, as required, the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.**

The following goals are taken from the *Bremer County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan*:

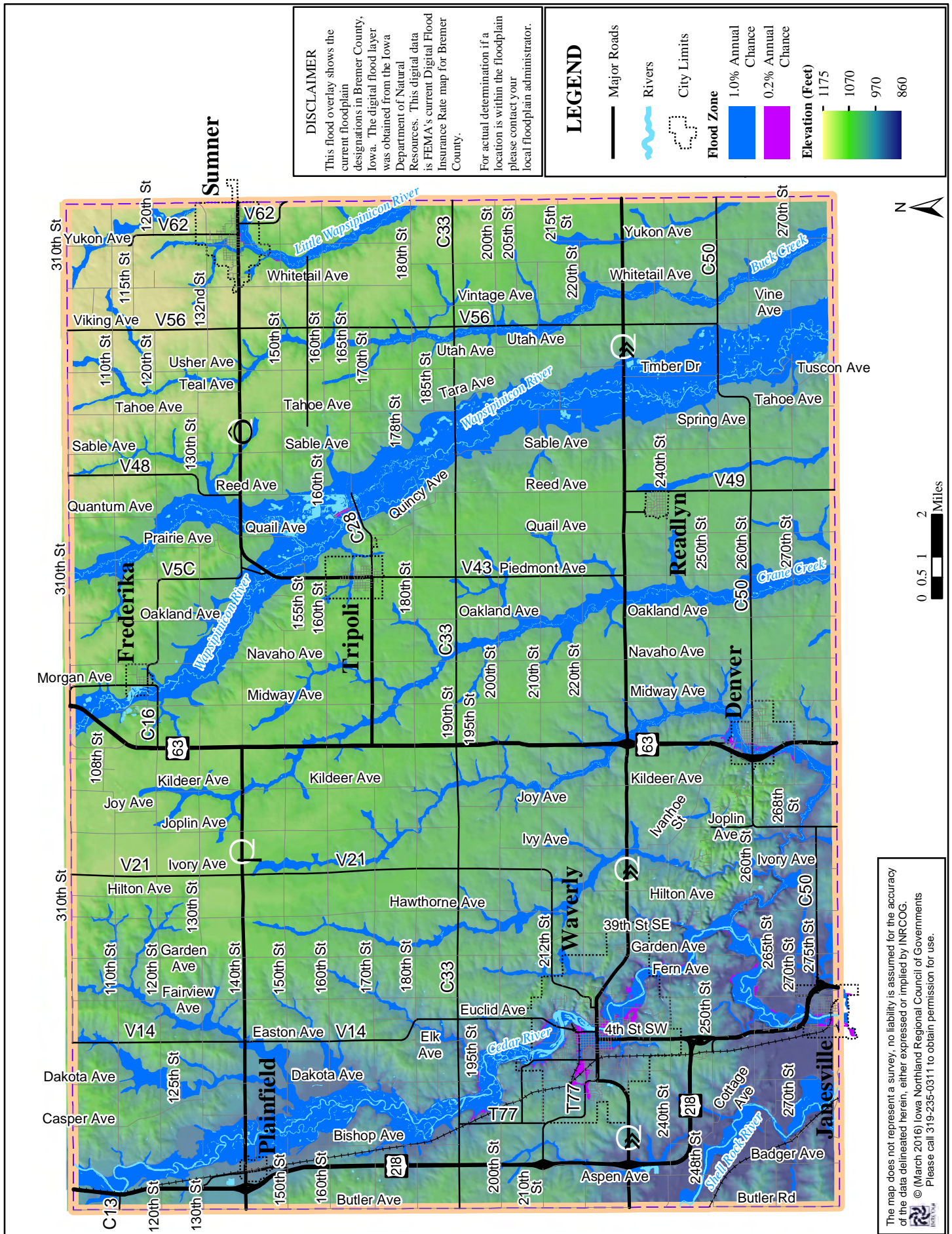
1. Minimize to the greatest possible extent the number of injuries and/or loss of life associated with all identified hazards.
2. Reduce or eliminate property damage due to the occurrence of disasters.
3. Identify ways that response operations, in the event of a disaster, can be improved.
4. Return the community to either pre-disaster or improved conditions in a timely manner in the wake of a disaster.
5. Develop strategies that can be used to reduce the community's overall risk to the negative effects of natural, technological, and man-made disasters.
6. Reconvene the planning committee on an annual basis to review the plan document, check for compliance with the plan goals, and track progress in achieving the mitigation strategies.
7. Maintain the Countywide Multi-Jurisdictional format for future plan updates.

### Smart Planning Element - Hazards

Objectives, policies, and programs that identify the natural and other hazards that have the greatest likelihood of impacting the municipality or that pose a risk of catastrophic damage as such hazards relate to land use and development decisions, as well as the steps necessary to mitigate risk after considering the local hazard mitigation plan approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.



Map 4: Flood Plain Map of the County





## Section 4 – Community Character

The Community Character Element contains the community design goals and action strategies that encourage activities and development that are consistent with the county's character, architectural style, and values regarding its physical character, while ensuring that certain universal principles of good community design are upheld.

### Existing Conditions

The following describes Bremer County's character based on stakeholder input at the Task Force meetings.

#### Education

The state of the County's schools received praise from stakeholders. Elementary and secondary schools were rated and participants felt the County was a good place to receive an education. Wartburg College in Waverly was identified as a significant asset to the county.

#### Healthcare

Healthcare was listed as an asset by Task Force participants. In addition to hospitals, nursing homes and elderly services were also viewed as a positive for the County.

#### Recreation

Bremer County has a number of recreational opportunities that benefit its character. The Cedar and Wapsipinicon Rivers flow through the County providing opportunities for water recreation uses. The bicycling trail network has grown in recent years by utilizing on-road bicycling accommodations and rail trails.

### Key Issues & Opportunities

#### Younger Residents

While Wartburg College does draw in many young adults, the County should provide opportunities to retain and attract younger individuals and families. The Task Force suggested that more starter homes be made available for young people to afford a house.

#### Rural, Small-Town Living

With Bremer County being largely agricultural, stakeholders noted that the rural nature of the county is one of its defining features. In conjunction with the previous opportunity to attract younger residents, Task Force participants stated that they would like to see more opportunities for young farmers. Allowing "hobby farms," smaller-scale agriculture uses, was suggested as a way for the rural

### Smart Planning Element – Community Character

Objectives, policies, and programs to identify characteristics and qualities that make the community unique and that are important to the community's heritage and quality of life.

nature of the County to continue without young farmers requiring large tracts of land.

## Community Character Goals

**Goal 1: It is the goal of Bremer County to maintain, and improve when possible, the quality of living of its residents. Quality of life, under this Plan, shall include the following factors:**

- a. Education. The County will work to ensure that all Bremer County residents have access to a quality educational system.
- b. Crime. The County will continue to prevent and minimize criminal activity.
- c. Arts, Culture, Library, and Historical opportunities. The County will work with appropriate organizations to offer cultural opportunities to its residents.
- d. Parks and Recreation opportunities. Bremer County, specifically the County Conservation Board, will work with the incorporated communities in the County to offer access to golf courses, recreational trails, swimming pools, boating and fishing, open space, and community celebrations and festivals.
- e. Health. The County will work to ensure all Bremer County residents have access to quality healthcare including hospitals and nursing homes.

## Section 5 – Community Facilities

Community facilities and services are commonly used to measure the quality of life in a community. These facilities and services are often what potential citizens and businesses consider when determining if they should relocate to a community – in addition to a well-connected and diverse transportation network, economic diversity, and so forth. In regard to community facilities and services, potential citizens and businesses look for a community that provides a responsive and competent public safety system, a variety of parks and recreational opportunities, an exceptional and supported school system, and cultural events and opportunities. Existing citizens and businesses also consider these features when deciding whether or not to remain in the community or move elsewhere. To some degree, community facilities can be used to enhance a community's quality of life, they can be used to help guide the rate of growth.

### Existing Conditions

Following are existing conditions for community facilities in the County. Please see Maps 5-8 for the location of County services.

#### County Government

The Bremer County Courthouse is located on Bremer Avenue in the City of Waverly. Within the county's organizational structure, there are many offices that provide a variety of services to the public:

- Assessor
- Auditor
- Building and Zoning
- Emergency Management
- Engineer
- Geographic Information Systems
- Home Care Program
- Recorder
- Sheriff
- Treasurer

#### Fire and Rescue Services

##### **Fire Departments**

There are currently eight fire departments located in Bremer County and two outside of the County that provide fire protection to residents. The in-county departments provide protection through mutual aid agreements include those from: Denver, Frederika, Janesville, Plainfield, Readlyn, Sumner, Tripoli, and Waverly. In addition, the Nashua and Oran Fire Departments provide fire protection to residents of Bremer County under mutual aid agreements.

### Smart Planning Element – Community Facilities

Objectives, policies, and programs to assist future development of educational facilities, cemeteries, health care facilities, child care facilities, law enforcement and fire protection facilities, libraries, and other governmental facilities that are necessary or desirable to meet the projected needs of the municipality.

### **Health Care**

There are a variety of health care providers located throughout the County. Hospitals exist in Waverly and in Sumner. Bremer County contracts with the Visiting Nurses Association to provide public health and nursing services to qualified residents. The County also provides home health care which is a non-nursing service. Regional health care services are available in the Waterloo-Cedar Falls area, Iowa City, and in Rochester, Minnesota.

### **Emergency Medical Services**

According to the Iowa Bureau of Emergency Management Services, Bremer County has four full transport ambulance services within its borders. The four services are located in the cities of Denver, Sumner, Tripoli, and Waverly, all of which are Emergency Medical Technician Paramedic services. The remaining communities, Frederika, Janesville, Plainfield, and Readlyn all have non-transport, or first-responder, services within their respective communities.

### **County Conservation Board**

The Bremer County Conservation Board, which is headquartered in the city of Tripoli, was established in 1958. Since that time, the Board has acquired and now manages 21 areas comprising over 3,400 acres. The Board presently has 5 full-time employees and 4-6 seasonal and intern positions. Overall, the goals of the Board include better timber management; improving native grass management; converting marginal crop areas and other areas to be capable of providing better wildlife habitat; improving employee safety policies and training; and improving patrolling and security of the Board-managed areas.

### **Parks**

Parks that are managed by the County Conservation Board, as well as their amenities and needs, are shown in the following table.

<b>TABLE 5.1: BREMER COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD PARKS</b>		
<b>Park</b>	<b>Amenities</b>	<b>Future Needs</b>
Cedar Bend Park	Campground, picnic areas, restroom, shower, electrical service, hiking trails, firewood, picnic tables and fire rings, drinking water, and playground equipment	Update existing amenities and equipment, electrical service, and add a summer residence that would allow for better maintenance and security
North Cedar Park	Campground, picnic area, restroom, shower, electrical service, hiking trails, firewood, picnic tables and fire rings, drinking water, and playground equipment	Update existing amenities and equipment, electrical service, and add a summer residence that would allow for better maintenance and security
Alcock Park	Campground, picnic area, restroom, shower, electrical service, hiking trails, firewood, picnic tables and fire rings, drinking water, and playground equipment	Update existing amenities and equipment, electrical service, and add a summer residence that would allow for better maintenance and security
North Woods Park	Campground, picnic area, restroom, shower, electrical service, hiking trails, firewood, picnic tables and fire rings, drinking water, and playground equipment	Update existing amenities and equipment, electrical service, and add a summer residence that would allow for better maintenance and security

### **Wildlife Areas**

The County Conservation Board manages nine wildlife areas, which have little in the way of development or amenities. The purpose or goal of these areas is to provide natural areas for those wanting to fish, hunt, trap, bird watch, nut or berry pick, or just hike. Each wildlife area has a parking area and access drive. Future needs include improving access by upgrading the existing parking areas and adding other parking areas, as well as providing river access to those wanting to fish or canoe.

### **Greenbelt Area**

Greenbelt area currently comprises 1,855 acres of river corridor along the Wapsipinicon River, from just east of Tripoli southward to Iowa Highway 3. It contains many small tracts of land purchased mainly through a grant. The purpose of the area is to provide additional recreational opportunities to people in northeast Iowa where they can fish, hunt, trap, hike, bird watch, canoe, cross country ski, as well as enjoy other outdoor activities. The area will be managed as natural area, with the only development being access drives and parking areas. Future needs include continuing to purchase tracts within the project boundary to connect those presently without public access, adding access points, and maintaining a primitive trail system in the area.

### **Other Recreational Areas**

The Bremer County Conservation Board also manages two native prairie areas; two river accesses; and two recreational areas. Future needs of these areas include maintenance and updating amenities that serve the public.

## **Arts and Culture**

Cultural opportunities in Bremer County include a museum in Readlyn and the Schield Museum in Waverly, and the County also has a Historical Society. In addition, Wartburg College also serves as an artistic and cultural resource for the County as well.

## **Education**

Nine public school districts provide education for school-age children in Bremer County. The districts include: Denver, Dunkerton, Fredericksburg, Janesville, Nashua-Plainfield, Tripoli, Sumner, Wapsi Valley (Readlyn area), and Waverly. Each district provides Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade educations; however, the Nashua-Plainfield District only offers 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade education in Bremer County and the remainder of the curriculum is taught in Nashua.

Wartburg College, a private college, is located in Waverly. The college was founded in 1878 and has an enrollment of approximately 1,600 students. The student to faculty ratio is 12:1 and the college offers about 50 major and pre-professional programs. In addition to academics, the college provides athletic, cultural, and social activities for students and Bremer County residents alike.

## **Libraries**

Public libraries in Bremer County exist in all cities, with the exception of Frederika.

## Key Issues & Opportunities

### Emergency Services

While communities in the County have fire departments, the County itself does not. Mutual aid agreements are in place, but fire and EMS protection is a large concern in rural areas where response times are higher than in communities. The County should consider the need for and provision of rural emergency services to better serve these residents.

### Fire Service Training

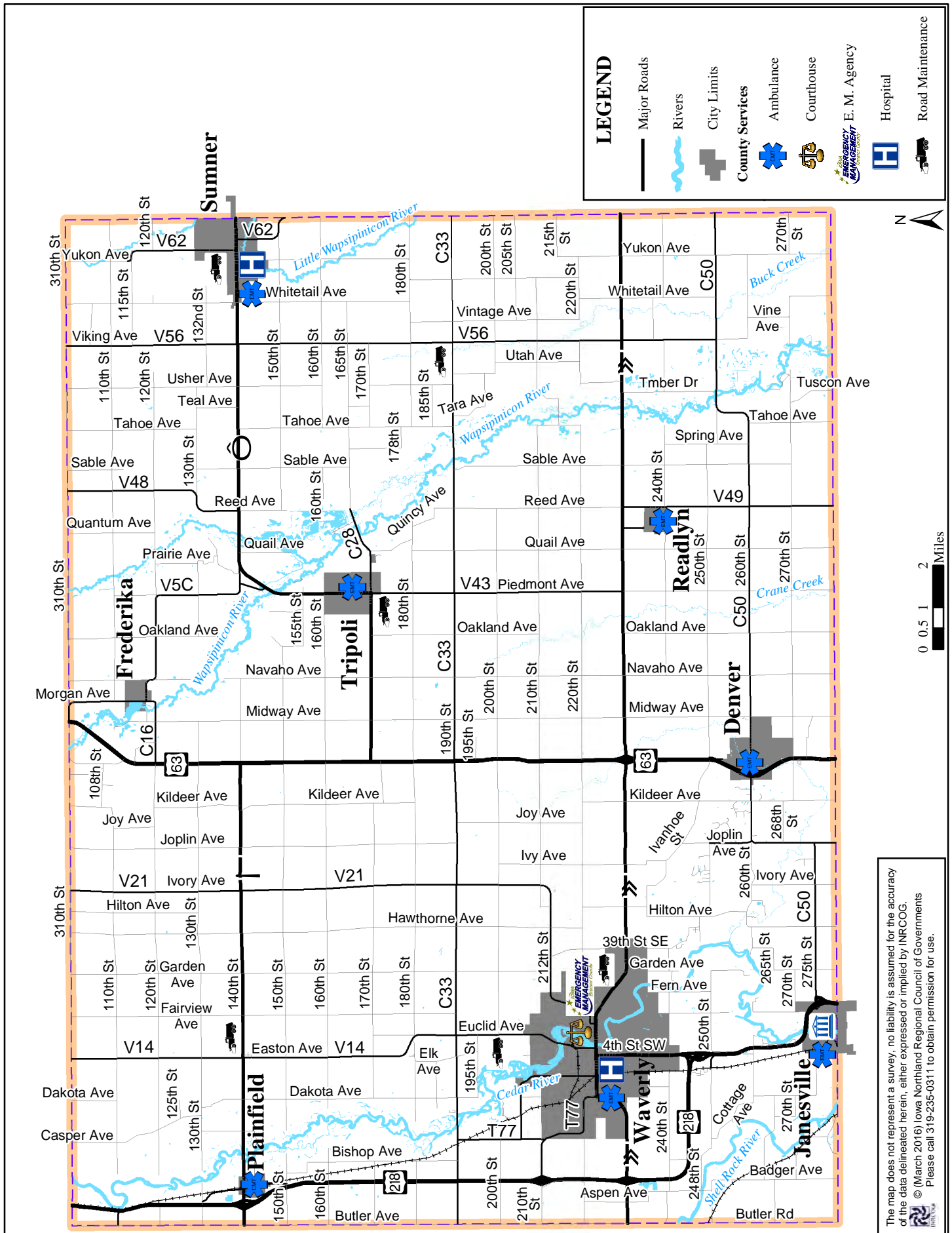
Fire services are mostly provided by volunteers in the County. While this practice is cost-efficient, it does mean that training is not up to the highest standard – firefighters require extensive training which volunteers may have difficulty acquiring. Additionally, volunteer service has raised concerns that there are times, particularly during business hours, when fire service response is limited. In addition to considering a rural fire service, the County should also evaluate these concerns and determine the best way to address them.

## Community Facilities Goals

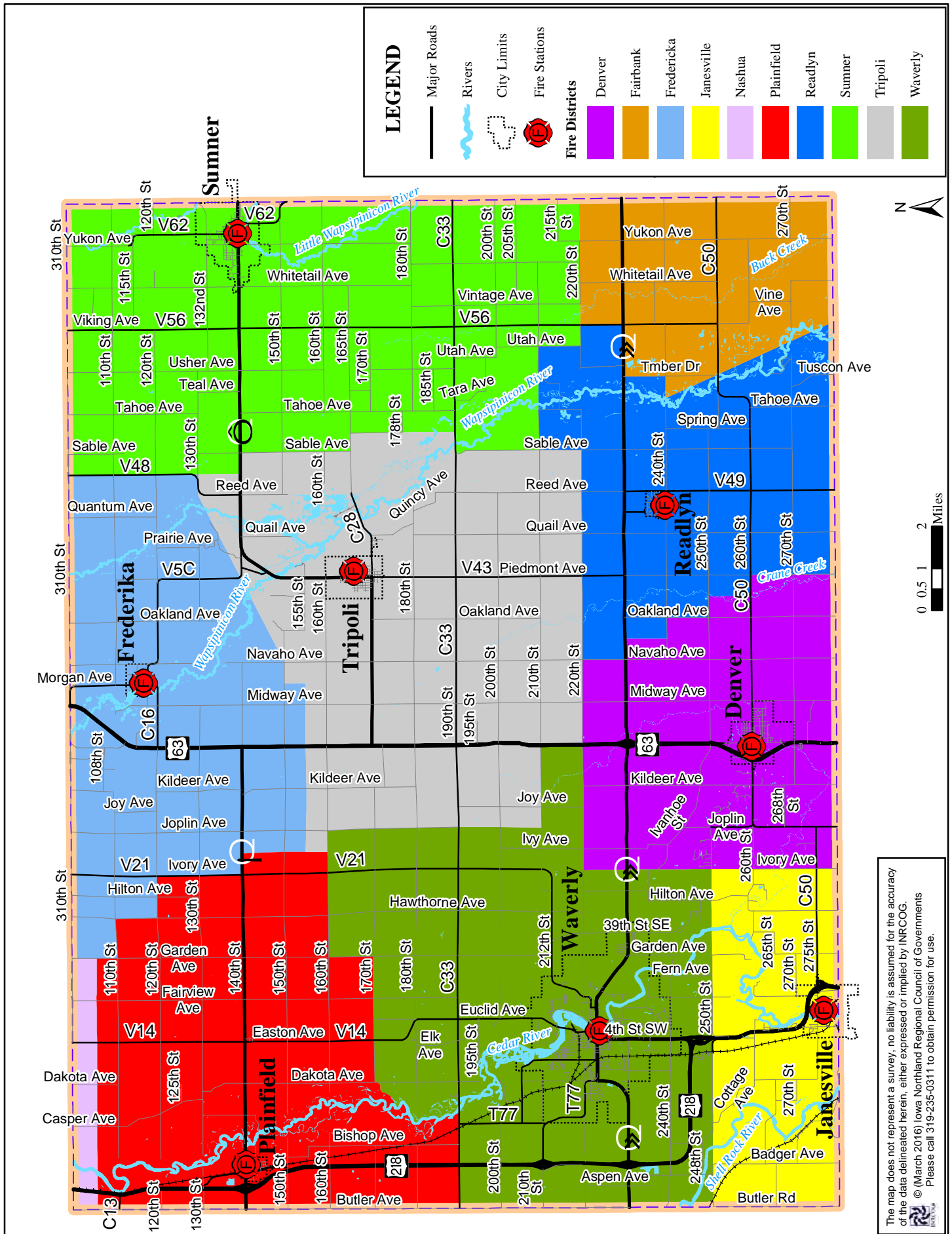
**Goal 1: It is the goal of Bremer County to encourage quality community facilities, such as:**

- a. Public safety services – sheriff, fire, ambulance services, and Emergency Management Coordinator.
- b. Art, culture, library, and historical facilities.
- c. Schools.
- d. Parks and recreation such as golf courses, recreational and bicycle trails, swimming pools, boating and fishing, and open space.

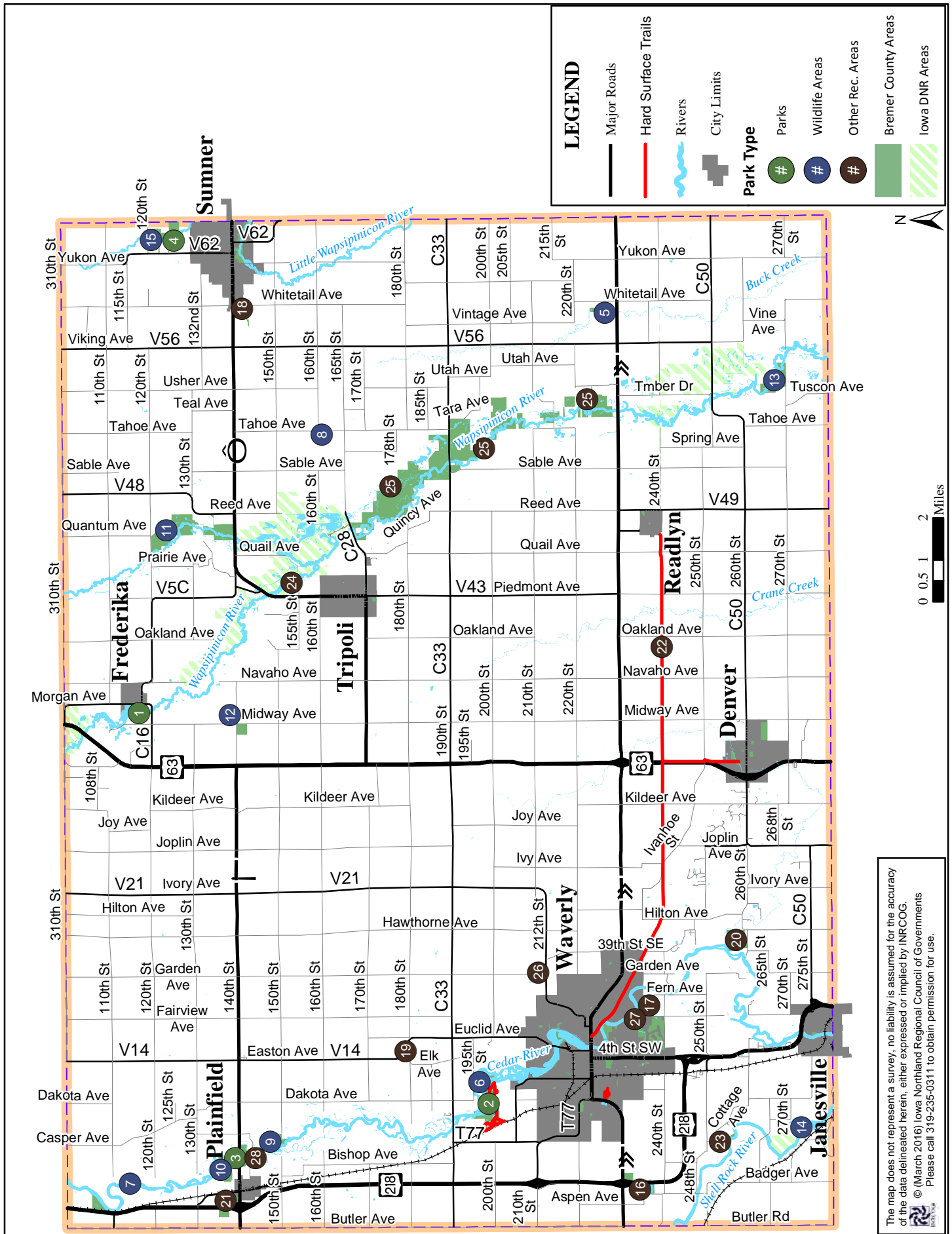
Map 5: County Services Map

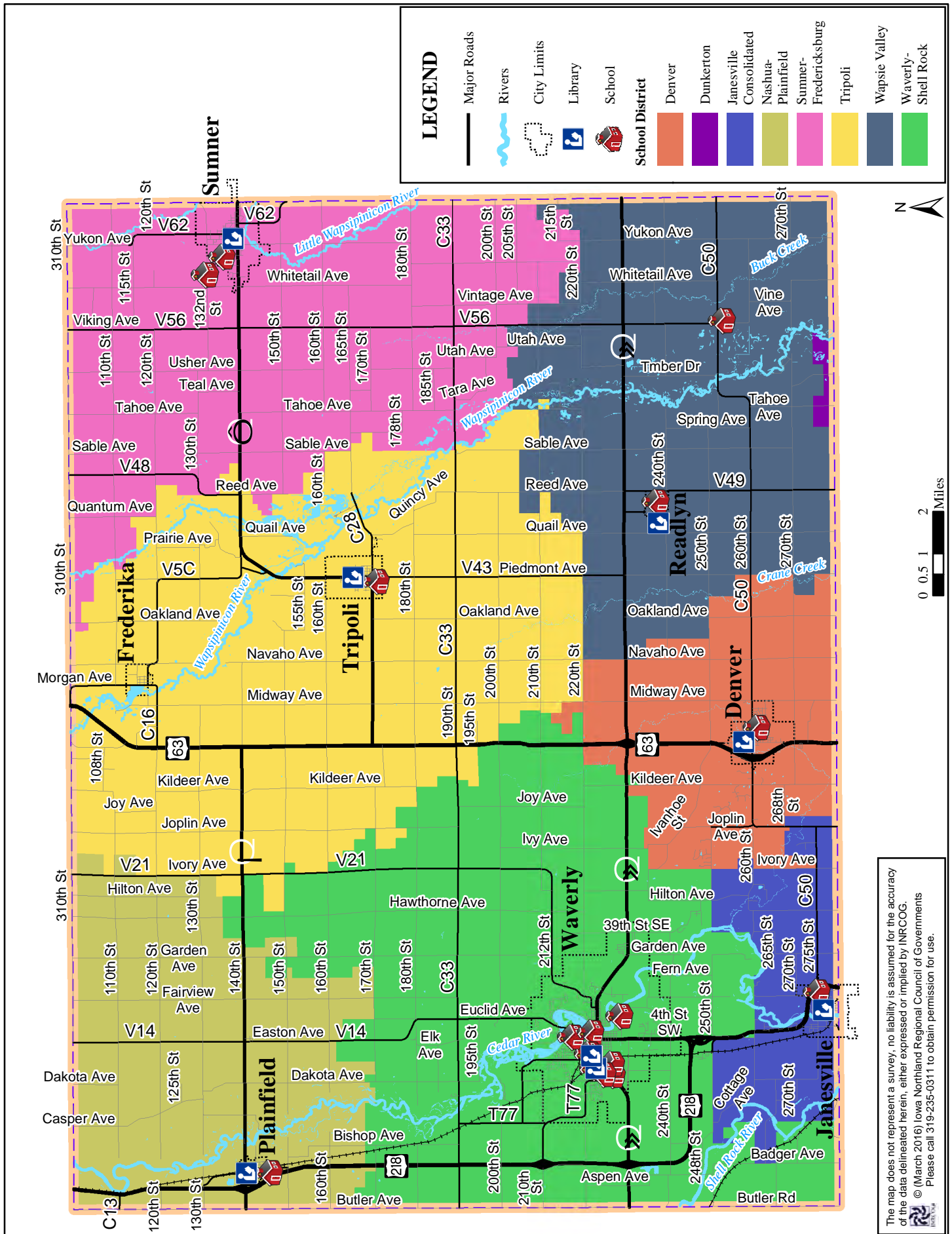












## Section 6- Public Infrastructure & Utilities

The infrastructure and utilities of the community are the backbone of a county. Without a proper, up-to-date infrastructure, the quality of life in the county is reduced. In order to reduce the migration to more urban counties, Bremer needs to determine the quality of the services, facilities, and systems throughout the community and bring them up-to-date to the best of their ability

### Existing Conditions

#### Water

Water service in Bremer County is typically provided by private, individual or common wells. The wells tap rechargeable groundwater aquifers for water. In terms of need, the County does not foresee the need for a common or public water system. However, the County does want to protect the groundwater from depletion or contamination in order to maintain its supply of potable water.

#### Sewer

The primary means of disposing of sewage in the County is by individual, on-site septic systems. These on-site systems include tanks and septic fields for disposal of household sewage. As with water service, the County does not envision the need for a common public sewage system. The County, however, does regulate on-site systems through ordinances, inspections and its Board of Health.

#### Electricity

Electric service is provided to Bremer County by nine different providers including: MidAmerican Energy Company; Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative; Interstate Power Company; Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative; East-Central Rural Electric Cooperative; and county providers in Denver, Readlyn, Sumner, and Waverly.

#### Solid Waste

The County provides dump containers to receive small amounts of solid waste and then transports it to the Black Hawk County landfill.

#### Flood Control

Bremer County began regulating floodplain activity and development in July of 1980 when the County became a participant in the emergency program of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). In July of 1990, the county applied for and was accepted into the regular program of the NFIP. The County continues to make efforts to discourage further development in the flood-prone areas of the County. Floodplain protection and mitigation efforts include the voluntary acquisition of flood-prone properties.

### Smart Planning Element – Public Infrastructure & Utilities

Objectives, policies, and programs to guide future development of sanitary sewer service, storm water management, water supply, solid waste disposal, wastewater treatment technologies, recycling facilities, and telecommunications facilities. The comprehensive plan or land development regulations may include estimates regarding future demand for such utility services.

## Key Issues & Opportunities

### Rural Internet

While other utility services were rated very highly by the Task Force, internet service in the rural County was an overwhelming key concern of the participants. Many residents and farmers have slow internet speeds with some still only able to access dial-up connections. In addition to being a hindrance to accessing information, poor internet connections also have an impact on some farmers' ability to conduct business with others. County officials should work with internet providers to find ways to provide high-speed or broadband internet service to more rural areas.

## Public Infrastructure & Utilities Goals

**Goal 1: It is the goal of Bremer County to consider the need for services when assessing a potential development.**

- c. The County will require that necessary services shall be provided concurrent with development. For the purposes of this Plan, "necessary services" shall include:
  - i. Access to a transportation network through highways, roads, streets, trails, and driveways.
  - ii. Access to a potable, approved water supply (individual wells and/or shared wells). The County will encourage use of shared or central wells, when possible.
  - iii. Access to an approved on-site septic system or connection to a central sewer system.
  - iv. Access to public safety services (sheriff, fire, ambulance services).
  - v. Connections to other utilities (electric, gas, etc.).
  - vi. Access to schools.
- d. The County will work with utility and internet providers to extend high speed internet access to rural County residents.

## Section 7 – Housing

This section addresses the goals, policies, and actions to promote housing diversity and opportunities for housing in Bremer County. This section also discusses the existing housing trends, including new subdivisions, areas in need, and forecasts for residential demand and development.

### Existing Conditions

Housing is the foundation of a community and its economy because it serves one of the most basic needs of residents: shelter. Housing is the biggest part of the US economy and one of the dominant land uses in most communities.

#### Housing Occupancy

A summary of general housing information is shown in Table 7.1, Bremer County has seen an increase of 578 housing units between the 2000 Census and 2010 Census. The average number of persons living in each unit is less than three persons and decreasing, as seen by the larger increase in households than in families. The vacancy rate is relatively low (5.6%).

TABLE 7.1: GENERAL HOUSING INFORMATION IN BREMER COUNTY		
Status	2000	2010
Total Persons	23,325	24,276
Total Housing Units	9,337	9,915
Occupied	8,860	9,385
Vacant	477	530
Persons Per Housing Unit	2.50	2.45
Number of Households	8,860	9,385
Number of Families	6,324	6,509
Source: U.S. Census Bureau		

#### Age of Housing Stock

Table 7.2 shows an estimate of when each housing unit in Bremer County was built. The majority of the County's housing stock is at least 40 years old with most units being built before 1979. Looking at individual categories, the largest percentage of units were built prior to 1940 with a similar percentage of units comprising the three categories from 1950 to 1979. The median year for structures built in the County is 1961. Iowa's median year for structures built is 1965, so the County, in general, has an older housing stock compared to the state.

### Smart Planning Element - Housing

Objectives, policies, and programs to further the vitality and character of established residential neighborhoods and new residential neighborhoods and plan to ensure an adequate housing supply that meets both the existing and forecasted housing demand. The comprehensive plan or land development regulations may include an inventory and analysis of the local housing stock and may include specific information such as age, condition, type, market value, occupancy, and historical characteristics of all the housing within the municipality. The comprehensive plan or land development regulations may identify specific policies and programs that promote the development of new housing and maintenance or rehabilitation of existing housing and that provide a range of housing choices that meet the needs of the residents of the municipality.

**TABLE 7.2: BREMER COUNTY HOUSING UNITS BY YEAR BUILT**

Time Period	Percentage of Total Units
2010 or Later	0.8%
2000 to 2009	9.5%
1990 to 1999	8.5%
1980 to 1989	4.8%
1970 to 1979	16.0%
1960 to 1969	12.0%
1950 to 1959	11.0%
1940 to 1949	5.4%
1939 or Earlier	31.9%
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013</i>	

### Housing Values & Rent

In general, homebuyers are directed that “affordable” homes cost 2.5 times their annual gross income. Median household income in Bremer County is \$61,216, meaning that an average affordable home should be about \$153,000. Table 7.3 shows that most homes in the County are below this amount as the median home value is \$145,300.

**TABLE 7.3: OWNER-OCCUPIED UNITS IN BREMER COUNTY**

Value	% of Total Units
Less than \$50,000	7.1%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	19.2%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	25.9%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	20.5%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	17.6%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	7.0%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	2.4%
\$1,000,000 or more	0.2%
Median (dollars)	\$145,300
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013</i>	

Table 7.4 shows various housing statistics for Bremer County, selected communities in the County, and the State of Iowa. Included in the table are the number of housing units, median value of owner-occupied units, the number of renter-occupied units, and median rent in each community using 2013 estimates from the Census Bureau.

### Development Trends

The County is primarily rural with large tracts of agricultural land interspersed with single-family homes. There are some subdivisions or larger residential areas adjacent to cities, particularly around Denver and Waverly.



**TABLE 7.4: HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS OF SELECTED COMMUNITIES IN 2013**

Community	Housing Units	Median Value Owner-Occupied Units	Renter-Occupied Units	Median Rent
Denver	742	\$146,800	164	\$605
Frederika	95	\$87,500	11	\$475
Janesville	412	\$135,500	110	\$524
Plainfield	191	\$92,800	39	\$611
Readlyn	345	\$115,700	33	\$575
Sumner	972	\$84,600	189	\$508
Tripoli	594	\$92,200	106	\$507
Waverly	3,803	\$153,400	798	\$617
Bremer County	9,943	\$145,300	1,733	\$588
State of Iowa	1,341,001	\$124,300	340,605	\$670

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013

## Key Issues & Opportunities

### Additional Housing Choices

There is a need in Bremer County for housing choices beyond single-family homes. Along with starter homes, there are communities that need multi-family housing. However, Task Force participants noted that these options may not be suited for the rural county. The stated preference was for multi-family housing to stay within the cities, while more single-family and starter homes could be built adjacent to cities.

### Developable Land

While there is a desire for some development, there are not many available places for it. Currently, many farmers are not selling their land and CSR values still make most of the County more suitable to agriculture. With these constraints, developers are looking within and around city limits and the County should align zoning and future land use to match.

## Housing Goals

**Goal 1: It is the goal of Bremer County to provide housing opportunities for all residents and maintain quality building standards.**

- a. Bremer County will consider coordinated efforts with incorporated cities to meet the housing needs of various groups, including:
  - i. Low income individuals and families
  - ii. Retirees
  - iii. Young adults and families
- b. To provide areas for new housing, the County should consider provisions for smaller, denser lots closer or contiguous to towns that do not negatively impact the environment or decrease prime agricultural land unnecessarily.

## Smart Planning Element - ED

Objectives, policies, and programs to promote the stabilization, retention, or expansion of economic development and employment opportunities. The comprehensive plan or land development regulations may include an analysis of current industries and economic activity and identify economic growth goals for the municipality. The comprehensive plan or land development regulations may also identify locations for future brownfield or grayfield development.

## Section 8 – Economic Development

This section discusses the current economic trends such as employment. This section provides guidance on the types of economic development the County should foster through the next 10-20 years, as well as actions the County can take, in partnership with local economic development organizations, to encourage these efforts.

### Existing Conditions

#### Trends & Statistics

According to the Census Bureau and for analysis purpose, the economy of Bremer County has been divided into 13 broad industry categories shown in Table 8.1. The table indicates that Education, Health Care, and Social Assistance; Manufacturing; and Retail Trade are the three largest sectors in the County's economy.

TABLE 8.1: ECONOMIC BASE OF BREMER COUNTY IN 2013		
Industrial Category	Number	Percent
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Mining	617	4.8%
Construction	690	5.4%
Manufacturing	2,270	17.7%
Wholesale Trade	310	2.4%
Retail Trade	1,395	10.9%
Transportation, Warehousing, Utilities	344	2.7%
Information	186	1.5%
Finance and Insurance, Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	974	7.6%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative and Waste Management Services	742	5.8%
Education, Health Care, Social Assistance	3,668	28.6%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services	719	5.6%
Other Services, except Public Administration	635	5.0%
Public Administration	264	2.1%
Total Employed Persons	12,814	100%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013		

The actual occupations of employed persons in the County is shown in Table 8.2. Note that the three largest occupation categories in the County in 2013 were Management, Business, Science, and Arts Occupations; Sales and Office Occupations; and Service Occupations.



**TABLE 8.2: OCCUPATION CLASSIFICATION OF PERSONS EMPLOYED IN 2013**

Occupation	Number	Percent
Management, Business, Science, and Arts Occupations	4,703	36.7%
Service Occupations	2,079	16.2%
Sales and Office Occupations	2,894	22.6%
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance Occupations	1,274	9.9%
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations	1,864	14.5%
Total Employed Persons	12,814	100%
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013</i>		

A brief overview of retail trade industries in Bremer County is provided in Table 8.3.

**TABLE 8.3: RETAIL TRADE IN BREMER COUNTY AND THE STATE OF IOWA IN 2007**

Geographic Area	Number of Establishments	Sales (\$1,000)	Annual Payroll (\$1,000)	Number of Employees
Bremer County	94	\$268,428	\$24,643	1,112
State of Iowa	13,203	\$39,234,649	\$3,561,117	177,156
<i>Source: Economic Census</i>				

Table 8.4 provides economic information regarding service industries in Bremer County and the State of Iowa.

**TABLE 8.4: SERVICE INDUSTRIES IN BREMER COUNTY AND THE STATE OF IOWA IN 2007**

Geographic Area	Number of Establishments	Receipts (\$1,000)	Annual Payroll (\$1,000)	Number of Employees
Bremer County	268	\$114,117	\$52,834	2,425
State of Iowa	36,765	\$36,093,538	\$14,546,375	534,881
<i>Source: Economic Census</i>				

Table 8.5 provides economic information regarding wholesale trade in Bremer County and the State of Iowa.

**TABLE 8.5: WHOLESALE TRADE IN BREMER COUNTY AND THE STATE OF IOWA IN 2007**

Geographic Area	Number of Establishments	Sales (\$1,000)	Annual Payroll (\$1,000)	Number of Employees
Bremer County	23	\$105,620	\$6,178	149
State of Iowa	5017	\$55,108,431	\$2,724,325	64,891
<i>Source: Economic Census</i>				

### **Agricultural Economy**

Because it is an important component of the Bremer County economy, the following provides detailed information regarding agricultural statistics for the past four Censuses of Agriculture.

Table 8.6 shows trends for the number of farms and average size of farms for Bremer County between 1997 and 2012. Despite some fluctuation, the number of farms in 2012 was the same as in 1997. However, the average size of those farms is increasing.

**TABLE 8.6: NUMBER AND AVERAGE SIZE OF FARMS IN BREMER COUNTY**

Year	Number of Farms	Average Size in Acres
1997	982	243
2002	956	267
2007	995	244
2012	982	276

Source: U.S. Censuses of Agriculture

The amount of land within Bremer County that is considered a part of a farm and the number of acres harvested is shown in Table 8.7. Note that the general trend in land in farms and acres harvested has increased since 1997.

**TABLE 8.7: LAND IN FARMS AND ACRES HARVESTED IN BREMER COUNTY**

Year	Land in Farms (Acres)	Acres Harvested
1997	238,528	200,037
2002	254,923	218,189
2007	243,057	212,259
2012	271,500	232,900

Source: U.S. Censuses of Agriculture

Table 8.8 shows the corn production in Bremer County for the past four Censuses of Agriculture. While the number of acres in corn production has increased, production and yield had large decreases in the last Census. In comparison, soybean statistics show the number of acres, production, and yield decreasing for the same time period. Soybean statistics are presented in Table 8.9.

**TABLE 8.8: CORN PRODUCTION IN BREMER COUNTY**

Year	Acres	Production in Bushels	Yield (Bu./Acre)
1997	105,948	14,824,642	139.9
2002	115,017	20,456,080	177.9
2007	134,932	23,420,829	173.6
2012	147,936	19,372,108	130.9

Source: U.S. Censuses of Agriculture

**TABLE 8.9: SOYBEAN PRODUCTION IN BREMER COUNTY**

Year	Acres	Production in Bushels	Yield (Bu./Acre)
1997	81,635	3,865,852	47.4
2002	90,780	4,758,658	52.4
2007	69,094	3,471,329	50.2
2012	73,211	3,291,410	44.9

Source: U.S. Censuses of Agriculture

Agricultural statistics pertaining to raising animals are shown in Tables 8.10 and 8.11. Specifically, Table 8.10 illustrates statistics for cattle production and Table 8.11 presents statistics for hog and pig production. Between 1997 and 2007, the number of total cattle and cattle sold declined, after which both categories increased in 2012. The number of hogs on farms and marketed has increased since 1997.

**TABLE 8.10: CATTLE STATISTICS FOR BREMER COUNTY**

Year	All Cattle	Beef Cows	Milk Cows	All Cattle Sold
1997	24,501	3,797	5,398	20,830
2002	21,479	3,518	4,101	11,980
2007	19,775	4,408	2,786	12,430
2012	26,673	2,997	3,759	21,229

Source: U.S. Censuses of Agriculture

**TABLE 8.11: HOG AND PIG PRODUCTION IN BREMER COUNTY**

Year	Hogs on Farms	Hogs Marketed
1997	88,693	204,594
2002	127,374	330,867
2007	122,934	298,884
2012	193,373	418,279

Source: U.S. Censuses of Agriculture

## Income

Table 8.12 shows both the per capita and median household income for selected communities, including incorporated communities in Bremer County, the county itself, and the State of Iowa. As the table indicates, the county had one of the highest per capita incomes as well as one of the highest median household incomes reported for the jurisdictions shown.

**TABLE 8.12: PER CAPITA AND MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR SELECTED COMMUNITIES**

Community	Per Capita Income		Median Household Income	
	2000	2013	2000	2013
Denver	\$20,791	\$27,507	\$29,292	\$58,450
Frederika	\$20,224	\$30,928	\$36,250	\$48,125
Janesville	\$18,878	\$25,734	\$40,060	\$48,864
Plainfield	\$18,156	\$25,112	\$39,688	\$52,708
Readlyn	\$17,721	\$27,251	\$41,625	\$56,488
Sumner	\$18,029	\$24,842	\$33,417	\$47,847
Tripoli	\$16,882	\$20,026	\$34,444	\$48,182
Waverly	\$18,285	\$27,556	\$39,587	\$62,172
Bremer County	\$19,199	\$28,727	\$40,826	\$61,216
State of Iowa	\$19,674	\$27,027	\$39,469	\$51,843

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Unemployment trends for the county and state are illustrated in Table 8.13. As is shown below, the county's rate has been below the state's each year for the period shown. As a comparison, the unemployment rate in the county in 2002 was 2.8 percent.

**TABLE 8.13: UNEMPLOYMENT RATE TRENDS BY YEAR**

Community	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Bremer County	3.2	3.4	5.3	5.1	4.6	3.9	3.8
State of Iowa	3.8	4	6.3	6.3	5.8	5.2	4.6

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

The following table compares the levels of education for persons within Bremer County and the State of Iowa. According to this information, the county has a slightly higher percentage of persons who have earned a college degree than those in the state as a whole.

<b>TABLE 8.14: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR PERSONS 25 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER IN 2013</b>				
<b>Category</b>	<b>Bremer County</b>		<b>State of Iowa</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	425	2.7%	72,508	3.6%
9 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade, No Diploma	559	3.5%	110,553	5.5%
High School Graduate, includes GED	5,456	34.2%	666,371	32.9%
Some College, No Degree	3,098	19.4%	440,519	21.7%
Associate's Degree	1,895	11.9%	215,049	10.6%
Bachelor's Degree	3,207	20.1%	359,520	17.7%
Graduate or Professional Degree	1,303	8.2%	162,199	8.0%
Total	15,943	100%	2,026,719	100%
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013</i>				

## Key Issues & Opportunities

### Regional Coordination

A common theme of the Task Force's economic development discussion was the lack of overarching coordination in the County. With no central economic development coordinator, there is no common initiative between entities and communities. The Task Force identified acquiring a Bremer County Economic Development Coordinator as an economic development need that may be considered in the future.

### Lack of Developable Sites

Similar to the development issues for residential uses, the County does not have many available sites for commercial and industrial businesses. The cost of preparing sites for these businesses makes it prohibitive to develop land for these activities and there are not many readily available sites adjacent to cities. In addition to coordinating the County's economic development goals, development areas will need to be identified that meet the needs of businesses without being prohibitively costly.

## Economic Development Goals

**Goal 1: It is the goal of Bremer County to maintain and enhance economic development opportunities.**

- a. The County will work with incorporated cities on coordinating economic development activities and efforts.
  - i. A Bremer County Economic Development Coordinator, or similar, position may be considered as a way to further efforts in accomplishing this goal.
- b. Where appropriate within the unincorporated County, sites will be considered for limited residential, industrial, and commercial opportunities.

## Section 9 – Transportation

The following section describes the transportation network in Bremer County. Note that because transportation has a profound influence on land use, and vice versa, this section is important in developing a future land use plan for the County.

### Existing Conditions

Following are the existing conditions for transportation in the County. See Map 9 for the location of transportation facilities.

#### Streets & Highways

Bremer County has an elaborate system of roads and streets, most of which were designed using the Rectangular Land Survey System. U.S. Highways 63 and 218 traverse the County north and south. Bremer County also has access to Iowa Highways 3, 93, and 188. As for secondary roads, many are paved and provide access to most areas of the County.

#### Air

Air service to Bremer County residents is available on a limited basis at the Waverly Airport. The closest commercial air service is available in Waterloo and Cedar Rapids.

#### Rail

Rail service in Bremer County is available on a limited basis. The Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad serves the southwestern part of the County, while the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad serves the northeastern part of Bremer County. The Illinois Central Railroad, which follows U.S. Highway 218, offers the most comprehensive rail service to businesses in the County.

#### Transit

The Iowa Northland Regional Transit Commission (RTC) offers limited transit service to residents of Bremer County. Currently, demand response service, which requires 24-hour notice, is offered in Waverly. The remainder of the County is served by RTC on a case-by-case basis depending on space and service timing considerations.

#### Water

Water transportation is not available in Bremer County, with the exception of private recreational boating. As was previously indicated, the County is influenced by the Cedar, Wapsipinicon, and Shell Rock Rivers. At this time, it is unlikely that these rivers will be used as a means of transportation without efforts to remove silt and sediment through dredging operations. In addition to dredging, damming of the river may be necessary to increase water depth to acceptable levels.

### Smart Planning Element - Transportation

Objectives, policies, and programs to guide the future development of a safe, convenient, efficient, and economical transportation system. Plans for such a transportation system may be coordinated with state and regional transportation plans and take into consideration the need for diverse modes of transportation, accessibility, improved air quality, and interconnectivity of the various modes of transportation.

Finally, in terms of environmental protection, efforts will have to be made to protect wildlife from chemicals and pollution that can be concentrated in Iowa waterways.

### Trails – Pedestrian & Bicycle

Access to bike and pedestrian trails for transportation is becoming more prevalent in Bremer County. Currently, most trails begin and/or end in Waverly. The longest trail segment in the County is between Waverly and Readlyn, which is approximately 14 miles. In addition, efforts are being made to plan and extend recreational trails throughout Bremer County.

## Key Issues & Opportunities

### Bicycle Connections and Accommodations

While work is ongoing to improve the bicycle trail network in the County, there are gaps between trails leading to a disconnected network. Also, a lack of on-road bicycle accommodations means that many rural areas do not have access to the trails. Grants should continue to be identified to help fill in the trail network gaps while road improvements should at least consider including bicycle accommodations, such as wider shoulders, paved shoulders, and markings.

### Impacts from Larger Vehicles

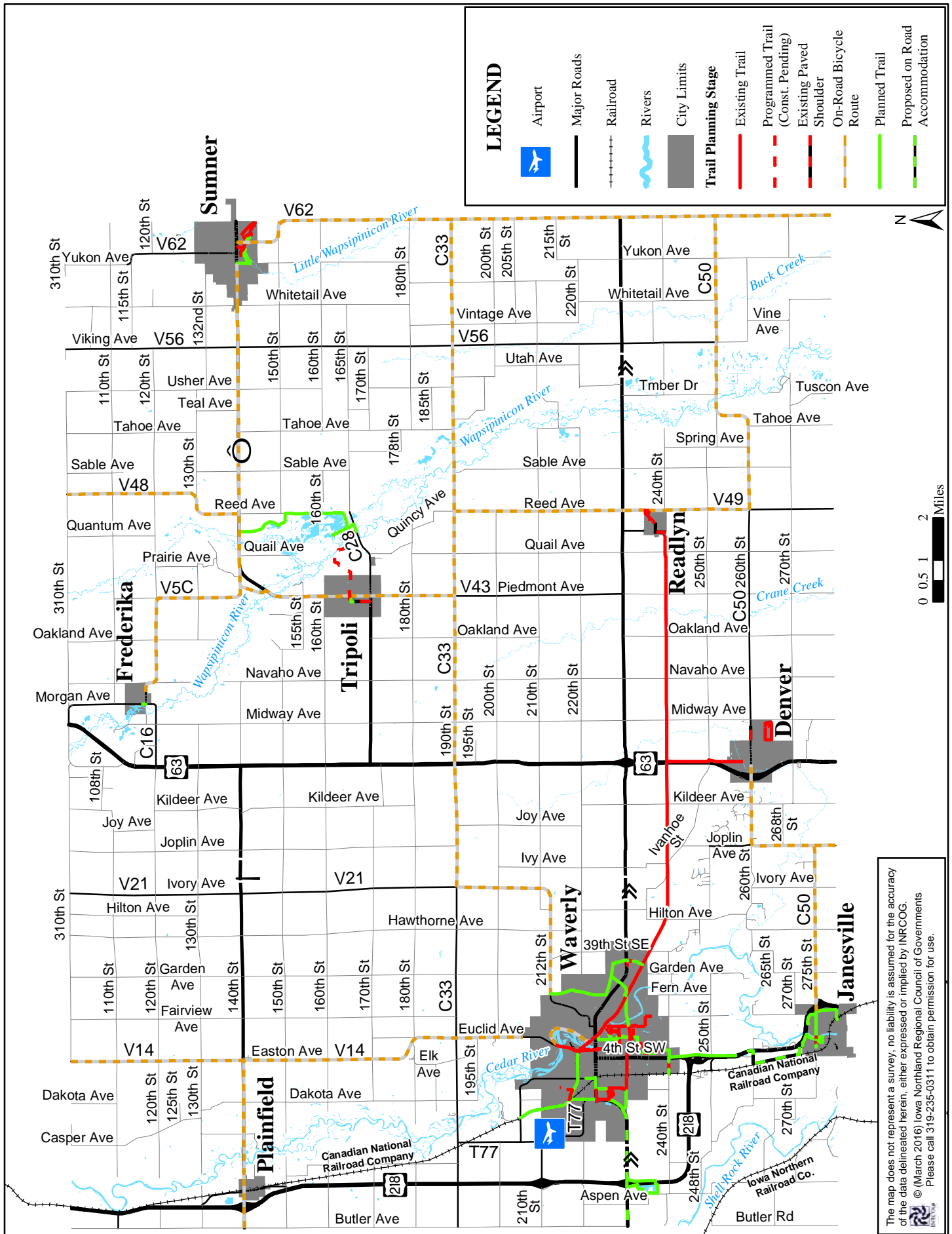
With improvements in technology, vehicles have become larger and, with Bremer County being largely agricultural, farm implements have become larger as well. Larger vehicles have a greater impact on the road surface as well as creating issues for traffic or bicyclists trying to pass them. The County's roads have not kept pace with the increasing vehicle size. As roads are repaired or improved, consideration should be given to the type of road surface and width in relation to the vehicles that typically use that road.

## Transportation Goals

**Goal 1: It is the goal of Bremer County to provide a safe and efficient transportation system to residents.**

- a. Bremer County will maintain and continue to develop a multi-modal transportation network that includes access to:
  - i. Highways and roads
  - ii. Air service
  - iii. Transit service
  - iv. Bicycling and trails
- b. The County will consider safety as a main consideration when providing for transportation network users.
  - i. Road accommodations should factor in larger vehicles and farm implements.
  - ii. On-road accommodations for bicycles should be considered in road construction and for expansion of the trail network.

Map 9: Transportation Map of the County





## Smart Planning Element – Land Use

Objectives, policies, and programs that identify current land uses within the municipality and that guide the future development and redevelopment of property, consistent with the municipality's characteristics identified under the Issues and Opportunities Element. The comprehensive plan or land development regulations may include information on the amount, type, intensity, and density of existing land use, trends in the market price of land used for specific purposes, and plans for future land use throughout the municipality. The comprehensive plan or land development regulations may identify and include information on property that has the possibility for redevelopment, a map of existing and potential land use and land use conflicts, information and maps relating to the current and future provision of utilities within the municipality, information and maps that identify the current and future boundaries for areas reserved for soil conservation, water supply conservation, flood control, and surface water drainage and removal. Information provided under this paragraph may also include an analysis of the current and potential impacts on local watersheds and air quality.

## Section 10 – Land Use

Even in an area as rural as Bremer County land is a finite resource. Only so much usable ground is available and, unlike glass or cars or televisions, we can't simply make more of it.

Most people realize that land drives our economy. Some lands need to remain open for natural, aesthetic and recreational uses; conversely, some open lands need to be in filled and used more productively.

How land is used is a chief ingredient of a community's character. But what goes largely unnoticed is that growth and land development carry with them some significant costs; costs not only to a developer or builder, but to surrounding land users and the broader community. And what's even more misunderstood is that once land is developed, an on-going financial responsibility results for the entire taxpaying public. Roads, water and sewer operations, police and fire protection, and other services all have costs, which must be considered when designating land for development.

Since fiscal resources, both public and private, are limited, it only makes sense to think carefully about the long-term effects of our land use. Careful planning better secures and protects the substantial investment needed to develop or conserve land.

By defining the extent to which our various lands can and should be used, we provide more predictability for individuals and businesses making long-term decisions. More importantly, the public costs associated with serving these lands can be minimized and the qualities that make many of them unique are preserved.

Just as land use drives our economy, the Land Use element of **Plan Update 2016** can be described as the driver of the comprehensive plan. The goals and policies of this section are intended to weigh the adverse environmental impacts of growth against the benefits of growth.

This section describes the existing conditions regarding land and its use in Bremer County by cataloging the activities currently taking place on land under city jurisdiction. It then relates the existing use and character of these lands to the possible major land use categories identified by the county.



## Existing Conditions

Bremer County is largely rural and agricultural due to its highly productive soils. Development exists in pockets, usually closer to communities.

### Existing Land Use Patterns

Agriculture covers the vast majority of the County. A strip of public land, both for recreation and flood protection purposes, follows the Wapsipinicon River through the center of the County. Residential uses are primarily located in the area between Denver and Waverly with smaller areas north of Waverly and pockets scattered throughout the rest of the County. Commercial and industrial uses are mostly contained within or adjacent to the individual communities, but there some sizable tracts of these uses to the west of Frederika and Tripoli.

### Future Land Use

The vision of this Plan Update related to future land use is shown in the Future Land Use Map (see Map 10). Bremer County is projected to maintain its agricultural nature with development continuing to occur adjacent to cities, primarily in the southwest corner of the County.

## Key Issues & Opportunities

The Task Force identified the following as key land use issues.

### Areas to Protect

It is still important to the County to protect prime agricultural land. With high CSR values, much of the land is productive and should be preserved for agriculture. Another key area to protect identified by some Task Force participants are woodlands.

### Inclusion of Other Development Factors

Currently, a CSR value of 50 is used as the primary measure of whether or not properties are considered prime agricultural land or suitable for development. However, there have been instances when properties with high CSR values were impractical for agriculture or had circumstances that were favorable for development. For this reason, it is suggested that the definition of prime agricultural land, for planning purposes, not include a specific CSR value while considering CSR along with other factors as described in Section 2 – Agriculture & Natural Resources.

## Land Use Goals

**Goal 1: It is the goal of Bremer County to preserve agricultural areas and natural resources by directing most growth and development within towns or contiguous to towns in areas that will likely be annexed by the neighboring city.**

- a. Bremer County will limit residential development in the County to areas that are planned for this type of growth.
  - i. The County shall protect, as best it can, soils with prime agricultural characteristics from residential development.
  - ii. The County shall encourage infill development to occur in existing subdivisions where infrastructure may be more readily available.

- iii. As is possible, Bremer County shall work to direct new residential growth to occur in incorporated communities where services are more readily available. If this is not possible, the County shall attempt to direct residential growth to areas where services may be available or to areas where minimal impact to agriculture will occur.
  - iv. The County will direct growth to areas with the least impact on environmentally sensitive areas.
  - v. The County, in considering residential development, shall be cognizant of adjacent land use(s) and attempt to minimize any associated conflicts or concerns.
- b. Bremer County will only allow limited commercial development in the unincorporated areas of the County.
  - i. The County shall protect, as best it can, soils with prime agricultural characteristics from commercial development.
  - ii. As is possible, Bremer County shall work to direct new commercial growth to occur in incorporated communities where services are more readily available. If this is not possible, the County shall attempt to direct commercial growth to areas where services may be available or to areas where minimal impact to agriculture will occur.
  - iii. The County will direct growth to areas with the least impact on environmentally sensitive areas.
  - iv. The County, in considering commercial development, shall be cognizant of adjacent land use(s) and attempt to minimize any associated conflicts or concerns.
- c. Bremer County will only allow limited industrial development in the unincorporated areas of the County.
  - i. The County shall protect, as best it can, soils with prime agricultural characteristics from industrial development.
  - ii. As is possible, Bremer County shall work to direct new industrial growth to occur in incorporated communities where services are more readily available. If this is not possible, the County shall attempt to direct industrial growth to areas where services may be available or to areas where minimal impact to agriculture will occur.
  - iii. The County will direct growth to areas with the least impact on environmentally sensitive areas.
  - iv. The County, in considering industrial development, shall be cognizant of adjacent land use(s) and attempt to minimize any associated conflicts or concerns.

**Goal 2: It is the goal of Bremer County to adopt and amend, when appropriate, a Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The purpose for the Plan is the following.**

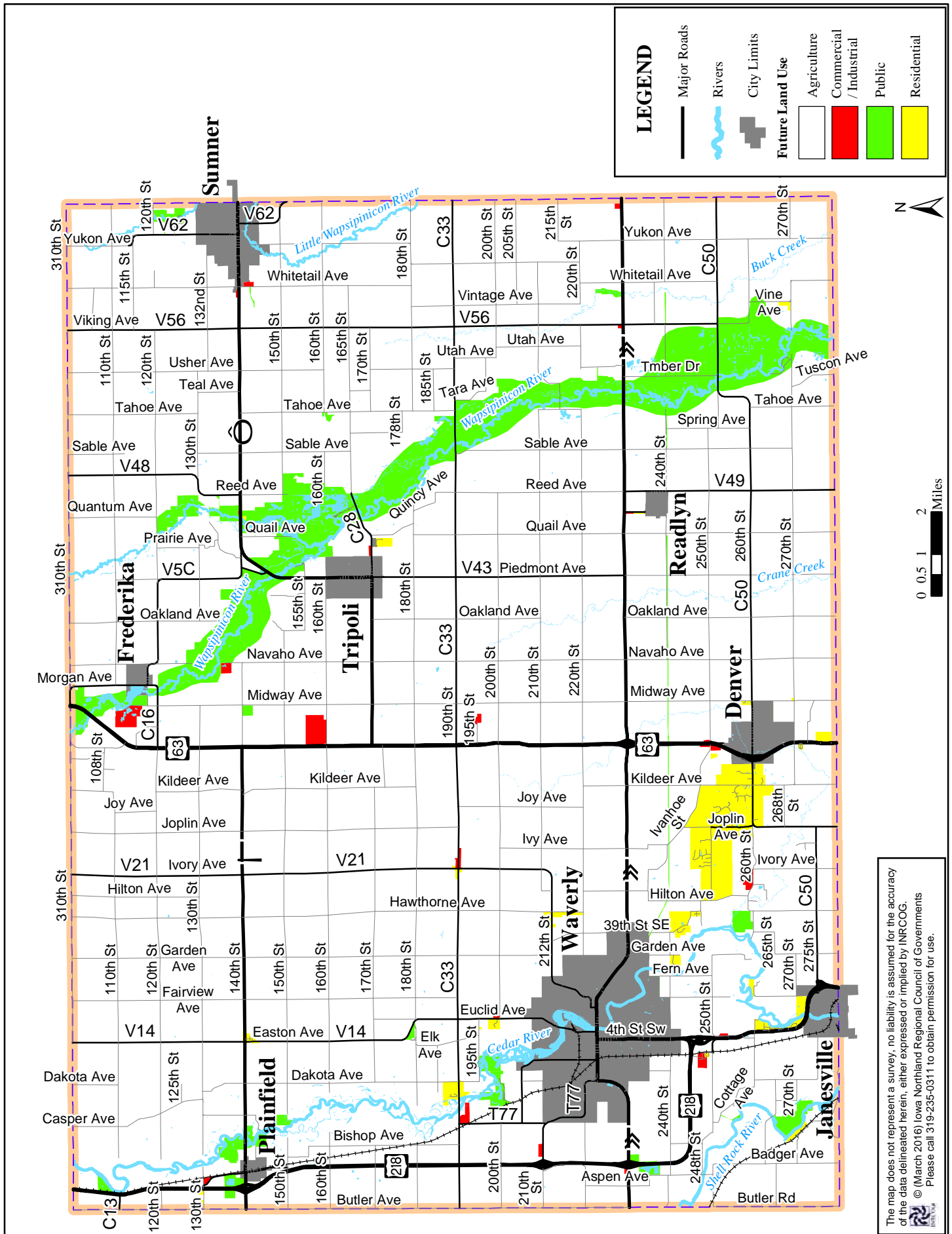
- a. The Plan will serve as a guide and a statement of policies for the County.
- b. The Plan will seek to promote orderly growth. More specifically, the Plan will attempt to:
  - i. Prevent leapfrog development.
  - ii. Promote the County and cities working together when annexation is proposed to plan for growth and service provisions in the proposed areas.
  - iii. Include a severance policy that requires that land that is severed from a city is reverted back to agricultural use and corresponding zoning.

- iv. Provide guidance to the various County commissions, boards, and authorities (P&Z, Board of Adjustment, Board of Health) that may be involved in county land use management.
  - v. Guide County staff as development is reviewed and considered.
- c. The Plan is intended to be the planning and legal foundation for:
  - i. The County Zoning Ordinance.
  - ii. The County Subdivision Ordinance.
  - iii. The County Building Code (including building, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical codes).
  - iv. Any future County Urban Renewal Plans or Ordinances.
  - v. Any future annexations consistent with comprehensive plans.
- d. The Plan, and its implementation tools listed above, is designed to encourage citizen or community input through defined and statutory development, amendment, and implementation processes.
- e. The County will require or measure the following checklist of issues prior to development approval.
  - i. Consistency with the Plan, including the Future Land Use Map and the goal of preserving prime agricultural land.
  - ii. Compatibility with existing surrounding land use(s).
  - iii. Minimal impact on adjacent property.
  - iv. Appropriate density of proposed use and its surroundings.
  - v. Minimal impact on traffic generation and flow.
  - vi. The ability of the proposal to obtain or access adequate services.
  - vii. Minimal environmental impact (i.e. floodplain, wetlands, and woodlands).
  - viii. Other factors affecting general intent and purpose of Plan.
- f. The Plan, which is intended to be broad and general, will serve as an umbrella for other County plans such as the Hazard Mitigation Plan and Housing Needs Assessment.

**Goal 3: It is the goal of Bremer County, and its residents, to recognize that land use planning is a continuous process.**

- a. The County will review this Plan as the need arises.
- b. This Plan will be implemented through various departments, policies, and ordinance including, but not limited to, the following:
  - i. County staff
  - ii. County ordinances
  - iii. County plans
  - iv. County budget
  - v. Outside agencies
- c. Public input on planning decisions and considerations will be sought out early in the process and in various formats, which may include providing public notices in or on:
  - i. Newspapers
  - ii. County websites
  - iii. Public areas

Map 10: Future Land Use Map of the County



## Section 11 – Intergovernmental Collaboration

### Existing Conditions

#### Hazard Mitigation Plan

The *Bremer County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan* was developed to assess the ongoing mitigation goals in the community; to evaluate mitigation alternatives that should be undertaken; and to outline a strategy for implementing the Plan. Within the Plan, the County hopes to build a disaster-resistant community and take action to protect families, businesses, and public facilities by reducing the effects of natural disasters. The Bremer County Hazard Mitigation Plan was formulated by elected officials, staff, agency representatives, business owners and operators, and interested citizens.

#### Extraterritorial Agreements

In December of 1998, Bremer County and the City of Waverly signed an intergovernmental agreement that defined development standards in the unincorporated area around Waverly. Specifically, the jurisdictions signed a legal agreement, authorized under Chapters 28E and 354 of the Iowa Code, to govern land development in a two-mile radius around the City of Waverly. The agreement involved numerous planning sessions with an ad hoc committee as well as county and city elected officials, planning commissions, and staff members. In addition, the agreement utilizes both jurisdiction's subdivision ordinances and building codes as implementation tools.

### Key Issues & Opportunities

#### Regional Economic Development

As mentioned in Section 8, economic development coordination has been lacking in Bremer County. An Economic Development Coordinator position may be considered that can help tie together the efforts of individual communities.

#### Schools

School districts have largely been left out of planning and development processes, but their actions can influence the County and vice versa. An effort should be made to include schools in planning more prominently.

#### Emergency Services

Mutual aid agreements are in place for community emergency services to help neighboring jurisdictions and the County. However, as mentioned in Section 5, there are concerns with the amount of training emergency personnel acquire as well as their ability to

### Smart Planning Element - IC

Objectives, policies, and programs for joint planning and joint decision-making with other municipalities or governmental entities, including school districts and drainage districts, for siting and constructing public facilities and sharing public services. The comprehensive plan or land development regulations may identify existing or potential conflicts between the municipality and other governments related to future development of the municipality and may include recommendations for resolving such conflicts. The comprehensive plan or land development regulations may also identify opportunities to collaborate and partner with neighboring jurisdictions and other entities in the region for projects of mutual interests.

respond to emergencies in more rural parts of the County. Consideration should be given to the amount of training required for emergency services and providing rural county services in conjunction with the mutual aid agreements.

## Collaboration Goals

**Goal 1: It is the goal of Bremer County to collaborate with other levels of government with regard to future land use and development. Specifically, the County shall collaborate with the federal, state, city, and school districts as is appropriate and/or possible. The County may also choose to work collaboratively with other counties.**

- a. The County will work with incorporated communities and neighboring counties, in appropriate situations, to develop agreements authorized under Iowa Code Chapter 28E on growth and development, particularly concerning future annexation and service provisions.
- b. School districts should be invited to participate in future planning efforts.

# Chapter 3: Implementation & Maintenance

## Section 1 – Action Plan

**Plan Update 2016** includes goals and objectives for Bremer County to become the community it envisions for itself.

While each goal and objective is important to achieve the Bremer County’s vision, it is critical to set priorities among the strategies. These priorities will lay the foundation for developing future capital improvement plans and annual departmental work plans for the County and will help with organizing and prioritizing future implementation efforts. The Action Plan provides a means for working through a variety of immediate, short- and long-range issues with other agencies, jurisdictions, and stakeholders by articulating a concept, premise or position to start constructive discussion and completion.

### Implementation Priorities

Throughout the course of developing the Bremer County Comprehensive Plan Update, community input focused on preserving the rural, agricultural nature of the County, increasing housing and economic development opportunities, providing a better transportation system more inclusive of bicycling accommodations, and building greater cooperation and partnerships with and between communities in the County. Listed below are the major implementation efforts to reach the goals stakeholders and citizens have agreed upon for the future of the County.

### Smart Planning Element - Implementation

A compilation of programs and specific actions necessary to implement any provision of the comprehensive plan, including changes to any applicable land development regulations, official maps or subdivision ordinances.

## Bremer County's Action Plan

**AGRICULTURAL & NATURAL RESOURCES GOAL 1: IT IS THE GOAL OF BREMER COUNTY TO STRIVE TO PRESERVE AGRICULTURAL LAND, PLACING EMPHASIS ON AREAS THAT ARE CONSIDERED "PRIME" AGRICULTURAL AREAS.**

***Objective 1: In making land use decisions, Bremer County shall consider the compatibility of existing surrounding land uses and the proposed use.***

**Lead Role:** Planning and Zoning Commission  
**Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors, Staff  
**Timeline:** 1 year

***Objective 2: Bremer County shall consider the availability of services needed for land use change requests.***

**Lead Role:** Planning and Zoning Commission  
**Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors, Staff  
**Timeline:** 1 year

***Objective 3: The County will require applicants to provide information regarding the services required for development at the time of the development request.***

**Lead Role:** Planning and Zoning Commission  
**Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors, Staff  
**Timeline:** 1 year

***Objective 4: Bremer County will prioritize the preservation of "prime" agricultural soils by considering land characteristics such as Corn Suitability Rating (CSR), soil type, and crop history.***

**Lead Role:** Planning and Zoning Commission  
**Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors, Staff  
**Timeline:** 1 year

***Objective 5: The County shall utilize large minimum lot size requirements as a means of discouraging development in the unincorporated areas.***

**Lead Role:** Planning and Zoning Commission  
**Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors, Staff  
**Timeline:** 1 year



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**Objective 6: Bremer County will investigate utilization of factors in addition to CSR and lot size when making land use decisions (i.e. Land Evaluation and Site Assessment).**

**Lead Role:** Planning and Zoning Commission  
**Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors, Staff  
**Timeline:** 1 year

**AGRICULTURAL & NATURAL RESOURCES GOAL 2: IT IS THE GOAL OF BREMER COUNTY TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES AND SENSITIVE AREAS SUCH AS FLOODPLAINS, WETLANDS, WOODLANDS, AND OTHER SENSITIVE AREAS.**

**Objective 1: The County shall protect natural features including surface waters including the Cedar River and Wapsipinicon River and their impact on other jurisdictions.**

**Lead Role:** Planning and Zoning Commission  
**Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors, Staff  
**Timeline:** 1 year

**Suggested Implementation Strategies:** 1) The County will participate in the appropriate watershed management authorities.

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**Objective 2: Bremer County shall consider topography when making land use decisions.**

**Lead Role:** Planning and Zoning Commission  
**Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors, Staff  
**Timeline:** 1 year

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**Objective 3: In addition, Bremer County shall protect or maintain the quality of its air and groundwater resources.**

**Lead Role:** Planning and Zoning Commission  
**Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors, Staff  
**Timeline:** 1 year

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**Objective 4: As is required, the County shall implement federal, state, county policies and ordinances designed to protect its natural environment and environmentally sensitive areas.**

**Lead Role:** Staff  
**Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors, Planning and Zoning Commission  
**Timeline:** 1 year

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**HAZARDS GOAL 1: THE COUNTY WILL IMPLEMENT AND UPDATE, AS REQUIRED, THE MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN.**

**COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOAL 1: IT IS THE GOAL OF BREMER COUNTY TO MAINTAIN, AND IMPROVE WHEN POSSIBLE, THE QUALITY OF LIVING OF ITS RESIDENTS. QUALITY OF LIFE, UNDER THIS PLAN, SHALL INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING FACTORS:**

***Objective 1: Education. The County will work to ensure that all Bremer County residents have access to a quality educational system.***

**Lead Role:** School    **Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors  
districts

**Timeline:** 1 year

***Objective 2: Crime. The County will continue to prevent and minimize criminal activity.***

**Lead Role:**                      **Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors  
Sheriff's Office

**Timeline:** 1 year

***Objective 3: Arts, Culture, Library, and Historical opportunities. The County will work with appropriate organizations to offer cultural opportunities to its residents.***

**Lead Role:** Board    **Key Partners:** Staff  
of Supervisors

**Timeline:** 1 year

***Objective 4: Parks and Recreation opportunities. Bremer County, specifically the County Conservation Board, will work with the incorporated communities in the County to offer access to golf courses, recreational trails, swimming pools, boating and fishing, open space, and community celebrations and festivals.***

**Lead Role:**                      **Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors, Planning and  
County                      Zoning Commission, Community organizations  
Conservation  
Board

**Timeline:** 1 year

***Objective 5: Health. The County will work to ensure that all Bremer County residents have access to quality healthcare including hospitals and nursing homes.***

**Lead Role:** Health    **Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors  
Department

**Timeline:** 1 year

**COMMUNITY FACILITIES GOAL 1: IT IS THE GOAL OF BREMER COUNTY TO ENCOURAGE QUALITY COMMUNITY FACILITIES, SUCH AS:**

***Objective 1: Public safety services – sheriff, fire, and ambulance services.***

**Lead Role:** Board    **Key Partners:** Emergency services  
of Supervisors

**Timeline:** 1 year

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**Objective 2: Art, culture, library, and historical facilities.**

**Lead Role:** Board of Supervisors  
**Key Partners:** Staff

**Timeline:** 1 year

---

**Objective 3: Schools.**

**Lead Role:** School districts  
**Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors

**Timeline:** 1 year

---

**Objective 4: Parks and recreation such as golf courses, recreational and bicycle trails, swimming pools, boating and fishing, and open space.**

**Lead Role:** County Conservation Board  
**Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors, Planning and Zoning Commission

**Timeline:** 1 year

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**PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES GOAL 1: IT IS THE GOAL OF BREMER COUNTY TO CONSIDER THE NEED FOR SERVICES WHEN ASSESSING A POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT.**

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**Objective 1: The County will require that necessary services shall be provided concurrent with development. For the purposes of this Plan, “necessary services” shall include:**

**Lead Role:** Planning and Zoning Commission  
**Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors

**Timeline:** 1 year

**Suggested Implementation Strategies:**

- 1) Access to a transportation network through highways, roads, streets, trails, and driveways.
- 2) Access to a potable, approved water supply (individual wells and/or shared wells). The County will encourage use of shared or central wells, when possible.
- 3) Access to an approved on-site septic system or connection to a central sewer system.
- 4) Access to public safety services (sheriff, fire, ambulance services).
- 5) Connections to other utilities (electric, gas, etc.).
- 6) Access to schools.

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**Objective 2: The County will work with utility and internet providers to extend high speed internet access to rural County residents.**

**Lead Role:** Board of Supervisors  
**Key Partners:** Staff

**Timeline:** 5-10 years

**HOUSING GOAL 1: IT IS THE GOAL OF BREMER COUNTY TO PROVIDE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL RESIDENTS AND MAINTAIN QUALITY BUILDING STANDARDS.**

**Objective 1: Bremer County will consider coordinated efforts with incorporated cities to meet the housing needs of various groups, including:**

**Lead Role:** Board of Supervisors    **Key Partners:** Staff, Planning and Zoning Commission    **Timeline:** 1 year

- Suggested Implementation Strategies:**
- 1) Low income individuals and families
  - 2) Retirees
  - 3) Young adults and families

**Objective 2: To provide areas for new housing, the County should consider provisions for smaller, denser lots closer or contiguous to towns that do not negatively impact the environment or decrease prime agricultural land unnecessarily.**

**Lead Role:** Planning and Zoning Commission    **Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors    **Timeline:** 1-5 years

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL 1: IT IS THE GOAL OF BREMER COUNTY TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES.**

**Objective 1: The County will work with incorporated cities on coordinating economic development activities and efforts.**

**Lead Role:** Board of Supervisors    **Key Partners:** Staff    **Timeline:** 1 year

- Suggested Implementation Strategies:**
- 1) A Bremer County Economic Development Coordinator, or similar, position may be considered as a way to further efforts in accomplishing this goal.

**Objective 2: Where appropriate within the unincorporated County, sites will be considered for limited residential, industrial, and commercial opportunities.**

**Lead Role:** Planning and Zoning Commission    **Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors    **Timeline:** 1-5 years

**TRANSPORTATION GOAL 1: IT IS THE GOAL OF BREMER COUNTY TO PROVIDE A SAFE AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM TO RESIDENTS.**

**Objective 1: Bremer County will maintain and continue to develop a multi-modal transportation network that includes access to:**

**Lead Role:** Board of Supervisors    **Key Partners:** Planning and Zoning Commission, Staff    **Timeline:** 1-5 years

- |                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Suggested</b>      | 1) Highways and roads   |
| <b>Implementation</b> | 2) Air service          |
| <b>Strategies:</b>    | 3) Transit service      |
|                       | 4) Bicycling and trails |

**Objective 2: The County will consider safety as a main consideration when providing for transportation network users.**

**Lead Role:** Board of Supervisors    **Key Partners:** Planning and Zoning Commission, Staff    **Timeline:** 1-5 years

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Suggested</b>      | 1) Road accommodations should factor in larger vehicles and farm implements.     |
| <b>Implementation</b> | 2) On-road accommodations for bicycles should be considered in road construction |
| <b>Strategies:</b>    | and for expansion of the trail network.  |

**LAND USE GOAL 1: IT IS THE GOAL OF BREMER COUNTY TO PRESERVE AGRICULTURAL AREAS AND NATURAL RESOURCES BY DIRECTING MOST GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT WITHIN TOWNS OR CONTIGUOUS TO TOWNS IN AREAS THAT WILL LIKELY BE ANNEXED BY THE NEIGHBORING CITY.**

**Objective 1: Bremer County will limit residential development in the County to areas that are planned for this type of growth.**

**Lead Role:** Planning and Zoning Commission    **Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors    **Timeline:** 1 year

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Suggested</b>      | 1) The County shall protect, as best it can, soils with prime agricultural characteristics  |
| <b>Implementation</b> | from residential development.   |
| <b>Strategies:</b>    | 2) The County shall encourage infill development to occur in exiting subdivisions where infrastructure may be more readily available.   |
|                       | 3) As is possible, Bremer County shall work to direct new residential growth to occur in incorporated communities where services are more readily available. If this is not possible, the County shall attempt to direct residential growth to areas where services may be available or to areas where minimal impact to agriculture will |

occur.

- 4) The County will direct growth to areas with the least impact on environmentally sensitive areas.
- 5) The County, in considering residential development, shall be cognizant of adjacent land use(s) and attempt to minimize any associated conflicts or concerns.

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***Objective 2: Bremer County will only allow limited commercial development in the unincorporated areas of the County.***

**Lead Role:**

Planning and  
Zoning  
Commission

**Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors

**Timeline:** 1 year

**Suggested**

**Implementation**

**Strategies:**

- 1) The County shall protect, as best it can, soils with prime agricultural characteristics from commercial development.
- 2) As is possible, Bremer County shall work to direct new commercial growth to occur in incorporated communities where services are more readily available. If this is not possible, the County shall attempt to direct commercial growth to areas where services may be available or to areas where minimal impact to agriculture will occur.
- 3) The County will direct growth to areas with the least impact on environmentally sensitive areas.
- 4) The County, in considering commercial development, shall be cognizant of adjacent land use(s) and attempt to minimize any associated conflicts or concerns.

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***Objective 3: Bremer County will only allow limited industrial development in the unincorporated areas of the County.***

**Lead Role:**

Planning and  
Zoning  
Commission

**Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors

**Timeline:** 1 year

**Suggested**

**Implementation**

**Strategies:**

- 1) The County shall protect, as best it can, soils with prime agricultural characteristics from industrial development.
- 2) As is possible, Bremer County shall work to direct new industrial growth to occur in incorporated communities where services are more readily available. If this is not possible, the County shall attempt to direct industrial growth to areas where



services may be available or to areas where minimal impact to agriculture will occur.

- 3) The County will direct growth to areas with the least impact on environmentally sensitive areas.
- 4) The County, in considering industrial development, shall be cognizant of adjacent land use(s) and attempt to minimize any associated conflicts or concerns.

**LAND USE GOAL 2: IT IS THE GOAL OF BREMER COUNTY TO ADOPT AND AMEND, WHEN APPROPRIATE, A COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN. THE PURPOSE OF THE PLAN IS THE FOLLOWING.**

***Objective 1: The Plan will serve as a guide and a statement of policies for the County.***

**Lead Role:** Board of Supervisors  
**Key Partners:** Staff

**Timeline:** 1 year

***Objective 2: The Plan will seek to promote orderly growth. More specifically, the Plan will attempt to:***

**Lead Role:** Planning and Zoning Commission  
**Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors, Staff

**Timeline:** 1 year

- Suggested Implementation Strategies:**
- 1) Prevent leapfrog development.
  - 2) Promote the County and cities working together when annexation is proposed to plan for growth and service provisions in the proposed areas.
  - 3) Include a severance policy that requires that land is severed from a city is reverted back to agricultural use and corresponding zoning.
  - 4) Provide guidance to the various County commissions, boards, and authorities (P&Z, Board of Adjustment, Board of Health) that may be involved in county land use management.
  - 5) Guide County staff as development is reviewed and considered.

***Objective 3: The Plan is intended to be the planning and legal foundation for:***

**Lead Role:** Board of Supervisors  
**Key Partners:** Planning and Zoning Commission, Staff

**Timeline:** 1 year

- Suggested Implementation Strategies:**
- 1) The County Zoning Ordinance
  - 2) The County Subdivision Ordinance
  - 3) The County Building Code (including building, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical codes).
  - 4) Any future County Urban Renewal Plans or Ordinances.
  - 5) Any future annexations consistent with comprehensive plans.

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**Objective 4: The Plan, and its implementation tools listed above, is designed to encourage citizen or community input through defined and statutory development, amendment, and implementation processes.**

**Lead Role:** Board of Supervisors    **Key Partners:** Planning and Zoning Commission, Staff    **Timeline:** 1 year

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**Objective 5: The County will require or measure the following checklist of issues prior to development approval.**

**Lead Role:** Planning and Zoning Commission    **Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors    **Timeline:** 1 year

- Suggested Implementation Strategies:**
- 1) Consistency with the Plan, including the Future Land Use Map and the goal of preserving prime agricultural land.
  - 2) Compatibility with existing surrounding land use(s).
  - 3) Minimal impact on adjacent property.
  - 4) Appropriate density of proposed use and its surroundings.
  - 5) Minimal impact on traffic generation and flow.
  - 6) The ability of the proposal to obtain or access adequate services.
  - 7) Minimal environmental impact (i.e. floodplain, wetlands, and woodlands).
  - 8) Other factors affecting general intent and purpose of Plan.

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**Objective 6: The Plan, which is intended to be broad and general, will serve as an umbrella for other County plans such as the Hazard Mitigation Plan and Housing Needs Assessment.**

**Lead Role:** Board of Supervisors    **Key Partners:** Planning and Zoning Commission, Staff    **Timeline:** 1 year

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**LAND USE GOAL 3: IT IS THE GOAL OF BREMER COUNTY, AND ITS RESIDENTS, TO RECOGNIZE THAT LAND USE PLANNING IS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS.**

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**Objective 1: The County will review this Plan as the need arises.**

**Lead Role:** Planning and Zoning Commission    **Key Partners:** Board of Supervisors    **Timeline:** 1 year

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**Objective 2: This Plan will be implemented through various departments, policies, and ordinance including, but not limited to, the following:**

**Lead Role:** Board of Supervisors  
**Key Partners:** Staff

**Timeline:** 1 year

- Suggested** 1) County staff  
**Implementation** 2) County ordinances  
**Strategies:** 3) County plans  
4) County budget  
5) Outside agencies

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**Objective 3: Public input on planning decisions and considerations will be sought out early in the process and in various formats, which may include providing public notices in or on:**

**Lead Role:** Board of Supervisors  
**Key Partners:** Planning and Zoning Commission, Staff  
**Timeline:** 1 year

- Suggested** 1) Newspapers  
**Implementation** 2) County websites  
**Strategies:** 3) Public areas

**COLLABORATION GOAL 1: IT IS THE GOAL OF BREMER COUNTY TO COLLABORATE WITH OTHER LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT WITH REGARD TO FUTURE LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT. SPECIFICALLY, THE COUNTY SHALL COLLABORATE WITH THE FEDERAL, STATE, CITY, AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS AS IS APPROPRIATE AND/OR POSSIBLE. THE COUNTY MAY ALSO CHOOSE TO WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH OTHER COUNTIES.**

**Objective 1: The County will work with incorporated communities and neighboring counties, in appropriate situations, to develop agreements authorized under Iowa Code Chapter 28E on growth and development, particularly concerning future annexation and service provisions.**

**Lead Role:** Board of Supervisors  
**Key Partners:** Staff  
**Timeline:** 1-5 years

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**Objective 2: School districts should be invited to participate in future planning efforts.**

**Lead Role:** Board of Supervisors  
**Key Partners:** Planning and Zoning Commission  
**Timeline:** 1 year

## Implementation Strategies

Many of the identified goals, objectives, and action strategies will only be met through the expenditure of public funds. Achieving the components of the Action Plan should lead to more efficient use of both public and private resources. Each project should be viewed with the full

range of funding alternatives and technical assistance available to it before action is taken. These sources must not only provide sufficient funds to accomplish the goals and action strategies intended, but they should be tapped in ways that are as equitable as possible in balancing costs against benefits received.

Another method for implementing the elements of the **Plan Update 2016** could be developed through a system of incentives and compensation. The benefits and costs involved in the achievement of public objectives should be considered; which are equitable to the individual and to the general public. Specific steps should be taken to enable progress to be made in each area of the plan.

## Section 2 – Plan Maintenance

**Plan Update 2016** is designed to be a working document. Its adoption by the Board of Supervisors is not the end of the community's long-range planning effort, but rather the means by which the county will see growth occur. County staff, citizens, and the private sector will use Plan Update 2016 as a dynamic tool to manage growth over the next ten to fifteen years to protect the high quality of life and foster a healthy economy for Bremer County.

A relevant, up-to-date plan is a critical element to ongoing planning success. To maintain public and private sector confidence, evaluation and modifications based on sound judgments should be made to the planning document as necessary. The Plan must be current. Therefore, Bremer County may, from time-to-time, want to consider amendments or updates to this Plan, including any and/or all of the maps, tables, and/or illustrations.

### Continued Participation and Leadership

Broad public support and involvement are required as a prerequisite to the development and use of virtually any implementation policy or program. If adequate support is to be developed, a vigorous and continuing program of discussion, education, and participation must be carried on. Moreover, people who are in a position to understand the needs of the city and ways of meeting those must take the initiative to stimulate the interest and the understanding that must be involved to assure that support and action is developed.

To produce the levels of consensus required, vigorous and continuing public involvement will be required in such areas as:

1. Detailing of plans and proposals to clarify their impact on specific areas, groups, and individuals;
2. Developing of specified implementation activities and organization arrangements; and
3. Continuing monitoring and interpretation of the Plan.

## Amendment Process

In order to consider an amendment or update to this plan, first the Planning and Zoning Commission shall consider the proposed amendment and conduct a properly noticed hearing, notice of which shall be published once, not less than seven (7) nor more than twenty (20) days before the date of the hearing, in a newspaper with local circulation. The Commission shall make a recommendation on the proposed amendment or update, after the public hearing. Said recommendation of the Commission shall be carried by an affirmative vote of a simple majority of its members. The Commission shall send its recommendation, either for approval or denial of the proposed amendment or update, to the Board of Supervisors for consideration.

After receiving the recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Board of Supervisors shall also hold a properly noticed public hearing on the proposed amendment. The notice shall follow the same publication guidelines as those prescribed for the Commission above. The Board of Supervisors is authorized to make the final decision, including alterations to the amendment or update prior to adoption. Adoption shall require an affirmative vote of a simple majority of the membership of the Board.